



The Last Gift

by Susan Brassfield Cogan



CoganBooks

Tales to keep you up all night . . .

WWW.COCHANBOOKS.NET

The Last Gift

Copyright © 2009 by Susan Brassfield Cogan

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the author. The only exception is by a reviewer, who may quote short excerpts in a review.

Previously published as *Jubilee, A Novel* (2003)

Cover and Book Design by:

Cogan Graphic Design

www.cogangraphicdesign.com

About the Illustrations

The images presented here are not actual illustrations of the story. They are original works of art produced across several centuries and are meant to evoke the mood of the story and enhance the flavor of the narrative. To the best of my knowledge they are all in the public domain.

THIS E-BOOK MAY BE FREELY DISTRIBUTED

Send it to your friends, families and
any total strangers you
happen to take a liking to.
See to it your grandmother has a
copy and email a copy to your
Mom, Dad, Aunt Jeanie and Uncle Gerald.
You get the idea.

ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU DON'T CHANGE ANYTHING OR REMOVE ANY PAGES

The images are in the public domain,
but Susan Brassfield Cogan retains copyright on the text.

Chapter 1

Marie could hear sporadic gunfire sputtering in the distance behind her. Fear lent her speed as she plunged down the empty passageway, lit only by moonlight through curtained windows, and past unused furniture and gilded mirrors draped with dusty silk. The voluminous court gown slowed her down and her high-heeled slippers, fashionably too small for her feet, weren't any help. She was only the keeper of perfumes, a mere servant—not an aristocrat. But the street scum—they called themselves the Paris Commune—would see the yards of pale blue silk in her gown and the rope of pearls at her throat, and they would not ask for her lineage. She knew this because she had once been one of them—and soon would be again—if the Swiss Guards could keep the Communards from entering the Tuileries long enough for one insignificant servant to slip away.

La Comtesse de Passy, Marie's employer, was dead. At sunset, the old woman had tried to escape the palace in a closed carriage. The mob had stopped them, very much afraid that the royal family would again take flight. Marie watched from a window as La Passy was dragged out screaming, to be engulfed by the crowd. Marie hated the aristocrats almost as much as did the people of Paris but she pitied that helpless old woman who had been kind to her—for an aristocrat. Marie sincerely hoped that Le Duc de Fallieres, La Passy's nephew, had not escaped. He had been disguised as the carriage driver. When the mob surrounded them, he jumped down and disappeared into the crowd. By then, twilight was gathering and she couldn't tell what happened to him. He was a filthy beast who deserved far worse than the guillotine. But La Passy was a harmless dowager with a penchant for younger men. She deserved a less horrifying end.



Marie was glad she would no longer have to avoid Fallieres and his casual but persistent advances. If she had been forced to reject him openly, she was certain to have lost her position. To accept would have been far worse. What he did with young ladies was whispered among all the servants. Rumor had it that one girl had even cut her wrists after a night with him. Marie had never sought details of his perversions—she didn't need to know them. The look in his heavy-lidded eyes was enough. She dearly hoped that he was dead now or would be soon.

Marie shook herself and ran on. All of that was over now and she was determined not to share the old Comtesse's fate. It was time to go.

The instinct for survival was strong in her. It was the reason she had managed the transformation from barefoot urchin in the streets of Paris to a keeper of perfumes for a lady of the royal court.

Her footsteps echoed hollowly in the empty passageway. This way was rarely used, except as a servants' shortcut, but somewhere a small side door opened onto the gardens.

Marie paused for a moment to catch her breath. Sounds of shooting were faint now—she could barely hear them over her own ragged breath. She strained her ears to catch the sound of anyone approaching. The passageway smelled of dampness and dust and very faintly a hint of—smoke? Was the Tuileries on fire? It wouldn't surprise her.

She went on more slowly now. She simply couldn't run anymore for a while. As she walked, she thought back on her life in the palace. It had for the most part been very pleasant. There wasn't much for a keeper of perfumes to do with her day, so Marie had filled her time gossiping and playing cards with footmen, chambermaids and lackeys. The card playing had been rather lucrative. She sighed when she thought of the seventeen lovely gold louis sewn into the lining of her best coat. It would be a long and dangerous journey down to her little room. A journey not worth making. If the Swiss Guard succeeded in keeping the revolutionaries out of the palace, Marie would come back for it. If not, some happy Communard, thinking only to steal a warm coat, would discover a small fortune—enough gold to feed a family for months, even considering inflated food prices that were rising every day.

Her heart leaped when she saw the little door through which she hoped to escape. She hurried to it, but froze just as she reached for the knob. Outside in the garden she could hear quiet voices and the sound of grim laughter. Marie's knees were suddenly so weak they would not hold her up. She sank to the floor in a pool of pale blue silk. She could go neither forward nor back—she was trapped.



The perfume of summer lay heavy on the garden basking in the brilliant afternoon sunshine. Bees hummed on the rambler roses that overwhelmed the cool, dim summerhouse.

"History was changed last night." Jake Dawson, clad in dark gray knee breeches and stark white hose, sat with his long legs out in front of him on one of the benches in the summerhouse. He poked idly at the leaf litter on the floor with his walking stick.

"I wish I could have been there!" said Jubilee. Jake's indulgent smile was a flash of white teeth in his strong face. The sight of it set Jubilee's blood singing, as it always did. She so rarely got to have him all to herself, she was savoring every moment.

"You wouldn't have enjoyed it. It was definitely not a place for young girls of good family."

She smoothed her white muslin dress, dappled with sunlight. Not a place for young girls! How often had she heard that? She glanced sidelong at him and wondered if he had noticed that she had grown into womanhood. She had loved him

ever since she was a mere child four years ago when she was only twelve and he was—according to her father—“a boy with more money than he knew what to do with.” Jake had inherited his father’s fur and timber export business when he was fifteen. She had overheard the servants whispering that he had to kill a man to keep it.

“Imagine!” she said. “The king driven from the Tuileries by a mob! Who wouldn’t want to see that? Nothing so thrilling happened in our revolution!”

Jake laughed. She loved his laugh—it was so rich and warm. At the same time she had an uneasy feeling he might be laughing at her.

“I was quite young at the time, but I’m given to understand that a few thrilling things actually did happen during our revolution!” He was really laughing at her now, but she didn’t mind. She smiled back at him, feeling herself blush a little.

Jubilee picked up the nosegay of red roses that had become scattered in her lap. She herself had been born only a few days after the ratification of the American Declaration of Independence. Her father, intoxicated with joy over that and her birth, named her Jubilee.

“What will happen to the royal family now?” she asked. “Will they send them packing?”

Jake snorted. “Hardly, my dear. Louis would return in front of a Bourbon army and France’s revolution wouldn’t turn out as well as ours.” He paused. His hands were rough and brown, in odd contrast to the elegant walking stick they held.

“There’s a rumor,” he said, “that the royal family is going to be sent to the Temple for their own protection.”

Jubilee raised her eyebrows.

“But the Temple is a prison, a horrible place. I have heard it is as bad as the Bastille ever was.”

“That’s true. No one escapes the Temple. If they go there, I don’t think they’ll ever leave, except to go to the guillotine.”

“Oh, surely not. The dauphin is a harmless little boy. Why should he be killed? Perhaps the king will abdicate in his favor.”

She wondered why Jake didn’t wear a wig, like her father. His unruly brown hair was merely caught at the nape of his neck with a black silk ribbon. Small locks were always escaping. It gave him a slightly wild, uncouth look. She always longed to touch his hair, to smooth it. Jake’s disturbing smile had vanished and now he was soberly thoughtful.

“As long as any member of the royal family is alive the French Republic is in danger,” he said softly.

