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"VENDETTA"

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VENDETTA:

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'ANGELA'
A NOVEL

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NEED

ANGELA

A Novel

by

Maurice Rowdon

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When her plane

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When she was walking across the tarmac in the sudden sweltering air she noticed how pale some of the other London passengers were and felt thankful for her tan. Her five-day holiday on Crete had paid off. It helped the Cleopatra look.

She looked round for her agent but saw no one. Then when she was through the passport wicket wheeling her trolley full of suitcases a pale bald-headed man in a blue seersucker suit hurried up behind her and said, "Hi Angela, nice trip? You are Angela Bourne?"

"Yes."

He took the trolley over and began steering her through the car park. The stationary cars sent out a massive afternoon heat that took her breath away. He looked rushed off his feet and his quick grey eyes always seemed to be searching the distance for some job that had to be done, while he bit his lower lip. She saw with disappointment that he was approaching a VW and not even a vintage one. She'd been dreaming of a black chauffeur-driven Buick at the least---and an agent at least six foot tall who looked, apart from actually being, the boss of a top Hollywood agency. Not some harrassed assistant from the TV department as this creature clearly was.

As they drove away she told herself not to be childish. After all she wasn't being asked to play the lead. In fact she wasn't being asked to play anything at all.

Just to interview for a part. In the old days an actress went to Hollywood for a screen test but now your agent circulated clips of your TV performances and your actual physical arrival wasn't all that important. It was a whole lot less glamorous and she'd be lucky if they remembered to call her from her crumby hotel room for the first interview. Still, she was here, all expenses paid and her London agent happy. And she needed a rest.

In the back seat there were piles of ragged manuscripts and the ash tray was so full of butts, most of them coated with lipstick, they'd spilled all over the gearshift. She could see it all---the quick lays among the scripts.

She was unaccountably nervous. That is, she usually knew why was nervous (and she was nervous most of the time). It wasn't the interview. She didn't really care if she got the part or not. 'I'm a stage actress anyway,' she always told herself.

Then she realised that the nervousness was excitement. She meant to win! All through drama school and her first acting parts she'd dreamed of crossing the Atlantic, and recrossing it back to Europe with an international reputation already made.

This offer had been sudden, unexpected, even for her London agent. But for God's sake she'd worked for it! She put her work above everything---sex, food, socialising. Her mother had taught her that. A French, methodical mother. It was hard sometimes, rising above the temptations (especially as men fell for her like skittles). Of course that flattered and pleased her. It helped the disappointed ego.

The agent kept glancing sideways at her. She was wearing a black one-piece with a low neck, cut close to the body. It set off her tan and gave her large eyes. She knew she was attractive---beautiful for some. Her lips were full and red and firm, a nice small but fruity mouth. Her cheeks were a little plump and she decidedly

didn't like her nose, which she called (when with girlfriends only) 'my snout'. The bones were awfully good for photography and her neck was what anyone would call long and slender, though it had a tendency to bend like a thick hose sometimes unless she made an effort to keep a straight back. In her first dancing class she'd been taught to maintain a straight line 'as near as dammit' from the crown of her head to the base of her spine, and this meant a neck as still as a stone column. Her looks bored her rather. The eyes were a terrific hold on people, and she encouraged the black sparkling look with lashes and an Indian mascara that didn't harm the pupils. Her heart always sank a bit when she got 'that look' from men. And she was afraid she was getting it now, from the agent at her side.

But she meant to get the part and kept up the Cleopatra look, her chin high and the long neck at its longest. Her hair was short and thick, its blackness in (hopefully) striking contrast with the whites of her eyes. Of course it would be the low neck he was most interested in. Sometimes she thought she hated ^eman. And in her profession ^{one}she had to expose ^{one}her self somewhat. At drama school they'd called her 'Cleo', and she did her best to maintain that flashing exotic look but it wasn't easy when she had feathers in her belly and felt ugly and plain and boring underneath. Her voice helped a lot. 'Strong and unhesitating delivery', one speech-class report had said. In fact she reckoned she could shout everybody else including men off the stage.

The directors liked her for her clear outlines--- a lithe figure, a crisp 'projection', self-assured walk. You knew where you stood with her, artistically.

The agent was telling her his name---'Everard Hope'.

"You can take it easy till tomorrow Angela, so listen why don't we have dinner together tonight, I'll pick you up around eight, OK?"

She knew the routine so well and murmured "Fine" almost without realising.

As for the tightrope act of keeping him out of her bed after dinner in such a way as not to blow their professional relationship, she thought she could manage it. She hated playing that game but whose fault was it, the man's or the woman's?

He went on talking but suddenly she wasn't listening. Her fingers were trembling violently and she couldn't take her eyes off a man not three feet away in an open Bentley. The traffic was waiting for the lights to change at Slausen Avenue. She stared into his dark eyes and it seemed he found it as hard as she did to shift his gaze. And what a gaze that was! It penetrated right through her body, apart from the fact that he was the most beautiful man she'd ever seen or even dreamed about. She didn't know if other women would agree, and of course she didn't care, but his beauty seemed so, well, almost terrible that she couldn't believe all the other women in the traffic weren't devouring him with their eyes too. And this trembling she had! It had started in a second, she felt cold in her extremities. She sat rigid, her mouth slightly open, and as for the Celopatra look, that had gone to pot. She hoped the lights would never change to green. She took in all his features---the smooth curve of the chin, the slim nose and the cheeks so soft and yet firm in line she felt she wanted to jump out of the car there and then and touch him with the tips of her fingers---no, more than that, she felt she had touched him, was touching him, and he could feel it, his eyes seemed to say so.

Whole minutes seemed to pass and there they were still staring at each other. His black hair was slightly ruffled in the breeze, thick round the ears. He wore a white suit with casual elegance, sleeves turned up to reveal an expensive blue shirt and a gold wrist chain. The shirt had tiny fleur de lys. His eyes were almost too keen to be bearable and yet their fixity caused her no distress at all, no embarrassment, she sort of abandoned herself to them, floated in them, as if they were in some strange way her own eyes, familiar to her like her own eyes

own eyes, or at least eyes she'd always known, perhaps from long ago, in a cousin or uncle she might have been in love with. Yes, he was familiar to her. And in that moment she realised that if they didn't meet again she was finished, ruined for life, as good as dead.

And she'd never believed in love at first sight. It took her months to get really interested in a man. She had to wait for him to get through the infatuation phase, which was very suffocating and intolerable, and to start not giving a damn about her, then she felt interest stirring in herself. It was when a man cooled off that her feelings really started and she saw his attractions for the first time. She needed, above all, to feel at home with a man, so that she could drop her airs and the Cleo look and all the other things that made her feel so tense and ugly inside. And with this man she was at home already! In fact he was home, all she wanted!

For a moment she'd forgotten where she was, in what city, on what continent. He wasn't even her type! He wasn't tall or blond. She preferred rather unkempt, thinking sort of men. This dark smoothness wasn't at all her style.

The lights changed. There was a loud blast of impatient horns behind them and the open Bentley sped forward and was at once lost to sight.

* * *

She returned to full consciousness when she realised that the battered VW she was in was driving up to the pink stuccoed entrance of the Beverly Hills hotel instead of a crummy place downtown. She couldn't believe it.

A porter lifted her bags out of the front boot and Everard Hope offered her a limp hand without leaving the driver's seat.

"He'll show you to your room," he said casually. "I'll have to rush, see you at eight kid."

And he looked away at once.

She walked up the outdoor carpet to the doors. To³/₄ Top star treatment! Or would they give her an attic room.

The porter led her along the carpet to the entrance. Top star treatment! Or would they give her an attic room three feet wide? She saw her bags disappearing and a man from the reception desk nodded to her and a page showed her to the lift.

It wasn't a room three feet wide. It was a two-room suite with a bathroom she felt she could live in round the clock. And there were roses everywhere. They burst out of vases on tables, on the floor, by the bed, even in the bathroom. The page left and she slumped down in one of the armchairs, watching her bags arrive. She didn't understand. Her excitement had become sheer bafflement. There were the tea-coloured roses she especially loved, and salmon reds, and creams and sonyas. But suddenly they and the suite, even the bathroom, were of no interest to her as she realised that she'd lost the only man she could ever love. Lost him in the traffic!

2.

It didn't take her much time over dinner that evening to see that producers only flew you to Los Angeles and booked you two-roomed suites if they predicted a good return on their money. In other words she was here to work, not to feel nervous or fall in love at first sight. As for Everard Hope's side glances at her in the car, she knew now that he'd been appraising her professionally. For one thing, far from being an assistant from the TV department, he was boss of the whole agency. Its title, the Vera Hopp Syndicate, was obviously a derivative from his name, and she wondered she hadn't realised it before. But then that had been when those eyes had happened.

The series she'd been invited over to interview for was a new bumper production of Guy de Maupassant's Bel Ami, in six episodes. As they were being shot in California, with a few location shots in Paris done by a number two crew, without actors, the producers had wanted as many people as possible on the set who 'felt' French. This was Everard Hope told her the minute they sat down. This was why she'd been offered a part (as yet unspecified), because her Spotlight photo said 'Fluent French' underneath and her mother was French-born.

"You certainly won't get Madeleine," he told her. "I'm hoping for Clotilde, it's not the star role but it takes up a lot of footage. You're not perfect casting even for that. I see her as plump and even a

bit dumpy, and you're certainly not that."

From his tone of voice it suddenly didn't sound too good, and her heart did a well-known flutter of disappointment.

"This film is one small part of a big package," he went on. "The producers are going to spend millions on recreating Paris in the 1880s and to justify the expenditure they want a whole load of stories from the same period. Apart from Bel Ami they want two bel epoque pictures, a series on Diaghilev and the Russian Ballet's first appearance in Paris, and I think a series on Dreyfuss. Now you can land yourself principal roles in all those pictures because that's going to be their policy---to keep the same names and faces as a kind of trademark for the whole package. What do you think of that, bright-eyes? You'll be in guaranteed work for two years! With rising fees and steady publicity too!"

These were the kind of words she'd been waiting all her life to hear. Her disappointment died abruptly. But she wasn't interested in what he was saying. She was amazed at herself. She'd come all this way to get a decent part in one series and here was her agent opening up vistas of at least two years work in major roles that would probably be seen all over the world! Yet she didn't feel a spark of satisfaction. She only wanted to see that man again. His image wouldn't leave her mind. And she began to feel she'd come to Hollywood not for films but him. And she'd lost him. A glimpse and he was gone! Tears came to her eyes and she saw Everard Hope staring at her with astonishment.

"You all right kid?" he asked her.

"Yes!"

He no doubt thought she was overcome with emotion. Not that, clearly he cared. He finished his glass of wine and looked round the dining room apathetically. There was little more to talk about.

Just like her, she thought, to lose all the excitement of living in the Beverley Hills Hotel and being offered star roles just because she saw someone in another car! That increased the tears and Hope was really beginning to look impatient.

really beginning to look impatient.

"I'm sorry," she said. "It must be jet-lag."

And those dozens of roses! She hadn't even thanked Hope for them, and she didn't feel like doing it. Those roses were like a mockery if you felt like she did.

All through dinner she kept glancing round to see if by some mad chance he would walk in. He might have followed her, seen her entering the hotel. Luckily they were dining in the hotel to save her trouble. And presumably Everard Hope had calculated that the dinner would go on the hotel bill, which would go to the producers.

After coffee they walked through the Polo Lounge to the terrace for a last drink. He shuffled along at her side, clearly bored at being with yet another crazy actress.

Then, sitting in a corner, huddled together, she saw four men. One of them was young and wore a white suit. The blue shirt had fleur de lys all over it. She wanted to run to him. She made a little cry, laughed slightly to herself as Everard Hope shot her a hard glance.

"You really OK?" he asked her.

"Yes! I'm fine, fine!"

She dared not look closer. Her mouth was dry, her heart seemed to have leapt into her throat and lungs, beating so hard she thought she would faint.

Suddenly she was aware of Everard calling out to the men "See you later!"

So they knew each other! Then she was saved! The young man hardly looked up. She was aware of him being older than she for the first time. He was perhaps thirty-five or thirty-six, at least ten years more than she. She saw him nod to Everard casually, and all of a sudden they were staring into each other's eyes again, and those first feelings swept back. Those eyes were as dark and steady as the night-sky, she thought.

Next day was busy. Everard Hope introduced her to the casting director, a woman of about forty called Jill Rapinsky who wore enormous dark glasses and a pony tail. She was a bit frigid in manner but Angela took to her just the same.

"Do you know Paris well?" Jill asked her.

As she'd only been to Paris once she said, "Well it's sortof in my blood."

As if this created a doubt in her mind Jill leaned forward and said, "This is going to sound **screwy** but you've read the book haven't you, I mean I'm sure you have but---?"

"Yes I have" (a sweet smile to remove any suggestion that she might be offended, which she was).

"And do you **think** you really fit Clotilde? OK," she added with a sudden laugh, "you don't have to answer, especially with your agent here! But I'd like to say this. I saw your TV clips but now I've seen you in the flesh I don't know why I thought of you for Clotilde! I've always seen Clotilde" (I bet she's only just read the book herself, Angela thought) "as fantastically pretty and sexy but not the dazzling Arabian nights type like you!"

Everard Hope looked bored, as if to say he was there to clinch deals and could do without the analysis. Of course this was a deliberate front, Angela decided.

"Do you mean you don't want me in the film after all?"

"No of course not! As a matter of fact the minute I saw your clips I put your name down and told my secretary to give your London agent a buzz. I didn't even think about it. In fact I hardly looked at the clips---"

A slight smile passed across Everard Hope's face and Angela couldn't understand this.

"You didn't feel to me like Clotilde," Jill went on, "you didn't behave like her or look like her so I must have been under a spell!"

"Yeah," Everard said, rising, "I do that to all the casting agents, how else would I stay in business?"

He went off to another appointment and they stayed talking.

But Jill didn't mention the film, or any films, again. It was the weather, did she have a good trip, had she been to LA before, was she planning any theatre work here etc.

Then, when they were leaving each other, out on the sidewalk, Jill suddenly snapped, "See you at the studios tomorrow at ten, OK?"

And she went off without a good bye. Angela stared after her. Jill had long blonde hair down to the middle of her back, very straight and clean, giving a totally false picture at the back of what she was in front. Angela decided she didn't like her after all.

Everard drove her to the studios next day and Jamie Somerson the male lead was waiting to meet her in the canteen. He was tall and blond and had it not been for that man of the day before she would have fallen for him there and then. They shook hands and he got her a coffee, with Everard sitting tapping his right foot impatiently. Why did he chaperone her if he didn't feel like it? Jamie seemed a bit embarrassed because no one knew for certain if she was going to be in the film or not. She was to do a read-through of Clotilde with the director that evening. Everything depended on that, Everard said grimly, looking away from her.

Then Jill came and piloted her round among the rest of the caste. There'd been a read-through of the first episode the day before, with another girl substituting for Clotilde.

"And she really looked the part," Jill whispered to her with a sort of conspiratorial smile she couldn't understand. Why was everybody so peculiar?

Of course she'd heard funny things about Hollywood. How they talked a language of their own etc.

She hung about the studios all day, with Everard coming and going, and the other actors looking busy, books in hand. She felt irritated and out of it, and wanted to cry again. But among other actreeses you couldn't really cry, it was too ordinary, everyone did it. Then in the late afternoon the director, a man called Max Pennance, turned up and to her surprise

shook hands with her before anybody else. Perhaps it was because she was a foreigner.

Keeping her at his side he went to various of the studios looking at the stages and talking to the costume mistress and constantly looking at his watch. He was quite a young man but already bald, with an auburn moustache yellowed with nicotine. The best thing about him was his eyes which suddenly came to life in a rather glum creased face the moment he smiled.. When he'd finished his consultations he hurried her out to the car park and they drove to La Mirada where there was, he said, a party going on. They could read through in a bedroom upstairs. It was a low-lying house at the end of a curling driveway, with wide airy rooms and a big gravel forecourt in front where at least a dozen cars were parked. The windows were open upstairs and down, behind gauze frames. There seemed to be people in every room.

She followed him upstairs, past groups of guests he didn't even nod to, though they most of them gave him a respectful 'Good evening Max' or at least a glance. She assumed from this that they were all actors.

He ushered her into a bedroom and locked the door. Then he gave her the book and said sharply (why was everyone so rude with her the moment business started?), "Page thirty, first speech, Clotilde."

Between phonecalls and people tapping on the door with messages for him, which they had to relay through the locked door, she got through the part without a hitch. He sat there rubbing his eyes and making them bloodshot, He had quite a tan, like most people here, and nice lips, but work (or coke, or horse?) had worked havoc on that face.

"Did you know the lines already?" he asked her after a pause of what seemed to her at least half an hour.

"No, I've never seen the part before."

"Well well!" he said, looking at her with respect for the first time. "I think we're in business. Have

you met Jamie?"

"Yes."

"I think you two ought to discuss your scenes together---I encourage that kind of thing among actors. What say he takes you to dinner tomorrow evening?"

"OK."

"I'll tie his hands behind his back so you won't get raped."

"Is that his habit?"

"Ever since he started getting lead roles, yes. You see they think it's expected of them."

Then he dialled Jamie Somerson's agent and a date was fixed for the following evening at Chasen's.

"We'll be paying so eat as much as you like," Max told her with a wink. "What say we go downstairs and pick at the buffet?"

Downstairs there was no music, just subdued talk. Some guests were drinking tea or coffee.

Passing the kitchen, a vast low-ceilinged room with a long refectory table, she saw three of the men who'd been sitting with her man the evening before. Or could it be an illusion? She almost stumbled, keeping close to Max. But he wasn't there. Her heart was beating fast again, so much as almost to take her breath away.

Max piled a plate high with ham and salad for her, then walked away to talk to someone else. The last thing she wanted to do was eat, so she put the plate behind a pot of flowers and went back to the kitchen. Yes, she was sure those were the men. But certainly he wasn't there. She wandered through the lounge again and out to the gravel forecourt, wondering if she might see his car. Suppose he was in one of the upstairs rooms? She was flushed and felt sweat under her armpits. The sun was just dying and a hot damp mist lingered over the bushes of the garden. Close to the house was the white open Bentley. She couldn't believe it! He was here after all!

She walked up to it, stared at the burgundy-red leather seats and the dark glasses he had obviously thrown down on the gear-shift tray when leaving the car. She wanted to pick them up, feel them. But on a second look she realised they were a woman's. Her heart did an extra leap. Suppose---? It was an eventuality she hadn't thought of---his having another woman, perhaps even a wife! And suppose his feelings for her weren't the same as hers for him, just sexual interest? She was in a panic all of a sudden.

She forced herself to go back in the house. Max came across to her and said, "Sorry about that."

She went to the loo and looked all over the house but he was nowhere. The three men were still sitting in the kitchen, one of them hugging a briefcase like a baby, swaying to and fro as he talked, his eyes peering at the table with layers of plump skin all round them. They took no notice of other guests, lost in a thick atmosphere of smoke and worry.

When she left with Max she saw a tall woman in a bright yellow dress going towards the Bentley. Angela couldn't tell how old or pretty she was. She didn't even notice the colour of her hair. The woman got in the Bentley, put on the dark glasses and started the engine. As she reversed Angela turned her head away abruptly so as not to be seen. So he was married! Married!

That evening she had a meal brought to her rooms on a tray and sat among the roses looking outside at the dusk. Before it was quite dark she strolled downstairs, taking care to wear her skin-tight dress again, and looked for him again. She walked through the Polo Lounge and on to the terrace. But he was nowhere. A thick heat mist now lay over the city and the swimming pool was full of people.

Just as she got back to her room the phone rang and she rushed to it. It was Everard.

"You got the part," he said. "Rehearsals start

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next Monday but you'll have read-throughs before then. You're dining with Jamie Somerson tomorrow?"

"That's right."

He rang off with a very offhand "Good night". It was as if he knew she didn't give a damn about the film.

She lay down on the bed, her face on the pillows, in a terrible mood of friendless isolation. She began thinking of the reps she'd played in, the affairs she'd had, anything to suggest she belonged to someone.

She must have fallen asleep because the phone-beep only a few inches from her ear sounded deafening. She jumped into a sitting position, thinking it was her psychodelic alarm clock in London.

It stopped ringing just as her hand found the receiver. She slumped back and let herself sleep some more. It was close on midnight when she woke again. She undressed and sat in front of the dressing table sleepily brushing her hair. Then she creamed her face and dried it with a towel she always carried on tour just for that purpose. The silence outside amazed her. It must be due to the heavy mist. And the heat might have sent people to bed earlier. She didn't want to be here. She felt nausea in the area of the solar plexus. She tried to think of her mother as a comfort but no image would come. Again she slumped back on the bed and fell at once into a dead sleep.

Next morning she had a long breakfast in bed and fingered through the Bel Ami script, framing all her speeches in red, which was her habit.

At about ten one of the hall-boys came up with a note. It was addressed simply to Ms Angela Bourne in quite elegant handwriting, rather fastidious, controlled. She thought it might be from Everard.

It said, 'I phoned you last night **but** you weren't in. I'll call again just before lunch and we might have a drink together. Dominic Latouche.'

Her first thought was, 'What an unreal name.' She looked at it again and again. Could it be him? She found

herself quite calm. Or was it an actor whom she'd forgotten, one of those who'd shaken hands with her on her first visit to the studios and perhaps, in the boring way actors have, fallen in love with her (for the duration of the shooting)? She watched the note trembling slightly in her hand. She knew this was a great turning point in her life, whether or not the note was from him. She felt that such unexpected events as the ones she'd been through in the last forty-eight hours didn't happen without some momentous explanation. She thought in a giddy surge of happiness, 'My man has written me his first note!'

She dressed carefully, choosing another skin-tight dress but this one in dashing primary colours that would echo turquoise ear-rings. She had a special feeling for turquoise, perhaps because they reminded her of the Nile and Cleo stepping from her barge.

She put hardly any make-up on, apart from the eyes, which really had to sparkle. Just a dab of red on her cheeks which no one could see, for a healthy glow. No perfume either. She ran her fingers through her hair after brushing it, to give a careless effect. If the writer of the note turned out to be some mildewy actor after all she would throw herself in the swimming pool and not come up again.

She liked her hair. Like Cleo's it was 'black as a night without stars'. She was excited, kept knocking things over on the dressing table like she did on a first night.

But there was a certain coolness about her too. She noticed she didn't make her usual last-minute search for the right outfit. No piles of dresses on the bed, no shoes all over the floor to stumble over when she rushed out of the room twenty minutes late.

At half-past twelve she sat down by the window and waited. Warm air drifted in through the air conditioning. At twenty minutes past one she began to conclude that the origin of the note was mildewy after all. It was like mildew to write such a note and then not turn up.

Then the phone rang. It was the hall porter.

"Mr Latouche is down here for you."

"I'm coming."

She went downstairs but he wasn't in the engrance lobby. She walked through to the bar but he wasn't there either. She began to feel less certain of herself, and her heart beat faster, though not yet perilously.

She spotted him in the Polo Lounge and then her heart really did seem to get out of control. Her legs hardly carried her along. He was in the same corner as before. A young couple was with him. Also Everard Hope. This disappointed her. Could he be connected with Everard in work---and stared at her from his open Bentley to confirm some casting hunch? But those eyes!

Always in the past she'd felt so much in charge in her relations with men. They were so simple to guide if you knew the trick of withdrawing from them the moment they needed you most. She was well aware that she wasn't really interested in men because one creature in the world took up all her interest and that was herself, which meant her career. Only her closest friends knew how thoroughly selfish she was, how utterly bored by whatever didn't concern herself. Even as a girl of sixteen she'd run her men with that ace up her sleeve. But now, with those eyes on her, steady and remorseless, not fluttering for a moment but dwelling darkly on her and seeming to travel along her blood stream, in the most intimate areas where perhaps no other man on earth had dreamed to go, she felt so weak she couldn't utter a hullo when the young couple were shaking her by the hand.

Everard whispered in her ear, "You made a hit with Max Pennance, he's thinking of you as the young Karsavina in the Diaghilev series, can you do classical ballet?"

She couldn't make any sense out of what he said. The dark eyes rose from the table. He was getting up! Little avalanches of desire rushed through her, it was unbearable, she wanted to throw her arms round him, she wished with all her heart they were alone together for this first meeting! His hand was cool, even cold at the fingertips. He held her for a few moments without smiling, just looking into her eyes as before.

"Oh---!" It was Everard, who wanted to introduce them to each other.

"That's OK," Latouche said softly but quite sharply, "we've met. We've known each other a long time."

So he felt the same! She wanted to sing it, he felt the same!

Everard laughed a little breathlessly, taking it as a joke,

His voice was exactly as she imagined it would be. That too seemed to come from her childhood. She'd heard it before---yes, when in love with a cousin or uncle, in her first years! It suggested a male richness she'd never found in a man, especially a man of her age. She hadn't even looked for it, it was remote from the world.

They were all discussing the Dreyfuss series that was to be made. Why had she been asked? It was mostly a financial discussion, with Latouche leading it and making the conclusions. So was he one of the producers? Or an accountant, a film accountant? Suddenly she wondered if the roses were from him. But then she realised they must have been put in her room long before they saw each other in the traffic. Of course he must have asked Everard afterwards who was she was. While talking to the others he continued to gaze across the table at her. She thought perhaps his hands were trembling. She hoped so. She noticed it when he raised a cigarette to his lips. She began to feel surprisingly relaxed and protected, and certainly the idea of being friendless was now far from her mind.

When the drinks were finished and everyone was getting up he came to her side and said out of earshot to the others, "Can you make dinner tonight? I'd like to take you to Ma Maison."

She nodded at once and didn't see the queer look her agent gave her (he wasn't out of earshot after all).

"I'll be here around nine-thirty," Latouche went on. "I'm afraid it'll have to be that late as I shall be down in San Diego this afternoon."

When he and the young couple had gone Everard took her to the terrace for another drink.

"I thought you were having dinner with Jamie Somerson tonight?"

"Oh my God, so I am!"

"I'll call Dominic and tell him you'll take a rain check on Ma Maison. By the way, what the hell was he on about? Do you two really know each other?"

"Of course we don't!" she said with an attempt to laugh.

It gave her a chance to ask some questions.

"Is Mr Latouche an actor?"

"Well," said Everard with his pale sparing smile, "not all the time but a hell of a lot of it."

She looked puzzled and he went on, "As a matter of fact Mr Latouche is a money man. He made so much money he retired at the age of thirty-six, last year."

"You don't like him?"

"Oh I like him. And you'd better like him because he's half the money in the film you're in."

"That's his work, the film business?"

"Not exactly but he's moving in fast, it gives him something to do."

And that was that.

Back in her room, gazing at the ceiling, she realised she didn't care how he was seen by other people or even how he was in himself. If you loved someone you loved him and that was that. She felt so happy she sat gazing out of the window with the lights out half the night.

3.

For lunch she went downtown and ate sauerkraut and sausages squeezed up at a marble bar in a deli with people yelling orders all round her.

When she got back there was a second note. It said, 'Pennance tells me you're dining with Jamie Somerson tonight, you'd better cancel that. Dominic.'

What arrogance, she was ready to say. But she agreed with it. She smiled as she read it and before she knew what she was doing she picked up the phone and called Everard. He wasn't in but a secretary gave her Max Pennance's number, or rather six numbers at which possibly he might be found. She had no luck, especially as none of the numbers was either his home or his office. So she called the agency again and asked for Jill Rapinsky's number. She then got through to Jill and said breathlessly, "I'm supposed to have dinner with Jamie tonight but I can't make it and I don't know his number."

"I'll talk to him," Jill said simply.

"You mean you'll be seeing him anyway?"

"I said I'll talk to him," Jill said and put the phone down without another word.

It didn't make her feel angry. She didn't care. She took a hot and cold shower and lay on the settee all afternoon in her dressing gown thinking what to put on that evening. She chose black, a divine two-piece, its hip-clinging jacket cut very low, almost to the navel, a real shocker. She wore nothing round her neck, nor a bra. She rejected ear-rings. But she put a little

lipstick on. And again no perfume.

It was just turned eight when she ready. She had an hour to kill.

A few minutes later there was a knock on the door. Expecting a hall-boy with a message from Everard or perhaps Jamie Somerson she called out without interest, "Who is it?"

The door opened and he was there. Taller than she'd thought, and even slimmer. He really was quite thin, tense, alert, so concentrated. Too much so. But it excited her.

"I didn't go to San Diego." He looked round without closing the door. "Nice room they gave you. Plenty of roses."

"Please come in. I'm ready."

He sat on the dressing table stool, still without closing the door, as if to tell her that no rape scenes were to be expected. He tapped his foot, wanting the preliminaries to be done with.

He was wearing a smart narrow-sleeved dark blue suit with a white shirt open down to his solar plexus. It was like an echo of her deep-cut jacket, a sign that they belonged to each other in a mysterious way, she thought.

"That's pretty cool," he told her with a smile, meaning her jacket.

His shirt collar was high and broad-winged, folded outside his lapels and making the darkness of his neck and chest almost black in the shadows.

"Funny how we met," he went on.

"Yes."

His gaze dwelled on her.

"I mean in the traffic like that."

"Oh yes!"

"I guessed you were an actress because you were with Everard. I called his office that afternoon and asked one of the girls who the new arrival was. They're giving you Clotilde?"

"Yes."

"Oh you can do better than that."

"Oh you can do better than that. Much better."

* * *

It was her first visit to Ma Maison. Some people call this the 'rubber-neck restaurant' because you're always turning round to see what star has come in. Angela didn't turn round once. They dined in the patio. A bottle of champagne was already on ice for them and you could tell the waiters knew him and respected him by the way they bustled round the table. He knew how to get loyalty. Perhaps because, despite the **relentness** in his eyes, he had no side, no pretensions. You felt he could easily have waited at table himself. Once during dinner he noticed that her napkin had fallen and it only needed the slightest glance from him to send a waiter round to her to pick it up. A fresh one was laid in her lap.

Really it was just what she hated in a restaurant, being fussed round like that. Also it didn't go with the raucous noise coming from the other tables. She felt he'd sort of organised it, this formality, almost to the point of rehearsing the waiters. And he was too well dressed. He was so carelessly elegant, so entirely with it in every respect, he stood out a mile. The women ate him up with their eyes. She could have killed him (already!). The gold wristband was just visible below his gleaming shirt-cuff. And there was the glitter of his wristwatch. His jacket cuffs were turned back one button, as on the previous day. His hair was carefully ruffled as before. He must have gone to the hairdresser to get it ruffled so expertly. His tan was so natural and unforced that it looked painted on. But every cell in her body said yes to him. She wanted to hug him. She even started to like the vulgar wristband. They touched glasses several times.

"You told Everard we'd never met," he said.
"Just after I told him we had."

"But we haven't met!"

"That's where you're wrong. Don't go telling people we've never met before because we have! Do you know what I mean or not?"

She shook her head and he gave her an understanding pat on her hand.

After they went to his place two blocks down from the Beverley Hills hotel. Music was coming from a hi-fi when they walked in, and lights were set low in every room. The apartment was as tensely casual as he was. Music followed them everywhere. At a guess, Haydn. The floor was expensively marbled in the lounge, with rugs and capets flung everywhere to prevent a chill effect. It was all like his gold wrist-band, ostentatious without being arrogant. And there was a feeling of safety and warmth, but how the furnishings achieved that it was impossible to see. There were book-shelves in the lounge, in fact a whole wall of them, but the books didn't look read or even real. And the armchairs had a way of re-adjusting themselves after you sat in them so that they looked as if they'd just come from the shop. She wanted to laugh at it all---the canned music, the portuguese marble with its subtle veins of red quarrelling with the vermilion and purples of the carpets, the sunken bath in the screamingly green bathroom. But it was like home for her.

They drank brandy in the lounge, half lying in armchairs armchairs. She began explaining why she preferred theatre work to films.

He cut her short with "You needn't explain anything about yourself. I know it already. That preference for the stage was clearly marked in childhood---the way you used to dress up, remember?"

She stared at him.

"Have you seen my French books?" he asked her, jumping up.

He had several hundred paper-bound French editions, including most of the works of Guy de Maupassant. Most of them were uncut. As they stood looking at the shelves she could feel him close to her, their sleeves touching.

"Do you read a lot of French?" she asked him.

"I don't read any French."

"Then what are you doing with all these books?"

He shrugged. "Nostalgia. My parents are French so I rejected it, you know how kids are, I mean the language, I refused to learn it because they spoke it at table. And now I regret that. So I do what any millionaire does, buy the outside of what I can never have inside."

"Is that why you work in films?"

"Partly. I've acted all my life to make money, so acting fascinates me."

"So your parents were French?" she murmured.

He turned and looked at her fully. "So you know they're both dead?"

"No I didn't know."

"Yes you did. You did know."

He filled her glass a second time, and returned to his place on the other side of the room. They were both sleepy. Suddenly he got up and said, "You'd better have an early night. You might have a call early tomorrow."

He walked her back to the hotel and kissed her hand.

* * *

He was right. A call from Everard around eight o'clock woke her.

"Get your arse over to CBS Television City for a read-through Angela."

She got angry. "Why does everybody speak to me like that?"

"The schedule's been speeded up" was his answer. "You'll have to find yourself a taxi."

He too rang off without saying good bye.

Humbled by the call she drank her coffee on the terrace and again fingered through her speeches, saying the words over to herself. It was a superb day. The

trees were full of warm yellow light and blinding rays darted up from the swimming pool.

Later she walked down Sunset Boulevard and then Fairfax.

She was ten minutes late because she couldn't find the right studio but luckily everybody was still standing around looking lost. When Max Pennance came in he didn't even say hullo. They all went to a small sound studio and sat round a table with a mike in the middle.

Jamie Somerson greeted her with his usual "Hi!"

The actress playing the lead, Sonya Steele, couldn't have been nicer. She'd played in London once with the RSC and kept asking her questions about West End theatre these days. As Angela was always playing in rep and hardly went to a West End theatre she wasn't very interesting in her replies. Sonya had a rather flatly pretty face, smooth and noncommittal, but the moment she smiled, as with Max Pennance, the sun came out. You could see her intelligence then. It couldn't have been better for the part of Madeleine.

The other actor present was a pale bearded man who fitted the part of Madeleine's consumptive husband so well that Angela knew who he was without asking. He was a bit offhand with her, concentrating on his book.

During the read-through the others started acting a bit instead of just mubling through the text in the usual way of first read-throughs. So Angela followed suit. She played one of her scenes coquettishly and suddenly Max Pennance slammed his script down on his knees.

"We'd better establish right away that Clotilde isn't a slut," he said. So he was deeply offended by her having cancelled the dinner date with Jamie! "She belongs to the upper middle class no less than Madeleine and perhaps more so."

He didn't look at her while speaking.

At one o'clock he looked at his watch and said, "OK, that's enough for today. There's a call tomorrow, same place, same time."

Then he was gone.

She went straight up to Jamie.

"Listen I'm really sorry about last night," she

She went straight up to Jamie.

"Listen I'm really sorry about last night," she said. "It was just that---"

"You don't have to apologise Angela!" He laughed.

"He put his arm round her shoulder and walked her to the canteen. "Still, you missed a free meal at Chasen's. So did I."

"Is that what Max was annoyed about underneath?"

"As a matter of fact he didn't mind you standing me up at all, since he doesn't like me all that much. What he didn't like was who you stood me up for!"

He clearly wanted to go on talking but Angela turned away. The bearded actor joined them for coffee and proved to be really nice. He talked quietly, biting the hairs on his lower lip or sucking his pipe.

He told her, "You don't have to worry about Max Pennance. On one film he told me to fuck off the set and twenty minutes later he was saying where the hell's Nick, why isn't he here?"

She hurried back to the hotel in case there was a note for her. But there was nothing. And the phone was silent all day. That evening she tried to work on the script but it was no good. She kept thinking of those eyes. Everard hadn't phoned all day. This worried her.

She went to bed early but couldn't sleep. She tossed and turned, then at about two o'clock she fell into a light troubled doze.

At three or so there was a phone call. It was from the desk downstairs.

"It's Mr Latouche ma'am."

"Please send him up."

"Thank you ma'am."

She went through to the lounge and unlocked the door, then left it ajar and returned to her bed. She felt that this was how he wanted it.

A few minutes later she heard him say from the lounge, "It's me."

She hadn't put any lights. She could see him dimly at the door of her bedroom. There wasn't a sound from the rest of the hotel. It was hot. The earlier breeze from the sea had dropped.