Jubilee held the roses to her nose.

“I hope not,” she said. “There has been so much death already. Perhaps someone clever can think of a solution.”

“Perhaps someone can,” he said gently.

They listened companionably to the bees droning in the sunlight. Jubilee covertly studied Jake’s face. He had beautiful eyes, deep and crackling with intelligence. Now, though, his gaze seemed miles away.

After a while he sat up a little straighter. “But I want to talk to you about something besides politics,” he said. “Although I wish to speak with your mother and father, I must talk to you first.”

Jubilee’s breath caught in her throat. Jubilee’s mother had been overseeing the making of marmalade when Jake came calling unannounced. Jubilee had been given the happy chore of entertaining him until her mother was free to receive him.

“I’m not exactly sure how to begin. I . . .”

Quick footsteps approached on the stone pathway. It was Yvette, the maid who helped Jubilee’s mother with the house.

“*Monsieur* Dawson, Madame will receive you now,” Yvette said fluttering, as usual, like a little wren. Jake rose fluidly to his feet.

“Thank you, Yvette. Come, Jubilee, walk me to the house and we’ll talk.” He offered her his arm. She took it, with a wave of excitement. This is it, she thought. He has finally noticed me.

Yvette set her pointed chin and pouting lips in what she obviously thought was a stern attitude.

“Madame says that Mademoiselle is to practice piano now.”

Jubilee, suddenly angry, nearly stamped her foot, but she had promised herself she would stop using such a childish gesture. Yvette was ruining the moment!



“Run along, Yvette,” said Jake easily, before Jubilee could do more than sputter impatiently. “Mademoiselle will be at her piano shortly.”

Yvette clicked her tongue and bobbed a curtsy. Her heels tapped rapidly on the stones as she flitted away. Jake waited until the maid was out of sight and then led Jubilee to the pergola that covered the path most of the way to the house.

“When will your father be home?” he asked. Jubilee glanced at him sideways. It was an unexpected question.

“Not until this evening. Why do you ask?”

“When he returns I’m going to ask him for your hand in marriage.”

Jubilee gasped. “Oh, Mr. Dawson, I . . .” He turned and engulfed her hands in his. He had never touched her in such a personal way before. The import of it made her giddy. Whatever it was she was going to say, she forgot it.

“I know I may be too late,” he said. “But it’s very important that you consider my offer.”

“Too late?” she murmured. It didn’t make any sense.

“Your mother and father are my dearest friends,” he said. “I would be a very good husband to you, you have my word on that. I would do everything in my power to make sure you are always comfortable and contented.” He said it all in a rush as if he had rehearsed it. It was not at all what she had imagined he would say. He still held her hands. Suddenly she wanted to pull them away. A chill had settled on her, defying the afternoon sun.

I love you, she thought. I have never wanted anything more than to be your wife. She thought it, but didn’t say it. “Tell me that you love me,” she said. Jake’s eyes widened with surprise. He seemed to go a little pale under his tan.

“I . . . don’t know what to say,” he said.

Jubilee jerked her hands out of his and backed away. “Say the truth! Say it’s good business! Say you wish to merge my father’s fortune with yours!”

“Jubilee! You know that I have nothing but the kindest of sentiments for you.”

“I will not be an item of barter!” She threw the words at him and then turned and ran.

“No, Jubilee, for the love of God . . .” she could hear him calling behind her. She didn’t stop. She dared not stop.

She ran as young ladies weren’t supposed to, pulling her skirts up past her ankles so she could run faster. Hot fury beat in her temples. She nurtured her anger—she cherished it, hoping it would burn away the hurt and humiliation.

She rushed up the veranda steps. The double glass doors into the dining room were closed and curtained against the August sun. She wrenched them open and brushed past the twittering Yvette. Hoping to avoid her mother's sharp questions, Jubilee took the back stairs. Later, when she was calmer, she would discuss Jake's proposal with both her parents. She was fully prepared to throw the fit of the century if she wasn't allowed to refuse him. Later she would deal with the bitterness of this disappointment, but now—she wasn't going to be bought and sold like a cow!

Although she had spared the glass doors downstairs, she slammed her bedroom door with a satisfactory bang. It was unmercifully hot in her room. She pulled off her fichu, the thin muslin scarf that her mother insisted she wear around her shoulders no matter how the heat rose. She splashed her face with water from the washstand and wondered why she didn't feel like crying. She just wanted to be alone with the pounding of her heart. She opened the doors to the little balcony off her bedroom, hoping to catch a vagrant breeze.

She saw her father below in the street paying off a hackney cab. Father was home early! Why must he turn up just now? She needed time to think. Even an hour later would be better than right now. But there was nothing she could do about it. She had to speak to him before Jake did. She must see to it that her father was as outraged as she was before Jake got to him and persuaded him that an alliance would be a mutual business advantage.

It was just possible that her father would force her into a marriage she didn't want. All her life she had had to do all sorts of unpleasant things that were "in her own best interest," such as learning to play the piano, which she detested—but those were little things. Marrying someone who didn't love her would blight the rest of her life. At sixteen there was still such a lot of it left.

She retied the fichu around her shoulders and gave her hair a quick pat. This time she used the front stairs. Her father was in the front hall handing his hat and stick to Yvette, who gave Jubilee a sharp glance as she bustled off with them.

"Papa!" She flew into his encircling hug. "You are home early." His face was long, and Jubilee always thought his features very sophisticated and elegant. Just now his expression was very bland, as it always was when he was hiding something.

"I must speak to your mother. Is she about?"

She wondered if this thing her father concealed somehow had something to do with Jake's proposal. She couldn't imagine how it could and knew all questions would be in vain.

"How is my girl?" he said with an affectionate smile. She decided it was best to just plunge into what she had to tell him.

"I'm very angry," she said without preamble. "Papa, I must speak with you now, before anyone else does."

"Who has earned your wrath, my child?" He touched the tip of her nose, a tiny caress that always made her smile.

"Mr. Dawson came calling this afternoon." Her father's smile vanished, and his eyes turned to flint. Jubilee faltered. "He's—he's inside speaking with Mama now." His expression was too smooth again; something was wrong.

"I'm very glad that he's here." His tone was soft but dangerous. Something here was beyond her understanding. She had never seen her father like this before.

He took her elbow. "Come, my dear, we'll speak to him together, and then you can tell me how he made you so angry."

"I can tell you now," she said. "He asked me to marry him." Her father raised an eyebrow.

"I thought you were in love with him." Jubilee stopped with a jerk.

"You knew?"

He smiled again, a real smile, although something hard remained at the back of his eyes. "Your mother told me—although I had suspected before that."

"How did you know? I never told anyone—it's not even in my diary!"

Her father steered her to the parlor door. A smile touched his lips. "Darling, your mother and I have known you all your life. Do you believe that we don't know you well?"

He paused outside the parlor door. The danger she had sensed earlier emerged into view on his face. Suddenly she wanted to run away. Jubilee's father took a deep breath. Then he grasped the knobs of the double doors and opened them abruptly. Jake and Jubilee's mother, Christiana, were seated on the twin settees that faced across a low table. Christiana was just pouring tea. Jake's hand seemed too large for the fragile china cup that he held. They both turned startled faces to Jubilee's father. Christiana was the first to speak.

"Neville! Welcome h—"

He silenced her with a glance.

“Dawson, you are to leave my house immediately. My attorney will meet with you tomorrow to sunder our business relationship.”



Marie huddled for a while on the cold marble floor of the hallway. She hid her face in her hands and struggled to steady herself.

She could still hear an occasional shot in the distance, but she was too far away to hear the crowd that she knew still howled for blood in the Place du Carrousel. She cursed herself. Why didn't she leave a month ago—or last week? Two months ago the mob had broken into Marie Antoinette's apartments. The queen had barely escaped with her life. Only an overturned table had served as a slim barrier between her and payment due for the gross injustices the Bourbon aristocracy had perpetrated on the ordinary people. Things had been very tense since LaFayette had fired upon the mob at the Champ de Mars. Then, finally, this morning a hungry, ragged army had marched on the palace.

Marie sighed and pushed herself to her feet. She hadn't gone last week or last month because she had believed, along with the rest of the court, that the Prussian army, organized by aristocratic exiles, would sweep into Paris and rescue the royal family. Then the comfortable life of one insignificant keeper of perfumes would be secure. That hope seemed foolish now.

She pressed her ear against the door. The voices outside were fading in the distance. Whoever was out there conversed quietly in cultured tones too smooth to be those of the mob. She sighed with relief.

Marie summoned the courage to open the door a fraction. Nothing was visible through the narrow opening but a few flowerbeds dimly lit by distant street lamps. Opening the door a little more revealed a group of blue-uniformed grenadiers walking away in formation. Since they had their backs to her, she decided to risk opening the door even wider, and stuck her head out for a good look. Other than the grenadiers, the grounds were deserted.

The garden here was thick with trees, which was both good and bad. Trees would hide her escape, but might also conceal human predators who would kill for a coin or two—or even for a few yards of blue silk. Marie shrugged resignedly. It was as good a chance as she would get.

The high-pitched piping of a child's voice drew her attention back to the grenadiers. They had turned to the left to go around a little goldfish pond. Marie gasped.



The king was in their midst. The queen, walking beside him, held the little dauphin by the hand. The king's sister and several other members of the court had also availed themselves of the opportunity for safe passage out of the palace. Marie noticed bitterly that there were few servants among them. Commoners could fend for themselves.

She pulled her head back inside. It doesn't matter, she thought as she shut the door quietly, I know how to take care of myself. She felt very sorry for the footmen she used to play cards with. Some of them would be dead by morning.

She herself would survive with any luck at all. First, she must make herself less conspicuous. Pulling off most of her petticoats flattened her skirt. She stepped out of high heels that would be useless in the garden at night. A sparkle caught her eye. On the toe of each shoe was sewn a garnet stud. Marie hastily tore them off. She realized suddenly that from the point of view of a courtier she was about to become desperately poor, but for a former guttersnipe she was wearing a fortune. She pulled off her earrings, her bracelets, the string of pearls from around her neck, and a thin gold chain that she wore as a belt. All were small gifts or cast-offs from her late mistress.



She knotted everything in a fragment of petticoat and shoved the bundle into the top of her corset, then returned to shedding her old identity.

Removing all the pads from her hair reduced its bulk considerably. Unfortunately her hair had been powdered pale blue to match her gown, so she dug through the shimmering pile of petticoats until she found the dark green one. A hastily ripped rough square covered the telltale powder and, she hoped, made her look poor. The makeshift scarf was pure silk, but no one would notice in the dark. Another square rendered a ragged fichu. Finally she was ready for escape. Her costume could not stand up under an inspection keener than a passing glance, but the transformation might save her life.

Marie grasped the doorknob, filled her lungs as if plunging into deep water, and stepped out onto the landing. She glanced in the direction the royal family had gone. The fortunes of the nobility were no longer her concern. She felt very exposed standing there and quickly descended the steps, darting for the nearest pool of darkness.

Paris roared in the distance. The muskets were quiet for the moment, but the sound of distant pandemonium seemed to disturb the big chestnut trees, causing them to rustle restlessly in the moonlight. She felt like running and did. Adroitly dodging the fountains, trees, and statues, she instinctively avoided the paved walkways, quickly soaking her stockings in grass wet with dew. She wished the court had stayed in Versailles, where she knew the gardens well. Here at the Tuileries it was not safe for any member of the court to wander in the gardens. For a year they had been virtual prisoners in the palace—ever since the king's ill-considered escape attempt.

In a corner where two hedges met she checked her headlong flight. Her breath burned in her throat—it had been a long while since running away had been a frequent event in her life. The night smelled of leaf mold and green things mixed with a faint intrusion of gunpowder.

A shout followed by tangled voices and broken bits of song pressed her against the hedge. Leaves and twigs prickled her cheek. Had someone seen her? Footsteps came closer accompanied by leaping torchlight. A few faces were sharply illuminated, but the rest were in shadow—about two dozen in all. Knives, cleavers, and pikestuffs glittered sharply. Two of the men carried ancient muskets. Soft red caps, bloody in the fitful torchlight, marked them as Communards. They jollied each other noisily along, but their eyes darted here and there, nervously probing the darkness.

Marie held her breath and watched them clatter by like a fox watches the hounds. They hunted the king's guards and took no notice of one small, lone woman. When they disappeared in the darkness behind her, she began to breathe again.

She ran a little further, but forced herself to a walk when she came to others in the garden. These were no revolutionaries, but small groups of ordinary folk with pinched, worried faces. A few nodded to Marie, but none gave her a second glance. In the dim garden, her makeshift disguise was good enough; she was afraid it would betray her under the brighter street lamps. She could see through the trees that the street was jammed with sightseers and would-be revolutionaries.



A low wall fashioned like a Greek ruin in miniature was finally all that stood between Marie and the sidewalk. She was too near the light to attempt the street, so she crept west along the nearly useless cover of the wall. Suddenly she spotted a shapeless bundle propped lopsidedly against the ruin. She prayed it was only a small bush or pile of refuse. However, as Marie drew near, she could see that her suspicions were correct. It was the body of a girl, very thin and very dead. Marie, kneeling, touched the cold, emaciated face, all skin and cheekbones. There was no sign of any wound, but Marie's childhood in the streets had taught her of many diseases that stalked the hungry. One of them had taken this girl at the doorstep of the fat Bourbon king.

Marie noticed she wore a long cloak, torn in places, with the hem long ago frayed away. It was too ragged to sell, or the girl would no longer have owned it, but it would hide an over-fancy gown and perhaps ensure Marie's survival. Sadness welled in her as she lifted it from the thin little body.

"I'm sorry, *ma petite*," she whispered. "My need is greater than yours, now." Marie patted the dead girl's arm. "Sleep well, little sister," she said and wrapped herself in the cloak of the girl she might have been.

All the traffic, both foot and carriage, seemed bent on the Place du Carrousel down the street and around the corner to the right. Marie strolled out of the garden casually, taking great care to avoid the eyes of passersby, but there was little interest in her. The people around her seemed consumed with worry and fear. The aristocrats viewed the ordinary folk of Paris as ravening monsters. Marie wondered when she had begun to believe it as well.

Suddenly there rose a howling roar splattered with sharp blasts of musket fire. The Place du Carrousel was exploding. The mob must have learned that the king had eluded their grasp. Marie continued to stroll toward the corner where she would turn left away from the palace. There she would find alleyways and other dark avenues traditionally useful to those who must slip from one place to another out of sight of curious eyes.

Chapter 2

Jake put down the tea cup so hard that it broke the saucer. He rose to his feet and shot a burning glance at Jubilee. Cold fear brushed the back of her neck. Had her father gone insane? This was not the reaction she'd expected. Her father's face was a mask of fury. Something was wrong—very, very wrong.

"My God, Neville, I'd no idea the child had so much influence over you." Jake turned to Jubilee. "I invited you to marry me, not to . . ."

"This is not . . . Papa, surely you can't . . ." Jubilee gasped for air. She couldn't imagine what was going on.

"Dawson, our partnership is at an end. You are to leave this house at once."