He sat on the edge of the bed and the moment he did so she felt an extraordinary relief go through her body, as if she'd never really relaxed before in her life.

"You OK?" he whispered.

He was wearing the white suit again with a blue or perhaps black shirt. She felt a wave of jealousy at the thought that he might have been with other women that evening but it disappeared at once.

"Give me your hand," he said.

She held out her right hand and they clasped each other. She wondered if he would raise it to his lips and kiss it. But instead he leaned down and kissed her on the lips. That too was like the first kiss she'd ever had. His lips were hers, they belonged to her! Their mouths sank into each other as if all their lives they'd been yearning for nothing else, and no one else's mouth would fit. She found her arms going round his neck in the most natural and unpremeditated movement she'd ever made. They began kissing urgently. And everything they did seemed ready for them, agreed beforehand, not really conscious. He kissed her everywhere on the face, and on her neck and shoulders. When he gently pulled the bedclothes aside and his body began pressing on hers it didn't feel, as she expected it to do, a new experience but one that had started ages ago, and all these years she'd been waiting for him to come again, but of course that was absurd, yet it felt like that, they'd found each other again after a long and bitter separation! And how they'd suffered in order to find each other---how many mistaken loves there'd been, unpleasing acts of sex! She knew his tongue, yes---its taste and texture! And because of this there was no shyness between them. It was really like greeting each other, saying hullo with a joy neither of them had known before. They whispered things to each other that were hardly words, made delighted crooning noises. She was open to him as she'd never

been to any man. They made love this way for perhaps three hours and in the end were both too tired to climax. They slept in each other's arms for an hour, by which time dawn was up. They gazed at each other in the dusky light, kissing each other again, unable to believe it.

He was whispering something to her. "You still don't know who I am."

And suddenly they were making love again and climaxed almost at once, simultaneously. It seemed that the shudder of her orgasm would never end. It made her cry out--- because she'd never had an orgasm before, only something superficial produced by local excitement. They gasped, made faint crying noises. It was like entering a new life, not so much an experience as a different existence.

He got up slowly and dressed.

And before he kissed her good bye he said, "I'll set your alarm for eight."

She was asleep at once and in her light dream she thought the sea-breeze, which had started up again, was somehow his good work.

When the alarm went she was alert, dazed with happiness, not a bit tired. There was still a smile on her face from three hours before.

She almost danced down the Boulevard on the way to the studios. Then she remembered that the call was for Universal Studios, not the CBS, and this meant getting to the other side of Hollywood Freeway. She found a taxi just in time and rushed into the entrance lobby at a minute to nine. She still had to find the stage where they were to meet. She got there out of breath and as luck would have it Max Penance was already seated with the **cast**. The chairs were arranged in a circle this time. He was looking really grim.

She murmured "Sorry I'm late" and lowered her head towards the book.

"Actually there's no great hurry," Max said to no one in particular. "Shooting might be postponed. Yesterday the schedule was being hurried up, today the mother-fuckers are talking about postponement."

The read-through went OK until they got to the scene where Clotilde urges Georges Duroy to take her to the 'low' spots in Montmartre. Really this Montmartre scene was her shopwindow.

When they were half way through it Pennance stopped her. "Listen, I think I'm going to cut that scene. It doesn't add anything to the story."

She looked up.

"So let's go on to where Georges snubs the whore at the Folies Bergeres," he added.

"You're going to cut the whole scene?" she asked him quietly.

"Well didn't you hear?"

"What, just like that? It's my most important scene!"

"But it's not the most important scene for me Angela, don't you see that?"

"Is this because I was late?"

"It's because I'm cutting the scene Angela, now do you mind if we push on?"

Suddenly she was on her feet, her cheeks flushed and a fierce glitter in her eyes. She was quivering all over, half way to tears. She'd never felt quite like this before, beyond all control. A moment later she found herself throwing her script across the room. Her right hand just shot out and it went straight for Pennance, hit his cup of coffee and sent it splashing all over his shirt and trousers.

"I haven't even got a contract yet!" she screamed and ran out of the studio.

Outside, she waited for someone to come after her. But no one did. She was in another sound studio. And she could hear their voices next door. Her anger was quite gone. Max Pennance was saying with an easy laugh, "She dines with Mr Hustler and doesn't have a contract yet! Can you beat that?"

No, she wasn't going back. She'd left her bag on the table but didn't care. She dried her eyes and made up carefully. Then she left the building---with that name 'Mr Hustler' ringing in her ears.

She walked to Fairfax Boulevard, meaning to return

She walked to Fairfax Boulevard, meaning to return to the hotel. But letting off steam seemed to have given her an appetite, so she began strolling down towards Little Tokyo. There on First Street she found a restaurant and took an early lunch of tempura and three cups of hot saki. She was ravenous. The heat was gathering and when she'd finished she weaved her way through the crowd on Olvera Street, gazing at the Mexican candles and handicraft.

The saki made her feel sleepy and she decided to take a taxi back. The porter called her over. There was a message. 'Waiting on the Loggia, Dominic.' She hurried out and found him sitting in front of a tall fruit fizz sucking at the straw.

"I walked out of the read-through," she said at once like a child. "He cut a whole scene of mine, it was pure spite!"

He laughed and pulled her towards him. She felt the gold wristband touch her hip.

"You having one of these?" he asked her, pulling at his straw while he drew her on to his knee.

"Who's Mr Hustler?" she asked him. "Max Pennance said I'd been dining with Mr Hustler last night."

"That's me. As if you didn't know! And he's damn right. I am a hustler! And he's going to know just how much of a one I am too! The son of a bitch! By the word your agent wants a word with you."

"Can I have a black coffee?"

He called a waiter over while she sat down.

"How did you know I'd come back at this hour?" she asked him. "You left a note."

"Everard called me. He said you'd just walked out of the read-through and would I cool you off. So here am I urging you to fight even harder."

Later they went up to her room and forgot about Everard Hope.

4.

Later that evening, after a snack at Schwabs on Sunset Strip, he took her to some night spots. First they tried the Roxy Theater but she wanted nostalgia music so they went on to F. Scott's where Roy Fox favourites were on the bill. They sat at a corner table with a candle between them. She was in a daze. Life had become much like a dress rehearsal, all excitement, rush, nerves, alarm, with uncertainty everywhere, about herself, her career. Sometimes when she looked into his eyes she went giddy. It wasn't really one face she saw but endless faces each one of which had a different exciting mystery for her, so captivating and yet so impossible to capture that she wanted to whisper a question at him, 'Who are you? where did you come from?' It was like seeing all the people she'd loved as a child and somehow forgotten. And the more she got to know him, with every hour that passed, he seemed stranger to her rather than the reverse, his touch became unbearably hypnotic.

He told her, "I'm going to give you a set of keys to my apartment so you can come when you like."

She dug him playfully, "Suppose I find you with another girl?"

"I'm never going to sleep with another girl as long as I live," he said without the trace of a smile.

He drove her back to the hotel at about three in

the morning. She lay in bed thinking about him. He said so little, much less than any man she'd known. But what he said seemed so pondered, even when it was quite unimportant. She'd always insisted on talent in her men---she loved brilliant talkers, flamboyant people, personalities. He had the personality, that almost terrible magnetism. And sometimes his closeness made her shudder, not only with physical excitement but a sort of foreboding she couldn't understand. They knew almost nothing about each other, hardly spoke really, they'd slept together no more than twice, and yet they were so close they needed no conversation, it was a constant thrill just being together, every moment was crammed with interest even when it was just ordering a meal or looking in a shop window. And it would have been the same if they hadn't touched each other. How could she explain such a thing to her friends---to her mother? even to herself? Her old life seemed so remote. And her new one a total unknown, a chasm stretching in front of her that might be full of happiness and rich events or else--- She didn't want to think about the future.

But he did. Perhaps because he seemed to see it so clearly. She thought about his remark, "I'm never going to sleep with another girl." It had been so flat, so final and decided, delivered in a quiet monotone, his eyes slightly narrowed as he took a cigarette and lit it at the candle.

Everything he said was definite like that. He'd spoken as if they'd already decided to remain together for life, married or otherwise. And for her too it seemed a foregone conclusion. Now how could that happen? She couldn't bear the thought of touching another man. Not just this, but she felt she'd never been with a man before. He was, literally, the only man in her life. And perhaps she'd had a vague inkling

of that always, since a child. And so he'd been right to say what he did. His arrogance (because it always felt like male arrogance at first) fitted the truth. The fact that he wasn't brilliant and that nothing-he said was memorable or even, sometimes, intelligent, made no difference at all. She felt she was learning at last what love was: values entered it hardly at all.

The thought of being completely faithful to a man had always filled her with nausea, and that sense of suffocation. 'I've got to be free!' she'd always told herself, and her mother had echoed this (having indoctrinated it since childhood)---"Angela must have her freedom and her men won't realise that!"

For the past three years she'd been running away from affairs as fast as she provoked them (out of vanity). In that time she'd become more and more attractive, she could tell that from the reactions. And what made her respond to men every time was that she wanted a relationship, wanted to share her worries and pleasures with someone, she really did. But all this heavy love-stuff men went in for after about a week brought on the nausea and she had to run away just when they thought things were going fine. And the awful thing was that she seemed to make men think about marriage the moment she touched them. One man said that her breasts were 'a wife's breasts, they belong to one man'. Yes indeed!

She had a 'steady' right now, a young actor called Louis. She'd tolerated that because he was playing up in Edinburgh and she in London. So they'd managed maybe one weekend in two months together. Yet she adored him, had yearned for the fun of being with him and talking theatre with him all through the night. He wasn't old enough for her. She knew she needed an older man to ride over her moods and not compete with her like somebody her own age. But Louis was OK. A marvellous actor, good looking, considerate, tense and thoughtful as she liked a man to be. But she'd

always let him know that she needed her full energies for her career. What nonsense that was. But with him and all the other men it had been true. The real truth had been that she couldn't handle love, she needed the attention and company that went with it but the thing itself made her shudder. It was like sharing a tiny supply of air with someone in a fetid, shuttered, squalid room!

That was where an older man came in. He didn't need you so badly. In fact, her ideal was a man who didn't need her at all. Was that what she felt about Dominic? Was he so strong, so collected and sure of himself that even though he loved her like no one else on earth he could still do without her if he had to? Was it the air of relentlessness she loved most?

All too often she'd opted for casual sex with somebody nice rather than the love-stuff. But nearly always that had led to trouble too, as if she was destined to provoke long-term affiliations. And then the only sex she had really enjoyed had been when she'd been able to abandon herself to someone. Abandon was essential for her. Surrender, complete surrender, was what gave her true orgasm. And that had happened twice, both times with older man already married. Neither had suffocated her with love-avowals. She'd always thought her ideal affair would be with a celebrity, someone in a position to desert her at any time, and under constant temptation to do so, with the result that she had to work hard to keep him.

And then she fell in love so slowly. She needed to go through so many experiences with a man before she even gave him her attention, or felt safe enough with him to reveal how utterly self-centred she was.

And all that was finished now. She'd fallen in love in two seconds flat. As for love-avowals, she could hear them from his lips a thousand times a day. No nausea, no suffocation. She would share the ugliest, most fetid room in the world with him. As for freedom and career she felt she'd found both in him. She'd never been so free in all her life and, whether it was connected with

him or not, her career was now rolling.

That evening he'd thrown her his apartment keys, across the table. They slid to a halt just in front of her hand. She would never have taken that from another man. As it was she slipped them into her bag without a word.

She began to think, had her nausea been due to a simple reaction of distaste towards any man but he? Had she known him long ago in her cells, so that the cells had reacted negatively towards the other men, however attractive? For in truth she'd felt reserves about all the men she'd known, including the two older ones to whom she'd (so she'd thought) surrendered herself. Had she been destined long ago, even at birth, to meet him and stay with him and sacrifice everything for him? In less than two days her past had disappeared down a black hole. The young woman who had boarded a Los Angeles bound plane had never arrived. She didn't know who she was any more!

Only, she was in ecstasy. She lay there in the warmth, letting the dank night-air from the window invade the air conditioning, while she gazed at the ceiling where blurred lights played and listened to the swish of traffic on the highway. All she felt, really, was him. He was in the shadows of the room, in her sweet tiredness, in the scent of the roses that drifted to her now and then. Her body had received and kept the imprint of his touches. They'd stayed like constant electricity, all over her. She needed him so badly. How had she lived all these years? Such starvation! Such loneliness! She was relaxed now, for the first time in her life. She felt so beautiful. Her limbs were different. She was so happy to be alive. Everything was such a nice experience--- even losing her temper and throwing coffee over her director. No headaches, no fatigue, no little shames or worries haunting the mind. She tried to tell herself that she'd only fallen in love like millions of others but it wasn't true: she'd come back to a man she'd

always known, and who'd been inside her all her life. It was like twins meeting for the first time very late. That was what it felt like. She cried a little in the darkness---with gratitude. And then she slept.

An hour later her phone rang. It was her London agent, Barbara Gleeson.

"What's going on Angela?" she asked. "You walked out of a readthrough?"

"I did, yes. He cut my best scene. It was pure spite!"

"Everard's been phoning you all day, he thought you'd flown back to England. He says you're out half the night."

"That's ridiculous Barbara!"

"Well I hope you can ride this one Angela because you'll never get another chance like it. I mean there are years of work here---"

"I know but I can't work with a director who hates my guts."

They left it at that.

Barbara Gleeson at once called Everard Hope despite the hour (it was noon in London). He happened to be up, watching a William Powell-Myrna Loy movie on an all-night channel as his stomach was giving him trouble. Barbara urged him to heal the rift. He didn't explain that the rift was out of his hands, and not entirely of Angela's or even Max Pennance's making.

Then he came out with it, "Listen Barbara she's having it off with one of the producers."

"Oh Jesus Christ!"

"The bastard can lay his hands on more money than two oil tycoons so we're all shit scared to get rough with her."

"Then why did Pennance cut the scene?"

"Because he's a dumb son of a bitch. He'll be out of work for the next millenium."

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She was up early because she sensed it was going to be a heavy day. Also she was bursting with energy despite the few hours of sleep.

There was a bit of a fog between the trees while the sun was gathering strength. She was ravenously hungry and after a cold shower ordered ham and eggs in her room.

At eight there was a call from the desk saying Everard Hope was downstairs and could he come up. She said yes right away.

She let a second or two go by after his gentle tap on the door. She was sitting by the window in her dressing gown, her breakfast on a coffee table at her side, and she wasn't going to show him more than minimal courtesy.

At least this was what she intended. But the moment she saw him at the door she jumped up with "How are you Everard? Come in and take a seat! Would you like some coffee?"

"Coffee'd be great," he said, sliding into a seat with an exhausted sigh. "I heard from your agent in the middle of the night."

"Me too."

She laughed and he smiled wanly. She noticed he had a contract in his hand. She went over to the phone and ordered a breakfast for him.

"I didn't think you'd do this to me Angela. I had Pennance screaming down the line at me yesterday that you hadn't been signed up yet and why the hell not. The contract's been sitting on my desk for two whole days, signed and witnessed. So really and truly you were signed up. You don't think I'd let an hour go by without clinching a deal once it was ready do you?"

He paused, looking round the room, obviously saying less than he wanted to, and being more polite than he felt.

He gave her a straight look and went on, "I mean, OK you can walk out of a rehearsal but don't for Christ sake make your agent out to be a fraud!"

She laughed again and blew him a kiss (her own confidence took her by surprise): "Darling I know you're

She laughed again and blew him a kiss (her own confidence took her by surprise): "Darling I know you're the most important agent in Hollywood but I was just blinding off! Nothing to do with you at all!"

"I accept the lie," he said. "The schedule's been changed again on Bel Ami. We might not start shooting for a couple of months."

"A couple of months?" She tried to look concerned but inside she was bulbbling over with joy at the thought of two months devoted to Dominic.

"Oh they'll have you on a retainer, it's down there in the contract."

"I wasn't thinking of that," she said naughtily.

"It's the producers' decision," Everard said in his flat way. "There are four producers and they come to four different decisions every day."

"And what's the real reason?"

"Listen, I've fixed up for you and Max Pennance to meet alone some place. He'll be at Chasen's at one today. Can you make it? He can explain things better than me."

"Is that your answer to my question?"

"Yes."

"But why can't you explain?"

"I'd rather he did, that's all."

"OK," she said, feeling a twinge of nervousness, like a momentary return to the pre-Dominic world.

"Maybe all this is my fault Angela," Everard went on. "I should have told you when I picked you up at the airport that the producers wanted to give you the star treatment and this aroused a lot of resentment on the set. I mean this is a television series, you're great but nobody knows your name and here you are with a suite at the Beverley Hills and more roses than Callas ever got."

Silence soaked into the room.

"What are you trying to say?" she asked him, her confidence gone, preparing for a shock. "Didn't you order these roses?"

"Me? I only supply flowers at funerals, baby. My clients know that."

"So who was it?"

"The same guy who booked you in at the Beverley Hills Hotel!"

"And who was that?"

"Why Dominic Latouche of course! Didn't you realise that? Oh come on Angela!"

"But he didn't know me! He didn't even know my name before I arrived! He saw me in the car for the first time, your car!"

"Angela, I hate to say this but at the same time I don't want you to screw up the possibility of a great career. Latouche saw the TV clips your agent sent over months ago. And he wanted you over here at any price!"

She felt so cold her teeth almost chattered.

"Was that why Inwas offered the interview?" she asked him.

"That's right."

"Because he took a fancy to me?"

"Put it any way you like Angela. You see, the director and the casting agent and the actors feel you've been imposed on them. And it just happens you're really good, so they don't blame you too much, now they've seen you. It's a crazy situation!"

She jumped up to hide her tears. She could hear that first conversation with Jill Rapinsky, how funny it had been, with Jill saying snide things and Everard smiling.

Everard craned round to look at her.

"Are you crying?" he said. "If you are don't. Fight instead. Here's what you do. You stick at it. Stick at the work and in the end they'll crumble. And with Hollywood's newest whizz kid behind you they've got to crumble anyway."

She couldn't stop the tears. "I'm going to leave! I'm going back to England!"

He got up, though breakfast hadn't arrived. He didn't like what he called 'off-stage scenes'. At the door

door he told her, "The contract's on the table baby. As for the rest, you make up your own mind. Either fight or stand there crying."

Then he was gone.

The tears dried almost at once. At first she wanted to smash something but then Everard's breakfast came through the door. The waiter looked round curiously for the other guest, knowing she was alone in the suite. He noticed the tears and also beat a quick retreat. Fuck men! she wanted to scream.

Then a great sadness took hold of her. She sank down in the chair by the window and simply stared before her. All those thoughts she'd had in the night! And the joy! The sense of his touch still being on her body! The touch was still there but the electricity had turned into something harmful, an ache. How could he be so cheap? How could he lie to the only woman he'd ever really loved? Then the love wassallie! That thought was too much for her and she rushed to the bed and putting her head in the pillows cried desperately, almost howling, and it wasn't actress's crying this time.

She somehow got herself together for the lunch. On the way to Chasen's she stopped to phone Dominic to break it all off but he wasn't at home. She had some idea that after a few hard words with him she would leave for the airport. But when what was she doing going to Chasen's? She felt so confused. She wanted to go on crying but also fight. But she didn't know how she should fight, or what good could come of it if the love with Dominic was ruined. Really the only person she wanted to fight was he. It wasn't exactly anger she felt. Deep down was a sense of horror at having been mocked ---yes---in that most sensitive of places, between the legs.

When was she going to learn? Again and again she'd gone through ecstasies and hopes and then this let-down.

Max Pennance was already at the table and seemed to see the situation at once.

"I still haven't got those coffee stains out," he said, opting for humour.

She didn't seem to hear him but just sat down.

"I hear you all resent me because Dominic Latouche found my clips attractive."

"Oh, who says that?"

"What about answering my question? I mean I thought I was being offered an interview because I was an actress and then it turns out it was because somebody thought I might be a good lay! I only heard this morning! I must be one of the simplest people alive!"

"That's not really why we're here Angela. Anyway, I don't get the impression that Dominic failed to see your acting abilities, even on the clips. The fact is we're all a bit scared of him not just because of the money he can call up but the influence he can have on people!"

"Oh I know about that!"

"All he has to do with the other producers is look at them. You know he's talking about shelving Bel Ami?"

"I don't give a damn about the film anyway, I'm going back to England, you get hurt there but not this bad."

He decided not to speak for some time. Then he said, "Are you prepared to listen to me or do you want to go on about a side of Dominic Latouche I'm not interested. I mean you should talk to him about that."

"OK. Yes, I'll listen."

"They won't find it all that easy to unwind a series that's already being shot, I mean it'll cost almost as much as producing it. But he's crazy enough for anything. There'll be contracts to pay off, the hire of the studio space, the advance publicity."

"But why does he want it shelved?"

"I thought you might know about that."

"No I don't. When we're in bed together we talk about love."

"There's a story going around that he wanted the

Madeleine part for you. He threatened to stop the film unless you got it but Jill Rapinsky and I refused to budge. Then he heard I wanted to cut that scene of yours and that clinched it, he cancelled the production."

"So you fucked it all up really, didn't you? Clever man!" (She'd never talked to a person like that, much less to a director!)

"Listen if you don't want to go through with this lunch we can always leave."

"That's a bloody good idea because I've got nothing to say to you except that you're a kiss of death!"

She grabbed her bag and walked out, realising as she went that she was wearing an awful dress. She'd picked it up at a jumble sale and didn't know why she'd brought it from England. Presumably for an occasion like this.

When she got back to the hotel she started packing. If only he'd ring her or suddenly appear! She kept fighting back the tears. She called the desk for a taxi and had her bags taken down. She took a last look at the roses. The porter kept saying to her, "But Miss Bourne does Mr Latouche know you're checking out?"

She didn't answer. She couldn't. She wanted so Mr Latouche so badly. She wanted to feel his touch once again, one last time. What did he matter how he tricked her or lied to her? She didn't really care! She only wanted him. Only that it seemed to pour doubt on their love, on the sincerity of his avowals. All that about never sleeping with another woman again! If you could lie about one thing you could lie about another!

She felt in her bag for her travellers' cheques and passport. And she told the taxi-driver, "Airport."

He took the coastal road and without knowing why she did it, just as they came within sight of the airport, she put her hand in her bag and found Dominic's keys. And her horror at having been defrauded turned back to anger. She was going to have it out with him!

"Would you turn back please?" she said to the taxi driver. "I've forgotten something."

"You want to go back to the hotel lady?"

"No, I want to go to an apartment two blocks away from it. I'll show you where it is."

He nodded blearily and with a racing of tyres took a tunnel under the highway and emerged in the other lane, bound for the city again. It was extremely hot and damp, the worst hour of the day.

She found the apartment and got the driver to help her upstairs with the bags. There wasn't a sound from inside apart from the canned music so she assumed he wasn't there. She let herself and after the driver had put the bags down in the hall tipped him generously.

He said, "Well lady it wasn't the airport but it'll do huh?"

And shaking his head and chuckling to himself he walked off. She closed the door. The canned music was Vivaldi, played very sugary.. Yes, his bad taste--- how had she been able to stomach that? His vulgarity? The way money glittered all round him!

There were signs that two people had taken a quick breakfast in the kitchen. The curtains in his bedroom hadn't been drawn. She stood there absorbing his atmosphere painfully, feeling the old hypnosis. Then she walked through to the lounge and there he was fast asleep in one of the armchairs, sprawled out with his shoes off and his chin buried in his chest, his mouth slightly open. The thought uppermost in her mind, apart from the relief, the helpless joy of seeing him again, was that he'd breakfasted with another girl and probably she was waiting in his bed the previous night! She wanted to kick him but also she wanted to throw herself into his arms and cry for hours and be comforted. She stood gazing at him. There was something so innocent about him. But then everyone looked innocent in sleep. It was funny, he still seemed to be gazing at something, concentrating on it with a slight frown, even in sleep. And the line of his chin was so perfect. His nose--- how could that belong to a trickster? And the hands, slender

slender and elongated, almost too fine for a man's.

She did kick him. But very slightly. As a matter of fact it was just a touch of her right foot on his. He woke very slowly, not moving. Nothing seemed to alarm him. He opened his eyes sleepily and saw her at once. He smiled but still didn't move. All he did was make a slight gesture with his right hand that she should come closer. Of course she didn't go closer.

"You left the hotel?" he asked her. It was a drowsy whisper. He smacked his lips slightly. "They called me up. Said you'd booked out."

"Yes I booked out."

"Worried about something?"

"Oh yes, I'm worried."

"I'll get you some coffee."

He raised himself into a sitting position very slowly and stretched out his arms, yawning. She thought it was never going to stop. She wanted to scream at him 'Get your arse off that chair!' but he was so sleepy, it seemed cruel. You can't attack a man when he's so helpless.

He managed to get himself to his feet but apparently he needed to stretch himself some more, and stood there yawning hardly two feet from her. Then he shuffled out of the room in his socks.

He saw her bags in the hall.

"That's great," he said with another yawn. "I got your room ready."

"What do you mean?" She followed behind him. "I'm not staying here!"

"What you book out of your hotel for then?"

"I'm going home, that's what I'm going to do!"

He turned to look at her. They were just outside the kitchen.

"Home?"

"Yes home! Where I can trust people!"

"You can't trust me?" he asked her quietly.

"No I can't!"

"Is this the result of lunch with that crumb

Max Pennance?"

"No it isn't! It's a result of hearing the truth from Everard Hope. My agent's was on to me in the middle of the night! You've ruined everything for me! You let me think the hotel suite and roses and star treatment was genuine and it was all organised by you and that's a dirty trick, it's the dirtiest trick a human being ever played on me!"

"Oh that," he murmured with a relieved smile. He walked on into the kitchen looking for the coffee pot. "Sure I gave you star treatment. You're a star! You always have been!"

She was crying but not a sound was coming out. The tears were just pouring down her face. He saw this and went to her at once, pulling her into his arms. And she let herself go. She put her head on his shoulders and just cried her fill. He stood there, silent, holding her without a word.

Through her tears she said, "You saw my clips and you thought I was attractive and that's why you sent for me! And I thought it was because of my acting!"

"I sent for you because I recognised you. I knew who you were. So when they offered you Clotilde I got mad. And when he cut your scene I got madder and cancelled the film. I know about your acting, Angela, I know about it."

"You've got them all resenting me. Jill Rapinsky was so snide and mean that first day."

"Jill Rapinsky's snide and mean all the time! She was born that way."

She removed herself from his arms and sat down at the table. She hated herself for having been so weak.

"I'll put your bags in your room," he said.

"No you won't!"

"I'm not having them stand out there in the hall for Pauline to trip up on!"

Pauline! She wanted to smash every cup in the room. He went down the corridor and she could hear him behind her shifting the bags. He made two or three journeys to a room quite close to the kitchen.

She felt like she'd been betrayed sexually and the man was going through a lot of explanations which would have her back in his bed in an hour. How she hated that. Hated that yellow-hearted surrender. She loved the surrender she'd felt before, but not this kind. And she wasn't going to stand for it. Why, he'd got the whole cast resenting her, and the top agent in Hollywood, and the director. What worse could he do for her career?

When he returned to the kitchen she said in a controlled way, "You told me you rang Everard Hope's office that first day after you'd seen me in his car and one of the girls gave you my name. That was a lie because you'd seen me on the clips and you knew who I was, in fact it was you who organised my trip over and I dare say Jill Rapinsky hated you for it when she had about five other girls in mind for the part. That's the trouble when amateurs start dabbling in this profession, they make a fuck-up."

He was messing about at the stove fixing the coffee and only seemed to be half listening.

"Well," he said at last. "I did lie. That was wrong of me. But I couldn't let you in to the whole truth at that stage, could I? Not before our love was cooked?"

"Cooked?"

"Well, I mean now you can never get away from me whereas before you could have."

"Oh!"

"Now where the hell's that coffee? Ah, Pauline! She always puts it in the same wrong place!

He opened one of the cupboards and found it.

"Who's Pauline?"

"She's an old friend of mine. You'll meet her."

"Thanks."

"She slept here the night. Not in your room though."

"In yours?"

"On the sofa."

He looked at her with a very open smile. "I love it when you're jealous. And with the other women there was always one thing I couldn't stand and that was jealousy. But I love the way your face sort of screws up and you look beaten. You've been beaten a lot huh? Like me! But this isn't one of the old affairs! And you haven't woken up to that yet. Pauline might be able to help that."

The 'screwed-up' look quickly reappeared on her face and he laughed.

The doorbell rang. There were two men with their arms full of roses, bunches and bunches of them.

"I've got the vases ready," Dominic told them, leading them to the room near the kitchen.

He called out to her, "I didn't want your roses to die in the hotel. They may as well die here!"

"It isn't only the roses that are dying!" she said.

He laughed, he sounded really tickled. And a tiny flash of a smile went across her face too. What a silly remark to make.

When the men had gone he said to her, "Like to go and have a look?"

"I told you I'm not staying here."

"Because I gave you star treatment?"

"Because you've screwed me up professionally!"

"If I'd given you anything less than star treatment, I'd have hated my own guts, don't you see that?" he said.

"But I'm not a star! It's very simple. Don't you see that treating me like one creates a lot of resentment and nobody can work with that? But you wouldn't see because you're not a professional."

"Listen Angela, resentment's natural, it happens wherever somebody's making a dynamic impression. And you made a dynamic impression on me, in the clips! And soon you're going to make a dynamic impression on them and they know it! You're going to fight your way to stardom and they're going to lick your hand for it!"

"Oh don't talk crap!"

And she added, "The only impression I'm making is as the producer's whore."

He shrugged. "Is that how I make you feel?"

She knew she'd hurt him badly.

"No," she said.

"You just have to be patient Angela," he said very quietly. "You want everything the old way, climbing from a good part to a better one and liking the director and being liked in return but we're not having that any more. You're at the top right now. Do you want to know something? You get to the top by already feeling there. Nobody ever reached the top without feeling he'd already arrived."

His tenacity, so unruffled and sure of itself, calmed her. She leaned back in her chair. The anger had gone. And she didn't even want to cry. She was--- she almost hated herself for it---happy.

There was someone at the door. The lock was being turned. He didn't even look up.

"Sounds like Pauline," he murmured, spooning the coffee into the filter.

There were high-heeled steps down the corridor and a girlish "Hi!" which sent a peculiar excitement through Angela.

"Is this Angela?" Then a laugh and a tall blonde came into the kitchen. In blue this time---she must have been the woman in yellow who'd driven his car off at La Mirada. She had a high forehead and wide-set, rather eastern eyes. When she smiled it sent tiny creases everywhere in her face, putting twenty years on her age. It was most odd. At once Angela knew there was nothing sexual between her and Dominic. Pauline was laden with food parcels. She put them down quickly on the table, smiling at her. She had a swift athletic way of moving about.

"Listen Pauline, can you come and handle the coffee?" I mean

"Here!" At once she was across the room and it seemed that the percolator was on the stove almost before she'd touched it.

"By the way," he said, "this is Angela Bourne."

"I gathered that!" she said with a laugh. "I've seen her often enough!"

Angela couldn't understand this right away. But of course she must have meant the clips. Perhaps she was Dominic's assistant.

"And this is Pauline Stromheim," he said, turning to Angela. "She comes and makes the coffee."

"I also help Dominic with his past," Pauline said with a smile.

"Oh."

"He's seen you in lots of trips. Long before he saw you in the projection room."

"Maybe we'd better break it to her slowly," Dominic said with a trace of annoyance. "Just at this moment she'd liked to set fire to my underpants."

"Why's that?"

"Well she comes here thinking that guys like Everard Hope and Max Pennance and Jill Rapinsky who's about the only male of the group recognise who she is like I do! She thought the hotel suite and the roses came from them! I can imagine that!"

Pauline looked down at Angela with a quick look of concern that sent creases into her face. "You know Angela he has his own way of doing things."

"That's right," he said, "you tell her because at this moment she's not trusting anything in trousers." He laughed. "As a matter of fact she thought you were my girlfriend and we had the night together!"

Pauline laughed too. "Wow! That's a real turn-off!" She looked at Angela. "I go for pimply college types without any bread! Dominic tried to grow pimples but it didn't work."

Gradually the two of them restored her humour. She sat fingering a tablemat thoughtfully.

Dominic sat down close to her and drew her face round to look at him.

"You won't trust me? Take the risk. You won't regret it."

"I'll try," she said.

"And you'll stay here?"

"But they'll say I'm your mistress, that's going to finish me professionally!"

She felt really in a tangle and looked at him as one might a child who'd made a mess but had to be forgiven.

"Maybe it's up to us to make our relationship, not them."

"Yes!"

"You're not working today?"

"How can I work if there's no film? You've cancelled it! You've ruined everything but I've agreed to trust you and so I will but in my profession you don't start the cameras rolling and hire studio space for six months and order the costumes and hire the actors and then decide you aren't going into production. Not if you want to stay in the business."

He looked across at Pauline. "Like I always said, she's got quite a business head."

"Even a fool could tell you what I've just told you!" Angela said.

"The fact remains," he said, "I'm not allowing men like Max Pennance to trim you down to their size. And if it costs me a billion dollars that holds. Unlike Max Pennance I can make money on my head, any time, to any amount. So I'm not worried. He's worried. He ought to be because I'll keep him out of this film and every other film made in the USA if he doesn't watch out!"

"That sounds like a vendetta," Angela murmured.

"It is, in a way. I'm having you at the top, and nowhere else!"

5.

She longed to make love to him but he went out with Pauline and left her. He'd shown her to a large quiet room fitted with latticed wall cupboards and a dressing table edged in satin. There was a wide divan bed and thick floor-length curtains which with the lace under-curtains diffused a pleasant restful light. Here the portuguese marble of the floor had a soothing effect, with thick white wool rugs here and there. She felt she'd furnished it herself, it was quite unlike the rest of the flat. It was just the kind of room she liked and she could feel her body relaxing against the soft cushions flung all over the bed. Still she resented herself for having given way to him. What career did she have? Everard Hope hadn't phoned, didn't, probably, know where she was. The film had been dropped. If her London agent dropped her it would be a fine kettle of fish, with no one to turn to even in London. In a word, her career was now entirely dependent on him. And perhaps he had wanted to work it that way. She felt cheated, degraded, but she'd promised to trust him and would at least go through the appearance of doing so. There were roses everywhere. Some of the reds were fading. But the tea-coloured ones, her favourites, were as mellowly bright as ever. And she felt so comfortable. She slept for a time, exhausted by the tension and the little sleep she'd had. She felt so safe here. And he was her man. She knew that now. She was aware of deep gratitude inside. But just the same

it wasn't good to feel this utter dependence. That couldn't do the greatest love any good. But she'd promised to trust him.

If only he'd had more experience in the business. But she feared he was using his mesmeric influence on people to make a howling mess. You just didn't sacrifice whole films, and the good will behind them, because your girlfriend hadn't made the lead. He was no doubt a wizard but to carry that one off he'd have to be God.

Before he left the flat with Pauline the phone had kept ringing in the lounge. Often he just disregarded it. Or he let Pauline take it. Whatever else he'd done, he'd managed to make himself the centre of Hollywood attention. And he seemed to enjoy it immensely. There was a little glint in his eye.

She had her own phone by the bed, her own number. She thought she might phone her mother, or her London agent. She ought to rouse herself. But she didn't feel like it. She dozed off again, woke and went to the kitchen for more coffee, returned to bed. It felt like the first real rest she'd had since her arrival.

Her bags were still unpacked. She wanted them to stay like that as a kind of threat to him, a hint that she might leave at any moment. He'd told her he'd be back in time to take her to dinner. She thrilled inside at the thought that they would be at Chasen's or Ma Maison that evening and not miles apart, he alone and she on a plane. Thank God she'd felt those keys in her bag!

The phone woke her at around six thirty. It was Dominic.

"You resting?"

"Yes."

"We're going to have dinner at Le St Germain, which even I think expensive. That's for starters. Then you meet my fellow producers at Schwabs. And then maybe we go and have a bop together, how about that?"

"OK."

"You sound as if you still haven't forgiven for having pulled down a billion-dollar TV series."

"If you do that you won't get away with it Dominic."

"See you later. We should make a move at around eight."

She put the phone down and lay wondering how one man could wield so much influence. Was it possible, in view of the fact that he could wield it, that he might after all get away with it? She realised how much she admired him underneath---his courage and unswerving decisiveness. Compared with him every other man she'd known had been what he called a crumb. But suppose it was a sort of madness---in him the money madness, in her the love madness? She trusted his strength, yes. But she didn't trust the world to follow him.