"Will someone please explain what the trouble is?" All heads turned to Christiana who had been silent until that moment.

"Later, Wife. I cannot in front of the child."

That brought the conversation to a halt. Everyone simply gaped at Jubilee's father. Jubilee was filled with equal parts astonishment and annoyance. She was to be sent away again! Jake broke the silence.

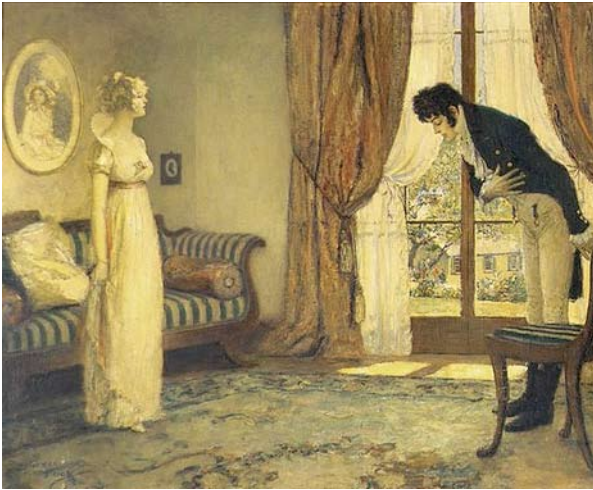
"Sir, you must do me the courtesy of explaining . . ."

"I owe you no courtesy, Sir—neither you nor your friend Larousse. My lawyer will give you all you shall get from me."

"Jubilee, you may run along now," said Christiana, her blue eyes were hard. Jubilee didn't protest. She stood outside the door behind her father. Christiana called for Yvette as Jubilee retreated around the corner.

She went straight to the little parlor. It was a smallish room and was never used except as a short cut from the library to the dining room. Shortly after they had moved into this house Jubilee had discovered that the little hole in the flue that controlled the drafts of the fireplace could also be used for another, more secret purpose. When it was open and you stood right next to it, you could hear everything that was said in the big parlor.

Jubilee made a bee-line for her listening post. She was about to lift the little hatch that covered the hole when Jake went by the open doorway.



His face was cold and set. She felt a rush of pity for him. Her family had used him very badly today, it seemed. Suddenly, she had an urge to run after him and tell him she would marry him after all. She took two steps toward the door and then stopped. Why had her father thrown him out of the house? She had to

know and her father was almost certainly about to tell her mother.

She returned to the flue and opened the hatch over the listening hole.

“... assume that they are in it together. After all, Dawson is in charge of shipping. The captain of the barge said that Larousse had been down to inspect the cargo personally.”

“It’s hard to believe Jake Dawson would willingly sell women into slavery,” Christiana said.

Jubilee gasped. Slavery? Hard to believe? It was impossible to believe!

“My dear, it is not easy to believe it of Edouard Larousse or any civilized man, but the two of them are seen all about the city together—at the opera, the horse races, playing cards in the coffee houses. I must assume that they are in it together.”

“This is genuinely upsetting. I believe I’ll have a glass of wine. Will you join me?” Jubilee gasped. Her cool, level-headed mother never indulged in wine in the afternoon.

There was a short silence, broken only by the soft click of glasses being set on the sideboard.

“What are you going to do?” Christiana asked.

“I’m going to sever business relationships with both of them. Then I will have a chat with the authorities, such as they are.”

“I’m not sure with whom you would have your chat, dearest. The city police are very busy. Have you read the newspapers today?” Jubilee could not hear her father’s reply—he must have answered with a shake of the head.

“The king was driven out of the Tuileries last night—he ran to the Assembly to save his skin, and there’s even talk of disbanding the Assembly.”

“So, Deputy Larousse is about to lose his job, eh? No wonder he was feathering his nest. Still, both he and Dawson could have made good money honestly. Not as much, of course, but good money, nevertheless, especially in these hard times.”

“Oh dear, I forgot to tell you! Edouard and his son are coming to call this afternoon. I was afraid they would arrive while Jake was here.”

Jubilee winced. Jules Larousse was the most odious creature she had ever met. Round-faced and sausage-fingered, he was the apple of his father’s eye. Jules had never been denied his least desire and it was obvious that he desired Jubilee. She could hardly keep from shivering when he touched her hand. His pasty complexion and self-indulgent smirk were more than she could bear.

“What would be the difficulty of all of them in the house at the same time? I could kill all the birds with one stone, so to speak.”

“That was originally not a consideration. It would have been awkward because Jake had come to ask for Jubilee’s hand in marriage.”

“So I gathered. Did he tell you that it made her angry?”

“Yes. Jake told me she had rejected him. Apparently she thought it would be only a marriage of convenience—to cement your partnership. She’s still just a child, dear, with a child’s romantic notions.”

Jubilee’s anger flamed again. Childish romantic notions! Those two had loved each other before they were married. Jubilee had once found some love letters she wasn’t supposed to see.

“But what does Jake’s proposal have to do with Larousse and his son? Surely not—”

“Yes, they are coming to sue for Jubilee’s hand.”

“Good Lord! Our daughter is certainly popular today. Are there any more suitors in the offing? I was hoping to have a change of clothing and then go off to my lawyers.”

“Perhaps we should send Yvette with a message to Edouard. It would avoid another scene.”

“No. Before God, I have a scene coming with Larousse and I mean to play it out!”

Jubilee heard a carriage stop in front of the house. It could only be the Deputy and his son.

“I wonder how much an Egyptian bordello charges for a French aristocrat?”

“Christiana! That’s an unseemly . . .”

The front door bell rang.

“Good heavens, they’re here.” Jubilee’s mother sighed.

“If you will entertain Jules, my dear. I’ll speak to Larousse in the library and spare you the vexation.”

Jubilee didn’t stay for her mother’s reply. If her father was going to receive *Monsieur* Larousse in the library, it wouldn’t do for Jubilee to be found in the next room with her ear pressed against the wall. She didn’t want to talk to Jules and felt sorry for her mother, who had to. Where would she go? She could run to her room, but it was miserably hot up there. The garden was too sharp a reminder of the ruin of her love for Jake. She was about to retreat to the dining room to think it over when the parlor door opened.

“Jubilee!” It was her mother’s voice.

“Yes, Mama,” Jubilee called reluctantly.

“Come to the parlor. We have callers.”

She reluctantly followed her mother to the parlor wondering what on earth an Egyptian bordello could possibly be.

Gaston was a pig. He held one of Marie’s garnets up to his small, nearsighted eyes and turned it over and over covetously. He was a trifle thinner than she remembered him, and his jowls hung loose around his chin. Marie lounged with elaborate unconcern across from him in his little office in the Heureaux Cafard. A table lay between them littered with papers and bits of uneaten food. A large vase of fresh flowers stood by his elbow. Flowers were one of Gaston’s weaknesses, among many others. Marie glanced around, openly bored. Only a few years ago this office had seemed grand to her. She had never noticed that the dark red velvet upholstery

was balding or that the magnificent landscape on the wall was a cheap copy. The air was close and smelled of sweat and beer.

Nevertheless, there were some good memories here. This little office, with its worn and dirty elegance, was where she had played in the many high-stakes card games that Gaston had arranged for her in return for a cut of the take. In those days Marie had thought him charming but dangerous. Now he was merely dangerous.

Finally, Gaston satisfied himself that the garnet was genuine.

"Do you want to leave the country? I can arrange that."

Marie shrugged. "No, only some second-hand clothes and a place to stay for a few days." Gaston meant for his smile to be knowing and confidential, but it was a shark's grin in a pig's face. He dropped the garnet onto the table and covered it protectively with one hand. His fingernails were black half-moons.

"A place to hide out, eh?"

"No. In fact I want you to put it about that I was a housekeeper to a bourgeois family in Sceaux." It seemed wise to disassociate herself from the court. Somewhere she would have to get a revolutionary cockade.

"You look like an aristo in that get-up." His little pig eyes had glittered when she took off the tattered cloak and revealed the cascade of blue satin. His glance kept stealing back to it. He obviously didn't believe that the garnet was all she had of value. She hadn't expected him to.

"I'm no aristocrat and you know it. Will you help me?"

"I'll try," he said. The garnet disappeared into a pocket of his baggy frock coat. "My fence was guillotined last month. It'll take time to locate another."

"Don't joke with me, Gaston, you know twenty fences."

An amused grin spread his deflated jowls. "But all of them are shy of the police these days."

Marie was very tired. It must be nearly dawn, and she wanted to stop pretending to be friends with Gaston. "Be persuasive, Gaston. Where am I to sleep?"

He stood. "Ah but I am forgetting my duties as a host." He took her by the elbow and led her upstairs. Dim blue dawn was beginning to tint the cracked and dirty windows of the saloon. Marie glanced around quickly as they passed through. It hadn't changed much; the same disorganized tables were scattered across a floor marred with the stains of spilled wine. The dusty hallway upstairs smelled faintly



of urine, but the bed in the room to which Gaston led her had moderately clean sheets.

"Would you like for me to arrange some card games for you?" Gaston was poised by the door, ready to leave. Marie wondered if he ever changed his stockings.

"No, Gaston, you know that life is over for me now. La Zollier . . ."

"La Zollier was a prig."

Marie stiffened.

"Was?"

"Madame Guillotine is always hungry."

"I see." Marie sat abruptly on the edge of the bed, suddenly too tired to stand. "Go away, Gaston, I must sleep now."



Jubilee's face ached from the smile pasted on it. Her father had been in the parlour with Larousse for nearly an hour. Jubilee had had three cups of tea and needed to use the chamberpot. Her mother had been making cool, inane conversation with Jules, while Jubilee listened and inserted polite comments when it seemed expected. They spoke only in French. Neither Jules nor his father spoke any English. She knew it was a strain on her mother, whose French was merely adequate. Jubilee's French had always been good, and after three years in Paris it was flawless. Even Yvette said that she could detect no accent, only an unfortunate American tendency to speak too slowly.

Jules lounged in a dark leather armchair wearing his Sunday best. The smirk of the spoiled child about to get his way was on his fleshy lips. He kept peering sidelong at Jubilee, who pretended not to notice. A pimple blossomed beside his shapeless nose. He was holding forth on the sterling qualities of his new racehorse. Christiana's face was carefully decorated with a stiff smile.

Jubilee wished for the fortieth time that her father would finish vilifying Larousse Pere and send them both packing. She knew when it happened Jules would look thwarted and make a scene. She hoped to be done with them soon. The thought of Jake started a little throb in her breast just below her heart. She was beginning to realize, if not the reasons behind her father's behavior, at least the significance of it. Somehow, the fact that Jake didn't love her didn't matter as much now as it had when they stood under the pergola together.

If she had turned him down quietly and politely, life would have gone on as it had before. She could still see him and speak to him. Perhaps they could even walk together in the garden.

Jubilee glanced at the library door. Her father would probably recover from his anger. Jubilee always did. If any cheating was going on, it was probably Larousse who was doing it. Certainly it was easy to believe it of him. Although more ferret-like and less fleshy than his son, Larousse was still unpleasant.

"Are their majesties still taking refuge in the Assembly?" Christiana asked, obviously hoping to change the subject away from horseracing.

"I do not know, Madame. Papa has not been there today."

"He has not?" Jubilee was surprised at her mother's surprise. Jules' superior little smile broadened.

"A messenger came this morning and Papa went out. He said he had a great many arrangements to make for my birthday."

"How pleasant for you."

Jubilee chimed in with a faint "*Oui*."

"Yes, indeed. I shall be twenty-one."

"A very important landmark." Christiana allowed the conversation to stop for a moment while she sipped her tea. "What does your father think will happen to their majesties?"

Jules grinned wolfishly and drew his finger across his throat. What an awful creature, Jubilee thought, and then realized that Jake had held a similar opinion.

"Papa says we can't really be a republic until they are dead," Jules added.

"Perhaps not," said Christiana, without conviction. She then launched into a discussion of roses. Jubilee knew that since her mother had no real interest in gardening she was taking a small revenge for the interminable horseracing stories.

The entrance of Jubilee's father and Larousse interrupted a discussion of the good qualities of the white damask rose. Everyone stood.

Neville looked tired, but he had a certain "job well done" air about him. He was obviously glad that the making of scenes was over. Larousse was a small, dark man, barely taller than Jubilee. He was well dressed, if plainly. No one wanted to seem too elegant these days. Although his behavior was never less than perfectly polite, there was something cold about him. He only warmed when he spoke to his son, whom he obviously adored.

"Papa!" exclaimed Jules. "Is it—"

"Be silent, dear son." He turned to Christiana and Jubilee and bowed. "You have been very kind, ladies. My son and I bid you bon jour."

"But Papa, didn't you—" Jules's eyes darted sideways to Jubilee, who shivered with disgust.

"Come along, Jules. It's time for us to go." The last was said with emphasis. Jules only sputtered a little while he and his father accepted their hats and sticks from Yvette.

Larousse hastened out with his son trailing sullenly behind him. Jules hadn't even gotten an opportunity to kiss Jubilee's hand, for which she was grateful.

"I must speak with you, Wife."

Christiana turned to Jubilee. "You may dress for dinner now, dear."

"Yes, Mama." Jubilee bobbed a curtsy. She hoped they would go back into the parlor, but her mother sat back down. Jubilee wished that they wouldn't always send her away when they were going to discuss something interesting.

She hastened down the hall, through the small cloakroom, and then through the kitchen into the dining room. Although evening was approaching, the summer sun was still bright, and shafts of light crept between the curtains that covered the doors to the garden. Silver gleamed on the table, laid out for supper. Jubilee positioned herself beside the door to the little parlour that was between the dining room and the library. It wasn't as good as the flue, but she could still hear.

"—told him I recognized her from her portrait that was in the last shipment from Nantes. She was supposed to have been guillotined along with the rest of her family, but someone bribed the jailer the night before."

"She was lucky."

"Madame, the guillotine would have been kinder."

"Nonsense, Neville. Death is not preferable even to life as a harem slave. As long as one is alive there is hope for some kind of salvation."

"Yes, of course." Neville muttered politely.

There was a small silence. Jubilee smiled. Her father always boasted that he preferred clever women and had had the good luck to marry one of the cleverest. But it still made him uncomfortable when he was wrong and she was right, even in little things.

"Did he explain why he would do such a distasteful thing?" Jubilee could detect a conciliatory tone in her mother's voice.

"He said that Dawson talked him into it." Jubilee felt her cheeks grow hot.

“What a great pity! I had come to think of Mr. Dawson as almost one of our own family,” said Christiana.

“So had I, rather, and since Jubilee seemed to have grown quite fond of him, I had hoped to see her safely settled with Dawson one day. But now—never!”

The grim finality in her father’s voice persuaded Jubilee that the bizarre afternoon had brought a breach between Jake Dawson and her family which would not heal. For the first time that day, tears overtook her. She wept quietly, leaning against the doorframe.

“One thing makes me rather uncomfortable,” her father said.

“What’s that?”

“Dawson was surprised to be found out, but Larousse was not. He was as cool as spring water.”