She stretched out, feeling the wideness and softness of the bed in its shaded corner, and the caressive quality of the silk cushions. She kept thinking of his face---the eyes that could become so sweet and vulnerable at times, when you least expected it. And his pale, firm cheeks---pale despite the tan, as if there was a frail delicacy underneath. Was that something in the blood, from the French past? Was that why they were so close, because of the French background? She didn't like it when he looked implacable. She'd hated that vendetta talk of his, when he'd attacked Max Pennance. After all, Max was a man earning his living, and a damned good director, as far as she could see.

She decided to phone Everard. He was out of the office but she realised in a flash, from the flurry of activity at the other end of the line, what an important caller she'd become. She was told he would contact her within minutes if she cared to leave her number as they understood she was no longer at the Beverley Hills Hotel? She read the number off the phone to them. A few minutes later a breathless Everard called her from Universal Studios where (he told her at once) he'd just had coffee with Jill Rapinsky.

Could Angela meet him in say half an hour? He had

urgent information to convey to her.

Good! she thought. Dominic won't find me here at six. It'll prove (to myself as well) that I'm not his slave and concubine.

They arranged to meet at Denny's coffee shop on Vermont Avenue, which was sufficiently downtown for a chance meeting with Dominic or Pauline to be out of the question. She jumped up, feeling a new energy. She was mistress of her destiny after all!

She quickly got into an afternoon dress and without making up grabbed her bag from the kitchen table and dashed downstairs. She found a taxi right away and Everard was waiting outside for her looking wanner and more worried than usual, his eyes narrowed and a slight sweat on his upper lip.

She felt a spurt of happiness at being in streets full of people again, and she greeted him like a long-lost friend.

He took inside right away and they squeezed into a table for two. It was very crowded and he had to shout to be heard.

"First of all the bad news," he said. "Max Pennance has been fired and that means the loss of two years work for him. Sonya Steele his girlfriend is out of the picture too, for being his girlfriend I suppose."

"But what's going on for God's sake?"

"Just between you and me and the whole of LA Dominic Latouche'll never forgive Pennance for getting a cup of coffee thrown over him!"

"So it's all my fault is it?" she said with determination. "I think it was Max's fault for cutting my scene!"

"You don't mind me putting the plain facts? Because if it's Pennance and Sonya Steele today it could be you tomorrow. Dominic's other name is the Killer by the way."

"I thought it was the hustler!" she said with a laugh, surprised at her own unconcern about the new title.

"That's to people who don't really know him. To every lawyer and accountant in town he's the Killer for the simple reason that he is a Killer. I mean, he agrees himself.

for the simple reason that he is a killer. I mean, he agrees himself. Once you get on the wrong side of Dominic Latouche kid you may as well go throw yourself off the Mount Wilson Observatory." He added sourly, "But it's nice to see somebody laugh when his real name's mentioned!"

"And what about the good news?" (She could sound so tough!)

"Well Jamie Somerson's last full-length film just came out and it looks like he's an international star. Which means you can't play around with him like you used to. If a whole production is being wound down, and I've never even heard of such a thing before, he'll want to know why and the money people will support him."

"I can't imagine him doing a thing!"

"That's because you see him as an actor and I'm telling you he's not that any more, he's a kind of financial organisation. His name means big money."

"OK."

"Now suppose he felt like reviving Bel Ami under another producer, Angela, with you as his lead. What would you feel about that? It's a question of divided loyalties isn't it? And remember what I said about offending the Killer."

The thought passed through her mind that she could handle the killer very well. She felt awfully calm. And as for the sense of total dependence she'd had before, that was gone.

"I'd say yes. I like Jamie. I think I could work with him."

He gazed at her with a certain astonishment.

"Well," he said, "you certainly have balls. As a matter of fact, it was Jill Rapinsky's idea. Ask Angela, she said, you'll be surprised, that girl's got balls. She ought to know. She's a specialist on women."

They walked outside. The sun was just going down.

"OK, Angela," he said. "I'll convey the news to all concerned."

Just before he walked away he said, "Say, do you know how high the Mount Wilson Observatory is?"

* * *

When she got back Dominic was taking a shower.

"Thought you'd left for the airport after all!" he shouted from the bathroom.

She felt quite gay all of a sudden and laughed. She pushed open the bathroom door. He was naked under the shower, his hair thickly soaped and his eyes tight closed.

She found herself walking over to him, still in the sleeveless blouse and skirt she'd worn to Jenny's, and putting her arms round him entered the steaming flood of the shower. She began kissing him, pushing her body close to his and laughing girlishly as the water cascaded down through her hair and her clothes began clinging to her and weighing on her, conducting the water in a heavy stream that slapped loudly on the tiles below. He caught hold of her and his soap came on her face. He began pulling off her clothes, kissing her all the time. The taste of their mouths mingled with that of the water. They were blind to each other but this made it all the more exciting, struggling to reach each other through the water. Her shoes were off, her sodden clothes lay in a heap beneath them and she was naked too. Reaching behind him he turned the taps off. He began towelling them both, while they still kissed and fondled each other. She knew now she was equal to him. She couldn't explain this but they were struggle together, whether for each other or against each other didn't matter. Their worst fights would be like love affairs. She understood him suddenly. She knew why he did things the way he did. It was nothing to do with approval. Deep inside she'd got his number.

He half carried her to the bed in her room. And among the cushions they made love for two hours, their

hair soaking wet. It was past nine when they got up and by now their hair was dry.

They were monstrously late but of course their table would still be waiting. Head waiters knew he was prepared to pay twice over when late. Apparently, Angela thought as she dressed, you didn't meddle with the Killer, not if you were in the restaurant business. Yet she couldn't find the Killer in bed. He made love with a tenderness she'd never thought possible for a man. He seemed to know what she wanted, where. His highest pleasure seemed to be giving her pleasure. He really got an unbearable thrill from her excitement. She concluded that the Killer was just an exterior, a form of self-protection in a tough world.

"Wasn't that a bit childish of you to fire Max Pennance and Sonya?" she asked him when they were driving down the Freeway.

"You see sweetheart the minute he started weighing in at you he lost my loyalty and that means my power to work with him. There's nothing I can do about it except shrug and say that's how it is."

They finished dinner quickly (neither of them was hungry) and got to Schwabs late. The three fellow-producers were waiting in a rather glum circle with some girls who were probably, Angela guessed, models with one foot in the film world. At least that was what they looked like. Easy dates for anybody with both feet in the film world. She wondered if that was the kind of girl he had gone around with before.

Dominic nodded to everyone and certainly the girls seemed to know him. The producers shook hands with her as if they were all old friends---"Hi, Angela!", that sort of thing.

One of them was very tall with short nut-coloured hair that stood up in an awkward way and you could imagine him trying to Brylcreem it down. His name was Greg Merrytown. He had a gaunt face you might have expected on a South Carolina farm. Barry Kurtz was small, dark and prematurely bald with a pained, all-suffering look in his big round eyes. Angela looked from one to the

other wondering how on earth they could be Dominic's closest associates. Saul Weinand, the other one, was the man she'd seen rocking his briefcase like a baby at the La Mirada house. He was big and paunchy and also bald. He was the only one of the three who approximated to the world's picture of a Hollywood producer.

He seemed to sense her thoughts because he turned to her and said breathily, because of his fatty heart, "You know Angela I used to smoke cigars, it seemed to be what people expected of a Hollywood producer but my doctors gave me a scare, and would you believe business went right down for me, it hasn't picked up since."

He made a wheezing laugh and winked at her. Behind his huge watery belly you could feel ruthlessness but not of the same kind as Dominic's. Saul Weinand went into the kill slowly and deviously, while Dominic hid nothing. That was Angela's hunch.

They drank coffee and then moved on, complete with the girls, to F. Scott's where they ordered champagne. It was a Sondheim night and as she'd seen the London revue 'Side by Side with Sondheim' when still a drama student she gave the music more attention than she did the producers. Dominic seemed to think this amusing, especially as she didn't answer half the things addressed to her.

But she was quick to overhear whatever he said, and to follow him with her eyes if he got up and moved about the room. Whenever he was away from the table she felt nervous and curiously unprotected, as if LA would become a dangerous city for her if she ever opted to be alone. Yes, she must be gathering enemies un-awares. Sometimes when he turned his intense look on her she flinched away.

Saul Weinand leaned towards her heavily again and said, "How are you coping with the hot weather Angela?"

"Oh I hardly notice it."

"Too busy huh?" he said with a leery smile.

"And then I never feel the heat much."

He nodded. "You know, the Santa Ana winds make it a very hot autumn sometimes."

At one point everybody separated---Dominic to the phone and the girls to other friends. She found herself at the bar with the gaunt farmer-type called Greg. They sat on tall stools and he talked looking straight ahead, leaning on the bar, with a candour that took her by surprise.

"You know something," he said, "Dom's put us in the way of some very big money but he never follows a business instinct. He hasn't got one. He follows something else, don't ask me what but I know one thing, it's got nothing to do with the market. I think it's the stars or some crazy system he's worked out that always pays off. I think he's got the whole astrological thing worked. He'll drop a deal stone dead while everybody's telling him it's a winner and by God he'll turn out to be right. Likeways he'll take a up a deal that looks a real dead fish, I mean stinking high to the sky, and he'll breathe life into it. That's why we're scared of your man, Angela. Mind if I call him your man?"

"No."

"Are you scared of him?" he asked her without removing his eyes from the coloured back mirrors of the bar.

"So,metimes."

"I don't mean scared like we're frightened but scared to say no because he's always so damned right in his hunches. It's a kind of superstitious thing. Now you take this Bel Ami property which Max Pennance was going to direct, we listen to Dom explaining how he hates Max's guts because of this and that but the real reason he's pulling out is he can't smell success in it any more, he can only smell stinking fish. I mean do you think we're happy pulling out of a project which is half ways in the can?" He leaned towards her sideways, still without looking at her and added, "And the banks feel the same. The guy has something uncanny about him. Listen," he asked, nearly pushing Angela off her stool with surprise, "is he uncanny between the sheets?"

She burst out laughing. "No, are you?"

He was really tickled by this and laughed so much she thought he'd choke.

"Has he got any other films in mind now he's cancelled Bel Ami?" she asked him.

"In mind? He's already setting them up! That man never stands still. Where is he now? Talking to one of the girls---not on your Aunt May, he's on the telephone!"

* * *

In the morning canned music, a sickening soft-percussion sentimentalisation of Bach, woke her at eight and from zero-volume went discreetly up by stages to normal as the minutes went by. She looked round for switches to turn the damned thing off but there didn't appear to be any.

They'd decided to sleep in their own rooms. They knew they'd make love all night if they didn't. Also she had a feeling that they were both doing things behind the other's back, and so a sort of physical estrangement had set in in the course of the evening. It wasn't a bad feeling. It was even exciting, the thought that they were being a little cool towards each other and building up towards a lovely reconciliation. She wondered what it was like sleeping a whole night with him. She knew they were saving that up for another time---that visit to heaven.

She didn't want to disturb him early, so she made herself coff and sat at the kitchen sipping it dreamily. She found some croissants Pauline had brought in the day before and put them in the oven.

Half an hour passed and he still hadn't got up. She tiptoed down the corridor and listened outside the room but the canned music made it impossible to hear his breathing. They'd had two late nights and she decided to leave him some more.

At about ten, just after she'd taken a shower, Pauline let herself into the apartment, with more parcels from the supermarket.

"Sleep well?"

"Yes, fine," Angela said. "What's happened to Dominic?"

"Oh he went to San Francisco. Didn't he tell you he was going? He probably thought he'd told you, he's like that!"

Just at that moment a call came from Jill Rapinsky. She spoke more like a business partner than a casting agent to an actress.

"If you come in on the new Bel Ami film," she told her, "I can promise you a lot of working while it's being set up. Just in case you think you're going to lose out on it. I mean publicity work."

She spoke very loudly and Angela was glad Pauline had gone lounge to put some flowers in a vase.

A few seconds after she'd put the receiver down Everard called to say that Dominic's fellow producer Saul Weinand ('the fat one', he said) had decided to go it alone and it was he who was planning the new Bel Ami independently of Dominic. As he said this Angela felt a twinge of protective fear for Dominic. Were they ganging up against him? And what could she, such a stranger in this city, do for him if they were?

"Now we've spoken to Jamie and he's very keen on you playing Clotilde, as I told you. It's all very secret at the moment."

Angela said, "Listen, Everard, am I being used as a sort of pawn in all this? I mean it sounds as if Dominic is out of it, so why do they want me, as they think of me as his mistress or worse?"

"Those are questions I can't answer, Angela. All I know is Jamie wants you and so does Saul Weinand."

"Who's the director going to be?"

"Oh, Max Pennance."

"What? And he wants me in the film too?"

"Sure! We all do!"

She sat on the bed thinking afterwards. It sounded so much like an ambush. She wanted to confide in Pauline but was afraid to. Were they trying to take her away from Dominic? But with what motive? Or were

anxious to use her as a kind of spy in his household, or else a useful influence to bring him back in the fold, which meant to bring his money back. She was surprised at the way her mind was working. She'd never had thoughts like these before, that is crisp business-like thoughts that concerned someone else's welfare. She realised how she'd grown up in a matter of days. Until she landed in LA her whole life had been devoted to thoughts about how to advance Angela. From childhood it had been like that. And everyone round her, from her mother to her boyfriends, had been for her means (of varying degrees of efficiency) for her self-advancement. Really she'd never given her mother a genuine concerned thought in her life. She had never looked after her in sickness, only the perfunctory things her mother had actually asked her to do. Home was a place where she could stock up with plentiful delicious meals in the French style. A boyfriend who could neither make her feel a gifted actress nor further her career in any way had been unthinkable to her. Of course none of this had been conscious, She'd thought of herself as a decent hard-working girl whose mind was set on her career, against which there couldn't possibly be any moral arguments. But what had she ever given anyone really? She expected her friends to see her first nights and give her exhaustive appraisals of her performance afterwards but she was less enthusiastic about going to their first nights, and when she did she hardly watched the stage, as she was thinking about what she could do with such a part, or even going through her lines in her current show, mouthing the words silently.

These weren't comfortable thoughts and she almost ran back to the kitchen, where Pauline had made fresh coffee. Angela's head was already spinning from the coffee she'd drunk while waiting for Dominic. Why hadn't he told her he was going away? Did he know she was playing a sort of double game? Her mind was in a whirl for a moment--- too much had happened in the last few days!

Pauline poured herself some coffee and sat down at the table. In a peculiar way she seemed to be listening to Angela's thoughts, and she kept giving her shrewd glances.

glances.

"You've certainly settled down quickly, you're like part of the apartment."

"Is that good or bad?" Angela asked her defensively.

Pauline laughed and at once those ancient creases appeared all over her face. What a strange woman she was! But she made Angela feel good. You could trust her.

"You've know Dominic for thousands of years so there's every reason why you should settle down quickly when you find him at last!"

"You mean we were together in past lives?" Angela asked her.

"That's exactly what I do mean. By the way, you may not have understood what Dominic said about me looking after his past, or maybe I said it. I sort of do his investigations into his previous lives, I regress him. We found you ages ago, oh at least a year ago."

"How do you mean, found me?"

"Well, you came up during the regressions, more and more. Listen, I've had a lot of experience in this game and I've archived the experiences of hundreds of people, here and in San Francisco, San Diego and Santa Barbara and I've also worked in the state of Virginia. And I can tell you Dominic's been associated with a soul mate for as many lives as he can remember, and we think you are that soul mate. He began preparing for you a year ago and when he saw your clips he called me over and said let's go down to the studios I want to show you something. And there you were on the screen. I felt as sure as he did that you were it."

Angela gazed at her with polite attention, trying to unstick her mind from her previous thoughts. What on earth was the woman talking about?

"You believe in reincarnation?" Pauline asked her.

"Oh yes. I mean," she added, "I'm convinced without really believing in it. What you're saying sounds so far-fetched."

"I'll say it's far-fetched!" Pauline said with

another laugh. "Thousands of years far-fetched! You'd be surprised!"

As if only now realising what Pauline was telling her she asked, "Is that why Dominic put me in the Beverley Hills Hotel then, and gave me all those roses?"

"Well of course! He'd been waiting for you for at least three lifetimes! Did you think it was because he liked the look of your legs on the clips?"

Angela smiled, feeling an enormous relief. So he was true after all! He wasn't a schemer, a killer!

"Listen Angela, would you like to do a far memory session with me?"

"What does it involve?"

"It involves lying down for a couple of hours and me regressing you into your past."

"I'd be terrified!"

"That's part of it. In fact I always say if you're not afraid first time you haven't got the right energies going for the most important trip your mind ever takes. Do you object to feeling terror?"

"I'd like to avoid it, obviously."

"But if you're not afraid if remembering the past in this life why should you be afraid of remembering it in another?"

"Oh I am afraid!" Angela said. "I hate remembering the past!"

"But that's like rejecting yourself! It means you never come to terms with yourself."

"Well, that's right. I never do. I never have."

"And how do you expect your relationship with Dominic to go well?" Pauline asked her. "He knows you from way back! But do you know him?"

"Not really."

"So isn't that going to put you at a disadvantage? Isn't that why misunderstood his putting you in a hotel suite instead of a crummy downtown room, and the roses, and the star treatment? He was very upset about that."

"He told you?"

"Oh!" Pauline said with a humourous gesture of boredom. "He tells me everything!"

"I went to the airport. I was going to go back to England and just outside the airport I put my hand in my bag and felt his keys, the keys to this apartment. And that made me turn back."

"He didn't tell me that."

"Because he doesn't know."

"I'm glad they made you turn back."

"Who?"

"Oh, the powers!"

* * *

"Don't worry," Pauline said, "I won't do anything against your will."

Angela was lying on a mattress on the floor with earphones and a body mike attached to her dress. All over the room there were mattresses. Wires trailed from the mikes to an elaborate recording assembly with several decks which stood at one end of the room on a raised platform. The other mattresses weren't occupied and she wished they had been. All this apparatus made her feel nervous, it was like being in hospital. And then she didn't really know Pauline. She might be a total freak. Angela was full of doubts all of a sudden, even about Dominic. She'd let Pauline persuade her because she didn't want to appear a coward but now she regretted it. She feared that her mind might be disturbed in some way. Sometimes, in the past, she'd felt vulnerable in that respect. There'd been a case of madness in the family, on her father's side. And sometimes, very rarely, she had felt her mind sort of slipping. It was a most disagreeable experience. In fact she almost got up from the mattress and told Pauline to forget it.

But at that moment Pauline spoke. "OK, now you have all the time in the world to relax. I'm going to ask you to breathe deeply, inhale to eight heartbeats and exhale to ten, OK? And listen to the gap between the inhale and the exhale, you can hear eternity there."

Eternity! It was the last thing she felt like having at this moment.

All the coffees she'd had didn't help. They made her tremble slightly. And she was given to gremling anyway. Sometimes she felt she wasn't a very courageous person. She had a lot of sauce, momentary arrogance of the kind that made it possible for her to throw coffee at a director, but it didn't last, and invariably ended either in helpless tears or a sense of cowardly surrender. How many times she'd told a director or fellow actor that she adored when she was secretly frightened of him and resentful of him!

Pauline had driven her downtown to her Florence Avenue apartment in Dominic's Bentley. The flat was quite a lot bigger than Dominic's Hollywood Hills place, with empty marble floors and bare walls which she felt he'd had a hand in designing. There was this large salon where the mattresses were which was entirely devoid of furniture except for sterile photographic collages on the wall, presumably to depress the far memory victims so much that regressing into a past life became a positive pleasure.

"Now I'm going to retire behind all that machinery you see up there," Pauline told her. "And from now on I'm going to talk to you through the earphones. And you can answer me on your mike. You don't have to do more than whisper. In fact if you do you'll blast my ears off."

As she lay there waiting for Pauline to switch on and settle herself at the recording console she thought of Dominic and how, the previous evening after she'd joined him fully clothed under the shower, they had made love with such ecstasy that she thought she was going to faint. No, she could never sleep with another man. And that stirred a peculiar fear in her, so deep and insidious that it seemed to permeate the mattress under her. Where did that fear come from? Certainly not from the fact that he'd spoiled her for

other men. It came from the power of their love-making, greater than any hypnosis could be, so satisfying, like a thousand banquets devoted to one exquisite dish after another, yet more than eating or drinking could ever be, in fact so much more than anything else in life that it was like---death! Sometimes during their love-making she feared they might both expire. Of course she didn't seriously think it would happen but the body felt frail, almost tortured with excitement, and death seemed to it a form of necessary escape. Again and again they murmured to each "What shall we do? what's going to happen?", as if the love so exceeded all physical measure that something---the will, the nervous system---had to break. Yes, she almost feared making love to him again, almost feared his return that evening from San Francisco, yet yearned for it so much that a trembling started in her and a special thrilling warmth started inside her which she had never known with another man.

She fell asleep and at once started dreaming of a young girl, perhaps seventeen, who wore a light frilled dress that billowed out round her legs from a cool breeze (but it was otherwise very hot). Outside the window was water, perhaps a river, because its reflection shimmered on the ceiling. But how could there be such a breeze in a room? The question puzzled her even in the dream. The girl was now leaning out of the window, yet it wasn't a window either. It might be a balcony of some kind. And then she heard steps on a wooden staircase. Someone, or perhaps more than one person, was coming up to see her. There was brilliant sunshine and very little noise. The silence was delightful. The girl was strikingly beautiful with elongated eyes that unlike her hair were very dark, almost a gypsy's. Her nose was quite small and fine, the opposite of Angela's own 'snout'. The girl was aware of sails far out---perhaps it was close to the ocean. The sails gleamed in the sunlight, like huge gull-wings. And she, the girl was high up. She could gaze down into a narrow lane at the side of the house and hear men's deep voices booming between the walls. And compared with the sunlight it was very dark down there, very cavernous.

deep voices booming between the walls. And compared with the sunlight it was very dark down there, very cavernous. She also thought she heard handcarts. The girl was standing close to Angela but Angela wasn't visible to her. She felt a lot of pleasure in being close to the girl, and it felt like she had more interest in her than she'd ever had in a human being. She was amazed at how selfless her interest in that girl was. She watched every movement she made. And she had an impression of blueness everywhere, in the sky and even below, a fact she couldn't understand even while she stood there in the dream.

Then everything went vague and she felt wonderfully rested, as if she might sleep a whole day. A long time seemed to pass---that silence continued even though the dream ended---and then she heard a whisper, "What do you see Angela? Tell me what you see."

She started awake (her mother had so often tried to get her to wake without that fearful start but how could you stop it?) and realised after a few seconds that this whisper so close to her ear was Pauline's voice in the earphones. She felt irritated. She didn't answer but started to doze again. But again Pauline's voice, "Angela."

Why didn't she let her rest? Then she remembered why she was lying down.

"Won't you tell me what you saw?" Pauline asked her.

"Oh I fell asleep. I was just dreaming, that's all."

"Didn't you hear any of my relaxation exercises?"

"No."

"Then tell me what you dreamed about."

"It was about a young girl. She was about seventeen."

"Can you tell me what she looked like and where she was?"

As she told Pauline about that girl, and all the impressions she had had, she thought she heard her gasp once or twice. But at the end all Pauline said was, in a matter-of-fact voice, "OK, that's great for a first session. I don't think you sleep enough by the way."

in a matter-of-fact voice, "OK, that's great for a first session. I don't think you sleep enough by the way. You don't get enough alpha-sleep at nights."

"You're telling me," Angela said with a yawn.

"You've got a lot of anxiety hidden away, a lot."

"I suppose so!"

"Angela, these far memory regressions can help you, once we've got through the sleep problem."

"But I'm not a good hypnotic subject, I'm sure I'm not!"

"We'll see about that. I think you've done very well. You got a far memory in sleep because you would have resisted the hypnotic influence. So they gave you the memory in sleep."

"Was that a far memory?"

"Sure it was!"

"But what lifetime, when?"

"Well we can't establish that yet. We can only piece things together slowly, through a lot of sessions. You see you need to know about your past Angela, because otherwise you're only half a person. Why do you think it is that Dominic's such a decisive person, and he gets so much influence over other people. He knows who he is! He's gone way back and he can see where the other lifetimes have been leading---like he did in your case."

"Were we happy in our other lives?"

"Well, it depends what you mean by happiness."

All this was being said over the mikes. It was an odd feeling and she didn't quite believe in it. Of course this kind of thing went on all over California, there were more freak movements and therapies than anywhere else in the world. But Pauline seemed a serious enough person. And Dominic---hadn't he proved himself? He wasn't a layabout after all. He'd carved a path for himself such as few men achieved. She became impatient and wanted to get up. It all seemed suddenly morbid and fruitless to her, this far memory probing. She wanted to get out into the light and air.

"OK," Pauline whispered, "you can split if you

want to," as if she'd felt her impatience over the wire.

She felt strange for the rest of the day and waished she hadn't gone to Pauline's. Her face itched and she took three showers. There were no more phonecalls and she was restless for Dominic's return, just for human company. She tried reading on her bed among the cushions but the room no longer felt good. The canned music almost drove her crazy and she went out for a long walk which she didn't enjoy because of the damp heat and the stink of automobile exhaust. She was dissatisfied with what she'd agreed about the new Bel Ami. Of course it had put in the enemy camp opposite her own lover! She remembered what Everard had said about what the 'killer' might do. A twinge of ridiculous fear went through her. How could you possibly be afraid of your own lover? But it felt so uncanny without him (Greg Merrytown had called him 'uncanny'). That was how the apartment felt. Sometimes she had the impression that he was looking at her---from an armchair or behind the mirror in the bathroom. He hadn't phoned from San Francisco. She tried to read the Bel Ami script but that seemed a ridiculous thing to do.

No, she decidedly didn't like all this far memory stuff. All her life she'd nightmares and anything supernatural of that sort seemed to provoke them. Whole nights she'd spent awake when on tour, nodding over cups of coffee, out of fear that if she went to bed she'd have a nightmare or die in her sleep or something. She would have hated to confess this to anyone but she slept with a night-light still. If she woke in total black-out she screamed. Of course if she was in bed with someone she didn't need it. Here in the apartment she had left the light on in the corridor and her bedroom door ajar. When she was at home her mother kept two night lights burning in her room in case one went out by accident.

The canned music cut out, presumably the end of the day's cassettes. She didn't like the silence. She walked from room to room, peeped into his bedroom. The bed was still unmade from this morning and his silk pyjamas on the floor. She made the bed and replaced the cover, folded his pyjamas and slipped them under the pillow. She again had the feeling of him watching her,

cover, folded them and slipped them under his pillow. Suddenly she felt she'd become someone else. Her hands on the folded pyjamas weren't hers any more. Or rather, they were hers but in her mind she was someone else watching her own movements like a stranger. She should never have agreed to do that far memory thing! Had it unhinged something in her? She walked about the flat restlessly, aware of this second personage and aching for Dominic's return, if only to reassure her that Pauline wasn't some sort of awful hypnotist who got people in her power. And he? Wasn't he a hypnotist?

She went to the lounge and mixed herself a vodka and orange. She got ice from the fridge. And she sat in his favourite armchairs waiting. She must have fallen asleep because the light of dawn woke in exactly the same position as she'd sat down. She blinked awake, thinking at first she was back in London and had fallen asleep in her mother's sitting room as she often did when she was exhausted from sleepless nights on tour, nights spent talking and smoking. And even when she slept it wasn't very deep. Pauline had said something about her never getting the really deep sleep. Her mind was always active, somewhere, somehow. And this other person who now hovered about her was part of that ever active mind.

She heard the phone ringing in her room at the other end of the corridor and dashed out of the lounge. She got there just in time. She wanted to cry "Oh Dominic!" in the phone but it was Everard's sleepy voice.

He told her that Jill Rapinsky had already found a couple of commercials for her. The first involved a day's work, good money, with who did she think in the male part, playing her boyfriend? None other than Jamie Somerson, who was getting a record fee. It was a car-ad and the call was for eight o'clock the next morning. Shooting would start in the afternoon, as she would need at least a couple of hours with the hairdresser.

"I'm sorry about the short notice," he said, "but you've replaced somebody else---Sonya Steele as a matter of fact. And for Christ sake don't tell me you feel sorry for her!"

He rang off without

sorry for her!"

After telling her that he'd pick her up next morning and take her to the studios himself he rang off without a good bye. It seemed people didn't waste charm here. She felt uncomfortable about the offer and returned to the lounge, where she saw her vodka and orange untouched. She took a shower nervously. So she'd stolen a job from Sonya Steele, who was Max Pennance's girlfriend---already she was making enemies! She wanted to phone Everard back and say it was off but something told her that this was her only way of getting her freedom from Dominic, from the hypnotism! All her old feelings about being in a trap wherever a man was concerned came back. She put enough eau de cologne on herself to drown a cat. And then the key turned in the lock. Dominic walked in. Her heart did a leap and she ran to the door, her dressing gown flying behind her.

"What happened?"

He pulled her towards him and no more words were exchanged. He half carried her to her bed and all morning they lay there making love, and the outside world not only didn't seem to exist, it had never, never been there.

"You did a session with Pauline?" he whispered.

"Yes Dominic, I'm worried, it doesn't make me feel good, I'm not a good subject!"

"Are you crazy? It's the best thing you did! Listen, we're going to have an exciting day, I'm going to play you a tape of one of my far memory sessions and then you'll see where we stand!"

She didn't like his excitement---it narrowed his eyes and put a strange glitter in them---but when he was close to her, with his lips touching her face, when she could smell him and feel his bare shoulders and the soft curve of his stomach, all the things that seemed to be familiar to her from long ago in her childhood, she felt no further resistance.

"Why didn't you come back yesterday?" she asked him impetuously.

He smiled and rubbed his nose on hers.

"I've got another girl there I was incarnated with a couple of lives ago. In fact I've got a whole bunch of girls right along the west coast who used to shack up with me in past lives. Satisfied?"

She ran her finger along his lips.

"Do you have hypnotic powers?" she asked him, watching his lips as he replied.

"To have so many girls, you mean?"

"When you looked at me in the traffic that first day it was like being hypnotised, I've led a completely new life since then!"

"Isn't that love, not hypnotism?" he said with a trace of reserve in his voice.

"How can I tell the difference? You could induce love in me hypnotically."

"Now just stop trying to be cruel little girl and let's go listen to that tape!"

He lifted her up from the bed but she was too heavy for him and he had to let her down again. She fell back on the bed with a laugh.

"You see," he said, "hypnotic millionaires aren't muscle men. Would you like a muscle man?"

She drew him down to her again and put her arms round his neck.

"Why don't you say I love you, you never say it!" she whispered. "Don't you feel it?" She was half laughing, touching his ear with her lips.

"I'll tell you another time, but here's one of the reasons." And he began kissing her again and baring her shoulders. He drew the dressing gown right off her and once more they were close together, naked. It was mid-afternoon when they stopped making love.

He went to the kitchen and made coffee, then called her. He had a tape machine set up on the table and was just inserting a cassette.

"I want you to listen to this," he said when she came in.

He switched on and his voice came over in a husky whisper.

"Yes, we're in love," he was saying. "Madly."

whisper.

"Yes," we're in love," he was saying. "Madly. Impossibly. But we aren't married. I can tell that much. We want to get married but it won't happen."

There he stopped. He was making heaving sounds, gasping.

"Are you crying?" she asked him.

"Crying!" I'll say!"

Then Pauline's voice came over: "What nationality are you?"

"I think I'm French," he continued, hardly audible. "Yes I'm sure. I think I have a large estate near Rouen. She's looking at me now but her eyes aren't happy. She's done something terrible, I'm sure of it. Oh!"

He caught his breath, almost hissed.

"Can you tell me what it is she's done?" Pauline asked him.

He paused a long time. Then he answered her question: "No. It just blocks out every time."

"Can you say what her name is?"

"Yes. It's Caterina. Caterina Foss---" He stopped again. "No I can't get the surname. Something like Foss."

"Then she isn't French?"

"Italian," he said. "She's Italian. And I keep hearing violins. The sound of violins. A whining and screaming, not the beautiful sound you expect from violins."

"Where are you?"

"In Venice. Yes, it's Venice."

6.

"Well what do you think?" he asked her.

She shrugged deliberately. "I don't know! I mean I don't understand what you're seeing, I mean it's a girl but it could be any girl, in the past or the future, it doesn't have to be me in a past life."

"And why shouldn't it be you?"

She knew she was resisting the idea. At the same time she wanted him to break down her resistance because half of her was fascinated.

"You mean to say you don't know it's you I'm talking about?" he asked her.

"Of course I don't know!" She turned her eyes away and didn't even want to think about it.

"Then I'm going to have to prove it to you!"

"But what does it matter? We're here and now, not two hundred years ago!"

Quickly he said, "How do you know it was two hundred years ago?"

"I don't! Nor do you!"

He nodded. "I thought you might have a hunch."

"Anyway it could all be a form of hypnosis. I mean you sound hypnotised on that tape. I fell asleep as soon as my head touched that pillow in Pauline's apartment, I'm sure it wasn't a natural sleep."

"Oh," he said, removing the cassette from the machine and putting it into its box. "As to why you fell asleep you'll find out later. You don't believe in this regression thing, do you? You don't even believe in re-incarnation, not deep down."

"In a way I don't want to believe in it, I've got too much going in this life to worry about previous ones!"

"So that's why you fell asleep. You didn't want to see yourself in a previous life but you did just the same, in what you think was a dream!"

"That wasn't me!"

"It was a seventeen-year-old girl, right? And I'm saying that's the same girl I'm seeing! Your description is the same. It's Caterina!"

"But what does it matter?"

He sat close to her and put his arms round her. "Now you'd better stop saying that. If we know what we did in our previous life together maybe we shall be able to handle this one better. I mean we're already divided aren't we? You playing in Saul Weinand's Bel Ami and doing a Jill Rapinsky commercial. She owns the company that's going to employ you by the way."

She looked at the table glumly. "Why does it have to divide us? It's good work. And I don't see the sense of pulling down films."

"Is that what I'm doing?"

"Well we're not making your Bel Ami are we?"

"We might be making something better, and you might be getting a better vehicle than you could ever get from Max Pennance. Still, you go your way. As I said to Pauline the other day, you've got a lot of business neck and I like that. That film won't be made by the way."

"What film?"

"The Bel Ami Saul Weinand's setting up."

"How do you know?"

He just smiled at her and gave her a kiss. "You really think I don't know?"

"Are you going to use those hypnotic powers?" she asked him, playing with his lips again, brushing her finger along them and feeling a delightful electricity go through her hand.

"Sure!" he said.

"And where does Pauline come in? Is she your witch? Does she mix the brews and put needles into little wax figures for you?"

"How did you guess?" he said with a laugh, drawing her on to her knee and baring her shoulders yet again. They began kissing ardently and for the third time that day returned to her bed, and emerged from heaven around dinner time. He drove her down to Santa Monica and they ate in a small Italian place.

"Do you really think we're divided?" she asked him.

"We were divided before so we'll go on doing the same until we wake up to what we're doing."

"What do you mean---before?" (she knew perfectly well).

"When you were Caterina. You know I didn't play you the other tape. I screamed on that one. I realised I was being murdered."

She smiled. "Did I murder you?"

"I don't know," he said seriously, "but you certainly weren't with me?"

"I was on the side of the murderers?"

"Something like that."

"And am I joining the enemy again by doing this Saul Weinand film?"

"Could be."

It sounded as if they were quarrelling quietly but it didn't feel like that. They strolled through the streets contentedly afterwards, holding each other round the waist, kissing each other from time to time.

"Why do they want me on their side---Jill Rapinsky and Saul and Everard and Jamie Somerson?" she asked him.

"Well, they can't beat me in a straight fight but they figure they might in a crooked one."

"What, they'd use me against you in some way?"

"No but they might figure to get you away from me. If you say killer often enough it might stick."

"Are you a killer?" she asked, hugging him.

"Yes," he said, "I think I am." He smiled at her and she thought she saw him wink. She put her head close to his for a moment and caught the scent of his hair, and felt unbearable excitement.

"And you won't say you love me?" she asked him.

"Isn't that what all your serious lovers have told

you?"

"Yes."

"So you've got your own answer Caterina! Ours isn't a short-term arrangement!"

"If my name was Caterina what was yours?"

"I don't know yet but I'm going to find out."