“Jules said that his father had a messenger this morning. Apparently he had been warned.”

“Mademoiselle!” Jubilee whirled. Yvette stood there looking shocked and clearly about to scold.

“Oh, be quiet, Yvette!” Jubilee ran to the kitchen and up the back stairs to her room. She threw herself across her bed and let the floodgates open.



The carriage hit a bump. Jules nearly lost his best gray top hat. He quickly craned his neck to see what the carriage had struck, but, to his disappointment, it was only a battered stick of firewood. Sometimes there were dead bodies in the streets. Jules settled back in his seat and resumed his conversation.

“But, Papa, you said you would get her for me!” Jules’ chin quaked indignantly. She was so beautiful. He knew he would die of love if he didn’t have her.

“Hush, mon petit chou, there is still a chance that your papa will make it all right for you.” Jules studied his father’s smooth, dark face. It had a closed look, as if he were far away. Jules didn’t like that. It always irritated him when his father was preoccupied, and he had been like that most of the day.

“I want to go riding after supper, Papa.”

“One doesn’t go riding in the evening, my boy. We can go tomorrow after breakfast.”

Jules’ voice rose half an octave. “I must ride this evening. I am very nervous, and riding will soothe me.” It was almost true.

"Perhaps we will discuss it again after supper."

They got stuck behind a slow-moving cabbage cart. Their driver stood up and shouted some very creative obscenities which attracted the attention of a gang of children. They swarmed around the carriage like a flock of guinea hens clamoring for alms in rough, rude voices. One bold urchin with sores on his scalp climbed up on the running board and stuck a grubby hand palm-up in Jules' face.

"S'il vous plat, *Monsieur*. Charity for the poor."

"Get down, you filthy wretch!" Jules shrieked in a high-pitched voice that he thought very stern. He struck the boy on the shoulder with his stick. The boy howled and fell off. He laughed when he saw the little creature was making obscene gestures at him.

"What a terrible day this has been, Papa." Larousse, who, with some amusement, had been watching his son deal with the lower classes, smiled indulgently. The cabbage cart pulled over, and they moved along rapidly again.

"I understand, my boy. Perhaps we'll have strawberries for dinner, would you like that?"

"One can't expect it to make up for losing Mademoiselle Jubilee," Jules fretted, although his heart lifted at the thought of the extravagant treat.

"I know." His father patted Jules' forearm comfortingly. "It will be all right."

Jules thought of Jubilee, with her dark, glossy hair and fair skin. She as a trifle flat-chested, but her mouth was perfection. It was like—yes, it was like fresh strawberries. He imagined that her legs were long and slim. Whenever he had a whore he thought of Jubilee, so delectable . . . Hastily he took off his hat and put it in his lap. He tried to get his mind off her for a moment.

"Papa, it would amuse me very much if you would tell me what you have planned for my birthday."

His father sighed. "Why do you insist on spoiling your own surprises, my son?"

Jules laughed. "Because I always want everything all at once!"

"Well, you can't have this all at once, no matter how much you plague me. I'm planning a very great surprise for you." Again his father seemed closed off, as if a curtain had been drawn across the back of his eyes. "A very great surprise—if everything goes well."



La Zollier's face, the wonderful color of *cafe natur*, floated in a gray mist uncomfortably detached from her body. Marie wanted to pour out her troubles to the old fortune teller as she had when she was a child, but the words stuck oddly in her throat. La Zollier's almond eyes were kindly, as always, but seemed tired and gazed far away . . .

Someone was in the room. Marie, wide awake all at once, instinctively rolled off the edge of the bed away from the door. Hard hands were on her arms before she could scramble under the bed. An instant later she realized that there were two intruders. She struggled and cursed, but they held her fast. Then a shutter was lifted on a closed lantern and soft yellow light streamed out.

"Gaston!" It was he who held the lantern. She spat at his shark's grin. It only seemed to amuse him.

"Good evening, *Cherie*. Have you slept well?" Marie only glared at him.

She was glad that she hadn't undressed, but had merely loosened her corset. She must have slept all day.

Gaston put his hand down the front of her dress. She flinched away from his warm, moist fingers. "You are so beautiful, *Cherie*, I wish I could afford you." He rummaged around until he found her little bundle of jewelry.

"Our association was always been most profitable," he said as he tossed the little bag in the air and caught it. It then disappeared into his pocket. "But nothing like tonight."

"You are a pig, Gaston. You will rot in hell."

"Undoubtedly." The prospect seemed to amuse, rather than dismay, him. He motioned to the men holding her to take her out. "*Bon voyage, Cherie.*"

"What?" It was all she could say before they dragged her out the door.



Jubilee lay awake in the warm dark of her room. After her lamp was blown out she had opened the doors to her little balcony. A very faint breeze drifted languidly in. There was no moon, but her room was dimly illuminated by the soft light from the corner street lamp.

Jubilee wished she could float like this forever and not have to face the fact that Jake had done something so horrible her father would never let her see him again. She had heard a great deal, but not enough to make sense of it all. A young girl

being spared from the guillotine was surely not an unspeakable crime. There had to be more to it.

She thought for a while about Jake as he had been this afternoon, with the fullness of high summer all about him. She loved for him to bow over her hand and touch his lips to her fingers. It made her feel quivery all over. She wondered what his embrace was like. She wished she could have found out, this afternoon under the pergola. If he had sworn that he loved her and kissed her on the lips, she would have run away with him no matter what his crimes.

An odd noise outside interrupted her warm reverie. It sounded like a footstep on the walk up to the house, but there were no other steps. Jubilee decided it was only a random night noise. She gazed at the little patch of stars that could be seen through the balcony doors. Perhaps her father could reach some kind of agreement with Jake. Maybe Jake could apologize and swear never to do it again. She knew, even as she thought it that grown men didn't behave that way. No, she would just have to—

A dark shape emerged from below her balcony and hoisted itself over the railing. Jubilee screamed. Her cotton nightgown was twisted around her, and instead of leaping to her feet, she fell out of bed and the shadow was on top of her. He stank of rum and sweat. Jubilee screamed again and pummeled him with her fists until he grabbed her forearms and dragged her to her feet. He wrestled her over to the door and wrenched it open, holding both her wrists in one hand. Once out in the hall, Jubilee called for her papa at the top of her lungs, while she kicked at her captor with her bare feet. The intruder dragged her toward the stairs.

A gunshot roared. She heard shouting, doors slamming, and a second shot. Jubilee's captor chuckled gleefully and dragged her down the stairs. She screamed and called until her throat was sore. She kept it up even as she realized that there might be no one to hear her. She was being dragged down the hallway toward the front door. All of the lamps were still lit. When they passed the door of the parlor, she caught a glimpse of blood splattered on the settee and someone lying sprawled on the floor. They were past the doorway before she realized that the someone on the floor was her papa. She couldn't breathe, there was no air, she was smothering.

Suddenly an explosion thundered so close it seemed to be inside her head. Her captor lost his grip and fell to the floor Jubilee, dazed and trembling, saw her mother framed in the library doorway. One of Neville's dueling pistols was in her hand. Jubilee thought irrationally that she had never seen one of those pistols out of their box.

"Come," whispered Christiana, and pulled Jubilee into the library. "We have only a moment." Her mother tossed the empty pistol into a chair and pulled off the fine white silk fichu that completed the evening gown she wore. Apparently Jubilee's parents hadn't been to bed yet. Christiana twisted the bit of silk into a rope, went to the desk, and returned with a dagger that Neville had brought her from Macao. The knife was exquisitely wrought and very sharp. Christiana had always used it for opening mail. The scabbard had a belt loop through which Christiana threaded the fichu. "Raise your nightgown."