"Oh Dominic before I forget," she said as juke-box music blasted from a games parlour on to the sidewalk, "could we have that nasty canned music switched off?"

"Boy!" he said with a laugh. "Are you a reincarnation of that lady!"

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Everard sat talking to her while her hair was being done. She was to have two dresses, one aquamarine with a V-neck folded over in heavy pleats and wide bat-wing sleeves, the other a fun jacket and mini-skirt in a lavish chequered design of primary colours. A tiny pill-hat went with the latter. She had the funny feeling that Dominic would mock her if he could see, and even that he was mocking her. His eyes always seemed to go with her.

The director was an anxious-looking man with rounded shoulders called Jonanthan Beane who kept coming over to her and asking her if she felt OK. While her hair was being lifted, combed out, curled here and there, she heard Everard's droning voice but hardly attended to it. What was he, a top Hollywood agent, doing concentrating on one of his clients like this? He surely had big stars on his list. Why, why had she become important for these people?

He brought her coffee from time to time. Jamie Somerson bent and kissed her on his way to the costume department.

"Jamie's been offered three feature scripts already," Everard told her. "He says he isn't going to accept one that doesn't have a lead part for you."

"Has he gone mad or something?"

"You'll see."

When she was ready for the make-up they had to camouflage two enormous love bites on her neck. She suspected that Dominic had planted the previous day deliberately. You knew when you were making a mark.

Then she was called on the set. There was to be a brief angle-shot of her in close up in a gleaming European car which was so small you could hardly get into it. That was the message of the ad. The small car was easy on the gas and fitted neatly in overparked streets. She and Jamie were whizz-kids in their respective professions (rag-trade and architecture) and made it clear by the way they behaved that they were turning down the gas-thirsty hearse-type of automobile that belonged to the past. How she could hear Dominic laughing!

While a scene with extras was being shot she and Jamie played cards in his dressing room. There were continual phonecalls for him and she noticed the subtle effect stardom was having on his personality, hardening the outside and weakening the inside. Usually she felt very close to an actor she was playing opposite but it wasn't happening with Jamie. She realised that none of this was giving her enjoyment and a feeling of nausea towards Dominic's apartment and the expensive dinners they had and that Beverley Hills Hotel suite and this studio with the two gleaming cars and the bonhomie dedicated to a thoroughly silly cause welled up in her.

She had to embrace Jamie and kiss him for one of the scenes, the basis of a montage of shots, and several takes had to be done because it didn't look convincing. Jamie stared at her with a hurt expression and said, "Why can't you really hold me for christsakes?" Every cell in her body screamed out against it. In fact she couldn't bear his touch and had to hide this as best she could.

When the rushes were shown next day there was mist

on the film and some of the scenes had to be shot. Once more she went through the ordeal of embracing Jamie. She could feel his blond moustache against her upper lip and though she liked moustaches it sent an unpleasant prickling sensation all through her body. And he was such a nice person. He was always round her offering to bring her coffee or suggesting changes in her costume or make-up which were surprisingly valid. Jamie had taken a course in advanced general physics at Harvard but given up a few months before the end. He told her he'd always wanted to do a drama course but his dad was a physicist and it hadn't seemed right. Then he met a girl who asked him if he wanted to be his father or himself and that had sort of opened his eyes. As a matter of fact his dad had been delighted when he switched to drama and said with a laugh that it was like opting to be out of work all your life. Well, that was how it had been the first two years. He was now thirty-one. And then he'd grown his moustache and that had sort of changed everything. It made his face more compact and the directors had begun to look at him with interest.

"I tried the stage," he said, "but I can't act."

They laughed. She half listened to what he said, as she did to everyone. She was becoming aware of herself, how deeply she regarded herself as the only seriously alive person in the world. And her problems were always the worst problems, no one had such problems. Her happiness was beyond capture by the rest of the race. And while Jamie talked to her she allowed her thoughts as always to roam round, dwelling on Dominic, how she was going to look for the next scene, how she should take a certain line, whether she should have the hem of her skirt higher for when she had to run towards Jamie, how she was going to get through that difficult bit of squeezing herself into a tiny car while keeping up her eye language with Jamie and also looking elegant, if she should go to the restaurant with Jamie and eat a heavy lunch or just have some sandwiches in her dressing room, hoping for a phonecall from Dominic. At the same time, such was her expertise in this matter,

her mind could collect what Jamie was telling her into a thread and she could make the proper ejaculations of interest when necessary. She wasn't an actress for nothing.

When she got home after the second day's work she found Dominic and Pauline cooking a meal. He was in his shirtsleeves cleaning mushrooms. She felt tired and irritable, having seen part of the spoiled rushes and found her scenes ridiculous. She'd played in bad rep often enough but this was going lower than that because it was all covered with a sheen of fashion and expense.

"I don't feel proud of myself," she told Dominic.

He smiled. "You mean you're not proud to encourage the sale of European cars on the American market?"

"You'll have to get used to not feeling proud if you work for Jill Rapinsky," Pauline said without looking at her.

"It's up to me who I work for," Angela.

"Oh sure!" Pauline said, turning one of her oriental smiles towards her. "Sure!"

"Anyway," Angela said to Dominic, "you didn't advise me against it."

"Jill Rapinsky's got a good outfit there," he replied. "She'll make good moeny for you and get your face known."

"And what else?"

"Well I thought you were over here to make feature films."

"I am! But you've just pulled down the film I was supposed to play in!"

"You didn't trust me before so why should you now?"

"Oh what do you mean, before?" she said angrily, throwing her bag down on a chair. "I suppose I'm going to have that thrown in my face all the time! 'Before'! You want to try living now!"

He said nothing to this but went to the fridge and pulled out a bottle of Don Perignan. With great care he edged the cork out and it flew to the ceiling with the minimum overflow of froth. Pauline had a glass ready. When he'd poured some champagne in she gave it to Angela.

"Here's to Jill Rapinsky!" Pauline said.

"Here's to Jill Rapinsky!" Pauline said.

"Oh fuck off!" Angela cried and threw the glass to the floor. She dashed out of the kitchen to her room.

"And thank Christ you've turned that bloody canned music off," she screamed towards the kitchen, "it was driving me crazy! All you people are so artificial! You don't seem to say real things and---oh Christ!"

She burst into tears.

She could hear Pauline clearing up the mess. Dominic was standing in the doorway.

"Want some more champagne?"

"No I don't!"

She flung herself down on the bed.

"I've got to read through this bloody silly dialogue for tomorrow morning so I want to be left alone."

He sat on the bed at her side. "Is this real anger with me or do you just want to let off steam?"

"I just want to let off steam," she said, drawing him towards her. She didn't want to kiss him. She just needed to feel his face against hers, and to lean on him, refreshing her memory of him, so to speak, his scent, his skin texture and the strong yet soft touch of his hair.

Pauline was there with another glass of champagne for her.

"Here," she said, "take your medicine."

"Where are your glasses?" Angela asked.

Pauline got two more and they touched glasses, with Angela still lying there. Then they drank.

"I'm fed up with hearing about the past," Angela said quietly. "Past lives. You haven't said a word about this new film you're setting up. Greg Merrtown told me why you go to San Francisco, to the banks. And he said you were setting up another series for sure. But you don't say a thing to me."

"It's just my way of working," he said. "I never like to talk until everything has jelled. It's just my way."

Pauline gave her a square-on look. "Don't you think that's a bit degrading to my profession, what you said about past lives? I mean OK you're an actress, I don't

come over heavy about actresses and temperament and all that, which I could."

"I'm sorry," Angela said.

"I'd rather you did a bit more far memory than be sorry, Angela."

"It gives me nightmares! It makes me scared! And I've got enough worries at the moment!"

"You've got worries?" Pauline said. "You've found the greatest love of your life and you've still got worries? Jesus Christ!"

"I know, it's silly of me."

"And you find us artificial?" Dominic said a little jokingly.

"Yes, I do. Ever since I got here it's been contracts and calls at this studio or that and cancellations and limousines and expensive dinners and night spots and the right Italian place down at Santa Monica and nice white suits and oh, shit, how I hate it all, I'd rather be back in a grimy London theatre on Equity minimum!"

He kissed her very lightly on the cheek with the edge of his lips and whispered in her ear, "You don't like my white suit?"

She laughed. "I only like you naked!"

"And tonight we're cooking you a cheap dinner," he said. "We got the smoked salmon and the vintage champagne at a discount."

"You see," she said, turning his face towards her, "you're still being artificial, making a joke of it."

He nodded.

"The kid's right," he said to Pauline. "I'm so fucking slick! I can't stand it any more!"

"It's a form of self-defence," Angela said.

"You're dead right! But against what?"

"All the other artificial people round you who're doing the same thing."

The dinner was actually caviar as a starter, grilled tuna steaks and a delicious semi-freddo with a layer of malscalpone. Dominic said that the ice-cream was 'custom built' for him by one of the biggest ice-cream manufacturers in San Francisco.

cream manufacturers in San Francisco.

"Another slick achievement," Angela said.

"But it's good?" he said with a light irritation.

"It tastes good?"

"Oh yes! But no better for what you said about it."

Her mood reduced the dinner table to silence. He'd made such an effort, got special candles that didn't run, and josticks. And afterwards he prepared real old-style capuccini as Pauline apparently liked them, with a dash of chocolate powder on top and the milk really frothy.

"I've got to look at my part," Angela said and went to her room.

After a time she felt tired and, having learned the absurd lines, decided to go to bed. She closed her door without a word and began undressing.

As so often in the past she had expressed strong feelings without knowing before she opened her mouth that she had them. Where had that word 'artificial' come from? But it expressed what she felt. Even Jamie was artificial. He never seemed to get down to the real subject. And with Dominic she felt it was only real between them when they were in bed or completely alone. And not saying much. It was an odd feeling not to know a man from Adam, and yet have him as one's lover, the greatest love of her life as a matter of fact. When she smelt his warm alluring scent (it came from his hair, his skin, perhaps only for her) and touched him with the tips of her fingers and said things into his ear and opened herself utterly to him she was with him as she'd never been with a human being in her life, and then, well, the word 'artificial' was ridiculous! But the rest of him she knew nothing about and couldn't, apparently, get contact with. In that respect Pauline was closer to him than she was. And yet it didn't matter. It only meant that they had to go on together blind, not knowing what life was going to present them with next. He in San Francisco among the bankers and she with his enemies on a commercial set. And he could be a bad man for all she knew, he could be the killer people said he was and it made no

difference. What difference could it make to the scent of his hair, to the way his skin felt, to the feel of his breath on the side of her face, to that special thrilling way he had of entering her while at the same time seeming to receive her.

And then, what man had really looked at her? Oh they'd looked her in the eyes with varying degrees of sympathy and interest and friendliness. But what did all that have to do with a woman? Dominic really saw every part of her body. He traced the intimate parts not only with his hands but his eyes. He looked. And she realised, with him, that looking is like touching, it produces thrill and expectancy. And he looked in her eyes. He gazed into them and she could see all the things he was experiencing. All her life she'd felt insufficiently awoken in the vaginal area. No matter how often she made love she still felt the need of further satisfactions because that part of her was insufficiently caressed. Or wrongly caressed. And--- this was what she now thought---only one man on earth could do it properly. Before, she'd thought it was a matter of finding the right lover, that is one sufficiently expert. That was why she'd chosen men much older than herself. But still it hadn't worked. It had been better, but the lurking sense of not having been fully satisfied had remained. Of course it had nothing to do with expertness. It was a matter of whether he was your only man on earth. Then he knew what to do as you knew what to do. You did it without thinking. You had no shame. That was another revelation! She didn't want to hide any part of her body from him, she didn't care about the defects she'd always been so conscious of (legs slightly too muscular, a rather rounded back, and that rubbery neck etc). Every woman, she now believed, carried around with her a list of her defects which she concealed even in nakedness. And while she was with the wrong man those defects would continue. And when she was with the right one those defects would disappear, they would become just, well, having a body!

The phone rang and it was Jamie. He wanted to talk about the new Bel Ami. Sonya Steele was saying that since Angela had stolen the commercial job from her, would she now steal the lead in Bel Ami? He felt she ought to meet Sonya, they ought to let their hair down together because it seemed to him that at those readthroughs they'd got on well together.

"I think it's a good idea too," Angela said.

"Anyway, I think you and I ought to talk and the set's no place to do it. What about having dinner with me tomorrow evening? You cancelled the last one, and this one is my personal invitation, not Max's idea."

"OK Jamie," she said. "Do I have to say right now?"

"Yes you do," he replied. "I'm star status now and can't be messed about."

She laughed. "All right. Shall we leave straight from the studios?"

"Sure! We'll go somewhere cheap and cosy, downtown. You must be real tired of the glossy places!"

That was clever of him, she thought.

She listened for Dominic and Pauline but there wasn't a sound. She yawned and slipped into bed. She wanted so much to sleep the night with him. If only he'd come to her bed now! But he wouldn't. He was proud. More than she was. She could easily go to him, now, if it weren't for this heaviness coming over her. She slept at once.

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She must have been asleep an hour when she jumped awake at the sound of screaming. There wasn't a gleam of light anywhere, since she'd overlooked to open her door slightly before getting into bed, and she began screaming too, strange high-pitched gasping sounds that seemed to come from her body on their own. Meanwhile the other screams, those of a man, continued, more long drawn out, and remote, more aghast than panic-stricken.

Her half-sleeping mind simply couldn't grasp what was going on, and what with the total blackness, and her not knowing for certain where she was, her screams augmented until she could hardly take breath. Then there were running steps along the corridor outside and she suddenly knew where she was. Dominic burst into the room, and light flooded it. She was sitting up with her hands held up to her throat, her eyes starting out of her head.

"What the hell---?" He rushed to her.

They clung together and she stopped screaming but the other screams continued.

"Dominic! Dominic!"

He shouted out, "Pauline! Pauline! Stop that damned tape! It's coming over the speakers!"

The screams suddenly cut out. Angela began crying, mostly with relief. Pauline came into the room.

"What was wrong?"

"The tape was coming over the speakers, I must have got the switches mixed. Hell! She must be terrified!"

Angela was quivering all over.

"I'm sorry," she said, her teeth chattering, "I'm terrified of the dark too."

Pauline got her some brandy and gradually she came to her senses.

"What was that screaming?"

"Me."

"You?"

"It was one of my far memory tapes. We were running it to get my first description of Caterina."

"Oh!" She lay back exhausted. "And I've got such a heavy day tomorrow!"

"I guess those screams didn't sound artificial?" Pauline said.:

"No, as a matter of fact they didn't."

"I mean, the man was screaming about you, OK in a former life but it was still about you, I mean you

ca. 't just lie there and say who was it screaming and then when you're told it's your own man, the greatest love you've ever had, you say you've got a heavy day tomorrow, Christ!"

Pauline was flushed, her cheeks were twitching slightly and she was clearly not used to any kind of outburst.

"Take it easy, kid," Dominic told her, putting his hand on hers.

"No I'd just like to know from Angela if she thinks those screams are phoney or unreal or artificial."

Angela looked at her for a time. Other people's outbursts always made her feel incredibly calm, perhaps because she realised they were terribly real whereas in her case they were always, but always, half compounded acting (and frequently it was more than half).

"Pauline," she said, "do you really like me?"

"Oh no, you're not giving me that shit! Here, you're going to hear that tape!" Pauline shouted.

She jumped up from the bed and left the room. On her way to the lounge she shouted back, "She'll be saying I'm jealous of her next!"

"What's going on?" Angela asked him.

He smiled and putting his cheek on hers whispered, "Screams."

And this time she really heard them. Apart from the fact that Pauline turned the volume to full, she was wide awake now.

She felt Dominic start as he heard them. It sounded like a man forced to watch an appalling outrage of some kind.

"What was it?" she asked him. "What was it?"

"My own death!"

"But your death when?"

"The last time, the last time round!"

"Oh my God!"

And then came his shout---"Caterina! Caterina!" It went on and on. Angela jumped up.

She ran to the lounge. "Shut that bloody thing off! Shut it off!"

Pauline was standing there, close to the recording

Pauline was standing there, close to the record player. Whether it was because Angela could act fury supremely well, or because she felt a little remorseful about what she'd done, Pauline quietly flicked the switch.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, getting people into this kind of situation," Angela told her. "It's crazy! Going back to past lives when you can't live in this one properly! No wonder you've got pimply boyfriends!"

Dominic was behind them.

"OK, girls," he said. "We've had enough fun for one night."

"And you let her do it!" Angela told him. "You woke me up with those horrible screams---!"

"At least you know they're real," he said.

She was shivering.

"You'd better get her a dressing gown," Pauline said to Dominic. Then she sat down, trembling slightly. "Boy," she said, "do you have a voice."

Angela laughed. "Mine was the biggest voice in my year. My teacher said he'd never known such projection."

"Do you want to sleep in my bed tonight Pauline?" Dominic asked when he came back. "I think I'll sleep with my lady."

"OK."

So Angela got what she'd wanted earlier in the evening. He closed the door of her room and all was darkness. She didn't mind a bit. She snuggled up to him and it was the most delicious warmth she'd ever felt, and when they whispered together it was like being the first creatures in the world, before any noise or restlessness had started. Oh she'd never felt such safety!

As for the terrors of darkness, these came, she knew now, from solitude. But in these moments of drowsiness before sleep, his legs crooked in hers, his arm round her waist and one hand on her breast, darkness was a friend and balm, and seemed to enjoy exactly what they enjoyed.

"Would you stop these reincarnation trips for me?" she whispered.

"Do you think it's bad to scream?" he asked her.
 "I mean what about the scream therapies? They're supposed to do you good."

She could feel him smiling. Always that cool smile! As if he knew the outcome of things!

"It's a kind of hypnosis, I think Pauline hypnotises you."

"You try telling her that!"

"But perhaps she doesn't realise her powers."

"And maybe you don't realise yours."

The hand that wasn't on her breast went to her head and in that instant she fell asleep. Her last thought, which she'd forgotten by the morning, was 'He's the one with hypnotic powers.'

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She and Jamie ended up in the same Japanese restaurant on First Street where she'd eaten alone after throwing her script at Max Pennance. She told Jamie and he said with a laugh, "Good omen."

They sat in a corner. The light was very dim. He kept filling her cup with hot saki and it felt good after the strains of the day (and the night). They had worked until about eight and everyone had been edgy. The producers had called Jill Rapinsky and told her they didn't like the rushes they'd seen, and there was talk about changing the director (especially after he'd ask Jill what the hell his rushes were doing being shown to a bunch of small-town crooks). Jill had appeared on the set briefly and while saying a jolly "Hi!" to Jamie almost cut Angela dead.

"You have to get used to that," Jamie told her.
 "She's probably blaming you for the way things have gone wrong."

"Blaming me?"

"People are very superstitious in this business and anyone connected with the Killer is supposed to have a bit of the evil eye."

"What are you talking about?"

"It's true! His assistant Pauline Stromheim isn't allowed near any studios. The cameras stop working right away!"

"Oh I can believe that," Angela said.

"And you can't believe any wrong about him."

She gave him a level look. "No I can't."

"Why?"

"Because he's my man."

"OK." He looked hurt but acted it away quickly.

"Sometimes I think that woman Pauline has a spell on him," Angela said, aware that she shouldn't be saying it but wanting any information about Pauline that might be going.

"Could be. Actually she's a nice lady. Graduated in Environmental Sciences but then she met Dominic and he got her into past-life regression as a profession. I mean, she always had it as a hobby."

"What are environmental sciences."

"Well, like how fish and underwater life generally react to sewage and agricultural run-off, that kind of thing. How many wild animals can we afford to kill? She'd have been good at that, travelling, getting solar energy and irrigation to African tribes. Sonyou think she's spooky? Well you know what some people are saying? Her brief appearance at that house Max Pennance brought you to for your first interview, you remember, the place in La Mirada, they're saying that screwed the Bel Ami film, put the kiss of death on it."

"Were you at that party?"

"I was. I saw you go out and look at the Killer's car."

"Listen if we're going to have a peaceful dinner would you give up that expression otherwise I'm going."

"OK, Angela, I'm sorry, the fact is I'm in love with you and not him."

She almost dropped her chopsticks. "You're what?"

"I'm in love with you. I fell in love with you that first morning at the studios, when Everard introduced us. So it's not my fault if I hate your man's guts, I mean I always have done like a lot of people in the industry, but I just want you to know I'm not the hating type, that's all."

the industry, but I just want you to know I'm not the hating type, that's all."

"So you've been suffering in silence all this time!"

"I opened my heart to Jill Rapinsky, that's all. Whether she talked or not I don't know, but I've got a funny feeling that I'm the reason why the first Bel Ami was run down."

"You mean Dominic knows?"

"That's what I do mean."

"You think he's that small?"

"No I don't think he's small Angela. He just knows his own mind that's all. And he follows it. Whereas others take fellow human beings into consideration."

"Do you think they really do? Here? It's a case of push or get pushed, and he pushes. So do you."

"I've never pushed in my life Angela. All I did was grow a moustache."

When ten o'clock came round she phoned Dominic's place but he wasn't there. He'd told her at breakfast that he might be late as he was spending the evening with a money man from San Diego. She had the feeling that somehow he wanted her to be free for Jamie, though she didn't tell him a word about the dinner date.

When she got back to the table Jamie said, "You're really in love huh?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure you're not just obsessed? How do you know you're not being hypnotised, either by Pauline or him?"

"Oh come on!" She laughed, remembering in that instant how on that first day in the studios she had thought how easy it would have been to fall in love with Jamie Somerson had it not been for the man she'd seen in the traffic the previous day. Suppose Dominic had never appeared again? She would have died, led a half-life!

"No," she said. "I'm in charge of faculties, in so far as anybody is when they're in love."

"But it isn't any ordinary love, is it?" he asked her, blinking a bit as if the question cost him effort.

"What love is?"

"No answer my question."

"It's the greatest love I've ever known. It's what I've been yearning for all my life and I always thought it was just daydreaming to want things like that, but I've got it. I'm sorry Jamie, you asked me to answer the question."

"Yeah, I did." He looked really sick.

"One shouldn't answer questions like that," she said quietly.

"And suppose I still said it was all illusion and you were going to wake up one day?"

"You can say anything you like! Love's like that. It looks unreal from the outside!"

"I want you to talk to Sonya, she used to be his mistress."

"What?"

"They lived together before she met Max Pennance."

She recovered from this, thinking, 'Well, what's wrong with that, I had Louis.'

"I think he showed a lot of good taste," she made herself say.

"But she can tell you a lot about him. He's been in and out of psychiatric clinics for years Angela! He nearly killed her once!"

"And you're afraid for me are you?" he said angrily. "Well thanks very much I can look after myself and I don't care what you people call him, you can say he's a killer and a madman but I love him, I love him!"

"OK, Angela, I'm sorry, I realise that, but I think you're going to wake up one day, I hope so, then you'll see I was right to say what I did."

"I've got to phone home again." She deliberately said 'home'.

Dominic still wasn't there when she called. Just as if he was listening to their conversation. Always she felt this, that he was present wherever she went. And she loved this, the feeling of not being a lone, isolated human any more.

And she loved this, the feeling of not being a lone, isolated being any more.

But Jamie's information worked on her. She sat silent for a long time, smoking. And he seemed to know what he'd done, and respected her silence.

How often she'd nearly ended in a psychiatric ward, she told herself. And there were actresses in England who thought her a killer, in her way, willing to kill for career.

"If Dominic was such a sick man mentally, how was it he got all that money together?" she asked.

"As I said, he's single-minded. And he doesn't care too much about people. And maybe he has hypnotic powers. Maybe he has a bit of the black magic, the evil eye! He gets what he wants. He got you all the way from England! He saw you on your clips and he said I want that girl here, and he got you here!"

"You know that too, do you?"

"The whole industry knows it!" He added, "Also he's a bit old for you."

"Oh don't talk shit! A friend of mine's married to a man twenty-four years older than she is and they're divinely happy! Really Jamie!"

"What I mean is he starts off with an advantage, he knows how to hook you, being more experienced---"

"We'd better drop this, let's go."

As Dominic still wasn't home she let Jamie take her to a disco in Santa Monica. But she wouldn't dance. She drank vodkas, too many of them. She didn't know why she didn't leave this young man with his depressing suggestions. But she sat on, afraid of being in the flat alone (alone with the thought that he was mentally sick). She phoned several times but he still wasn't back. Finally at about half-past two she got up and said, "It's curtains, don't you think?"

He drove her back in his battered mini and she only let him shake hands with her.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"Sorry about what?"

"Being in love with you."

The flat was empty and she went to the lounge. But a few minutes later she heard the key turn and he came in. He had loosened his collar and was looking a bit flushed with drink. It was three o'clock.

"I took him to Butterfield's," he said. "Did you know it used to be a guest cottage on the Barrymore estate?"

"I expect you know who I've been with."

"Why should I?"

"You seem to know most things."

"So who was it?"

"Jamie Somerson."

"Oh!" He laughed. "He hasn't got a hope. And I bet he thinks I cancelled the film because I don't like to think of his arms round you."

"Something like that," she said.

"Well," he said, putting his arms round her, "he's only an actor, you mustn't judge him too harshly. And don't actors and actresses fall in love twice a month?"

"Do they?" she said, giving him a kiss. "I fall in love with you a thousand times a day!"

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The next day's shooting was the toughest so far. Jill Rapinsky was on the set the whole time either bickering with the director or suggesting alterations in the script. Dialogue was changed a dozen times.

"Now I know why most commercials have no talk," Jonathan Beane said.

It was the scene where Angela embraced Jamie that interested Jill most. She insisted that it be reshot. Angela really began to hate that woman, and Jill seemed to enjoy it.

"Angela," she said, "you act as if you've never made love in your life!"

She wanted her to kiss him properly, not in a standing position either but lying down. Angela was to write about. Why didn't they try to get some sexual enjoyment

position either but lying down. Angela was to writhe about. Why didn't they try to get some sexual excitement out of it, for Christ sake? Jill kept her huge shades on and her long hair kept swishing about like a tiger's tail. Even Jamie thought she was going too far. But insistence wins in the end, at least in the film industry, and the director finally agreed to having the two principals virtually undress each other on a couch and then in the car so that he could make a montage of the shots. There was an atmosphere of hate and hysteria. It was one in which Jill thrived and which she invariably tried to provoke when things looked like going wrong. That was why she got the contracts.

On the couch Angela realised that Jamie had an erection and wanted to cry out for Dominic. Why the hell didn't he come and rescue her? How was it that he pulled down Bel Ami but let this nonsense continue? But there he was, smiling again, just behind her head!

"Listen, Angela," Jill said, rudely coming in front of the director, "you're living with our current whizz-kid, now you've got to have some sex appeal, now where is it?"

It was amazing, she just had no answer for this woman, no come-back at all. Jill was so quick with her rudeness, and the rudeness was so contemptible the mind couldn't believe it.

Jamie put his hand under her blouse (she was in the two-piece, her pill-hat was supposed to fall off as he dragged her down) and found a bra.

"Listen," Jill said, "what's the wardrobe department thinking of? We don't want bras in this scene, we want the full works, frigid though they may be."

Off the bra came, and Angela was mute with astonishment and anger. He put his hand under her blouse again and this time found her breast. It was amazing but by an automatic biological reaction it swelled and her nipple became hard. Something must have happened to her face because Jill whipped round to the director and screamed, "Why aren't you rolling for Christ sake?"

Jamie was pressing hard on her and tried to kiss her with his tongue but she resisted, her teeth clenched. She felt his erection as he pulled himself over her and here too she experienced a sudden involuntary reaction, the warmth spreading inside her against her will, making her moist. She tried to get out of it but Jamie was strong.

There was a terrific row going on between Jill and the director.

He was shouting, "Who the fuck's the director here? And don't you realise you're standing in front of the cameras?"

"Why aren't the fucking cameras rolling? Why aren't they rolling?"

There was a touch of hysteria in Jill's voice which Angela was aware of and which for some reason increased her involuntary excitement. He was kissing her everywhere on the face and his hand had travelled to her other breast so that he was now caressing her fully, pushing with his whole body. And the warmth grew inside her while she struggled and writhed under him. He forced her legs open.

"What the hell do you want---a love scene or a rape scene?" the director was screaming.

"Get them rolling!"

"OK start rolling!" The director called to the actors, "Action!"

And in that moment, while Jamie became more and more excited on top of her, and pulled up her blouse to show her swollen breasts, kissing her neck and ears, she saw with clarity, despite the confusion, what was happening. All her life, since a child, she had had rape fantasies, excited herself with them when masturbating. There had been a handfull of stock situations---in one a man took her from behind when she was bending down to pick up something, in another two men took it in turns to enter her, in another a muscular scene-shifter took her in the shadows of the wings while she was waiting for an entrance in performance watched by at least a thousand people. And the more she struggled with Jamie the more the excitement

excitement overwhelmed her. He had now gripped her with his haunches. Suddenly she saw the sound boom hovering over them and realised they were recording as well. She began shouting, "Get off! Get off! Jamie get off me you bastard! Get off!"

At once the director's voice came, "Cut!"

Jamie relaxed and slowly slid into a lying position, breathing hard, sweat breaking through the make-up. She pulled her blouse down and lay there too.

"Sorry," Jamie said quietly.

"Well," they could hear Jill Rapinsky saying in the background, "there's something in the can."

"Enough to bring a rape charge against your company," the director said.

"Oh come on Jonathan, what kind of talk is that?"

"But how can I use stuff like that?"

"If you can't use it baby throw it away!"

And she was off the set in a moment.

"That woman's a nutcase," the director said, sitting in his canvas chair. "Just wait till we see the rushes!"

Jamie got up and went to his dressing room without looking at Angela. The director came up to her and said, "Sorry about that."

She didn't answer. Later in her dressing room she looked at herself in the mirror and was appalled to see the excitement in her eyes. She didn't feel Dominic smiling any more. He seemed dead. Like crucified. He was lying in other people's arms like Christ in those deposition pictures. One of these people was Pauline. Yes, he did well to keep Pauline as his friend. She was probably better for him than a lover.

The girls came in to take her make-up and costume off but she yelled at them "Let me alone! All of you!"

They went abruptly. She leaned back in her chair and felt the moisture on her legs. And those fantasies drifted vaguely into her mind and out again. She wanted a shower, or two showers. She wanted to be away from Dominic for a week in order to get her body (his body) back.

What a difference there was between one man's love and another's. When she made love to Dominic she felt pure and good and healthy afterwards, it seemed the most wonderful thing she could do, with no remorse or darkness in it at all, nothing that had characterised her other affairs. Often, but often, she had let one of those rape scenes run through her mind while she was making love to someone so that the orgasm would be OK. With Louis, towards whom she felt no physical affinity whatsoever (oh he was good-looking and knew how to excite her), this had become a habit, and the moment he began kissing her these fantasies had taken over. He really believed that her heavy breathing and sighs were his work. And afterwards, after the climax, she had felt bad. Not towards him. If he was fooled by a lover that was his look-out. It showed how insensitive he was. She felt bad about herself. Making love shouldn't be like that.

And all that had become prehistory with Dominic. She'd really forgotten about it all. She wondered now that she'd ever been able to take pleasure in such things, and that absurd mental images had really had the power to produce excitement between her legs! How true what she'd said to him the previous night had been---she really did fall in love with him a thousand times a day all over again, as she saw a new aspect of him or their love.

She jumped up and tore the door open: "I want a shower! I want a shower!"

One of the wardrobe girls came running, "There's no shower, Miss Bourne, there's a wash basin!"

Jonathan Beane appeared. "We don't have showers honey, I'm sorry."

"Why the hell not?"

"Because that bitch Rapinsky does the hiring! You have to wash whatever it is in the piss-house!"

She went along to the lavatory and with toilet paper swabbed the moisture away, the warmth. She felt so ashamed. How could she face Dominic? She who had always found it easy, indeed enjoyable, to face her lovers after an infidelity asked this!

her lovers after an infidelity asked this!

When she returned to her dressing room Jamie was there. He looked pale, contrite.

"Angela, I just had to do what I did, I can't explain it."

"I love him more, more---!" she hissed at him.

"And get out of my chair."

He moved away from her dressing table.

"I don't feel sorry about it, I enjoyed touching you, I feel I know your body now, I was right to fall in love with you---!"

"OK," she said quietly, "so what are you looking like a beaten dog for?"

"Because I had to do it that way. And I screwed up my chances with you."

"You never had a chance with me anyway," she said, realising that this was cruel.

"I had an idea I wanted you to feel another man, to rescue you from him, from the hypnotism!"

"Oh don't talk shit!"

"It's true what I'm saying."

"I didn't say it wasn't. Shit can be true can't it?"

"See you tomorrow," he said on his way out.

"You'll be lucky."

She called Dominic and was surprised to find him home.

"I'm upset," she said. "Can you pick me up at the studio?"

"Sure. Be right over."

About twenty minutes later she heard him call out 'Hi Jonathan!', just outside her door. He strolled in, dressed in jeans and a T-shirt.

"What's the trouble?" he asked her.

"I don't want to work for these people any more."

"OK, show me the contract when we get home and I'll see what can be done."

"What contract?"

He smiled. "You didn't sign a contract?"

"No!"

"Well, that's great. You can walk out whenever you like. And you don't get paid anyway."

"Why not?"

"Let's go, you're kind of stupefied at this moment."

When she got up she let him kiss her but averted her lips.

At that moment Jamie walked in.

Dominic smiled at him: "Hi, Jamie. Moustache still paying off?"

"I guess so! See you Angela!" And he was gone again at once.

On their way out, crossing cables and passing by the cameras, Dominic was calling out "Hi!" and "Hullo there!" with a big smile, and getting warm reactions. She realised that camera crews liked him. That was somehow important to her.

She saw Jamie getting into his mini in the parking lot. 'The little rapist', she thought, but then disliked herself for thinking this. But how dare he of all people call Dominic sick?

When they got to the apartment Pauline was there and gave her a cheery hullo as if nothing had happened between them. Dominic murmured to Angela, "Go and lie down honey while I handle this."

She threw herself down among the cushions and closed her eyes. Really she wanted a shower but couldn't rouse herself. Dominic appeared in the doorway and said, "On second thoughts you may as well hear everything I say."

He sat on the edge of her bed and took up the phone.

"Everard around?" he asked when the call went through.

She heard a female voice at the other end but couldn't make out what was said.

"Tell him to call me right away," Dominic said and put the phone back without another word.

He sat gazing at her. "They gave you a pretty tough time huh?"

tough time huh?"

A few minutes later the phone rang.

"Hi, Everard. Was there no contract for this commercial for Christ sake?"

She waited and then Dominic said, "Angela, yes. She says she hasn't seen a contract." Then, "OK, Everard, keep smiling."

He put the phone down and began dialling another number.

This time it was for Jill Rapinsky. She too was unavailable and he said, "Tell her to call me right away."

Here the delay was longer.

"The dike's probably tied up with a woman in her office, literally," he growled half to himself.

The call came and he said at once, "Everard tells me you agreed on five thousand dollars for Angela on this commercial. That's chicken feed and I wouldn't even give you a show of her under-pants for that price but just the same get the money round to me by five this afternoon."

And he slammed the phone down.

An hour later, when she was taking a shower, the money arrived. A messenger brought a cheque in her name with a covering compliments note from Jill Rapinsky.

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It was a heavy still day with low mist and a hot unhealthy sun lurking behind, sending an unusual glow on to the roofs. A procession of at least twenty black limousines had travelled slowly to the cemetery west of Sunset Strip and they were now entering the tall gates where attendants were waiting. The hearse drew up at the crematorium chapel while the limousines drew round unctuously and smoothly on to the ornate parking lot where cement statuary looked vaguely uncomfortable on low columns and the grass was so trimmed and sprinkler-refreshed that it looked artificial, even ugly, menacing. The gravel cracked and slid under the heavy tyres, and the purring of the engines, so discreet, could hardly be heard. There were black-suited attendants at the entrance of the chapel too, waiting for the coffin, hats in hand and professionally lugubrious expressions on their faces. A slight breeze touched the bushes and awakened the dull mist a little. From inside the chapel came the sound of music, a quartet had been hired, and Mendelsohn was the chosen composer. To one side of the chapel, on a grassy mound among fuchias fuchias and dogwood, there vast wreaths, their ribboned cards glowing white. And there were massive bunches of lilies. Some orchids figured there. The rear window of the hearse swung open automatically and the six bearers, pads on their shoulders, walked slowly

round to place themselves under the coffin as it slid on rollers towards them. The attendants at the door straightened and it seemed they were doing all they could to show grieved concern, as much that is as was consonant with total immobility. Smoke was emerging vertically from the crematorium chimney. The flames were ready.

She saw Greg Merrytown get out of the first limousine, looking startled as if death had never occurred to him as a possibility before, and wondering how he should look---surprised, tortured or serene. His hair was still sticking up like it was at that night spot, and a ton of Brylcreem wouldn't have helped. He had a tight striped blue suit on which seemed worn out but rarely worn, as if he saw a special mourning significance in looking unattractive. Barry Kurtz was soon at his side, small and rotund. He had a pained look anyway, so that was OK. He looked round with startled eyes as if one of the attendants was going to tell him there'd been a mistake and he should be in the coffin, not the man who was. He clearly didn't like funerals. The door attendants were trying to smile at the mourners, a condolatory smile that stopped short of fun. In a few moments the limousines were parked in perfect line, side by side, and the mourners poured out silently, waiting for the coffin to go in. It looked heavy and the bearers swayed slightly. For a second it looked perilous.

The whole of the Bel Ami set was there (that is, the Bel Ami that had been cancelled and the second Bel Ami that, now, was just as dead). There were actors, film crew, directors, cutters, wardrobe and make-up assistants. She saw Jamie Somerson and tried to hide but then realised that this was a foolish thing to do. Jill Rapinsky got out of the limousine like a black cloth construction surmounted with a deathly white mask, most of it covered with sun glasses. Everard Hope looked entirely hopeless---it wasn't his scene and events like death were horrifyingly unnegotiated, their clauses without mention of percentages or retainers. He had his hands

his hands in his jacket pockets and his black shoes looked enormous. The suit was yellow. An agent didn't seem to need dark clothes. He would have preferred to come along in his VW but the organisers of the funeral, called Frontier Productions, put their foot down and said either you came in one of the limousines or you stayed at home. Everard should have been wearing black, seeing that this death had cost him half a million dollars. He didn't greet anybody. It was an agent's business to be everywhere, he seemed to say, and to be expected everywhere, therefore not greeted.

The actors were mostly elegant, casually so, although Jamie Somerson was in a sober double-breasted suit with matching dee-brown shirt and tie, but was no doubt because he was now star level. Perhaps Frontier Productions had dressed him. Sonya Steele was in a flowing white wool dress, presumably because at funerals people wore black. Max Pennance was at her side looking moral in a black leather suit, as if he could have foreseen this all along. A muscular grips, accustomed to pushing dolleys and no questions asked, couldn't help looking jolly even in black, and greeted everybody as he would in the studios. Perhaps he couldn't believe it wasn't a funeral sequence with a dummy coffin. The bearded actor who'd been at the first read-throughs of Bel Ami looked exactly as he was meant to in the film, except that there was now no film, with the result that he had the air of a man at dinner who spent a month preparing his speech and isn't even asked to propose a toast. Everyone shuffled into the chapel, Jill Rapinsky first.

Angela and Pauline walked with Dominic between them. They stood in the next to last row, and the other mourners either left that row empty on purpose or by an accident that suited them emotionally. That is, no one really looked at Dominic, therefore Pauline and Angela were disregarded too. Dominic wore a strictly black suit, very elegant with turned-back cuffs and narrow sleeves. Pauline was in striped maroon two-piece, while Angela had chosen her skin-tight dress with

the low-cut V-neck as the only black thing she had. She toned the neck down with a black chiffon scarf, and the striking waist with a black silk jacket. She looked a dream but nobody was supposed to look at her. Frontier Productions had barred photographers. She felt pinched and pale, and clung to Dominic, whose look was one of placid unconcern. She prayed that Jamie wasn't going to speak to her, especially in front of Dominic, but she knew there would be a reception afterwards at the Sheraton-Universal.

The limousines had crawled all the way from La Mirada causing traffic jams at the peak morning hour. By a peculiar logic these jams had caused further jams ahead so that the pace became even slower. They could have walked it faster. Everybody was hungry, as always at funerals. She sat between Pauline and Dominic in the limousine, with three other people opposite them, studio executives who just nodded to Dominic in a friendly it's-in-the-day's-business way and then said nothing. She wanted to talk to Dominic so desperately but of course they couldn't with everyone listening in. She wanted to cry not because it was a funeral but because she was out of a job with no scripts to read and nowhere to go. Of course great things were being planned for the future but being an actress she only believed the future when it happened. If Dominic had been more sympathetic towards her it would have helped but he was always about of the apartment or in San Diego or San Francisco or dining with a money man or doing these FM sessions (she had finally realised that this meant Far Memory) at Pauline's place in Florence Avenue. She'd spent hours alone in her room in the last fifteen days without the phone ringing once. She had phoned her mother and been told a lot of nonsense about how Beryl, a woman down the road who read the Tarot cards and was always supposed to be right, had spotted the fact that she was madly in love but warned her of unspecified dangers. Also

Angela had forgotten the time difference and woken her mother up at four in the morning.

The five thousand dollar cheque from Jill Rapinsky had made her feel independent but it hadn't lasted long. Everard had called her the same day and said she needn't worry about his cut, he'd already taken it straight from the Jill Rapinsky office.

"The funny thing is this," he had said. "Dominic nails a company down for payment on a contract that doesn't exist but he's not honouring any of his obligations on the Bel Ami contracts."

"Why don't you tell him?" she said, feeling stupid at once.

"What," Everard said, almost spitting down the phone, "an agent talk about money, never heard of it!"

And he slammed the phone down.

Jamie Somerson had called almost continuously. Sometimes he spoke to Dominic, and a smile would spread on Dominic's face. She hadn't told him a word about what had happened in the studio to make her quit. She'd tried to but he always made it impossible. He seemed to know that she had something important to say, and to avoid it. They'd made love since that time but it had been different on her side and he must have noticed. She felt sort of soiled. And she would go on feeling like that until she'd talked to him. She didn't get excited like before. Oh she loved it just the same, he belonged to her whatever the love was like, but God didn't seem to be in the room any more. Sometimes she thought she saw a look of grief on his face. But he didn't say a word.

Saul Weinand had given a stupefying party on board the docked Queen Mary in Long Beach Harbor. No one knew why he did, or why he chose a ship for it, and a British one at that, not a French one, though of course a French ship wasn't available. It seemed an odd way of announcing a film that was to be shot on terra firma and about Paris. Some said that it was because one of the stars was British, but Angela thought this absurd (with a flutter of pleasure).

Of course (so Dominic had said) Saul had got a beneficial hiring deal from the Queen's proprietors. But it still cost the best part of a quarter of a million dollars. You could justify it on the grounds of advance publicity. There were TV cameras everywhere, the trade magazines ran excellent columns on it, and it gave the press a chance to meet the new star Jamie Somerson. The title Ambition was seen everywhere, on ribbons strung across the dining salon, on banners and hats and even the table-cloths. That was the new name for the new Bel Ami.

Saul had walked round looking like David O. Selznick kissing the ladies on both cheeks, grabbing male hands and being photographed with Jamie.

"Only when he caught my eye," Dominic said, "did he feel what he was, a man in a helluva big debt."

She and Dominic and Pauline had been in a light mood that evening. They'd driven down to Long Beach Harbor in the Buick, Dominic's second car. Angela chattered about her Thirties idol Jack Buchanan whom she'd only seen on film, though she had all his records. She told them that his ashes had been scattered from the Queen Mary and that he'd made over fifty transatlantic crossings to appear on Broadway or in films. She sang them his career-hit 'And her mother came to tea'.

Pauline drove them towards Pier J. on the harbour and they saw the huge ship before them, brilliant with lights in the dusk as if about to slip anchor for another return voyage to Southampton.

The party had started off with caivar and champagne in the Queen Mary Playhouse, with a revue imported from the Mayfair MusicaHall in Santa Monica. The men were all in tuxedos, the women in every kind of undress. Angela wore the aquamarine gown from her commercial (the Jill Rapinsky outfit had sent it round to her with its compliments the day after the cheque). With some pearls Dominic slipped round her neck just before they left the apartment. She hated that sort of thing and almost threw them in his face. She liked a gift to be given to her straight out, not made into some sort of sentimental occasion

given to her straight out, not made a pretext for some kind of sentimental show. Like she heard once how a husband somewhere or other (there must be thousands of them) walked into the room on her birthday and just handed her a bunch of keys.

"What are these for?" says the wife.

"You'll find out if you take a look outside," he says, glowing with hubris.

And she walks outside and finds a custom-built Mercedes. Crap! Suppose she didn't like the colour or the make?

She told Dominic, "Never do that again. I don't like having things hung on me as if I was a dummy."

"Sorry lady," he said with an admiring smile. He loved it when she was like that.

All round the pros arch in the Queen Mary Playhouse there had been a tricolour ribbon with fleur de lys and Ambition in scroll-print. Straw boaters were handed round for the men, cloche hats for the women, all with Ambition on them. What a crazy evening!

One ribbon featured the names of the stars--- Jamie Somerson and Angela Bourne.

"Well just look at that," Dominic said. She thought he was mocking her.

TV cameras and hand-held 'bashers' followed her everywhere, she was asked for comments on the coming film (she hadn't signed a contract yet!) and she made a few trite remarks which Saul's publicity department had advised her on beforehand. Sonya Steele was nowhere to be seen and some said she'd refused to play in the film. Max Pennance was to direct just the same. After all nobody expected him to stand by his girlfriend anyway.

Once the contracts were signed shooting was to start, probably in ten or fifteen days, at the Burbank studios. The stages were already hired, Saul had bought a whole load of costumes off the previous Bel Ami production company (that is to say from himself and Dominic), and really the only difference between the first Bel Ami and the second was that Dominic wasn't one of the producers. Otherwise the participants were the same.

the same. Even Sonya Steele would join the company once she'd felt two days of unemployment.

There'd been nothing for Angela to do in that period. No one knew if the material shot for Jill Rapinsky's commercial would be used. She wondered that Jill hadn't asked her for further work, since that was what Everard had promised. It was all a bit peculiar. And that rape scene instead of a love scene---what was behind it? Did Dominic know, and was that why he avoided talking about it? She waited for the daily Everard call but that stopped. Meanwhile contracts were drawn up for Ambition, hers included. Dominic went through hers with a toothcomb and called Everard to negotiate further on certain clauses. Angela just couldn't understand his sang froid about all this.

"Why don't you disapprove of me working for a breakaway producer?"

"Because he isn't breakaway, I'm breakaway, and secondly it's what you want."

"And the devil can hang me?"

"OK, Angela, everybody takes the rap for what he wants! Jesus Christ, you don't want me to negotiate your contracts and thank you for it!"

Anyway, there'd been a lot of talk about Ambition in the industry. People who had previously said that 'another costume film' would never make it on the big screen were now beginning to wonder if this wasn't another Gone with the Wind. Angela was expected to do a Vivien Leigh. It should all have been very exciting, but somehow the excitement never got to the actors and actresses.

Jamie had worked in another commercial and a hand-held light, living up to its nickname of handbasher, had fallen within inches of his hand. Nobody had known what it was doing there, or why the sparks responsible had been carrying the thing round on a live lead. Nothing was being shot at the time. And within minutes the story was going round the set that it was an 'occult happening'. That had started a lot of talk about Dominic.

And then Saul, Weinand died. He'd been suffering

And then Saul Weinand died. Recently he'd been suffering from an extra-systolic heart flutter, and been put under observation at the Cedars of Lebanon. He felt giddy and depressed because they'd put him on a ganglion-block drug to set the blood pressure to rights. He'd been told to take it easy but of course, with Ambition about to be shot, and a stupendous bank loan to justify, he couldn't think of that. He collapsed on the stage at the Burbank Studios one afternoon and died two days later.

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The reception was on the second floor of the Sheraton and there was enough booze to sink the Queen Mary. The sideboards were draped in black crepe, and there were drapes on the walls too. The waiters were in black.

"But who paid for all this?" she whispered to Dominic.

He shrugged. "I guess his company."

As at the chapel, they were a little apart from the others, together with Pauline. Not exactly ostracised but no one made a point of greeting them. She could have killed Dominic when he suddenly appeared with Jamie, his arm round his shoulder.

"It isn't the end of the world," he was saying. "There'll be other films where maybe you and Angela can play together. And why, you've got enough star pull to insist on your female lead."

"That's right!" Jamie said, his chin buried in his neck, hardly daring to look at her.

She was amazed! She gave Dominic a hard look but he was refusing to register. She even suspected he was having a good time.

"What I don't understand," Jamie went on, "is why the Ambition project had to die with Saul. I mean, Jesus, all we have recently is films being set up and then pulled down again!"

"The fact is the banks shut down on it once his guarantees were in the hands of his family. I mean,

"The fact is the banks shut down on it once his guarantees were in the hands of his family. I mean, with me out of the project, there's no one they can trust any more."

Jill Rapinsky was passing.

"Hi Jill," Dominic said affably. She was amazed at how he could handle people! "Thanks for the cheque. And it didn't even bounce!"

"Well," she mumbled, "you have to thank God for small mercies."

It gave Jamie the chance to draw Angela aside, and Dominic didn't stop this.

"Would you still work with me if the chance came up?" Jamie asked her.

"Not the way I feel at the moment."

"I suppose you think that rape stuff was my fault?"

"Well you did it! You were the one who did the pushing, not Jill Rapinsky or the director!"

"Oh I don't mean they influenced, it just happened and Jill did her usual thing of cashing in on accidents. She's going to use that scene. She's convinced the producers to use it. They're changing the whole theme of the commercial."

"Are they allowed to do that?"

"Why sure! We're there to act, not adjudicate!"

He touched her on the arm. She was horrified to feel a reminder of what she'd been through in that scene--- a quickening of warmth inside her, a rush of sexual desire that had nothing to do with her. Had Dominic put them together to teach her something about herself?

"Listen Angela, I've got to talk to you---I've got to! Couldn't we have a coffee somewhere tomorrow?"

She turned away. She wanted to get rid of the warmth.

"Call me up tomorrow!" she said.

"OK!"

She went straight to Dominic and stood by him, so close that their sleeves were touching. It made her feel better. Jill Rapinsky said a quiet "Hi" to her but she didn't say a word.

Pauline was watching her. Ever since the quarrel they'd had her eyes had followed her everywhere. They were drinking champagne. Suddenly Angela felt a touch on her hip and started. It was Sonya Steele.

"You look great!" Sonya told her.

"You too!"

This wasn't sincere on either side because white billowy wool wasn't right for Sonya or the occasion, while Angela looked pale, with her mouth drawn down and too much eye make-up on. But sincerity was behind the compliments just the same, as they both knew. They liked each other and wanted to have this known.

Jill drifted off and Sonya smiled (diffidently, Angela thought) at Dominic.

"Remember," Dominic said, "how we used to have Saul round?"

"Yes!" Sonya said with a daunted expression.

"Know something?" Dominic said to Angela. "I found Saul in New York? He was a Broadway impresario and didn't know the difference between one play and another. I thought he was ideal for the film industry. He was getting two hits a year and ten flops so he was always in debt. The trouble was he followed his judgement and he didn't have any. Now that's OK in the film industry because it's all done by computer anyway. I mean you employ Jamie Somerson because he's now what we call king of the play dates, he can pull people into the cinemas the whole world over. It means his agent can ask almost any price for him at the moment, not a Marlo Brando price but a big one just the same. Now that's all down on the computer. You don't have to exercise judgement on whether Jamie's a good actor or not, you just reckon out how much you can afford. Now Saul was good at that. And he was good with the banks because he's always been a rich man in his own right. Now with me it's different where the banks are concerned. I never had a cent before I was thirty. I'm a whizz kid and the banks distrust whizz kids, who can lose today what they won yesterday. So I have to use my charisma. Once the charisma goes the banks don't open their doors to

the charisma goes the banks don't open their doors to me any more."

"Is there a chance of it going?" Sonya asked while looking in another direction.

"Judge for yourself baby!"

She laughed. "I can't see any signs of it!"

And Angela realised in that moment that the girl was still in love with him.

He'd never talked so much. And about his work, himself. Was it Sonya who opened him up? Had she herself failed to do this? A great sense of defeat came over her, and she felt it was deserved, in view of that horrible biological reaction to Jamie's touch on her arm. Anybody would think he was a seducer, a sex bomb, but it wasn't the case! So why had she reacted that way? She felt a sudden pain in her womb, a real pain, and wanted to be alone with Dominic, making love to him, forgetting the outside world.

He seemed to realise this. "Wanna go home?"

"If you're ready!"

"Come on!"

Before they left Sonya said, "I'd like to see you Angela, how about lunch together?"

"OK!"

"I'll book a table at the Chianti, it's in Melrose Avenue. For one o'clock, how about that?"

"I'll see you there!"

"That's bad," Dominic murmured to Pauline when they were outside. "Ex-lover has lunch with current lover."

Angela hugged his arm. "Do you think I'll be dis-loyal to you?"

"Not you. But she might. And how!"

He and Pauline laughed.

All through the funeral and the reception she'd forced herself not to think of all the glances he was getting, some surreptitious but others openly hostile. And how blandly he'd taken it all. More than that, he'd enjoyed it. The Killer!

She knew that was going to be the theme of Jamie's talk with her. When he called the following morning she said simply, "See you in half an hour at Denny's", then rang off without another word. She was learning aggression as a way of life!

He turned up just as she was walking in the door. They almost bumped into each other. He was wearing slacks and a sweat shirt, and he must have been to the beach the previous afternoon, after the funeral, when the mist had cleared. She caught a whiff of his eau de cologne and was almost sick, she hated it so because it reminded her of the rape scene. She chose a table as close to other people as possible, where they would both have to shout.

"OK," she said. "What's it about?"

"Do you have to be so hard?"

"Sure I do! You're here to try and get me away from the only man I've ever loved. Wouldn't you be hard?"

"So why did you come?"

"To find out what you think of him, what Hollywood thinks. It's important to me. I want people to love him and admire him, that's natural, it may be foolish of me but it's natural!"

"Listen just cool off Angie!"

"My mother's the only one who calls me Angie and I hate it."

"Sorry!"

He was getting into difficulties, biting his lip, and she started feeling sorry for him. But she wasn't going to let up.

"I'm seeing Sonya for lunch," she said, "so I shall be getting a double dose."

He began to look cool, and she judged that a sort of quiet sadism was taking hold of him.

"You know," he said, "Everard Hope overlooked a contract on that commercial job, I mean for you. It's the first time it's ever happened to him, one of his clients walk on to the set without a contract! Jill couldn't believe it!"

"But he had a verbal understanding with her."

"Oh yes."

"So what are you saying?"

"Nothing. I just thought I'd tell you. Another thing, Jill Rapinsky's a pain in the crotch but I've never heard of her screaming invective at a director before, nor has anyone else. And Jonathan Beane's at the top of his profession, there are just two other commercial directors who rate higher than him. How about that?"

"But what are you saying?"

"I'm saying lots of things have been happening, I mean unusual things, for the first time!"

"Yes?"

"I'm in love with you Angela, so what did I do, I tried to rape you! OK, it wasn't real rape, I tried to force it, I mean I was crazy in those moments, I didn't know what was happening, I wasn't conscious of anything on that set except you and wanting to get inside inside you! It wouldn't have made any difference to me if there'd been two thousand people watching! Can you see how crazy that was? Can you see how unusual, a middle-class kid, well brought up, Harvard and all that, filling the girl he loves with nausea without even thinking about it? Because that's what I did, didn't I?"

She looked away.

"I can't tell you how unusual that was for me! You know, I wait weeks for a girl to come round! I'm a Vergo and, Jesus, I'd hate to touch a girl anywhere if she didn't want it! You see what I'm saying?"

"Yes," she said quietly, "I see what you're saying."

"I wonder if you do. Because a dark force got into me that day. It had nothing to do with me."

This time she looked at him with interest. It had got into her too! Her excitement had had nothing to do with her---but nothing to do with him either, for he had no physical attractions for her!

"And a light falls on my hand!" he went on. "Did you hear about that?"

"Yes."

"Almost, anyway. And the guy couldn't explain why he was carrying the damn thing around, I mean the set was being lit but no hand-stuff was being used, it's obvious isn't it? And take the mist on those first rushes for the Jill Rapinsky commercial, none of the mess would have happened if those damned love scenes had been OK! Now that photographer's one of the finest in the industry, he says he just can't understand it! Another thing that happened for the first time! As a result of it the producers started getting stropopy with Jill, she was using up too much time! They started pushing her and she started pushing the director---until nobody recognised themselves any more!"

"And this is all the Killer's work..."

"How did you guess? And in the end he killed, didn't he? He killed Saul because he launched out on his own, he killed the original Bel Ami project and then he killed the second! And you're still with him? Jesus Christ, don't you realise that man's power! Everybody else does!"

She was looking down at the table, preparing a reply, or rather trying to control the confusion of her thoughts, which were rushing in too fast.

He'd already got up.

"Enjoy your coffee," he said, leaving his untouched. And in a minute he was outside.

How they looked up to Dominic, she thought. It made her smile. A girl came and asked if she could share her table.

She smiled and said, "You can have the coffee too is you like, my friend left it, he got uptight and walked out."

"That was Jamie Somerson."

"That's right."

"I played with him once at the Showcase theatre in San Francisco, bit parts, we were just out of college."

"You're a stage actress?"

"I'm playing at the Shubert in Century City, come and see us; it's a revival of The Twentieth Century, did you ever see it, it's a musical?"

"Yes it was in London! I thought it was great!"

"Oh you're English! Well!"

They rapped on pleasantly. It seemed to her about the first normal conversation she'd had since arriving. But, she reflected as she hurried out to get to Melrose Avenue in time to meet Sonya, why should she want the normal? All her life she'd yearned for miracles, extraordinary events!

As soon as the antipasto and the wine were on the table Sonya started in.

"You know Dominic and I were together once?"

"I think Jamie told me, yes."

"How do you find him these days?"

Angela sipped the wine and thought this was a thoroughly stupid question. So she didn't answer it.

"Are you still in love with him?" she asked insetad.

"Me?" It sounded too high-pitched to be cool.

"You know, Max and I may get married."

Angela shrugged.

"As a matter of fact Angela, I've never loved another man. I wonder if I ever will."

The remark made the restaurant look bleak and menacing to Angela, though she was knew it was warm and snug and nice. She had a horrible sensation in her middle! Did this great love happen to every woman he met then? She knew it was absurd, outrageous but doubts flooded into her mind. They hadn't made love the day before after all. Again Dominic had seemed to avoid a confrontation. And she'd taken a shower, two. To get rid of that awful moist feeling after being touched by Jamie, the feeling that had nothing to do with her! They hadn't slept a whole night together since that first time. And she had

no one to express her doubts to, no friend like the girl she'd just met at Denny's and whose name she hadn't even asked. How her relation with Dominic isolated her from people! Of course! He was too powerful for most, too rich!

"He's a son of a bitch of course," Sonya was saying.

"In what way?" She couldn't keep a tremulous uncertainty out of her voice.

"I never got my way with Dominic even about what I sprayed my body with! Jewellery, clothes, the books I read, the quality of the coffee I drank, the question of the pill, the coil or the diaphragm, he decided the whole damned lot! And it was great for a time. Then I realised he was choosing everything for somebody else! Whether she was imaginary or not I don't know but it wasn't me. So I wanted out. Maybe it was you he had in mind, before he'd even met you! For instance, you remember those pearls you were wearing for the Queen Mary party?"

"Yes! But you weren't there!"

"Oh I was there but not speaking to anybody. Well, those pearls went on me first. And they looked terrible on me. In fact I thought he just didn't have the right touch with a woman. But I suppose I was wrong. I mean, take that dress you were wearing on the Queen Mary---that was real nice!"

"But he didn't give me that! It was from the commercial I did with Jamie."

"I know." She laughed. "I'm sorry kid! You really didn't know that he had that dress specially designed for you? The producers of that commercial are like his twin brothers! In fact he knew two days before even Jill Rapinsky knew that you were going to get the job!"

"What?"

"That's what I always said when I was living with Dominic. What? I said it every day!"

"So it wasn't really Jill Rapinsky who wanted me in the commercial?"

"Sure she wanted you in it. But only because the producers did. And they wanted you in it because Dominic did."

"Good God!"

"That was another of my expressions."

"Well," Angela said, "at least he didn't try the dress on you first!"

"Oh he'd have been capable of it just the same. For Dominic anything he does has the stamp of absolute rightness, he's always been that way!"

"Is it true he went to a lot of shrinks at one time?" Angela asked her with a feeling of betrayal.

"Oh sure but partly it was a hobby. He liked to talk about himself. He knew he was going some place but didn't know exactly where yet. That was before he went into films. He was making a heap of gold at the time as some kind of middleman, nobody quite knew what he was up to except it was some kind of wheeler-dealing. He used to come on the set with me and that was how he learned about films and met everybody. Of course the more gold he made the more the boys tried to pull him into the production side. He got the usual cranks and phonies round him and he fell for some surrealist crap and lost fifty thousand bucks on a film nobody troubled to pre-view let alone distribute. It taught him a lot and he started treating films as a business. That way he was sincere at least. I mean he just looked ridiculous with all those art people round him! How can a human dagger look dreamy? Anyway the first films paid off, once he'd learned who and what to be ruthless with."

"And he stopped going to the shrinks?"

"Oh that only happened when he met Pauline. Really you know she was about the biggest thing that ever happened to him?"

"They had an affair too?" she asked with alarm.

"Are you kidding? Pauline lusts for gawky student types of forty or fifty. You'd be amazed if you saw them, which is why you'll never see them! She keeps them under lock and key. I think in some lonely downtown basement and they don't even have her phone number. She passes by now and then and throws them down a bag of meat."

"So why was she the biggest thing in his life?"

"Because everything changed after that. The girls stopped. He used to have so many girls calling him up they sort of annulled each other. I don't think he took many of them to bed. He seemed to be looking for someone all the time, that was the impression I got, and of course when we met I hoped it was me. I believe he started developing his fantastic will after he met Pauline. It was really amazing. He'd made a lot of bread already but now he started making millions. That was all her work. She showed him who he was, what he could do. She sort of made him daring. I think it was this reincarnation thing she was into. She was always crazy. Anyway, he really set her up, got her an apartment and fixed these far memory sessions, organised the archives and all that."

"But didn't I hear that it was Dominic who got her into it?"

"If you did it was wrong. The minute he met her things changed. It seemed to put his life on the rails. He knew where he was going. And now, by God, he seems to know every number before it comes up!"

"Yes!"

"No wonder," Sonya went on, "people think he killed Saul Weinand and put a jinks on Ambition. You know what he said to me at the funeral, 'Saul's dying saved him from the biggest flop and the biggest debt of his career'! And I bet it would have been a flop too, if Dominic says so."

"What do people call him the killer for?"

Sonya laughed. "It's a way of saying they're scared of him. And they're dead right. It wouldn't

do to have Dominic Latouche as your enemy!"

"Jamie Somerson says he put a jinks on the commercial we did together, and made that light fall on him!"

"Jamie Somerson's a kid, do you know I think he masturbates too much? You know, I think people are scared of Dominic's immutable stare---"

"The eyes!"

"That's right. I know a lot of guys who have the same, you get it smoking dope, if you augment the smoke with a pinch of coke and maybe a shot of horse! And our Dominic certainly did all of those things."

* * *

If Sonya had been bitchy it would have been better. Butshe wasn't the type. And her tone wasn't bitchy. And she was still in love with him. Angela walked home slowly, getting lung-fulls of car exhaust. If only she could equate the Dominic she loved with what was said about him! She wasn't really troubled by all this 'killer' talk. Nor the evil eye talk. It was worse than that. The unhappy fact was that she believed it, even though her mind said it wasn't true. She realised she was afraid of him, but that the fear was part of her love. She'd never heard of that before! Except perhaps once, when an actor had told her that his father's death had been the most terrible blow of his life.

"My God how I loved that man!" he said. "And how he adored me, I couldn't do bad in his eyes!"

"So many fathers put the fear of God into their children," she said, half-listening (and thinking of her own father).

"What?" he said. "Fear's got nothing to do with it. My father absolutely terrorised me!"

Of course it didn't mean to say she felt fear when they were making love. Oh no! The greatest safety and ---well, the first time in her life she'd been right inside life, happily and without any reserves or shame or wish for anything else! But when she was away from him especially then, she felt feathers in the tummy at

him, especially then, she felt feathers in her tummy at the thought of what he might be doing, planning: the fear was so vague, more an unease than anything else. But it was always there, unless they were actually in bed together. Even in the kitchen, with him sitting by her or opposite her, it was lurking. Perhaps it was his gaze, that undaunted, dark, still look that almost never wavered. Of course he never opened his heart to her. Nor she to him. It didn't seem necessary. In bed they cleared up all their problems, shared their secrets in a dumb way she'd never experienced before. It wasn't that. And even if he'd opened his heart to her, told her about his work and his (probably boring) conferences with his money men in San Francisco or San Diego, it would have made no difference to that vague premonitive trembling she felt in her---yes, almost in her womb.

And that reminded her. The pain in her womb. After that rape scene. Was it fear? Was her excitement in the rape scene caused by the fear? Was her horror of even touching another male part of that fear? Was she tied to Dominic in a way that might not, in the end, make her happy, but which she would have to go through with because the love was the whole of herself, she had no other form or meaning and didn't want to have any other form or meaning. These thoughts weaved in and out of her mind. It was rather a dreamy day. The sun was hazy behind the smog, the traffic deafening. People looked tired, hostile, and she kept her eyes down in case her habitual frank stare ('You're more Italian than French!' her mother had always said) provoked an angry defensive look. There was so much violence around. Sometimes she felt that cars were actually driving faster when she crossed the road, to hit her. People were so sick. They needed so much help. And they dared to call Dominic sick? Jamie Somerson called him sick? Wasn't she in a way right to feel fear? Because he was so strong! Who was it who'd said to her that Dominic knew every number before

it came up? And then there was her fear of losing him. The sexual excitement she'd felt with Jamie on the set had been part of that fear. Deep inside she'd been scared that Jamie's touches and kisses would become known to Dominic and he would shut her out of his life from that moment, offering no explanations, never mentioning her again, always with that mute dark stare. She remembered her father. He never wanted to hear about her troubles. It seemed to embarrass him. As soon as she started talking about herself she looked away. But when she did something wrong he didn't look away. He looked. And the terrible reproof she saw in those eyes were more than a thousand beatings. In fact he never touched her in anger. Yet she loved him too. He was living with another woman in Pimlico and together they ran a laundry business, picking up soiled sheets from hotels and delivering them clean. It somehow suited her father enormously, that work. Whenever she called on him he lavished little gifts on her, wrote her out a cheque, urged her to stay the night, hugged her and kissed her. She knew he suffered from his own disapproval more than anybody. But it didn't stop her fearing him. Even now she was taut with tension in his company in case she provoked those dark still eyes to turn on her like the mouth of a lethal weapon. He was good-looking, terrifically debonair, it was marvellous going out to dinner with him, he knew just how to behave with a woman, and the waiters always liked him. Thank God he didn't resemble Dominic physically in any way, otherwise she would have accused herself of falling in love with a father image!

When she got back she found Pauline in the apartment cooking a meal. She looked girlish, her hair wild, her hands covered in white flour.

"Like salt cod?" she said.

"I think so---I'm not sure I've had it!" Angela said.

She stood in the kitchen watching Pauline, who was dipping the cod lumps into flour and then laying them in hot oil with whole garlic and strips of tomatoe. The smell smell was delicious.

There was no canned music on. The frying pan made a gentle homely

There was no canned music on. The frying made a gentle bubbling noise, reminding her of times in the kitchen at home when her mother was cooking. They would talk together and she would tell her mother all her heart-aches, without offering to stir her hand to anything. At drama school she'd lived on boiled eggs because that was all she could think of to eat, except spaghetti and that needed a sauce she didn't have time to prepare even if she'd known how to do it. The result was that she'd more or less permanent constipation at drama school. Not that she'd connected this with the eggs. She'd thought it was just how she was made.

"Can I help?" she asked lamely.

"No that's OK?" Pauline added, "Or were you asking yourself that?"

"Probably!" She didn't get the sense of this at once but when she did she felt that Pauline had been listening to her thoughts about those drama school days.

"Dominic's gone to Venice," Pauline said.

"What?"

She was suddenly pale. The tips of her fingers began to tremble and she felt she was going to fall down.

"What's the matter?" Pauline asked her with a quick glance. "

"I don't know."

She pulled one of the chairs towards her and sat down.

"Gone to Venice! And he didn't tell me a word!"

They hadn't slept the night together since that first night. There had always been some reason, either she or he or both had to get up early the next morning and they knew they'd make love all night if they could. Or phonecalls were expected from San Diego, New York, Florida, and he didn't want her disturbed; anyway, his callers would be ringing the other number, in his room.

Still, she could have slept in his room, she wouldn't have minded the disturbance. Or they could have made love all night and risked

love all night and risked feeling dead next day. Had he felt her excitement over Jamie? Had he concluded that theirs wasn't a great love after all, because how could you get excited by somebody else, especially a person who had no attractions for you? She felt sick. She had no one else in the world! After him there was nothing!

She felt his eyes on her and in a moment of drowsiness, leaning against the table, she got them mixed up with her father's eyes in her mind. They were immobile in the same way, mute with disapproval. She couldn't bear it!

Her heart was beating so fast she could hardly take breath. They hadn't made love for at least two days. Only once since Jamie had touched her and that was the first time she ever recoiled from him, and he must have felt that. Of course they'd made love wildly like always but it had been a little too wild, just a shade contrived.

"Listen, Angela, you'd better learn how to control your emotions."

Pauline was sitting at her side.

"I'm sorry! It sort of shocked me!"

"Dominic going to Venice?"

"Yes!"

"Why should it do that?"

"Shit!" she cried, anger spurting like a flame into her cheeks. "We are lovers!"

Pauline laughed, laying a hand on hers. "I overlooked that! Sorry!"

Angela half smiled and then began crying.

As the cod had to be looked at Pauline got up and went to the stove.

"Boy," she said, "I wish I could cry like that. It must give you a lot of relief."

"Yes it does," Angela said, rather as a girl might put her tongue out.

"And what are you crying about?"

"Well I've lost Dominic haven't I?" she screamed at the top of her voice.

"Lost him? Are you crazy?"

the top of her voice.

"Lost him? Are you crazy?"

"He isn't here is he? He goes off to Venice without saying a word to me, but he tells you! So you've got him, I haven't!"

"But that's because I book him his plane seats and run his affairs while he's away. For instance I'm frying salt cod for you because Dominic Latouche says cook for her tonight, try salt cod on her, done the Italian way, she probably doesn't know it."

Angela stared at her. Relief like soft purring motion stole into her body and rested her face.

"But why does he do it?" she asked quietly.

"Because that's how he's made! He hates to tell people what he's up to until it's all cooked and ready to serve!"

"Do you know what he's up to?"

"Yes, partly, but only partly. And I wouldn't tell you for all the turquoise in the world!" She fingered Angela's ear-ring. "I see you've got my craze too."

"Why wouldn't you tell me?"

"First of all because you're a woman and wouldn't be grateful. And second I'd lose my job. And incidentally my apartment."

"Are you afraid of Dominic?"

"No, he's afraid of me. But I still don't want to lose my apartment."

"Sonya says you changed his life."

"I showed him who he was. He changed his life."

"Would you show me who I am?"

"Well!" Pauline laughed and Angela was amazed to see momentary tears in her eyes. "That is a compliment! Sure I'll show you who you are!"

She went to the frying pan again and Angela thought she did this to hide her emotion. Non-acting people were so funny, the way they handled their feelings! Angela's eyes were already dry, her heart was beating normally, she had a healthy flush in her cheeks

because he was still hers, hers! Emotions, after all, were things that came and went. Naturally, when what her London agent Barbara Gleeson called 'Angela Bourne's waterworks' were switched on it looked tragic. But a moment later the sun could be out again.

"I'm not going to tell you anything new," Pauline said. "You had that dream about the seventeen-year-old girl. You've already seen yourself."

Angela was silent, looking down.

"Oh that," she said.

"That's all I showed Dominic!"

"You mean his past lives?"

"One of them! If you've got one of them you've got 'em all."

When the meal was ready Angela thought she should at least lay the table. She went to get the knives and forks.

"Stay where you are," Pauline said. "Boss's orders."

"Do you always have to obey them?"