"But, Mama, I have nothing on underneath."

Her mother's face was white and grim. "Don't argue, they will be here any second." Jubilee raised her gown without another word. Her mother tied the improvised belt around Jubilee's waist. The dagger was cold and curiously heavy.

Her mother hugged her hard. "Listen to me and don't talk," she whispered with her arms around her daughter. "The fact that you are still alive means they don't plan to kill you. They want you for something else. They walked in and shot your papa without a word. They tried to shoot me, too, but I was nearer the door and got away." Jubilee moaned and hid her face against her mother's shoulder. Christiana stroked her daughter's hair and then held her at arms' length and shook her gently. "Jubilee, listen to me—you must hear me. Never turn the knife against yourself. Please. I could not bear that. Keep trying to escape."

"Mama, you speak as if all were lost. We must run away and get the police."

Another shot blasted from the direction of the kitchen. Christiana shuddered. "Poor Yvette," she murmured.

There were heavy footsteps running in the hall. They stopped suddenly with a guttural shout, "Over here!" Apparently Jubilee's erstwhile captor had been discovered. Someone rattled the knob of the locked door and then pushed against it heavily.

"Come." Christiana scooped up the empty pistol and took Jubilee's hand again. Christiana unlocked the door that led to the small parlor and peered through it. The way was clear, so she crossed to the dining room. They circled the table, heading for the double doors that had been standing open since sunset.

"Stop!" Jubilee and her mother whirled. Three hard-looking men stood in the doorway behind them. One of them wore a long green scarf tied around his head. He had a pistol in his hand. Jubilee and her mother faced them across the white linen tablecloth. Christiana pointed the empty pistol at them.

"If you shoot," she said. "I will take one of you with me."

His two companions looked sidelong at the man in the green scarf.

“Zo you ar de tigress,” said the man in the green scarf. He spoke in thickly accented French.

“Jubilee,” said Christiana. “Run, now, and get the police.” Before Jubilee could turn to obey there was a metallic click behind her, and then a shattering roar. Christiana fell forward. Jubilee’s knees could no longer hold her up, and she crumpled to the floor beside her mother. A small hole had appeared in her mother’s back, and blood spread across the Chinese carpet.

“Mama,” said Jubilee weakly, and touched her mother’s arm.

When Jubilee looked up, the man in the green scarf stood over her grinning hideously. She didn’t even protest as he pulled her to her feet and hurried her through the garden and around the house. Before he could shove her into the cart that waited in the street, however, she slipped into welcome darkness.

Chapter 3

A n old woman sat on the curb beside the gutter amid the shrieks of children and the clatter of carriages. She had exposed one skinny leg and occupied herself massaging the swollen knee with gnarled brown hands. A passing washerwoman with an over-large basket on her head made a sign against evil in the old woman's direction. The hag cast her eyes down. In better times, she would have spat back a curse to teach the washerwoman manners. In better times she might have, but not now. She scratched at a flea that was trapped under the patch that covered one eye. Death danced through the streets these days, glutting itself on the unfortunate and the unwary. The stink of dying hung low over the city. Soon there would be a feast of blood greater than any she had ever known. Her sense of such things told the old woman the truth of it, though she prayed she was wrong. Even as she prayed, she could almost hear the great death rolling inexorably forward.

She hoisted herself to her feet on her twisted walking stick, her ragged skirts falling into place. Her nose led her, limping, to an alley where it was customary to urinate. Salvation for herself only lay in continuing to move and to hide.



When Jubilee awoke there was no moment of confusion or merciful forgetfulness. The world had ended and she was awake in hell.

When they unceremoniously dumped her into this room last night she had remained crumpled on the floor and cried until no more tears fell and she gasped dry

sobs. She closed her eyes and saw only blood—blood on the settee in the library, blood on the Chinese carpet in the dining room. She couldn't see her mother and father—only blood. She floated loose in a red sea of emptiness that was as painful as a physical wound. When dawn crept into her consciousness, her surroundings resolved into dim focus and she crawled onto the bed and slept.

Now it was broad day, and there were no more tears. Only pain and the memory of blood, not quite so close as it had been, but still crouched warm at her elbow. She sat up. Every muscle was stiff and her face felt hot and swollen. Bruises spotted her arms.

In a dazed and distant way she took stock of her surroundings. She found herself in a very large room that had once been very elegant. The intricately patterned carpet was slashed and the furniture was chipped and cracked, not from age but from abuse. One table had dark streaks in the gold leaf across its top as if someone had tried to scrape it off with a knife. The ceiling, however, was undamaged. It was covered with a fresco of cupids and fairies cavorting in a lush park, dancing and pushing each other in swings adorned with flowers. Jubilee blinked at it and wondered for the first time why she was not dead also.



When Jake Dawson's hired hack jerked to a stop before Neville Jones's house, Jake stiffened his back a little as if preparing to face an opponent over dueling pistols or bare knuckles. He descended without hesitation, however, and paid off the cabbie with only a glance at the house.

No letter had come from Jones's lawyer this morning, and when Jake went to see him the big, bearlike man had regarded him with astonishment and rumbled that he had received no instructions from *Monsieur* Jones about disbanding the partnership or anything else.

Dawson wished for the hundredth time that Jones had told him what he was supposed to have done. Jake walked through the gate and up to the Jones villa feeling a little defiant. He planned to have it out with Neville. At first it had seemed that Jubilee had persuaded her father to such a violent reaction. Afterwards, when the incredible scene had receded and his anger cooled, he realized Neville would never be so dominated by the girl. Edouard could possibly be swayed in such a way by his son, but Neville was not that sort of man.



The scent of roses was heavy in the air, reminding him of yesterday, the warmth of Jubilee so close. He wished he was not so damned clumsy. He hadn't meant to insult the girl. How perceptive she was! And what a temper! Now she would probably marry Jules in a fit of pique. He could not understand how a competent and socially adept man like Larousse could turn his son into such a self-centered lout.

Jake rapped on the door with his stick. It was opened by Larousse.

"Larousse!" He was the last person Jake had expected.

"Please come in, Dawson." Larousse said solemnly. Impeccably dressed as always, his dark hair pulled sleekly back, he seemed . . . official. Jake stepped across the threshold into the foyer with a growing sense of unease. The umbrella stand lay on its side—empty. Jake stopped. A tendril of arctic chill stole over his heart. "Edouard, tell me what has happened here."

Larousse's face was smooth, although his eyes glittered for an instant. "My friend, last night someone broke into this house and destroyed the entire Jones family."

"What?" The air went out of him explosively like someone had slugged him. He brushed past Larousse. A pool of drying blood marred the hallway. Jake stepped carefully over it and strode from room to room. Everything was wrecked, as if the house had suffered a mob's fury. Larousse trailed behind him.

"I discovered the bodies this morning and, of course, summoned the police immediately. The family must have put up a stiff fight; one of the ruffians was dead. Everything of value has been taken. Jones was in the library, his wife was in the dining room by the garden doors, the girl was on the back steps—all had been shot." Larousse said all this in a monotone, as if he were reciting. Jake was barely listening; he was staring at the blood on the Chinese carpet. Pictures filled his mind. Flashes of Christiana, cool and long-fingered, pouring tea into a delicate cup; Neville, blade-sharp; and Jubilee . . . Jubilee showered with golden coins of sunlight in the summerhouse, her sea-gray eyes wide with the wonder of a changing world.

"Where are they now?" His throat was tight.

"The police have taken the bodies away."

“Where are they now?” The sheer volume of his voice shocked even Jake. Larousse coughed delicately and tactfully averted his gaze from such a faux pas.

“I told the police, when they were finished with their examination of the bodies, to take them to the Church of St. Therese.”