"My orders were to treat you like a guest, so that's what I'm doing."

Angela shrugged and sat down again while Pauline got the knives and forks.

"Seems a bit silly, childish to me," she said, looking down again.

"What, doing things the new way?"

"What do you mean, the new way?" Angela asked her.

"You want the kind of lover you've always had--- all over you, borrowing a couple of bucks to get himself a bottle of wine, in your bed even when you don't want him?"

Angela laughed. "You're talking about your lovers, not mine!"

"Maybe!"

"It's true this is all new to me," Angela said.

"I just don't know how he's going to behave next---"

"And you always did know with the other men."

"More or less."

"So don't complain if he treats you like a lady

sometimes. It's his weakness."

The fried cod was delicious. Pauline served with mashed potatoes sprinkled with grated nutmeg. And young carrots. Dominic had given her instructions about the wine. It was to be a Chablis.

"The trouble is he doesn't know a thing about wine," Pauline said. "I mean, there are Chablis and Chablis. This one is OK because I got the most expensive one."

They touched glasses. It wasn't properly chilled.

"First of all," Pauline said, "you think you were scared because you'd lost Dominic when you came in but it isn't the truth. That seventeen-year-old girl was scared, and about something else."

"What?"

"You'll find out in time."

* * *

Pauline slept in his bedroom. Angela lay on her bed among the cushions gazing at the ceiling. She almost wanted the canned music, just to remind herself of him. She'd gone to her room as soon as dinner was finished because she needed to be alone. She wanted to bask in that feeling that he was still hers after all, that nothing had changed despite that horrible episode with Jamie. But the fear continued to come just the same. It submerged her in waves as she lay there, like a force from outside. It even made her tremble ever so slightly. Suppose he didn't come back? Suppose---this was really absurd---he didn't exist and the love had never happened and she'd imagined it all? Suppose it was just another affair, with its expected aftermath of coldness and recrimination? She knew the thoughts were provoked by the fear, that the fear came first, like a ghost, stealing into the room, challenging her. Always she'd been subject to fits of panic which had no particular cause, or rather a cause (such as an unpaid bill) too trivial to take

seriously. She knew that the panic was a feature of her nervous system, not in the circumstances round her. And it was the same now. Nothing was wrong in her relation with Dominic, she had Pauline's testimony for this, but the fear undulated horribly through her cells just the same, like millions of ghostly bacteria. She watched her hand for a moment, saw the quivering at the tips of the fingers, hardly perceptible but all the more powerful for that. And that ache inside, not quite in the womb, lower, but somehow including the womb. She couldn't bear to be physically apart from him, it made this ache which never left her, she was only half alive.

She woke at three o'clock in the morning with the light still on and the door slightly ajar. She was still in the dress she wore for lunch with Sonya. She leaned forward to undo her bra. Then she remembered the dream she'd just had. It was about that seventeen-year-old girl. At least, she seemed the same girl. Or was this due to Pauline's proximity---in Dominic's room? was she influencing her in some way? But the impression remained. It was that same girl with the blonde hair and billowy dress, rather like the one Sonya was wearing at Saul's funeral. Or was it a sort of dream version of Sonya? Again fear gripped her as she thought, 'Is that why Dominic fell in lovewith Sonya, because he thought she was me?' The previous day Sonya had told her that he'd always treated her as if she was someone else, and perhaps this someone else was Angela, who had not yet come into his life. But why should this idea cause her fear? After all, it meant that henloved only her. But the fingers continued to tremble. It was the memory of the dream. That girl was someone else, in t's dream, but also her. It felt like having been become someone else, just for the dream. The girl was slimmer and a little taller than she was. She had long hair andintensely dark elongated eyes which the people round her said were the most beautiful eyes in the world. She had long delicate hands, much finer than Angela's. Angela found herself sort of looking up to this girl,

than Angela's.

She was an amiable girl, placid, and it seemed to Angela that she was much cuddled and cozzeted by her brothers and sisters. But she was also impulsive. She did things on a sudden decision which alarmed her family. Also this girl was pure in a way that Angela wasn't. 'But then,' Angela found herself thinking, 'she lived in a much smaller and safer world than I do, so there were fewer chances to risk your virtue.'

Then she remembered that the girl had black hair. But the previous dream said she was blonde, and very blonde. You could feel the sea in her hair, and how the sun had bleached it. But the fact remained. She was black-haired. There seemed no contradiction here. But it puzzled the awake Angela.

Yawning and stretching, and a wave of fear came over her again like a chill damp breeze from outside. Yet the dream excited no fear in her. After all, it had just been a glimpse of that girl, as she stood in a room. The room had pictures on the wall, and heavy curtains, but a glow came from outside, and you could see the flashing of water in reflections on the ceiling, as if there were a river outside and a bright sun. She was just standing in the room. Angela could feel her now, she was almost here! Gooseflesh ran all over her. She grabbed a blanket from the foot of the divan and huddled inside it, closing her eyes.

The previous evening, during the dessert, Pauline had said, out of the blue, "So Jamie Somerson didn't get what he wanted."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't you have lunch with him today?"

"No. I had lunch with Sinya Steele."

"Oh," Pauline said, flushing, "I thought you saw Jamie."

"I did. We had coffee together."

"And doesn't he want to get you away from Dominic?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm saying he didn't succeed. Or rather Jill Rapinsky didn't succeed."

"What's she got to do with it?"

"Hell, she was screaming at the cameras to start rolling, she wanted rape and she got it!"

"But why?"

"Because she wants to take away from Dominic the most precious thing he's ever had, you."

"But how would letting Jamie rape me help that?"

"She wanted you to respond. Some people say you did respond."

"No! I was horrified! All I wanted to do was take a shower and never see that man again!"

Pauline said, "I'm one of the people who say you responded."

"You weren't there!"

"I saw the excitement in your face afterwards!"

"Listen," Angela said, raising her voice, "what is this, some sort of inquisition?"

"If you like. That's why Dominic said I'm off to Venice, and I want you to give her the works while I'm away. That's what I'm doing."

By now Angela's mouth was dry.

"You can't see inside me," she said quietly.

"You don't sound too sure."

"So what if I did feel excitement, it was just an animal thing, I hated it, I got a terrific pain in my womb afterwards, I yearned and ached for Dominic----! Now will you just stop making this fucking insinuations you bitch---!"

She jumped up and jumped forward to grab Pauline's hair. But Pauline was quicker than she was. In a moment she was on the other side of the room, leaning rigidly against the sink, flushed, her eyes glistening.

"Why do women always go for the hair?" she asked, her voice quivering with distress.

"Just keep your fucking nose out of my business, that's all," Angela said, sitting down again.

"You still want me to show you who you are?"

"Oh!" Angela said sarcastically. "Is this part of it?"

"Yeah!"

"You're showing me who you are," Angela said under her breath.

"So why do you think you felt excitement when Jamie got on top of you? Damn it, you don't even find him attractive!"

Angela couldn't believe her ears. She gasped, stared at her.

"I tell you," Pauline went on, "we know everything! It isn't difficult! You just have to know the trick!"

"Was it noticeable then, in the studio---that I was getting excited?"

"I wasn't there. I didn't get my information from there either. I got it from you."

"From my face?"

"How could I get the fact that you aren't attracted to Jamie from your face? I know your history, your background! And I can find out what you feel in any situation."

"How?"

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

Pauline returned to the table and finished her mousse. Angela did the same. It was too delicious to miss---an orange mousse Pauline had made at home the previous day.

She'd gone to bed soon after, thanking Pauline for the meal in as handsome a way as she could.

In her room she shut the conversation out of her mind so that she could think of him, and the fact that he was still hers. But now it returned to her with the fear that had made her grab the blanket and curl up inside it like a baby.

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They had coffee together in the morning. Angela hadn't slept since waking at three. It was a heavy day full of ground mist and the traffic noises outside were muffled like in snow. Pauline busied herself doing the toast.

"Take cereal?" she asked.

"No thanks."

Pauline made her feel a stranger here. She yawned, felt forlorn.

"You look as if you didn't sleep."

"I woke about three."

"Did I upset you last night?"

"Not specially."

"Really?" Pauline said. "I meant to."

Angela disregarded this one. To make conversation she said, "Do you know what Jamie Somerson told me? He said he jumped on me in that scene because he was under a dark force. It wasn't his responsibility. What an alibi!"

"It's the truth. Jamie's about the only intelligent individual in that outfit."

"What makes you say that?"

"He talks the truth."

"He says Dominic's a killer."

"So he is!"

"What?"

"Dominic's a killer. I ought to know!"

"Jamie says he put some kind of evil eye on Saul and killed him."

"So he did!"

Angela laughed. "You must be mad!"

"I'm not mad. You may as well know who you're in love with."

"So he killed Saul Weinand."

"That's right. And he had a motive. Saul defected didn't he? And Dominic Latouche doesn't like that."

Fear was starting again, little feathers inside.

"And he made a handbasher fall on Jamie."

"Most likely." Pauline was starting at her hard, her lips pursed.

"You can't mean it!"

"Oh I can mean it! I've been watching it in action for quite a few years! I've warned Dominic not to use his powers, I taught him those powers but he's too weak to handle them properly."

"Weak?" He's the strongest man I've met!"

"Strong men don't use supernatural powers badly."

"So you taught him supernatural powers?"

"Yes I did," Pauline said, leaning forward so that her face almost touched Angela's. "Have some more coffee."

"Thanks I will." While Pauline was pouring it she said, "He says Dominic put a jinks on that commercial. Jill Rapinsky never screamed at a top director before."

"Dead right."

"Sonya says it's all rubbish, Jamie masturbates too much, she says."

"Sonya wants you to go into this love affair with your eyes closed, she wants you to be eaten alive!"

"But you told me last night that Jill Rapinsky wants---"

"I didn't say she wants Dominic to eat you alive. I said she wants you out of his clutches. She happens to think you've got a great potential as an actress. Sonya's just crazy, she's in love with him and wants him to kill you like he killed Saul."

The stillness was awful.

"And so Jamie's right that he was in the power of some dark force when he was trying to rape me, and the force was Dominic?"

"Precisely so, Angela, and your eyeballs'll pop out of your head if you don't watch out."

"And you're Dominic's friend?" she asked, trying to control the trembling.

"His best. By the way, why don't you put all this to him? He'll agree with every word!"

"That he made an actor try to rape me? Why would he want to do that?"

"Do you know, I've been trying to figure that out for days and I just haven't got an answer."

"Maybe it's just not true."

"Angela, if I were you, I'd go on the assumption that it is true."

"You're not just trying to frighten me?"

"I'm succeeding huh? No honey I don't like to see you frightened. I'm just telling you the truth because in the end it's you who've got to save him. I can't!"

"Oh Pauline, is it true he went to a lot of shrinks and had to have mental care?"

"Yes."

"Sometimes his eyes---!"

"We're all a little mad, Angela. What about all the shrinks Jamie and Sonya and Everard and Jill and Max Pennance have been to? And as to why they all end up in LA, don't ask me!"

"Have you been to shrinks?"

"I used to be one."

"But Jamie said you did some kind of ecology course."

"Oh I wasn't a professional shrink. I had my own therapy. As it worked I got a lot of clients. And one of them was Dominic."

"Was the therapy something to do with reincarnation?"

"No, it was a side-line at that time. I used to go straight into the lies. If you tear down the lies a person's telling himself you've got virgin soil to work on."

"What are my lies?"

"Oh that you're an actress and your career comes first and that kind of junk."

"But I am an actress!"

"You're a being! You haven't realised that yet! You're so busy with the personality junk you don't even know you're alive. That's why you're about the most selfish person I've ever met!"

"Is that what Dominc thinks too?"

"I guess so. He's pretty realistic."

"What?"

"The number of times you've said what this morning!"

"Is there a cure?"

"Sure. Love's the cure."

"But I've never loved a man so much in all my life!"

"OK!" Pauline said with a laugh. "So you've got your cure!"

She felt humbled and went to her room to dress. She found herself wanting a phonecall from Everard, even Jamie Somerson. Why? Perhaps to get in contact with the real world again. Or was it just to bolster up her pride?

Pauline passed her room and said, "I was thinking about last night. You've got quite a tongue on you when you get stirred huh?"

"I don't know where it comes from, my mother's so genteel you wouldn't believe it."

"I know where it comes from. It's that impulsive girl who was always scandalising her family with her rash actions! That blonde whose hair was really black!"

Angela turned pale. She stared at the door with open mouth. For Pauline had gone.

8.

It suddenly struck her. The name of that young girl was Caterina. She was sure of it. It was funny in dreams how you could be so certain of things even when they weren't presented to you clearly. Nobody in the dream had said her name. Of course you could say that she'd been influenced by what Dominic and Pauline had said. And by Dominic's scream on that tape. She didn't, on the other hand, want the name to be Caterina. She didn't believe in all that reincarnation nonsense! Secretly she believed that what happened in a far memory session was that you saw telepathically into other people's lives, even way back in history. But those lives weren't necessarily your own. So she wasn't on Pauline's side. She didn't want to admit to a living soul that the name was Caterina but it was. She knew it was. She wanted to cry. She was frightened. Her life had become a turbulent dream. Things had seemed so cosy and safe in London!

The flat was empty again and the phone didn't ring. Pauline had just disappeared---immediately after making that remark about the blonde girl being black-haired. Her mind was being pried into! And Dominic---could he see into her as well? Was she being manoeuvred like a puppet? Was even her love for him something other people had premeditated and arranged? And he didn't bphone. As if that too was part of a manoeuvre. She couldn't settle to anything. Again she had no script to pore over. Two films dead before they were born! What could be more dreamy than that?

She knew lots about Catérina. She was horrified by this. Yes, Caterina had brothers and sisters. One of her brothers in particular had guarded her jealously against other males. She didn't know ehen, what country. She still felt the stab of his jealousy. 'Still'! Why 'still'? That jealousy was like a memory in her own life. Her father, Caterina's father, had been an important man. Everybody had looked up to him. Her brothers had feared him called him 'sir'. Except that it hadn't been 'sir'. Another language. Something like 'sir'. She almost got it. Her tongue did a funnysslight movement as she tried to get it. She remembered telling her sisters that a man would visit her one day and he would be the love of her life. Therefore she wasn't interested in other men. She'd been good at seeing the future. Her father had sometimes asked her about the future, in a joking, patronising sort of way, He had frequently acted on her advice. Perhaps he'd been a politician of some kind. Up till the age of seventeen Caterina had had a good life. Such safety and quietness and intimacy as you couldn't imagine in the twentieth century. So it hadn't been the twentieth century? She wondered. Tried to remember. She remembered the sound of those carts on the cobbles far below the balcony she was standing at, in that first dream. But the sound of carts wasn't much to go by.

She paced around the flat all afternoon. Once she stopped, horror on her face. Suppose she was being hypnotised like Jamie said? After all, he'd been right about the other things, according to Pauline! Suppose she was in Dominic's mental grip? Suppose these thoughts about Caterina, the dreams, were being induced in her by Pauline? She broke out in a sweat.

Her thoughts drifted back to Caterina and this ironically made her feel calm again. She had the feeling that Caterina had attended a convent as a young girl. But she couldn't be sure. The sight and touch of nun's habits seemed familiar to her. Then asstrange

emotion swept through her, almost making her laugh. She was proud of having been Caterina, or rather of having Caterina inside her! She wanted to know more and more about her because in a quaint way it made her feel important, it gave her a sense of power she couldn't define.

She went to the lounge, wanting to look down into the street. The wide window let in a great deal of light, the flat being on the top floor. It was divided into three casements. She went to the one nearest the bookshelves, to open it. But the frame had no handles whatsoever. There was nowhere you could open it. If you tried to look into the street below your head touched the glass and all you could see was the top end of the shops, no people, cars. And you couldn't hear a sound. A slight hum perhaps. She went right along the window to see if there were handles but there were none. How could he live like that, closed in? Was he afraid of something? Was it true what Pauline said, that he wasn't strong after all?

She walked to the front door, picking up her bag on the way. A stroll might do her good. She might even grab a coffee at Denny's. Perhaps that nice girl would be there, or someone else she could talk to and make a friend of.

The door wouldn't open. She pulled and pulled. They'd locked her in! She had a moment of hot panic, pulling and pulling at the door, shouting something inchoate, a cry that seemed to belong to someone else. She ran to her phone but who except Pauline could let her out---and she didn't know Pauline's number!

She was just leaving her room again to return to the front door, half whimpering to herself (the possibility that she might have one of those panic fits that had wracked her student days frightened her), when the phone rang. She rushed back to it, swept it off its cradle.

"Miss me?" The voice was soft, so close to her!
"Dominic!"
"Anything wrong?"
"Yes!"

"Yes!"

"That's why I phoned."

"Why---?"

"I wanted to find out what was wrong, now spill it Angela!"

"It's the front door, I've been locked in and I get these panics, oh Dominic I wish you were here, why did you run away like that and not tell me anything---"

She was crying.

"Wait a minute," he said with a chuckle, "that was a whole mouthful. Which wrong do you want me to attend to first?"

She was gasping through her tears---"What?"

"Have you got your keys?"

"My what?"

"Your keys Angela! Pull yourself together!"

"They're in my bag I think," she whispered.

"Well just you get them out of your bag and go to the door and put the big key in the mortice lock and turn it, turn it three times, that's the lock about waist height. And don't hang up."

"Could you tell it to me again?"

He did, and she went to the door. The key turned easily, and she pulled the door open and closed it again.

When she got back to the phone he said, "Pauline probably locked you in last night. She's probably jealous of you taking up so much of my time and wanted to find you dead this morning. Died of panic at four in the morning, not a mark on her body, how about that?"

"It's all very well for you to laugh but I was scared---and you going away like that!"

"Know where I am?"

"Venice."

"Wrong again. A place called Padova. It has a university full of terrorists."

"Oh Dominic come back soon!"

"I'll call you again tonight, OK?"

"Yes!"

"And just you lock Pauline in next time. Maybe she'll die!"

She lay on her bed afterwards, listening to his voice

She lay on her bed afterwards, listening to his voice again in the silence. Why did she frighten herself like this? Why couldn't she realise he was hers and settle down and have a good time? She had money after all, she knew some pretty important people and what was there to stop her from calling Everard or asking Jill Rapinsky out to lunch? But she recoiled from these things. She wanted to stay lying on her bed until he walked in the room.

Pauline called her.

"You OK? I hear I locked you in last night, sorry."

"That's all right."

"Hear the news?"

"What news?"

"Jamie Somerson committed suicide."

* * *

Of course she didn't believe it. She held the phone in her hand so long her fingers seemed to get fixed. She thought she heard Pauline say that nobody knew yet how he'd done it but he was dead OK. Angela knew, she positively knew he had no suicidal tendencies and that Pauline was really and truly trying to persecute her now, with Dominic's help. Were they a couple of witches? She couldn't bear the thought of going to her room, as dusk approached. Who could she call up? The first person she wanted to call was Jamie. Yes! She tried the number but there was no reply. Then she tried again and a sharp female voice said, "Jamie's away for a time, please contact his agent." It was obvious she wouldn't have said this if he was dead. What news could an agent give about a dead actor? Her trembling increased. Oh if only Dominic would come back! She didn't mind him being a killer as long as he was close to her and she could feel his breathing on her cheek.

Why did they want to 'work' on her, Dominic and Pauline? Was it part of the process of showing her who she was? The horror of it, if he had killed Jamie!

When it was dark (she put on every light in the place

When it was dark (she put every light in the place on) she called Pauline. She wanted to show her that she wouldn't be persecuted.

"Hi Pauline!" she said lightly. "Listen, I tried these windows in the lounge today and they just don't open! Is there a switch or something?"

"No. They're designed not to open. You've got the air conditioning, for any temperature you want."

"You can't open them at all?"

"First of all they're double glazed, which is why you don't get fumes or noise. And secondly he's scared shit of throwing himself out if they did open."

"What?"

"Dominic doesn't like heights, they make him want to get down to ground level right away, on the giant wheel in the fun park he has to cling to the rails to stop himself jumping off."

"I get giddy like that too," Angela said softly.

"Oh it's not just giddiness. He really wants to throw himself off."

She wanted to put the phone down. This woman was filling her with horror!

"That's how Jamie did it," Pauline went on.

"Did you get the news? He threw himself out of the window. He's got a place two blocks down from me and right high up, a penthouse. He landed in a parking lot."

"I think you're horrible," Angela whispered and put the phone down. Then she picked it up again and left it off the cradle in case Pauline tried to call her back. Once more she tried Jamie's number and once more the sharp woman referred her to his agent.

She wandered down to the street. The noise was deafening after so long in the flat. There were masses of people on the sidewalk and the neon adverts were flashing overhead. It was about eight. She saw a headline YOUNG STAR DIVES TO DEATH. She hurried on. So he had done it, Dominic had done it! She burst into tears, her mouth puckering up in her effort to hide it from the passers by.

What was he doing in Venice? Something about that city frightened her. She'd been there only once and it had rained all the time. Yet she loved it too. It was difficult to describe, that mixture of emotions. He hadn't even told her about the weather. She felt the first anger against him. Why couldn't he stop playing at mystery like a child? But killing Jamie wasn't the work of a child! Would he kill her in the same way? Was he doing it now? Was she dying all the time, of fright and unhappiness? Pauline had said that this was what Sonya hoped! Perhaps Sonya knew him better than anyone, having been his lover and got out of it alive! She hated these thoughts as they sped through her head but couldn't stop them.

She thought of Venice in the rain again. She'd gone there with Louis, he'd been production assistant on some TV thing, that was when he'd been in stage management, before he became an actor. His job had been to contact a 'fixer' who booked the crew into hotels, hired generators and barges for the shooting etc. She'd spent her time wandering through the narrow lanes, listening to voices booming between the walls from her hotel room. The boom of voices from below! It reminded her of something. She'd heard it from the balcony where Caterina had stood, in that first dream. Yes! And the sense of blue sky all round, and water reflected on the ceiling in the second dream, and---but of course!--- it was Venice! Caterina came from Venice! That was why she'd seen white sails far out! And he was in Venice now! She felt such turbulence inside she thought she'd go mad if she didn't find company, talk to someone.

She hailed a taxi and asked for Denny's.

There she sat squeezed between two other people, she deliberately chose a crowded table, with just one place left.

"Mind if I share your table?" she asked.

They looked up, surprised. There were plenty of other tables going.

"That's fine," said one of the young men, with a slight smile at the girl with him. They took her for a nutcase, no doubt.

a nutcase, no doubt.

They talked so fast she couldn't understand a word they were saying. She ordered ham and eggs but wondered how she was going to eat it. Actually when it came she ate ravenously and then ordered an apple strudel.

Some more coffee was being poured into her cup when she remembered Dominic's husky voice on that far memory tape he'd played for her. He had mentioned Caterina. But that wasn't the only thing. When Pauline asked him where he was he said 'Venice'. And her Caterina was in Venice too. Was that what had taken him to Venice now? Was that the reason for his being mysterious about the journey? What were he and Pauline cooking for her? Were they actually programming the thoughts in her head?

She left the coffee undrunk and edged out of her seat. One of the young men said something to her but she didn't answer.

When she got back the phone was ringing in her room. She slammed the front door and rushed to get it. It was Sonya Steele.

"Hear about Jamie?"

"Yes---I didn't believe it---Pauline told me---!"

"He left a note for you. I was at his place and the police said they'd be getting in touch with you. I'd have gotten hold of the note and brought it round to you but they wouldn't let me, they probably want to know what's in it. I gave them your address, hope that's OK? It just said Angela on the envelope. There couldn't have been two Angelas in his life."

"Why did he do it Sonya?"

"Maybe the note'll explain." And she rang off.

Angela locked the front door and put the chain across. If the police came she wouldn't answer. She went to the lounge and put the television on very loud. For nearly two hours she sat there, most of it watching Gone with the Wind. She wept at some of the Vivien Leigh scenes, not because of Vivien Leigh but because

she might have made a performance like that if the second Bel Ami had come off. And now the star who said he wanted to play with her at all costs was dead! She was so tired she could hardly drag herself across to the television to switch it off. She sank back into Dominic's armchair and was asleep at once, muffled from the noise and fumes outside by that double thickness of glass.

At about four in the morning she woke to hear the key turn in the lock. It was Dominic!

"Angela!" he said, and she heard his footsteps coming towards the lounge. She was surprised to find her heart beating fast with fear, not excitement.

"Dominic!" she called out. "Dominic!"

She wanted him to come and lift her up from the chair as he sometimes did and carry her to bed. At the same time she couldn't open her eyes.

"Dominic..." she whispered.

There was silence. No more footsteps. She screamed. She heard the scream die away, still unable to open her eyes.

Minutes passed. Not a sound more came. She called out again, "Dominic!", but there was no reply. Perhaps he'd gone to his bedroom and fallen asleep, assuming her to be in her own room and not wanting to disturb her. Oh Dominic, she thought, even near me, a few yards away, you still aren't in my arms. And with that she fell asleep again.

It was long after dawn when she woke and she was surprised that the light from the window hadn't roused her. Her first thought was to go along to his room and peep inside. He'd be suffering from jet-lag--- of course that was why he hadn't come to her---so she wouldn't disturb him. He crept along the corridor. His door was slightly ajar. She looked inside and the bed-cover was there as before, undisturbed. No one was in the room. She stood there, her mouth half open as if to talk to him---remonstrate with him for not being there after all! So it hadn't been him! She walked to the front door. Of course, she'd put the

chain across the evening before. She detached it and tried the lock. No one had come in. She was stunned. She couldn't go on living here!

She was on her way to the kitchen when a bell rang. At first she thought it was the phone and ran to her room but then she realised it was the front door. She went there on tiptoe and looked through the peephole. It was a young thick-set man with a moustache. He had pleasant eyes and she didn't hesitate to open up.

"Hi," he said. "Mind if I step inside for a minute?"

He held out an identity card with his photo on it. The police.

"Why sure, come in."

She took him to the lounge.

"Like some coffee?" she asked him.

"No thanks. Listen, you knew Jamie Somerson?"

"Yes, I worked with him."

"Did he ever talk about suicide?"

"Not to me."

"He left a note for you."

"Yes a friend told me, Sonya Steele."

He nodded. "Would you mind very much if I knew what was in that note? We've got this check to do, I mean it's routine, we're pretty sure nobody threw him out."

He handed her the envelope and she opened it coolly.

"What does it say?" he said.

"You can read it yourself. You can have it."

It was a simple note. 'Dear Angela, forgive me talking like I did. Could I call round while Dom's away? Love J.'

"How did he talk?" the young man asked.

"It was in Denny's, the coffee house. He talked a lot of stuff about how I should leave the man I'm with."

"He was in love with you?"

"He said so, yes."

"And where's Mr Latouche?"

"In Venice."

He nodded, with a smile.

"I asked that because even his best friends don't know where he is sometimes."

"You know him?"

He got up. "Dom and I were at school together mam. We always had a joke, one of us was going to become a cop and the other a crook and we didn't know which. Well!"

He walked to the door.

"Oh," he said, turning. "Here's the letter. We won't need it. Jamie tried hard but didn't make it huh?"

* * *

Everard's office was the opposite of what she expected---rooms screened off from each other with six foot partitions through which you could hear everything and girls rushing about from one to the other. There was no reception, just an untended switchboard which was flashing like mad, but one of the passing girls saw her and with a nod and a smile disappeared into Everard's cubicle. He emerged in shirtsleeves, with half-moon glasses on.

"Hi Angela, come along in. Like a coffee?"

"No thanks."

"Tough about Jamie."

"Yes."

She sat down in front of his desk, which was hardly visible for scripts and thumbed books.

"Know why he did it?" Everard sat as he too sat down.

"No."

"He'd have been great in this series."

"What series?"

"The Diaghilev series. Didn't Dominic tell you? That's why he's in Venice."

"Oh!"

She must have looked hurt because he added, "Oh, he just likes mystery, that's all!"

"Am I in it?"

"You're playing Karsavina, the young dancer. One of Diaghilev's favourites. He took all his favourites to Venice, you, Pavlova, Nijinsky. Know something? Nijinsky danced the first steps of L'apres Midi d'un Faune in St Mark's Square. He jumped up from the cafe table and did the steps in front of Diaghilev and Diaghilev said it was great. Dominic told me."

"So he's researching all this himself?"

"Well not exactly. He's fixing up the production. The financial side's OK. Diaghilev was probably fonder of you than any of his female dancers. I mean, OK, he liked Nijinsky but part of that was wanting to get into his pants. With you he was a real friend, you were about the only one he really opened his heart to, among his dancers. What I'm trying to say in halting agent's language is that this is a hell of a part, the star part apart from Diaghilev who's going to be a real heavy, we don't know who yet but he might be British, a real heavy. You see, Angela, Diaghilev loved Venice. People said he looked ten years younger the minute he got there. He really uncoiled in Venice, every year. And he died there. Know what? Some witch predicted---this was in Russia before he started the Ballet Russe---that he'd die on water, and he died in the Venetian Lido, did you ever see that Visconti film Death in Venice, well that hotel was where Diaghilev died, can you beat that? Dominic told me all this on the phone. So he's building up Venice big in the film. Sort of beginning and end. The rest is Paris round the turn of the century, when he made his first hits with the Ballet Russe. Imagine it, Bakst, Picasso, Ravel, you name the artist and Diaghilev had him! There never was a greater impresario in the history of theatre Angela, that's why this is a role for you and the film for you, so maybe destiny had a role in pulling down those two Bel Ami films. Know something, Dominic has a nose! The money men are clinging to his shirt tails now that Saul's dead. They say Latouche can do no wrong, the Bel Ami series would

say Latouche can do no wrong, the Bel Ami series would have a pain in the crotch, and Jamie would have committed suicide in the middle of shooting anyway, people reckon that being on the set with you all day would have driven him crazy. Know something, that kid used to call me up a dozen times a day asking where was Angela, couldn't I find a film where you could work together!"

"Was Dominic going to have him in this series?"

"Oh sure!" He looked doubtful. "Why, don't you think he was?"

"I don't know."

"Anyway the contracts are all here, shooting starts about the middle of next month, and you see Angela, what makes it all so neat is that the Bel Ami sets can be used, the costumes and all that, so nothing's been lost, Greg Merrytown and Barry Kurtz are wild with excitement, they say it was worth staying close to Dominic. Well, it certainly looks unlucky to go the other way doesn't it?"

"Oh," he said before they parted, "Jill sends her love and wants you to know that she thinks you as Karsavina is genius casting. And, before I forget, there's a lot of money! I mean, you're getting a fee like you was queen of the play dates already!"

That was why he was so excited. He saw her to the door, hugged her briefly and said, "Promise me something?"

"Yes?"

"Don't look down on me when you're up there!"

"Up where?"

"At the top of the bills of curse!"

She walked away with her hands deep in her pockets, head down. A fat lot there was to celebrate! She hadn't yet really woken up to Jamie's death. The sky looked bleak, with rosy sun gleaming through thick smog. She didn't know where she was walking. Jamie had tried to warn her but she'd been deaf! Really she was the one who'd killed him! Without her he wouldn't

have incurred Dominic's wrath! She remembered Jamie's desperate kisses, and his hands on her breasts, and for a hateful moment she felt regret that she hadn't responded to him completely. She knew that was just reaction but oh, what a great love she'd felt before and now it was all ruins, mangled in a lot of talk about yet another series.

She looked up and crossing the road ahead there was a funeral. One black car followed another, very slowly. Was it Jamie's? She almost asked it aloud. Then she randedown a side street and went into the most crowded coffee shop she could find.

* * *

He phoned again, late that night. She'd been walkinground the flat unable to sleep, afraid of hearing the key turn in the lock again when nobody was there--- andof seeing Jamie---once she thought she saw him gazing at her like her father usedto gaze at her, seemingly from far away, reflectively, reprovng.

"I wanted you so bad lastnight," he said. "In fact I came to see you, did you fel me around?"

"Oh Dominic it frightened me out of my wits, I heard you come in the door and I said Dominic and you said my name but then I didn't hear any more, I was terrified!"

"If you hadn't been terrified I would have come in further, don't you see that? It was your fear that stopped me. We could have made love, anything, so why do you fear these things Angela?"

"Because I do, I always have done!"

"You'vegot death all round you baby, that's why, you don't understand you're eternal, you take on human form from time to time but you yourself go on for ever. You can't stand funerals huh?"

"No!"

"Has Jamie been buried yet?"

"Oh Dominic don't! I can't stand hearing it mentioned!"

"Will you let me come to you tonight?"

"Oh Dominic please don't! I screamed last night!"

"But what the hell are you made of, Angela? You think it's flesh? And what made your flesh? It's spirit, but you're afraid of spirit, and yet you're made of spirit, can't you damned well think it out?"

"I don't understand what you're saying," she said.

"OK. So I'll give you spund sleep tonight, a whole ten hours of it. And when you wake up tomorrow morning remember I promised you this and gave it to you."

She was quivering. "I wish we could be ordinary people for a bit, I don'tb understand all these things!"

"Ordinary? You mean deathly!"

It was lovely hearing his voice, and the sound of his breath, slight, on the mouthpiece. It tired her out. She couldn't think any more and felt an exhaustion she'd never experienced before. She went to her room and undressed quickly, then slipped into bed, after leaving the door ajar and the hall light on. She slept right through till ten in the morning. And when she got up she'd forgotten his promise, and its fulfilment. She hurried into the kitchen to make coffee.

She'd just ground the beans when the phone rang. It was her London agent.

"It's eight in the evening," Barbara said, "I thought I wouldn't disturb you too early. Listen, the producer of that Diaghilev series was in my office today."

"Dominic? He's in London?"

"Mr Dominic Latouche. Is he a friend of yours?"
(as if she didn't know).

"I'm living in his apartment as a matter of fact," Angela said flatly.

"Well," Barbara replied with a chuckle, "what could be more friends than that? Anyway, he wants you to play Eliza Doolittle in a revival of Pygmalion."

"What?"

"A stage revival, naturally. He wants to open it

in San Francisco and then do a tour of the States and presumably end on Broadway. He said everybody's seen My Fair Lady but now we need a revival of the original play. He said that Shaw wrote a naked scene in the original play which everybody misses out. That was news for me but I checked it out and it's true. It's Eliza's bathroom scene, her first bath. He says ^{that} you naked on the stage, if only for a couple of seconds, would hit people between the eyeballs (I quote him) and he could already see the headlines on the entertainments page of the big circulation dailies, A BATH? NOT BLOODY LIKELY! It's something to think about, Angela. I think he's crazy but a hell of a nice guy, and those eyes, wow! I admire your taste. He wants me to fix him up with an all-British cast, that's why he came to me. I said, what about Equity? They'll never allow you to tour the States with an all-British cast. 'Really?' he said. Anyway I thought I'd warn you. By the way Angela, is it true what Everard tells me that they call him the killer?"

"Yes it is," Angela said.

9.

"What's all this rubbish about me playing on the stage naked?" she said, clinging to his arm as they walked against the wind.

He'd bought a stetson in London, and a long dark blue autumn coat which made him look debonair and important. His face was smooth, serene. ~~She~~ He wanted to hug and kiss him and kept making little dancing steps.

"What's that?" he said. "What are you talking about?"

The wind cut across the airport from the sea, sweeping the words out of their mouths.

"What you said to Barbara Gleeson, me playing Eliza Doolittle and being naked!"

"I wouldn't have you naked in a play or film or anything!" he shouted. "Not for a million dollars! So what are you talking about?"

"It's what you said to Barbara Gleeson!"

"Who the hell's she?"

"My London agent!"

"Oh! Yes I get it! I only called on her to see what she was like, to get a whole picture of you. And I had to say something. So I said that."

"You made it all up?"

"Sure I made it all up!"

"But she's started casting the play for you!"

"What?"

"She's casting Pygmalion for you!"

"Oh I'll give her a cut off Diaghilev or something."

Pauline was waiting in the parking lot with the Buick, his second car (they'd driven to the Queen Mary party in it).

"So what did you think of Barbara?" she asked him when they were on their way.

"She's OK. She'll never get you anything big though."

He and Pauline had just nodded to each other, not even pecked each other's cheeks. He murmured something to her about "San Diego OK?" and she nodded mutely. They had a language all their own. Angela still clung to him in the car. She could feel he was proud of this. He kept turning to her and laying his right cheek on her lips. She could smell his hair, his skin, and she kept stroking the back of his hand.

"I paid Angela a visit the other night," he told Pauline, "and it scared the shit out of her."

"I think you'd scare the shit out of me too," Pauline said. "One day you'll take your visits too far and find a crazy lunatic when you get back home."

"Jamie been buried yet?" he asked.

"Yesterday," Pauline said.

"Many people there?"

"Like at Saul's funeral. In fact it could have been the same one. Maybe it was organised by the same production outfit."

"It was," Dominic said. "Mine."

"What, you handled the two funerals?"

"That's right!"

"My oh my!" Pauline said. "Did you learn some tricks in the nuthouse!"

"But how do you mean, you organised them?" Angela said. "How could you?"

"Well, Saul's company was partly my company too. We had an outfit called Frontier Productions, so I charged funeral expenses to the company. And I did the same for Jamie as a kind of tribute. And also because he was to star in Saul's film. It seemed kind of right."

"Just look at your man's face," Pauline said without turning round. "You'll see it's perfectly serious."

"It was."

"I told them not to send you an invitation to Jamie's," he said to Angela, touching her lips with his cheek again.

"Aren't you a little bit sorry about his death?" Angela asked him.

"As sorry as you are. And it was his choice. He threw himself out, not me."

"Angela's thinking about what people say, that you did throw him out!" Pauline said.

"Oh that." He smiled. "At the time of his death I think I was in a gondola with a money-man from Milan. He thought I was crazy to hire a gondolier to plough his way across a choppy lagoon in freezing weather but it's good to give the impression you're crazy, people credit you with special powers, provided you're rich already of course."

Pauline didn't say another word the whole journey.

Back in the apartment, when they were all in the kitchen together, Angela asked him, "Why did Jamie do it?"

He turned to Pauline. "Didn't Jason Crow explain that one?" Then to Angela, "That's the guy who came here to see the letter Jamie wrote you, the cop. We used to call him the crowbar at school because he had such powerful biceps. He talked to Pauline after he'd seen you, he said Jamie threw himself out of the window because he was crazy about you."

"Oh Jesus!" Pauline cried. "Come off it man will you?"

"What's wrong?"

"Just quit the subject! Don't you see you're killing this poor kid?"

He bit his lip. "OK. Yeah. I'm sorry."

"It's not my fault he fell in love with me," Angela said in a hush.

"Oh he doesn't really care about that," Pauline said. "He's not blaming you. It'll take you some time to understand Dom's wavelength."

"That's true," he said. "Here---"

He drew Angela on to his knee and kissed her.

He drew Angela on to his knee and held her mouth in his fingers, then kissed it.

"I guess I go too fast. I love you, I love you---"

He pulled her head on to his shoulder and held her tight. She began crying.

"Angela Bourne's waterworks," he murmured.

"Good God!" Angela said through her tears, lifting her head. "Did you get that chatty with Barbara Gleeson?"

* * *

They slept together that night in her room. All night she had her arms round him. They didn't make love, he was dead tired from the journey. They were whispering to each other when he suddenly fell asleep.

"Dominic," she said, "when Jamie and I did that scene together and Jill Rapinsky kept shouting at him to get right on top of me, I felt desire, it wasn't really me, it was something that happened in my body but I felt so bad about it afterwards, I felt I'd been disloyal to you and wanted to talk to you but you never gave me a chance! I hated being touched by another man Dominic! He touched my breasts---!"

"Listen, he's dead!" he whispered back in a hissing way.

"I know but I've still got it in my mind, it's like still in my body and I think I took about three showers that day to get rid of the feeling!"

He said nothing to this, just lay there.

Then he made a little chuckle. "I never thought of that before," he said, "rape---Rapinsky---! Yeah!"

"Don't make a joke of it please."

"Don't you see," he said, "it's the killer's way of being sad?"

And he was suddenly asleep. She lay awake until two or three listening to his even breathing, touching his hair with her lips, sometimes stroking his cheeks, being close to him, feeling the warmth in her legs and breasts.

He didn't wake up until after eleven the next morning. She heard Pauline moving about outside, and she could smell the coffee. But still she lay there with him, wide awake, her arms round him. At a few minutes past eleven the canned music began drifting discreetly through the rooms. She could have killed Pauline for that but noddoubt they were his orders.

"Angry?" he said, kissing her on the lips.

"Why can't you use an alarm clock instead of that awful music?"

"It reminds me of home. Listen to it, it's Vivaldi, the Venetian composer."

"But it's all sugared up!"

"Jesus Christ, do you expect me to take it neat? Don't you put sugar in your coffee?"

She leaned on top of him, drew her body right over him and said, "Why are you always pulling my leg?"

"To find out who you are."

"I thought you knew already."

"I've got a few clues. But you block me all the time with your fear."

"Do I?"

"We could be together even when we're apart because what we've got together doesn't depend on the body but you won't see it that way. You don't even know what I'm talking about do you?"

"You're talking about the spirit."

"Oh shit!" he said. "I knew you'd bring up that word! It went out with Al Capone!"

She laughed and they kissed. He pulled her over him, her breasts, her stomach, kissing her. She realised he'd made her clean. She didn't feel tainted any more! The old excitement was back! It was a certain softness she couldn't describe, her vagina---her whole middle---melted in a way that was almost beyond feeling, made her float.

They took a shower together, played about. Pauline kept calling out from the kitchen "Coffee time playmates!"

Suddenly he caught hold of her as the water streamed down on their heads and said "You look just like Caterina!"

She pulled herself out of the warm water and grabbed

She pulled herself away from him and grabbed a towel.

"Dominic why can't we just get on with our work, there's so much to do on this film, why do we have to dig up past lives?"

He pulled himself out too, blinded by the water.

"Gimme a towel!"

She threw one in his face.

"Answer my question!" she said.

"That's what I mean," he said, "you don't want to know who you are!"

"But I'm me now!"

"That's what you think, it's what most people think, but it ain't right!"

When they were in the kitchen sitting in front of hot waffles and coffee he told Pauline, "I don't want any phonecalls for an hour."

"OK."

"I'd better say this in front of Angela though she won't like it. I found out a whole load of stuff from this guy in Padova. Remember I told you I was a Frenchman? With a big property in Rouen? And I was in Venice? The question is what was I doing in Venice? Now this guy in Padova specialises in Venetian history. Maybe you were a diplomat, he said, giving me a funny look because he doesn't get paid for reincarnational enquiries every day of the week, in fact he doesn't get paid like I paid him for anything! I said no, I didn't feel I was a diplomat. Maybe more like a soldier, an officer. He said OK but it was very rare that a foreigner could live in Venice without some official position, the Venetians didn't like foreigners, not living amongst them leastways, and they kept a sharp eye on them, they had agents everywhere, I mean the government did. They didn't even allow foreigners into people's private homes, there was a law against you, a Venetian could go to prison for entertaining a foreigner in his home, that was an ancient Venetian tradition, this professor told me. So how could you be a Frenchman living there, especially a soldier, they couldn't stand soldiers, being a mercantile people, and foreign soldiers

a soldier, they couldn't stand Italian soldiers let alone foreign ones, being a strictly mercantile people. They would have had a foreign soldier out of the city (or in it for eternity) inside a day."

"But you definitely were in Venice," Pauline said, "I know it."

"Right!" Dominic said. "Well all of a sudden he stops and says hey wait a minute, just like a character in a film. You could have been in Venice at the time of the Spanish Plot in 1618. **What was that, I ask.** We don't know exactly, he says, because Venetian internal security was always so tight even the historian can't get to the bottom of certain events. All we know is that in the course of two or three nights five hundred men were murdered. They were strangled, thrown into the canals. No one saw a thing except the corpses floating. Most of those men were foreign soldiers. Mostly Dutch. But there were French as well. And I reckon, this professor said, that you might have been a French officer brought into the city to organise those foreign troops."

"But I thought he said Venetians didn't like troops of any kind?" Pauline asked.

"He did. But foreign troops were definitely allowed in the city. And some people call this Spanish plot a French plot. They say that the Venetian government wanted to overthrow Spanish rule in Naples, and invited some French officers to get a small army together for that purpose. Then the Spanish got wind of it and, because you never argued with a Spaniard at that time, the Venetian government panicked and decided to get rid of the whole army, just like that. Hence the floating corpses. The tthe government put it about that the dead foreigners were Spaniards who'd been plotting to overthrow the Venetian republic, so crowds went to the Spanish embassy and tried to sack it. And this was the alibi largely accepted by the historians."

"So you could have been one of the officers who ended in a canal?"

"I don't think so. I think I was murdered

privately---by Caterina's family or even by Caterina herself."

"Oh great!" Angela said. "So I'm a killer too. No wonder we're in love!"

The other two laughed.

"I told him her name," Dominic said, "something like Foss, Caterina Foss, and he said it could have been Foscari, that was a famous Venetian name, and one very much in top political circles at the time. It was possible, he said, that I'd had an affair with this Caterina and her family had found out about it. An affair with a foreigner was unthinkable for a Venetian, the family's honour would have been stained for generations, so maybe I was done away with quietly. And it feels like that," he added, gazing at the table. "It never felt like I was suddenly grabbed and hustled towards a canal after dark, or leapt on. It was a considered business, a betrayal. I can't help feeling you betrayed me."

"Really?" Angela said. She wanted to make a joke of it but his eyes said no. And she remembered Jamie, feeling that warmth inside when he touched her breasts, and the sense of betrayal. She flushed.

"Now what I'd like you to do Pauline is to get your ass along to the UCLA library and find out all you can about the Spanish Plot, and now we've located the place and the century I guess we should have another FM session, just to see if I can't get my name, and maybe one of two other names. What do you say?"

"OK."

"Would you like to come along Angela? Listen, it's the only way of getting over your fear! I'm going right ahead with this because I found you this way, I looked out for you for two whole years and then I spotted you on that clip Barbara Gleeson sent across. We've got to find out what we did to each other in the last life so we don't do it to each other again, do you get that? There are things I'm scared of---"

"Like what?" Angela asked him.

"Well, Jesus, people call me the killer and Jamie died and Saul died and people say I put the evil eye on 'em and---!" He sighed and sat back in his chair, his eyes closed. "You know, I can't say they're wrong. I can't say I didn't do it."

* * *

She was astonished at how quickly he went under. There was the close smell of people who had been there that afternoon, sweat and perfume, a class of forty. Pauline put Angela in a chair behind the recording console while he lay on a mattress in a far corner. She handed her a pair of earphones. Within a few minutes of Pauline's first instructions ("OK, I'm going to ask you to breathe deeply, inhale to eight heartbeats, exhale to ten and listen to the gap between inhalation and exhalation, you can hear eternity there") he appeared unconscious. All Angela could hear over the earphones was his deep breathing.

It went on for ten or twenty minutes this way, with Pauline saying nothing over the microphone. Then he made a slight convulsive movement. A sort of shiver.

Pauline whispered, "Anything coming?"

He had the same croaky voice as on that tape. "I nearly heard my own name. Dammit! Liga---Liger... And Caterina's around. I can feel her, not see her. She's very concerned, very intent on me getting the right names. She wants all this cleared up. They died together!"

"Who did?"

"We did. We died together, Caterina and I."

"Where?"

"I don't know. But maybe it wasn't really together, what I mean is our bodies were together in the end, I can't tell how."

"Do you see other names?"

"I still get Foss for Caterina, maybe Foscari is right. No it isn't right but it's near it."

"OK."

"I got another name just then. I could see him,

"I got another name just then. I don't know who he is. But he's connected. With Caterina's family maybe. He isn't Venetian. He may be English. It's something like Henry Wad, Watt maybe, Henry Watt."

"Is he in an embassy? Or maybe he's French?"

"No he doesn't talk my language. He's quite important. He might be in an embassy, yes. He talks to politicians, he could even be ambassador. It's a lovely day. Caterina's in some sort of disgrace. This is before they find out about our love."

"Who finds out?"

"Her family. But the family's been in disgrace before. Also because of a foreigner, maybe a love affair with a foreigner, it seems to weigh on Caterina, she sort of does the same thing, brings about the same disgrace out of love for that other person in the family who fell in love with a foreigner, hey am I rambling?"

"You're doing fine."

"That's all I've got. I'd like to sleep. There's a wonderful sunshine here. You don't get air like this nowadays."

Afterwards she asked him what it felt like to be underhypnosis and he said, "Well you're on two levels, you're back there and you're here."

"But how do you know you're not imagining it?"

"Because you're just watching. You're not doing anything. And you'll see, those facts I gave you today are history! Not even I can lie down and imagine history!"

At home again she wondered if he'd been spoofing it, lying there on the mattress. This thought made her pause. Wasn't it just the kind of thought that divided her from Dominic? Wasn't that what she'd always said about her mother's friend Beryl, with her cards? But Beryl had always been right, nearly always. She remembered what her mother had told her over the phone, "Beware of unspecified dangers."

"Know something?" Dominic said to her at dinner that evening. "You're getting interested in other people. You're starting to think about them."

She looked over his head into the distance. "And before I just thought about myself?"

"That's right."

"How do you fall in love with somebody else if you're always thinking about yourself?" she asked him.

"You fall in love with an aspect of yourself. You recognised that French officer sitting in an open Bentley about four hundred and sixty years after you last saw him. Or rather, Caterina saw him. It had nothing to do with us as we are now. We didn't know what had hit us, right? We hadn't got to know each other, we hadn't even met. We just looked at each other in the traffic, wham!"

They ate cheap at Joe Allen's, then went on to F. Scott's and ended up listening to coutry music at the Palomino on Lankershim Boulevard.

"When you said today about Jamie and Saul, you couldn't really believe you killed them!"

"No?"

"Well how could you? Just thinking about them?"

"Yep!"

"But how?"

"Thoughts kill Angela! Just sit and think about your own death day in and day out and you'll be dead soon enough."

"But somebody else?"

"Maybe I've got very powerful thoughts."

"You actually sit and wish them dead Dominic?"

"Of course I don't!" He flushed with annoyance, agglow under the smooth olive skin. "It happens if I know they've done something bad to me. Not even bad--- just sort of against me! And I just have to think of that and well this kind of thing tends to happen. I have to be careful how I think. It started happening when I became more than Dominic Latouche, know what I mean? OK, you'll say you don't know even if you do. What I mean is when I saw my past lives I got a new kind of power in this one, I could see round corners, round death. It made me think of death as not such a big deal as I used to."

"You aren't afraid of death?"

"Death doesn't scare you?"

"I don't know. I'll tell you what I think. I'd go very cool. Not a year before or a month before but right then. So the answer is sure I'm shit scared of the idea but once it comes I'll be organised."

"Will you ever think that I've done something bad and kill me with your thoughts?"

He laughed. "Why, got something on your mind?"

But a moment later his face went very dark. Next day he got Pauline to drive him out to the crematorium off Sunset Strip where both Saul and Jamie had their names in the book. He left some flowers in the chapel. Then he passed by St Patrick's, a catholic church down from Pauline's place, and lit a couple of candles there, the biggest he could buy. Pauline told her he prayed and looked for a priest to confess but there was nobody about.

"I didn't know you were a catholic," Angela said in bed that night.

"I'm not," he said. "I just use their facilities."

She didn't say a word about her second Caterina dream. She felt she didn't want to 'encourage' them. But was this the real reason? She didn't want anyone to know about Caterina. It was a secret, perhaps a lovely one. She felt Caterina was in all her dreams now, somewhere. Not that she believed in what Pauline and Dominic were doing. Caterina was different. She was a delightful creature who somehow belonged to her. But how was it Pauline and Dominic knew about her too?

He came to her bed every night now. She knew those deaths were on his mind. She always fell asleep after he did, enjoying the sound of his breath and the warmth radiating from his cheeks, and the serenity with which he slept, utterly still, as if thinking something out with his eyes closed. And he woke like a child, his eyes opened slowly and he gazed round innocently. What an unfathomable creature he was. She hugged him in sleep and kissed him but he didn't wake up. Some-

times she talked to him. One night she remembered that he'd said 'I love you'. Funny that it should have gone out of her mind. It made her laugh with pleasure, she stroked his bare shoulder and kissed his eyebrows, put her lips on his for a time, not kissing him but just feeling them there as his warm breath touched her evenly. No, she didn't just think about herself any more! Her career? It seemed that he gave it more thought than she did! And sometimes she provoked him to wake in the middle of the night and make love to her. She would press against him and let her warmth sink into him, all the time pressing her lips to his face, letting her breath mingle with his. And he would wake slowly and still in half-sleep run his hand down her back and then over her breasts, and begin kissing her neck.

Once, just after he'd fallen asleep, the horrible thought occurred to her that he'd killed Jamie for her and she was proud of him. Even Saul he'd killed for her! It was a night-thought, half dreamed, but it lingered the next day like a sour taste and she wondered what was happening to her. She tried ringing her mother to get back a feeling of normality but she wasn't in. Sometimes she went to the coast for a few days with a friend---it was unclear whether male or female. Angela pulled her leg about it and Nicole always blushed. She often told Angela that she felt a child with her. She loved to go to her first nights--- "It's like seeing all my family come out on the stage, your face goes through a hundred expressions I can recognise from my childhood."

She announced in the kitchen one morning that she wanted to grow her hair long. A picture of Caterina flashed through her mind---and the glance Dominic gave her suggested that he knew this. She turned away. She'd love hair like Caterina---black but bleached in the sun!

"Know what I found out in Venice?" he said. "Did you ever see those wooden balconies up on the rooftops? They're all over Venice. The women used to sit up there in the sun to bleach their hair. That's right! The altana, they called it, the place where they took

"The altana, they call it. They used to wear straw hats with wide brims, only they'd cut the top of the hat out and pull their hair through so that it fell round the brim, get it? I was at some guy's house and he took me up there and we had lunch under a sun umbrella and he told me about it."

Altana, she could hear the word---hear her brothers and sisters running up the wooden stairs behind her, while she combed her hair over the straw brim and saw white sails far out on the lagoon.

"Your face is different," he said.

"Is it?"

"You're standing there looking so beautiful---!"

For a moment she thought he meant on the altana. She had to force her hands not to go through combing motions! And she could smell the sea. Feel that warm air. As Dominic had said, you don't get air like that nowadays.

The phone rang and he left the kitchen. Again she thought, 'What's happening to me?'

* * *

Pauline could only find the books she wanted at Berkeley, San Francisco, so she'd flown there. This was her calling.

"I've tracked down your Henry Watt," she told him. "I went into deep concentration and I saw it was something like Wott and I found this Sir Henry Wotton who was the English ambassador in Venice at the time of the Spanish Plot. I don't know why he comes into your picture but I'm trying to find out now."

"Be careful of those gurus up there," Dominic said, "especially the ones with pimples!"

Afterwards he said to Angela, "You see? I nearly got that name right. And she'll get some important information through that guy. Maybe you were his illegitimate daughter!" he added with a laugh.

She loved to see him laugh. It was more a rippling chuckle he made, never a coughing outburst. It made her feel

chuckle he made, never a coughing outburst. It melted all the tension in her.

It was true what Pauline had told her, there was some weakness in him. More, a fragility. She loved this. When she lay awake with him in her arms she was aware of this and it made her feel so close to him. She sometimes touched his nose lightly with the tip of her finger, to feel how fine it was, and she put her finger under his nostrils to feel the softness of his breath. Or she ran it against the bristle on his chin, to feel the contrast with his soft firm skin.

She could see the fragility in his eyes sometimes too. A quick vulnerable glance could reveal it. And she discovered why his gaze could be frightening. His eyes were dark, hooded, immobile when he concentrated on something, and that was because he was looking from somewhere far away, beyond life, maybe from one of his other lives. He never seemed quite here and now. Yet he did too. But this person he really was---the person behind---was looking all the time, observing human actions with interest and dispassion. It was this dispassion that unnerved people.

In bed on the night of Pauline's phonecall he said to her, "Know what people call you on the set---Killer Two!"

"What?"

"They say I've found my match. They say you got Jamie Somerson to fall in love with you, you fattened him for my kill."

She sat up in bed.

"But people are crazy!"

"People don't know who they are Angela," he murmured. "So how can they know others?"

"And you take it like that! Why don't you tell them?"

"Tell'em you're not a killer? And do you think they come up to me and say how's Killer Two?"

"Killer Two!"

"Are you blaming me for what these bums say?" (she'd moved away from him).

"Yes in a way."

"It's OK for me to be called the killer but not you?"

"Yes because you've developed all these powers but I haven't, I haven't done a thing except come here and fall in love!"

"But you fell in love with the killer just the same," he said with his rippling chuckle.

"And what set are you talking about? There's no set for the Ballet Russe series because you haven't started shooting yet. Or have you? I wouldn't put it past you!"

"It was one of Jill's commercials, I move around, I keep my ears to the ground."

"And I suppose you've got money in it."

"In what?"

"In the commercial."

"Sure. You don't think Jill Rapinsky eats out of my hand for nothing do you? She said to me once 'Sure I love you Dom, I mean I don't wanna die!'"

"Yes it's all a joke to you isn't it? I suppose Jamie's death is a joke too!"

"Now come on," he said, pulling her down towards him. "Take it easy."

"I'm sorry," she whispered. "But Killer Two---! That's awful!"

He said nothing to this.

After a time she said, "And does Everard talk about me like that? And the girls in his office?"

"Probably." He yawned.

"You just don't care what people think about you do you?" she said.

"No."

"Do you care what I think about you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I care what you are. Not what you think. Did you ever hear about that French philosopher who said 'I think therefore I am'? That's wrong. What I say is 'I am therefore

is 'I am therefore I don't give a shit what I think'.
As for what other people think---!"

She lay thinking just the same. Killer Two!

"People are horrible!" she said.

"No they're not."

She couldn't get over it. Her face was hot, she had a bad taste in her mouth. And she'd never be able to work on the Ballet Russe set, knowing what they were all saying! And it made her feel implicated in poor Jamie's death. She couldn't get it out of her mind that she had killed him. She remembered that look the cop had given her when he said "So Jamie didn't make it huh?" It was like saying she was a whore! Just because she was living with a rich man! Dominic was to blame for all this! He had this power mania and of course it trickled off on to his associates. Jamie had almost called Pauline a witch, she'd put a hyponotic spell on Dominic or something. What rubbish!

She began cooling off. She could feel his warmth spreading through her, and his neck was so soft on her arm. She touched his cheek with hers. That fragility! How horrible she was to blame him in her heart. She kissed him lightly, ran her lips delicately over his eyebrows---she loved to do that.

"What do I do not to care like you?" she whispered.

But he was asleep.

She nudged him roughly. "Hey!"

"mm?"

"How do I get like you, not caring what people say?"

"Make a billion dollars," he said.

10.

She found herself waiting for Pauline's return with excitement. Suppose she'd found things out about Caterina which had happened in the two dreams? But what had happened in the dreams? Really nothing. At the same time she felt she knew all about Caterina, just from seeing her standing there. She had an odd sense that she wasn't yet conscious of how much she knew about Caterina. And her love for the French officer? She was aware of a dim but somehow awful excitement, it was so deep down she couldn't recapture it a moment after it disappeared. It had something to do with that officer. And---yes---there was something like the involuntary excitement she'd felt with Jamie in the studio. A warmth inside, a flood of warmth, that was somehow illicit.

"Well here's how," Pauline said, her notes on the kitchen table in front of her. "There was a Comte de Ligeaux who got involved with the Venetian republic and who certainly died there in 1618. Does that sound like the name you had?"

"Yes it does," Dominic said, his head down, utterly concentrated.

"His whole name was Alphonse de Ligeaux. How do you like it?"

"OK. It sort of fits."

"Now we know he had a big estate and a chateau near Rouen, which is one more clue in your favour. He was related to the powerful de Guise family and involved in a lot of unofficial diplomacy. You know what I mean,

these big families governed their countries from their private homes and bot the king and the church had to reckon with them." She looked up. "I can just imagine you in that role."

"Right!"

"He was a prominent figure at court, naturally. One day a Venetian came to him with a proposition. The republic, unofficially of course, would like to invite him to Venice for a time, perhaps a year. His job would be to build up a small army of mostly Dutch soldiers with the objective of removing Spanish rule from Naples. Now being a de Guise you had no love of the Spanish. There'd been a terrific feud between Philip of Spain and the de Guise family in the previous century, and now that Philip was dead and the Spanish empire sort of crumbling it seemed to you a good opportunity to do a grab. The viceroy of Naples at that time, the Duke of Osuna, was a friend of yours and in fact you'd already got wind of the plot through secret envoys of his. The duke was all for it. With the help of the unofficial Venetian army he would remove the Spaniards around him and become a Venetian or French satellite. The plot was financed partly by him and partly by Venice."

"So I went to Venice?"

"You did. You lived there for over a year. And then I guess you got murdered together with all the other foreign soldiers."

"Is that all?"

"For the moment. I've got a photostat of Sir Henry Wotten's papers and I'm ploughing through them at home. They may come up with something."

"And what about Caterina? Any clues on her name?"

"Well if it was Foscari it didn't figure in the Spanish Plot."

"Listen," he said, "get on the line to this guy in Padova, you'll find his name on my pad, Toni Morelli is his name, now ask him to dig into the Foscari archives and see if they had a daughter named Caterina around

that period. Or any similar name. Got it?"

Her name wasn't Foscari, Angela knew that. It was very like it but not Foscari. She almost formed the name with her tongue. And she enjoyed the fact that the other two didn't know it. She felt a sort of glee about that. Did Caterina have a strong sense of mischief. She could almost feel her laughing inside.

Next day Pauline phoned before breakfast.

"I think I've found a lead, I'll be right over."

She was with them by the time breakfast was ready.

"There must be a reason why you remember that Wotten name. Now I've found a whole lot in his papers about a man called Foscari. Could that be Caterina's name?"

Yes! Caterina almost shouted. Yes! That was her name. She remembered her father, his voice and the smile that won him so many women. She said nothing, held herself still in her chair.

"Antonio Foscari died during the night of April 20 1622. He was strangled in the ducal prison."

Why? She felt the alarm deep inside. What had happened? Why didn't she know?

"But he had nothing to do with the Spanish Plot," Pauline went on. "He had an affair with an Englishwoman called Lady Arundel, or so it was said. They had houses near each other in Dolo. Now then political security in Venice was so hot you hardly dared look at a foreigner in the street. There were government spies everywhere. And sometimes they did a frame-up, either for bribes or to get noticed. A spy saw Antonio go into Lady Arundel's house several times and denounced him. Venice was very touchy at the time. There was a tense and suspicious atmosphere, probably because of the Spanish Plot four years before. Antonio was arrested and thrown into the ducal gaol and as usual where noblemen were suspected of having betrayed the republic they were garrotted, that is strangled with catgut. He was accused of plotting the overthrow of the republic with the English."

"What's the connection with me?" Dominic asked.

"I think he may have been

"What's the connection with the rest of the story?" Dominic asked.

"I think he may have been Caterina's father. It's just a hunch, based on the fact that you remembered the name Henry Wotten. Now after Antonio's death Lady Arundel went to Henry Wotten and said she wanted to see the doge to clear Antonio's name. She'd had an affair with him but there was nothing political in it. He tried to discourage her because the charge against Foscarini had been high treason and the Venetians didn't mess around on that subject, she could get herself quietly removed. But she went to the doge just the same. She told him what she'd done the English ambassador. And she demanded (she was quite a toughy) that the senate officially proclaim her innocent of any political motives in seeing Foscarini. And the senate did just that. A year later the spy who denounced Antonio confessed that his evidence had been false, and he was arrested and executed. Antonio's name was cleared posthumously and he was reburied with full honours at the Frari, which is one of the top churches in the city."

"So what do you think?" Dominic said, turning to Angela suddenly with something fierce in his voice.

"Are you Foscarini's daughter?"

"How do I know?"

"You know dammit, you know!"

She just looked at him. She wanted to say something, a lie. But she couldn't.

"Do you know?" Pauline asked her.

All she did was look at Pauline across the table, her eyes rather haughty and her lips pursed. Dominic was watching her. That look wasn't really hers and she knew it. She'd never looked at anyone like that before but she felt a terrific certainty, a dignity she refused to be approached. Pauline blinked, looked down. And neither of them went on with the subject.

"So," Dominic said. "Get on the phone to that Morelli again and tell him what you know."

"OK."

When she'd left the kitchen Dominic touched her arm and muttered, "Having an affairs with foreigners

When Pauline had left the kitchen he touched her arm and muttered, "Having affairs with foreigners ran in the family huh?"

She laughed. She couldn't help it.

The evening she phoned her mother again. Dominic had gone out for a business meeting with Merrytown and Barry Kurtz. She was amazed how far away her mother seemed. She gazed before her, listening to her mother's voice, trying to feel contact but finding none.

"I saw your father yesterday, he sends his love."

"Oh will you give him mine?"

"And what about the love life Angela?"

Her first thought was 'How dare people enquire about my love life which is only for Dominic and me'. Then she realised what an unusual question it was for her mother.

"Why do you ask?"

"Well I think something's happened to you. You sound different. I feel you're different."

"Is that good or bad?"

"Shouldn't you be able to answer that question?" her mother said.

"Oh I know the answer but I wondered if you do."

"Angela, what is the matter with you? Why don't you say you're madly in love and that's that?"

"But that's not what you wanted to know! You said I was different and I wanted to know how!"

"Oh for God's sake Angela, it was only something that came into my mind! You sound very wrought-up."

"You've been saying that since I was sixteen, and if it's true it doesn't make things better."

They were on the phone nearly thirty minutes. It was an expensive way of saying nothing. Also she'd got her mother at eight o'clock in the morning before her first cup of tea which was always a bad time.

But where did that feeling of assaulted dignity come from? She'd felt it when Dominic asked her if she knew she was Foscarini's daughter and she felt it when her mother put an intimate question to her. Her feeling was 'How dare these people impose themselves on my privacy!'

on my privacy!'

She went to her room and opened one of the wardrobe doors where there was a full-length mirror. She looked at herself. She was different. She swore she was taller. She remembered Dominic looking at her a few days before and saying something like why are you standing there looking so beautiful. She'd never looked beautiful like this before. The dignity was there in her body. Of course she'd had so much love and that smooths out the rough lines and, well, does a kind of divine therapy on the body. The absurd thought crossed her mind that she'd had two men's loves, or rather one man's twice over. She'd had all the ecstasy of his love when she'd been Caterina, and now it was repeated, perfected, finalised!

What was she doing with such thoughts? She couldn't even say she believed in reincarnation. Perhaps she was just going along with Dominic and Pauline, swept up by their absolute belief. And he did so want her to believe. Their love seemed to depend on it for him. And a woman does oblige a man in this way, she knew that.

But really it didn't matter about all that. It wasn't only that she was taller. Her hair had subtly changed. Or was she imagining that? Were her dreams about Caterina influencing her? Her hair was finer. Her eyes had a steadiness she'd never seen in them before. And a certain haughtiness. And mischief. A lot of humour. Wildness too. They didn't have that 'Bourne sparkle' as Louis had once called it any more. She wasn't Cleo. She wasn't flirtatious. She'd always told her sisters that only one man interested her and that was the man who would come to her one day, a foreigner. This thought made her giddy. In this life she had no brothers and sisters and yet she could feel them! Then surely Dominic and Pauline must be right? How could you imagine such these things? How could you imagine a girl like Caterinawhom she could describe

in detail? For instance she wore clogs, colourful ones at least ten inches high. Now how did she know that? And how was it possible? Whoever heard of clogs that high. But it was true.

And was she slimmer? Was it a more perfect line? She knew she was going to have to take classical dancing lessons for this Karsavina part, and be at the bar for hours every day. Dominic had said so. Everard had fixed up with the dance school. And here she was already prepared for it. She was sure Caterina had danced, taken lessons at home. Of course very different dances but agile, requiring slimness. Oh those white sails out on the lagoon---she suddenly remembered them!

The man at Padova university called at midnight. Dominic had told him to call at any time of the day or night, and had given him Angela's number as well as Pauline's.

He had traced Caterina. She was Antonio Foscarini's daughter. She had died at sea in 1618, he didn't yet know how.

3.

11.

You either hate Venice or love on your first visit. It is difficult to have any emotion in between.

On her first visit Angela had found it damp, smelly and slippery. At low tide the canals became filthy ditches, with a fearful stink, at high they were lugubriously oily and dark. Fog descended on the roofs early in the evening, stinking of the chemical works at Marghera. The continual footsteps in the narrow calle outside her hotel window had depressed her. And voices had boomed between the walls all night.

But on the way to the airport to return to London she'd felt such a regret that she'd started to cry. Of course Louis had said something silly about "Oh don't cry darling." She loved crying. He'd put his arms round her shoulder and she'd actually felt comforted! What a silly goose she'd been, a slip of a girl. She'd let him persuade her that the tears were an emotional reaction to something or other (they were having some sort of row at the time, they always were).

Now she knew what the tears had been for. She hadn't wanted to leave her city. The city of her birth.

* * *

She recognised some of the crew at the airport. There was the rosy-cheeked grips she'd seen at Saul's funeral and he was smiling cordially to everyone just

as he'd done at the funeral. He had a small whipcord hat on which gave him a jolly appearance. A few of them nodded to her. She recognised other faces from the commercial she'd done with Jamie. Thankfully no one came up and talked to her. She was quickly out of customs into the taxi launch that had been ordered for her. Luckily the crew couldn't see the taxi launches from inside the customs shed and she could slip away unseen. She didn't want to start envious talk about how she got preferential treatment as the producer's mistress. These things worried her. She was an actress and liked to get with everybody---the backstage staff, the technical people. A joke with them when you were feeling scared could save you at the right time. She didn't like this star feeling. Principally because she wasn't a star. She hadn't set foot on a stage since that commercial, a good two months back. She'd been working hard but all the work in the world couldn't substitute for relating to an audience or a camera. She'd picked up that word 'relating' in LA. Everyone was trying to relate. At the moment she was trying to relate to nothing. The launch edged out of its little harbour and then, gathering speed between the wooden stanchions that marked the navigable waters, put its nose gently up. It was a nice feeling. She kept putting her hand to her face nervously to touch her skin. The departure had been dreadful. She hadn't slept all night because of leaving next day. Anyway they'd made love all the time. She'd cried a lot. Asked him why she had to leave alone. He just smiled and said "Oh don't be a baby." Of course he'd taken her to the airport but that had been worse really. He'd almost had to push into the passport wicket. It was awful to depend on someone like this but she felt she didn't exist any more. She hadn't eaten on the plane. Thankfully she'd travelled first class so no one tried to chat her up. They offered her champagne but she shook her head. She had the earphones on nearly all the time, listening to a sort of classical Venetian pot pourri. There were panic moments when she felt inclined to rush to one of the hostesses

inclined to rush to one of the hostesses and shirek
 "Let me off!".

He'd decided to make a feature film, not a television series, because it would make a better showcase for her. This had meant telescoping the action to, more or less, the relationship between Diaghilev and Karsavina. It couldn't be a love relationship because Diaghilev was queer and in love with Nijinsky anyway. So the writers had a hard time of it. Because there had to be some love somewhere. Having been a discreet woman, the real Karsavina hadn't talked about her love affairs so little was known. But Dominic insisted. And somehow a script had been together which leaned heavily on Karsavina's determination to get to the top, supported by Diaghilev's determination to get her to the top. There were scenes at the Milan dancing school where the famous Cecchetti taught. He had a stick which he used on the dancer's legs, sometimes painfully. Diaghilev once got so furious in Cecchetti's studio that he banged his walking stick on the floor and rats ran out of the wainscoting in terror. There was to be a shot of the rats. It was a ghastly script, a real pain in the arse, and some of the lines you couldn't even say aloud.

"A bad script is just what you need for a successful film," Dominic said. "It means the director and the actors and the writers get round and throw something together at the last minute. I've seen it happens."

"The improvisation school," Angela said sourly.

"You don't think it works?"

"It doesn't work for me. I like to learn my lines and say them."

"You'll change your mind."

That was very unnerving too, the thought of working on a day to day basis, with no one knowing exactly where they were going. It was OK if you had a great director who did all his real work in the cutting room anyway but so far no director had agreed to work on this thing and she suspected that the big ones would stay away. The fact was that directors didn't like Dominic. Everyone else did. But his cavalier treatment of Max Pennance had lost him

had lost him a whole lot of points. Also Max hadn't suffered. He was working in South America on a new series. Sonya Steele was down there with him and had picked up a plum part. Her relation with Sonya had shrivelled up, especially after Sonya had more or less put the phone down on her over Jamie. She tried to apologise afterwards but there seemed no good reason why they should have a friendship. They were now in separate camps. Sonya knew she was Dominic's woman, the one he'd always waited for, and so she was concentrating on Max for the moment. He was telling all his friends how marvellous it was, they were really tuned together now. And Angela knew she hated Max's guts. It was Sonya who had told her, during one of the Bel Ami read-throughs when there was a discussion as to whether the hero Georges Duroy ever really loved a woman, "Oh you can love for ambition."

"What do you mean?" Angela had asked her.

"Well I mean, shit, you know what actresses will do to get parts! I'm saying it can be real love sometimes, they see the man they're screwing as the way in to a big part and it makes him beautiful!"

Sonya must have been making a sly indirect reference to her in that conversation. She hadn't realised it at the time. She felt depressed.

He'd wanted to call the film Ambition. The writers had refused. What awful ideas he had sometimes.

It was a mellow sunny day with a light mist, one of those winter days that suddenly depart from order. The steersman had taken off his leather jacket. She realised she didn't know if he was young or old, attractive or otherwise, she hadn't given him a glance. She saw Venice in the distance---she stopped herself relating even to this, and looked away. All her thoughts said was 'Dominic, Dominic'. And that pain in the womb had started again, she knew it was hunger for him, so soon after their separation! She wondered if she would have a child by him, if she wanted one. She had a funny feeling that she already did have a child of his, it was with them all the time but not physical. Sometimes she saw this child in his face.

with them all the time but not physical.

She longed for the warmth when he was lying beside her. It seemed she'd been cold since leaving LA. Cold deep inside. She longed to feel his lips, the way they felt when he talked very close to her, touching her cheek.

She was the only member of the cast to travel ahead of the main company. She guessed that the men she'd seen in the customs were a number two crew for shooting the location scenes where no actors were needed.

Dominic had insisted that she must join the ballet class at the Fenice as soon as possible, she had to get the feel of working among dancers. The ballet master was a Russian, he said, and an excellent man. No one in LA to come up to him. She knew it was partly just an excuse. He wanted her in Venice alone because of that Caterina business. Yes, he wanted Caterina to dominate her life! Venice was drawing nearer, they were just passing San Michele and she deliberately kept her head down, she didn't want to be intoxicated! She was here to be an actress, to make an international reputation, not to---oh, but how lovely the water looked when they slowed up to enter the canal that cut through the city, past the Arsenale, to reach the Grand Cana on the other side... And that calm, a certain quiet which always had noise in it---children playing, dogs, gondoliers with their cry of 'Oi!', barges---but tranquil just the same.

At the Riva degli Schiavoni she had to look up. They were approaching the square, the two columns representing the lion of St Mark's and St Theodore! And the minarets behind! The pillars round the square, a glimpse of Maurizio at his clock tower ready to beat the hour! Oh she had to see all this!

In a moment they were pulling in at the side of the Gritti palace where Dominic had booked them what the Italians call a residenz, with bathroom and kitchen and sitting room. He'd told her it overlooked the Grand Canal, having chosen it himself.

The anonymous helmsman lifted her bags on to the fondamenta and then offered her a hand up the slippery steps. She hadn't to worry about bills, Dominic had told her. Everything either had been or would be paid. The contract she'd signed at Everard Hope's office stipulated a large advance before shooting began, about ten times what she'd earned in a year in London. It was exaggerated, the actress in her was embarrassed to sign that document with Everard and two secretaries watching, she hadn't earned it with hard work, she'd felt cheap under their eyes, a producer's bit.

They took her straight up to the apartment---no formalities at the reception desk. She was so used to Dominic's way of smoothing everything for her---would she be able to live otherwise? Hall porter, bank clerk, the American Express---they'd already had their instructions. How could they call a man a killer whose life was so devoted to invisible service? He did the same for Pauline, had done (no doubt) the same for Sonya. Once she'd found him booking a plane flight for Greg Merrytown, plus a hotel room, a light cold supper and a bottle of whisky. Dominic just didn't believe in other people doing things for themselves, not while they were connected with him. And he didn't do it to incite a sense of obligation. Most of the time you didn't know he'd done it.

She smelled the roses almost before the porter had opened her door. There they were in every part of the sitting room, almost the same colours as those he'd chosen in LA! In the bedroom too, on the floor in great vases, on either side of the bed, and with that touch of flamboyance---the excess that consoles---that the Italians go in for.

"My God!" she said, and despite her vow not to take pleasure in anything until she was in his arms again she smiled.

The porter nodded, half with resignation at the frightful waste of money, said the same in broken English. After he'd gone she felt she ought to have tipped him, since tips can't be pre-paid, but then something of Dominic's sang froid towards people came into her.

Dominic's sang-froid towards people came into her and she began attending to her bags. She opened the windows on to the Grand Canal. Two vaporini were passing each other with that delightful bubbly sound of their engines. It wasn't the season for gondolas but the misty sun had brought out a handful. She could see as far as Santa Maria della Salute on the other side of the water, and in the other direction the wooden bridge of the Accademia. She realised she knew Venice quite well, from all those solitary walks she'd taken while Louis was at work. How, if this Caterina business was true, had she felt no inkling of it on that first visit?

The scent of the hothouse roses was overwhelming. A little sickening too. He loved that sugary element. It seemed to be what he meant by culture.

She had to report her arrival to the Russian dancing ballet master. It was lunchtime, so he'd probably be at home. Dominic had given her the Fenice number and his private one. She asked reception for the number and almost at once she got him---delighted, yes he knew who she was, he was expecting her to call that moment, what about dining together that evening and joining the class next day at ten o'clock or was she too tired?

He spoke English perfectly, had worked at the Met, and gave her a warm professional feeling.

"I'd rather stay in this evening," she said.
"But I'd love to come tomorrow morning."

She'd been working at the bar in LA for two whole months, at an excellent dancing school. Her teacher had been Russian there too but she didn't tell Dominic this. She'd become even slimmer. Her back had become strikingly erect, and her hips had changed their line. Her teacher had told her that she'd even begun to walk like a dancer, feet slightly splayed out, the steps long. All this gave her an agile, alert look she hadn't had before.

She could do that part marvellously. She knew it. But with a bad script? And maybe a director who didn't know what he was doing? And the subject of the film twisted so as to give her the maximum number of close-ups, shop-window scenes etc? And was Diaghilev going to be? No names had yet come up. A 'heavy', Everard had said, but were the heavies refusing to participate in this disaster? Or were the money-people right, this was going to be a winner? There'd been one or two good ballet movies before. Maybe the script didn't matter. Every time she thought about Karsavina she thought about Caterina. In fact, talking about the part one day to Dominic she'd said 'Caterina' 'Caterina' by mistake and he'd laughed. It was a fact, she couldn't even read about Karsavina without at once drifting off into daydreams about that girl four ce centuries ago, the daydreams Dominic called memories. Also she felt that Caterina was the more real of the two. She could see her better. The Karsavina part just wouldn't come, yet she knew she was right for it. Perhaps it was the script.

She tried to rest but couldn't. Then she felt hungry. Dominic had said to order everything she wanted from the hotel restaurant, have it sent up. But she wanted to eat out, find one of those little places where she and Louis had eaten. It was late, gone half-past two, but she might be lucky. She put on a light wood-green overcoat, with no hat but a scarf at her neck which she could put round her head if it got chilly. She remembered a place like a baronial hall with a massive fireplace. Louis' film crew had eaten there. She walked towards St Mark's, along the Calle Larga XXII Marzo. She found a tiny hotel entrance and thought it might be there. She went in. No one was about. Then she found a door that looked familiar. She pushed it and at the end of the corridor she saw the hall. Most of the tables were empty and the waiters were clearingup. She walked in just the same and one of the younger waiters almost ran up to her and said "Uno?" She nodded and he put at a table for two near the log fire, just the

he put her at a table for two near the log fire, just the place she wanted.

She didn't look up once, even when ordering her meal. She didn't want to see people, look in their eyes. She gazed into the fire, calculating the time in LA, about ten hours back. He would be in bed now. He could be lying in her arms, his warmth filling her middle. Sometimes he fell asleep in the middle of a sentence. She loved this. Until she met Dominic it had been she who had always fallen asleep first, with a man. The man had had his arms round her, felt her breath on his cheek, kissed her eyebrows. Dominic was right. She'd woken up to the existence of other people, through him. Was that what growing up meant?

The sun was already dying, going down in the mist, but it wasn't depressing. The light became intimate, glowing. She looked forward to the darkness so that she could walk round Venice as she'd done on that other visit, gazing at the shop windows, dropping into a bar for coffee, tasting those delicious little budini that the Venetians cooked. She knew a cake-shop in the Calle delle Spezie where she could get them. It was so nice in Italy because at dusk the shops were opening, not closing.

She ate little, a fish called San Pietro, with some slices of white polenta. The waiter put a jug of sparkling prosecco on her table without asking, and she began drinking. It was what she needed after the journey. It brought out a delicious tiredness in her, but not so much that she wanted to sleep.

From the restaurant she walked to a cafe she knew on the spacious Camp Santo Stefano and took a coffee standing up. All these things she did mechanically. And no one made a fuss of her. She'd noticed it in the restaurant. They hadn't treated her like a tourist. She knew that most Italians put up a front with foreigners, perhaps to avoid live contact. But the waiters had gone about the business of clearing the other tables

with hardly a glance in her direction. Of course she did look Italian. But she knew it wasn't this. It was the fact that she felt one of them, part of the family. She knew that this was why Italians put up a front, because you were outside the family. With one of the family they offered no defences. Dominic would say it was Caterina who felt at home. Certainly she felt she'd be able to speak the language just like that if she tried. When she'd done the student tour of Italy, hitching rides, people had said how good her accent was.

It was the same when she got a coffee. Louis had taught her how to ask for a caffè macchiato, which was an espresso with a dash of frothy milk. When she asked for it now the barman simply nodded and went on talking to another man. None of the foreigner unctious.

She strolled across the square. The mist seemed to protect the city, keeping the warmth of the day. She walked across the Accademia bridge, leaning on the rail to watch the boats underneath, their lights flashing merrily on the water. She looked towards the mouth of the Grand Canal and again had that joyful feeling of the morning, when she'd passed the two columns in the taxi. It reached into her throat and she didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

She needed to do her exercises and then go to bed. It was almost six and he'd just be getting up, padding along to the kitchen in his sandals, tying the cord of his silk dressing gown. The canned music would have woken him. She'd convinced him to get less sugary cassettes and he'd agreed.

You couldn't afford to miss a day at the bar as a dancer. Already she was getting a stiff feeling. The moment she got back she threw off her shoes and put on a track suit. She used the dressing table as her bar.

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She went to bed early after removing the roses from her bedroom. She fell into a deep sleep and woke suddenly about three in the morning, wide awake, fresh. There wasn't a sound on the Grand Canal. She knew where she was the moment she awoke. The mist had turned to fog in the evening but now it had lifted and she thought she saw stars in the sky. The phone rang.

A sleepy Italian voice said "From Los Angeles."

Then there was his voice, slightly husky, as she remembered it on those far memory tapes.

"Just got in, thought I'd call you."

"Oh Dominic!"

"Trip OK?"

"Mm."

"What's the apartment like?"

"Full of roses!"

"Plenty of tea-coloured ones? If not, a Venetian dies tomorrow."

"Lots, and yellow, aren't they called sonyas?" She yawned. "Where are you?"

"Home. Looks like we'll be ready to move soon."

"I hope so!"

"It's bad isn't it? being half a person?"

"Yes."

They said nothing for a little.

"And how's Venice?" he asked.

"I walked round yesterday evening, I remembered it much better than I thought I would."

"From the last visit?"

"Yes."

"You mean the one four hundred years ago?"

"If you like!"

"If I like, that's how it is!"

"But why do you want to make me Caterina all the time?" She asked it mildly, sleepily. "I'm not Caterina!"

"Of course you're not. But you're not Angela either."

"What does that mean?"

"You're the one who became Angela, like you became Caterina."

She thought about this. Minutes seemed to pass. The Grand Canal was so quiet. And she was sure those were stars. She saw what he meant. One never died. That was what he meant.

"There'sna hell of a smog here."

"Are you lying on your bed?"

"No, in your room. I thought you'd let me know if you were awake or not if I came to your room and you did."

"I woke up just before."

"Did you call the Fenice?"

"Yes. I've got my first class tomorrow. I did some exercises, you've no idea how stiff you get after a day! And sitting all those hours on the plane. I didn't eat or drink a thing the whole journey."

"Why not?"

"I didn't feel like it. Not without you."

"But Caterina had a good appetite---"

"Yes! I had a good lunch at a place I remembered from a year ago when I was here with Louis."

He chuckled. "A year ago! Getting your dates right huh?"

"Dominic, what about the script?"

"Oh that's OK. I'll be sending you the rewrites."

"But there are so many rewrites Dominic!"

"That's right. One of the writers got fresh with me yesterday and said did I never hear about that Balzac story where a painter works on his canvas so much that it ends up a mass of black paint? I thought that was cute." He paused. "He said did you hear about this story, he must have kind of known I don't read!"

"I don't think you can read," she said, with a sudden mischievous ;augh.

They were suddenly relaxed.

"I love you," he said.

"Once I thought you were never going to say that

to me."

"Who said it first?"

"I don't remembere. Do you?"

"Yes. It was me. After you wanted me to. I heard you wanting me to so I said it."

She slept again as soon as she put the phone down. Just before sleeping she felt a stillness she'd never known before. And a bodily contentment she thought was impossible without Dominic at her side. And she heard him talking to her. She couldn't make out what it was but he was in the room, then she was asleep.

She woke at seven when the boats were on the move again, with that hollow liquid sound, and again today there was sunlight, hard and bright. She took a shower and moved all the roses back into the bedroom. Was it always the man who said I love you first, she wondered. She put on a burgundy two-piece, woollen, and fur-lined boots because she remembered how cold the Venetian pavements were. After all, a city floating in the sea!

The smell of the roses reminded her of her suite at the Beverley Hills hotel, and those first days, when life changed so much that sometimes she felt her body was the only remnant, connecting link, from the old life. She wondered what it would be like to see Louis, her mother. Her father was the only one she could imagine talking to, perhaps because of that detached way of his, and those eyes which like Dominic's seemed to be gazing from the great distance. But her mother when she looked at things peered at them closely, judging them good or bad, black or white. As for Louis, he never looked at anything.

But then neither had she. She walked to the window overlooking a little square and watched people passing. She looked up and saw those wooden balconies Dominic had told her about, where the women bleached their hair in the sun, pulling the hair over the brim of a straw hat which had the crown cut out. She could almost feel her arms moving in the combing motion, with the sun pouring down! Was that suggestion? Almost every roof had p one of these wooden structures among the tiles. It

The sky was clear, spacious, a wintry blue with a few misty strands of white cloud very high up. Behind everything she could hear the cheerful throb of the boats from the Grand Canal. She put some earrings on but no hat, just a silk scarf tied at her neck, as on the previous day. There were nearly two hours to fill before her class began. She walked to the square, then to the Campo San Luca, where she remembered having one of the best coffees of her life. The cakes there were good too. It seemed that half of Venice had the same idea because she could hardly get to the cash desk. She ordered a coffee and an apple strudel, which the woman handed to her in a paper napkin, with a nice smile. This morning she took a capuccio. That was another thing Louis had taught her. Only take a capuccio in a place where the coffee is first-class, otherwise they use old or weak coffee while you're not looking, and drown it in the hot milk. She didn't know if it was true. She watched the barman carefully as he drew down the lever and the black drips fell into the cups. She saw him heat the milk at the ~~steamer~~, then he poured the frothy milk in and with a floating motion brought the cup to the bar, laying it down before her with a quiet "Capuccino", before serving someone else. Just as she was about to put it to her lips he came along with a chocolate sprinkler and shook some into her cup, a quick afterthought which she took to be for her alone, since she didn't see him do it for any of the other people who were taking capuccinos. How observant she'd become! Her eyes went all round the place, taking in faces. That was the wonderful thing in Italy, you could stare to your heart's content. In the old days she would have been semi-conscious, her thoughts far away in a script or the possibility of a part in a new play or a tiff she'd had during rehearsal. Even the coffee would have been drunk without consciousness. Whereas this one she relished, every sip, taking bites of strudel in between. Where had her body been all those years? In another life! She looked back on that life now with wonderment. How on earth had she managed to get

through it without---yes--suicide. There seemed nothing in it which had been enjoyable. No love, not even sex really. A few efficient orgasms. A lot of jumping about on a bed, and sighing, and, worst of all, a hell of a lot of feigning. She swore that Louis feigned the whole act with her. He was really masturbating.

She'd tried to commit suicide once. She hardly knew a girl who hadn't. Her mother had found her and they'd rushed her to hospital. Of course if she'd really wanted to kill herself she wouldn't have tried in her mother's place. She got a lot of attention, which was supposedly what she was after. Not entirely though. That life hadn't been worth living. That is, she hadn't been alive anyway. Her body had, just! But where had she been?

* * *

The Russian ballet master wasn't there. He'd sent a substitute to take the class, a woman with hair drawn back cruelly tight over her head. She had large round eyes and a long neck, and had clearly been a ballerina in her day. She shook hands with Angela, said she knew about her, and Angela took her place at the bar with the other girls. She was astonished at the exertion, now that she was among professionals. Sweat poured out of her. Every moment she thought she couldn't make another move. At the end she was quivering with hunger and rushed down to the Fenice bar to grab a plate of pasta. She felt light, almost happy. The clothes she'd put on felt too elegant and she went back to the hotel and changed into jeans.

It was still early and she took a boat to Torcell where she'd once been with Louis. She wanted to lunch late at Cipriani's. There was an exhilarating light all round from the lagoon, boring into every corner of the tiny island while it slept in the water. She walked around for an hour, went to the church. The silence was amazing. The water was still like glass. There was a contentment in her she'd never felt before

but it came from inside her just the same, she'd known it before somehow, somewhere. Perhaps Dominic was right! She seemed to know the lagoon, be familiar with that slight warm breeze that interrupted the cold for a moment and went away again. And the smell of the water. Had Caterina been here?

There were only a few people in the restaurant, tourists like herself. She listened to the children playing outside. She chose a corner table and sat sipping wine and cracking crostini while the omelette she'd ordered was being cooked. The waiters treated her with a soothing mixture of familiarity and respect. She had that feeling again---of being one of them. They accepted her. For a few giddy seconds she felt she could understand what they were saying to her, in the rather singsong Venetian pronunciation. The vague warmth from the wintry sun, the silent lagoon, the murmur of voices from the kitchen---was it her world, much more than it was the world of the waiters? After all, if she really had been Caterina she had built all this generations ago, these waiters were the decadent end-result of work that her father and brothers had done! Now Venice was flooded every year, the buildings were falling to pieces, the canals were open sewers. But in her day it had been a sweet clean city where everything shone, wonderful colours---she could remember the sharpness and vividness of everything!

She took a boat back when the sun started going down and it became chilly. In the hotel again she thought her 'memories' as Caterina were ridiculous. You could so easily imagine that kind of thing. But how was it she knew Caterina had brothers, and that she could see the Venice of that time so vividly? Well, her imagination was supplying it. Or were Dominic and Pauline filling her mind with these ideas from a distance? Walking the narrow calli that evening, she felt she knew what Dominic meant when he said she wasn't Angela. She felt she'd always existed. And she didn't feel she was going to die. She sort of floated through the calli. And when she went to bed she felt close to Dominic as if he was there too. That had never happened before. It was

nice to feel you were never going to die. And that spaces didn't count for you. Yes, she understood what he meant when he said you could be together with thousands of miles between you. She could feel his touch on her arm, the way his slight breath touched her face. And, unbelievably, it was his warmth that spread through the bed, not just hers. In a moment she was warm all through. It was another clear night, and she could see stars. The Grand Canal had fallen silent, and she was aware of a delicious tiredness. It was good not to have anxieties---would he arrive, did he still love her, would they always be together? She realised that these thoughts haunted her all the time, and that underneath she had a terror of being abandoned as her mother had (many times) been abandoned by her man. The more you loved a man, the greater the terror was. Was that why she'd run away so often from what promised to be a serious relationship? Then why hadn't she run away from Dominic? What had made her stomach the terror and cling to him for dear life? Oh how she loved him! And in a way it didn't matter if he did abandon her, the love wouldn't change, it couldn't be stolen from inside her. But he couldn't abandon her, any more than she could him. They had the same cells. Yes, these cells reacted in the same way all the time. If he felt hurt, she did too. They were like two delicate machines together. And she could feel him now, thinking about her, perhaps talking about her with Pauline. It would be about lunchtime there. He would come to her soon. He would phone her---perhaps tomorrow---to tell her he was on his way. She felt this warm certainty. And she would make the film. She would let him talk about Caterina and she would even agree to having been Caterina, but what counted was the life they had together now. All of a sudden she saw how well she could do as Karsavina, the part had started to grow in her. She was a ballerina, she was dancing!

12.

He did phone the next day. And he did say he was on his way. But he phoned late in the evening to say the plans had been cancelled. There was a money problem and he would have to go to San Diego, and his lawyer in San Francisco was coming over to see him. The second call came through at about two in the morning, and she spent a sleepless night. A thought terrorised her for a couple of hours---'I shall never see him again!'. Then she calmed down. A quietness and peace stole over the room, and she heard the first vaporini of the day crossing the Grand Canal to the Accademia. It wasn't yet light. She got up and began pacing the room in her dressing gown, without the lights on. It occurred to her that just as Dominic influenced events with his thoughts, she might do the same. It was a great discovery. Perhaps she had a similar power! She directed her concentration to him, calculating the time in LA. It would be about six in the evening. She urged him to come to Venice whatever the problems. She urged Pauline to help her in this. She put the idea into his head--- come, at once! She felt her will going out over the canal into the sky and then far beyond, to meet him.

She spent the next day in the apartment, ordering food from downstairs. And she went on concentrating. Sometimes it seemed to her that she was saving their relationship. He had to be with her as soon as possible,

she didn't know why. At about two in the afternoon the phone rang. It was an Englishman called Horsley Turner. She thought she'd heard his name before, seen his photo in Spotlight maybe. He had a deep throaty voice and called her Angela.

"Are you about tomorrow?" he asked. "I'm to play Diaghilev in this film."

"Oh yes! Let's meet!" Her heart was beating fast because he must have met Dominic, he must have been in LA recently.

They arranged that he should come to the hotel at noon the following day and they would have lunch together.

Hardly had she put the phone down when Dominic came through.

"Have you talked to that actor?"

"Yes, just this minute! How do you always know things?"

"Well, I told him ring Angela right away, and then I called when I thought you'd finished. Why, you trying to make me out a witch?"

"You are a witch," she said softly. "Or Pauline is."

She could hear him breathing at the other end. A trembling desire started in her. She couldn't wait for him any longer!

As if to answer her on this point he said, "It looks like we've gotta go on making love over the ether because I'll need a week in San Diego maybe."

"Oh Dominic!"

So much for her powers as a witch!

Next day she dressed simply in her woollen burgundy two-piece, with no jewellery. She'd bought the pearls Dominic had given her but was afraid to wear them in case they looked ostentatious. Suddenly she took off her two-piece and returned to the jeans and blouse of the day before, with a nice pair of boots. It made her look a bit tarty but Horsley Turner sounded queer anyway. She would have hated another man to look at her with desire but somehow she wanted to provoke Dominic to come

to her quickly and the jeans and tight blouse were a challenge. What absurd ideas were getting into her head these days!

Horsley Turner was tall, in fact immense, with a haughty dark face and a way of lifting his head when he talked to you so that he was literally looking down his nose. Yet he had a quiet voice, fastidious hands, and was such a hand at paternal courtesy that she felt half her age. There was something cruel in him. Perhaps it was the eyes, the way they settled on you darkly and rather contemptuously for a moment, while he said something that sounded witty. He had built his personality on someone and suddenly she tumbled to it, it was Oscar Wilde. How clever Dominic was! It seemed perfect casting!

They were hardly through the pasta when he said, "I was with this Johnny Latouche a couple of days ago. Know him?"

"Yes. I live with him."

"Really?" He looked up slowly. Then he laughed, with that upward tilt of the head, which might have come from uncertainty. "Well, you have buttered your bread well!"

"I didn't mean it like that. I fell in love."

"Better still if it's natural!"

"What do you mean, it's better to have a producer between your legs if possible?"

He blinked very quickly and looked into her angry eyes. "I've offended you."

"How did you guess?"

"I didn't intend to. I simply think it's fortunate that's all, I mean from an actor's point of view. I wish I had a producer in my bed!"

Yes, he was cruel, and that was why Dominic had chosen him.

She thought he was probably a very good actor. Apart from a certain magnetism there was an air of the unexpected, you hung on his words, and this was just what you wanted for an audience. Nothing he said sounded ordinary, even when it was.

He let a name drop about a recent television series and she remembered he'd made his fame in a relatively minor role.

"As you know Latouche," he went on unrelentlessly, "perhaps you can relieve an anxiety of mine. There isn't a chance I suppose that he'll be our director is there?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because so far we haven't got a director. First I was told that nobody wants to work with him, then they were saying he had two top directors lined up but neither was available."

"I just don't know. But why on earth should Dominic want to direct, I mean he's never done anything like it before!"

"Exactly," he said, looking down.

"You didn't answer my question. Why should he want to direct?"

"Well, he's quite a megalomaniac isn't he?"

"So are you, I should think."

"How right you are," he said, leaning forward and squeezing her hand with a chuckle. "We always recognise each other."

"If you really want to know," she said, "Dominic's quite capable of taking over the direction."

"That was just what I was afraid of."

"I said he was capable of it, not that he would."

"Yes I noticed the difference. It doesn't make me feel much better. I mean, at this stage in my career I'm not happy at the thought that a bad director could screw my chances from the outset."

She sensed something behind this. "What's really on your mind?" she asked him. "What went on in LA?"

"Let's go the lounge and have a drink and I'll tell you everything."

Once they were there he didn't have all that much to say. He ordered himself a Courvoisier and poured it into his coffee.

"Latouche saw a clip of mine and sent for me. I was in London, I'd just started rehearsing a new play, and he pulled me out of it, paid a lot of money to the management, they say."

bought me out of my contract, for a lot of money, I heard. When I got to LA he had about five other Diaghilevs, all looking more or less like me. How he picked them up from every part of the world I don't know. He had a woman there with long blonde hair and dark glasses."

"That's Jill Rapinsky, she's a casting agent."

"They were having rows all the time. There was no script for us to look at. There was no director to audition us. He did it all. And I must say he seemed to know what he was doing. I was the only man there capable of playing Diaghilev and he knew it. He didn't even audition the others. He more or less walked in and pointed to me and said 'It's him'. This blonde woman looked angry, she wanted to go through a regular audition but I got the impression that one didn't contradict Mr. Latouche."

"I do, frequently."

"Then why did you let him send you here?"

She made a little gasp. "What's that got to do with it?"

"Everybody said you're the only person with any control over him. He eats out of your hand. Everard Hope---you know Everard Hope?"

"Yes, he's my agent."

"He says he's never seen the killer subdued by man or beast until you came along."

"Oh," she said, "that sounds so corny. We're in love, obviously we influence each other. But why shouldn't he send me here? I had my dancing lessons at the Fenice."

"The point is this. Why don't you tell him over the phone to get a director? Apparently only you could do that."

"You want to use me?"

"Yes. So does everyone else on the film."

"But it only means you don't trust him," she said.

"And in the end you will trust him."

"I hope so," Turner said with a sigh.

The conversation made her feel both excited and nervous. It was wonderful to hear that she had influence over Dominic---that he was really hers---yes, she had to have some confirmation of it from the outside world!

But why had he sent her away? Her earlier feeling of certainty was gone. She needed to talk to him, touch him. She hurried back to her apartment and lay in bed for the rest of the day as the noises outside got less and less, and once more the liquid sound of the vaporini ceased.

Next day she strolled along the Riva degli Schiavoni and watched the car-ferry speeding towards the Lido. The painters of Venetian scenes had packed up shop, their easles were gone. There were no photographers, no pigeon-food vendors. She walked between the tall columns on the Molo, gazing at the numberless gondolas bobbing up and down in the water on their mooring poles. Something made her look up at the columns. On one there was a haloed figure with a lance in one hand and a shield in the other. The column oppsite had the lion of St Mark. A shudder sent her away. Why was that? She felt threatened. The film wouldn't happen, she now felt.

She began hating Horsley Turner. He called her up once or twice but she said she didn't feel well. She felt he'd brought something bad to Venice, to the film. Why had Dominic chosen him? She didn't like the way he said almost nothing but left you with a feeling of unease.

She walked in the deserted Giardinetti with its neat gravel paths. It was too cold to sit at one of the benches. One day she lunch upstairs in Harry's Bar and got into the habit of taking an aperitif there. No one tried to chat her up.

Then there was a midnight call from Dominic.

"To hell," he said, "I'm coming over. The money problem can look after itself."

His plane was due to leave in a couple of hours. She couldn't believe it! She rushed about tha apartment afterwards'clearing out the roses that had faded, changing the water. Then she decided to get rid of them all, and went to a florist near the Accademia bridge and ordered nearly a hundred dollars' worth of different flowers. Her heart thumped away, she felt desire stirring in her, making her tremble slightly. Her excitement was so great

that she couldn't imagine actually meeting him, she would faint or something. She wasn't go to the airport but wait in the apartment. He would be in around noon. She paced up and down, changed her dress several times. The day was rather dark, the clouds low over the roofs, the water high. Horsley Turner called to ask her when Dominic would be in, and reluctantly she told him.

"I've heard the banks are pulling out," he said.

"It depends who told you."

"Your agent."

She at once phoned Everard. He wasn't in the office but one of his girls promised that he would ring her back. He didn't. It was eleven o'clock. She was trembling, feeling nausea from nerves.

Her 'witchcraft' had worked. A little delayed. Would he be proud of her when she told him how she'd done it? Or should she say nothing? All of a sudden she saw Jamie Somerson in her mind and almost burst into tears. He looked so innocent with his fresh moustache. He'd made the mistake of falling in love with her! She wondered what his mother was like, whether it was that rather sharp woman who had answered the phone. She thought of her grief. Witchcraft, yes!

As she waited she realised what a selfish person she was. She'd hardly noticed Jamie's death until then, not really. It had distressed her, but more because of Dominic's doubtful role, and his reputation (hers too--- Killer Number Two).

There was a knock on the door. She rushed to it, pulled it open. Pauline was standing there in a camelhair overcoat looking pale and exhausted.

"Pauline!"

"I'm supposed to have a room in this place but they don't know where!"

"Come in! Oh Pauline it seems like a hundred years---!"

She hugged her and kissed her on her cheeks.

"You look great," Pauline told her. "You really do. Maybe you should be away from that man more often. He looks a wreck."

"Where is he?"

"He went to Padova to see this professor guy."

"To Padova?"

Pauline burst out laughing. "Don't worry, he'll be here this evening, he's been sick for you, how's that?"

"OK," she said quietly. She could just as well have kept her jeans on.

"For Christ's sake get me a whisky," Pauline said.

Angela went to the phone. "I'll order up a bottle and some ice."

"No need. Dom says there's a sideboard full of booze."

She hadn't even looked. She pulled open one of the doors and there the bottles were, with a dozen or so glasses of every type.

Pouring the whisky she asked, "Is it true the banks are pulling out?"

"One of the money-men got nervous, that's all. Who told you?"

"That actor, Horsley Turner."

"And who told him?"

"Everard I think."

"Well, Everard's as much against this film as I am."

"Why? I mean why are you against it?"

"The omens aren't too good. I've told Dom that but he won't listen. Also I think this Venice trip's unnecessary, it's eating up half the production costs and a number two crew could have handled it all."

"But he wants shots of us in the square and the Fenice and on the Lido at that hotel."

"That's what he tells me too."

Without another word Pauline fell asleep in her chair. Angela covered her with a blanket. Then she put her overcoat on and went downstairs. She felt imprisoned by Venice, by so much water, and walked to the square to give herself the feeling that she was in a land-locked city. Then she went to the Campo San Luca for a cup of coffee. It was dark when she got back and Pauline had left. She still felt nervous, threatened. The lights of the vaporini on the water looked sad. She'd put a pocket record-player and put a cassette on but the moment

but the moment the music started she switched off. She lay down on the bed. The phone rang---she must have fallen asleep and fumbled for the receiver. It was now pi

Dominic was at the other end. "It's amazing," he said. "The whole story's pieced together! Wait till you hear it!"

"Where are you?"

"I'm in Padova. I'm on my way soon."

"But what's the time?"

"About two."

"In the morning?"

"Well, not in the afternoon honey!"

"But where's Pauline?"

"Didn't she arrive?"

"She came here this afternoon and then disappeared."

"Oh she'll be in touch, she's kind of tired."

"Dominic, we've been away from each other all this time and you don't come straight to see me!"

He chuckled. "Wait till you hear the story and you'll see why."

"What story?" (though she knew).

"About the Comte de Ligeaux and Caterina Foscarini, how they fell in love. Isn't it amazing? I knew I was that guy, I knew we'd been connected and here it all is, in black and white, history!"

"You're mad."

"I'll be right over, I'm getting a taxi."

She was excited just the same. She jumped out of bed in the darkness almost singing, and changed into pyjamas. He was coming! Mad or not he was on his way!

* * *

She lay in the dark daydreaming about him. At about four in the morning Pauline called up.

"Can I come and talk to you? I'm on the same corridor, I can't sleep."

"Nor can I! Come right over!"

She appeared in her dressing gown and sat on Angela's bed

Angela's bed. She switched the bedside lamp off and they they sat in the darkness.

"You know there's no director yet?"

"Yes," Angela said.

"They won't work for him. The bad ones will. What's the sense of coming out here with two crews and no directors for God's sake?"

"What about the script? Is there one?"

"There's enough script for three films but no one to say what's good or bad in it. He talks all the time about the Karsavina scenes. I've never seen him like this before. Jesus, he couldn't have made a dime this way! Maybe that's why the San Diego money man pulled out, he lost his confidence, he said Killer Number Two's taken over your life and we want a film about Diaghilev, not your latest lay!"

"Pauline!"

"That's what everybody's saying and you'd better know."

"Does Dominic know too?"

"Sure he knows! But he measures talk by the money behind it, and the San Diego man's got less bread than he has."

Angela lay very still. She felt desperately cold. She made the youthful discovery that people can be unjust, and it was a shock. And he'd brought this on her!

"Listen, Angela, I ought to tell you about Jamie Somerson too."

"What about him?"

"I didn't want to worry you with this in LA. He used to come to me a lot. You know he thought I had some kind of a hold on Dominic. Maybe I did but I lost it. He had a whole background of attempted suicide, Jamie. I knew about that. He was terrified of one day doing what he actually did, jumping out of a window. Previous times he took overdoses, which didn't seem to frighten him too much, but the idea of falling to death horrified him. You know suicide people are pretty funny. They think they can do away with their body and go on living, it's some sort of feeling like that. In a way they're right, because what they're doing is flinging themselves

into another incarnation. Of course they have the same problem in the next incarnation, it doesn't change just through changing your body. You tried once huh?"

"Yes."

"But it wasn't too serious."

"No."

"That was it was with Jamie the previous times. But he had this image of throwing himself out of a window one day and of course you don't come back from that, nobody can rescue you. And he didn't want to be tempted to that. So he was very sensitive to the idea that somebody might be putting a kind of spell on him. That's why he came to me. He said he knew Dom was driving him to do that."

"Did you tell Dominic at the time?"

"Oh sure. He said he knew anyway, he knew about Jamie's fears. God knows how he knew because I never left any of the tapes lying around. They were tapes of Jamie's far memory experiences, I persuaded him to do some regressions with me. And a whole lot came out. About you too."

"About me?"

"You know he really did fall in love with you. He said if Dominic hadn't been in the way you would have been lovers. Is that true?"

Angela thought about this. "Yes."

"He didn't really regress. He didn't believe in it so he had this block all the time. I couldn't even get him under. But, as I say, a whole lot came out. He said you were the biggest love of his life, he knew every pore of your skin. And he'd failed once before, in a previous lifetime, with you. Somebody else had got in the way then too, and he thought it was always Dominic. In a lot of lifetimes, maybe in all of them, there'd been Dominic like a heavy shadow over everything he did. And when he met Dominic in the studios, that was around a year ago, he knew who he was, he felt it, though he didn't believe in reincarnation at all. He just recognised him and a cold feeling went down his spine, he could hardly take breath. He knew Dom was going to drive him to do the thing that horrified him.