Jake stepped over the pool of blood and opened the doors to the garden. “Thank you, Edouard. I’m sorry. I—well, I’m sorry. They were rather like my own family.”

“Please think nothing of it.” Larousse brushed an invisible fleck of dust from his sleeve. “I am going to ask the Chief of Police to allow me, as a member of the Assembly, to investigate this personally. The police are rather busy these days and probably won’t have time to investigate it properly.”

“Good. If I can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call on me. Good day, Sir.” With that Jake strode down the steps and into the empty garden.



Jubilee sat cross-legged on the bed, still in her night shift. The remains of a partially eaten meal of bread and black coffee sat on a table beside the bed. She turned her mother’s dagger over and over in her hands. It seemed like a sign from heaven—a true miracle—that it hadn’t been discovered. As a parting gift it was somehow typical of her mother. Jubilee’s father had privately called his wife his secret weapon. It was a family joke. Jubilee’s tears made trails silently down her cheeks.

A scratching at a door Jubilee had thought locked caught her attention. She glanced at the other door, which led to a hallway. That door was not locked, but it was guarded by a scruffy-looking young man. There would be no escape that way. Jubilee shoved the dagger under the edge of the rumpled blankets within easy reach and watched the jiggling doorknob with a thrill of fear. She wiped her cheeks with the backs of her hands.

A tiny, delicate woman in a sumptuous blue gown stepped through the door. She carried a bottle and a small bundle held awkwardly in one hand, a hairpin in the other. This she pushed into her rather disheveled hair, which bore traces of pale blue powder. The woman smiled and came toward Jubilee.

“Who are you?” Jubilee gasped.

“I am Marie. What is your name?”

Jubilee was shocked. “I am Jubilee. Are you Marie Antoinette?” The small woman nearly doubled over in a deep, earthy, infectious belly-laugh. Jubilee smiled, her face stiff with dried tears.

"I'm afraid the queen is in a prison not as nice as this one." Jubilee looked around at the tattered elegance to hide her embarrassment. Marie plopped down beside her on the bed.

"What is this place?" Jubilee asked. It hadn't occurred to her to wonder until just this moment.

Marie uncorked the bottle and handed it to Jubilee. "I heard you crying last night. Have some of this." Then Marie glanced around appraisingly. "I think this was once the Hotel du Villiers, but now it's a whorehouse."

Jubilee took a tiny sip from the bottle just to be polite. Her parents didn't allow her to drink unwatered wine.

"What's that?" she asked.

Marie raised one eyebrow. "It's a brothel, a bordello—a place where ladies sell their favors to men."

"Oh, it's a whorehouse," said Jubilee to herself in English. She wasn't supposed to know about such things, but of course she did. Bordello. Where had she heard that word before?

"Pardon?"

"I mean I understand. Do you—work here?" Jubilee felt herself blushing as she handed back the wine. It might be an impertinent question.

"Mais non. I am a prisoner here, as you are. I think several other girls are held prisoner here, also." Marie took a deep swig of the wine and tossed the little bundle down on the bed. It was a deck of cards.

"I've been working on Rat-face out there in the hall."

Jubilee was shocked. "Sssh! He might hear you!"

Marie shrugged. "It was the name he told me. Anyway, I got the wine and cards out of him and a little information." She began to shuffle the cards expertly. "He wasn't very nice to me at first, but after a while I discovered that he thinks I'm an aristocrat." She tilted her head and regarded Jubilee. "He thinks you're an aristocrat also."

"No! I'm an American!"

"Keep your voice down!" Jubilee was startled by the whip-lash from the small woman.

"But an aristocrat is not a good thing to be these days," Jubilee whispered, much chastised. Marie patted Jubilee's arm.

"Don't ever tell your enemies anything, Jubilee, remember that. It might save your life someday."

Tears stung Jubilee's eyes. She realized that this odd little woman was being kind to her. "Thank you. I will remember it," Jubilee said, blinking rapidly.

"Oh, la, none of that. Here, have another drink of this." Jubilee accepted the wine and took a real gulp as she had seen Marie do. A comforting warmth spread out to her fingertips. She wondered why Marie wore that ugly green fichu with such a pretty dress. Well, it had once been pretty. Now it was grass-stained around the hem and very wrinkled. The sleeves were fashionably tight and deeply ruffled at the elbow, but one shoulder was torn.

"Do you play cards?" Marie had begun to deal out hands in colorful snaps almost faster than Jubilee could follow.

"*Mais oui*, I used to play Hearts with my cousins. I must warn you, I often won." Marie raised one eyebrow.

"Hearts is a nice children's game. I will teach you a game I used to play as a child. It's called One Eyed Mouse."

They played several hands. Jubilee learned rapidly and enjoyed it, even though she didn't win a single game.



"Your erstwhile business partner is now dead?" Le Duc, wearing only a long white silk shirt that fell almost to his plump knees, lay across a pile of dark velvet pillows. Several feet away, a beautiful young girl in pink lace sang softly, accompanying herself on a small virginal.

"Yes," Larousse replied, "and the entire family for safety's sake." Le Duc's thin lips, free of rouge, curved into a scythe of a smile. He was corpulent like so many of the Bourbons. His heavy-lidded eyes were set in a fleshy and dissipated face. His long, thick fingers toyed with some braided strips of leather, too fine to be calf. Larousse found it difficult to keep his eyes off this small movement.

"You have always been delightfully thorough."

"Merci beaucoup, Your Grace." Larousse shifted in his chair, which was almost too small for even his slight frame. Late afternoon sunlight slanted through ceiling-high windows, touching the hair of the girl at the virginal with gold. "I have also taken the precaution of having myself appointed to conduct the inquiry into their deaths."

"The inquiry will of course be regrettably unsuccessful."

"But of course."

Fallieres gently tapped a dark green pillow with the braided leather. As usual, Larousse found Le Duc's presence curiously exciting. Larousse always visited his mistress after an interview with him. Deceiving Fallieres about the Jones girl intensified his excitement.

"Allow me to extend my congratulations for your successful escape from the palace."

"Thank you. Of course, now I must go about incognito, but I shall not mind that. It will be a refreshing change of pace. The court has been rather dull the last few years." Not for the king, Larousse thought. Fallieres had always been close friends with the notorious revolutionary Danton, and lately it was rumored that he had business dealings with Robespierre. All this while His Grace was living at court, dancing attendance to the king and kissing the hand of the great Austrian whore.

Fallieres sat up and poured himself a glass of wine from the carafe on the table beside him. He did not offer any to Larousse.

"The men who did the actual killing, what became of them?"

Larousse shrugged. "I paid them off and sent them back to Marseilles."

"Have them followed and killed, all except for Lazar. It would be too unfortunate if they talked. Have Lazar join *Monsieur* Dawson's staff. He is to stay close to Dawson. The American is far too useful to lose at the moment, but when we no longer need him, he is to instantly join the Jones family."

"I will see to it." A pity to lose such a valuable pigeon. Larousse shrugged again, this time mentally.

"The shipment of girls that Jones released . . . How is that coming?"

"All the girls should be recaptured or replaced in a few weeks."

"No sooner?"

"If too many young, aristocratic women disappear from prison, it will cause—talk. I'm sorry, Your Grace, these things take time."

The girl ended her song and started another without a pause. "She sings beautifully," said Larousse. "Has she had training at the opera?" Le Duc smiled smugly. His hands, usually restless, were quiet for the moment. The lace on at the cuffs of his sleeves nearly covered them.

"Yes, and that is one of my compositions she is singing."

"It's delightful," said Larousse, although he was certain no music critic would actually think so. They chatted for a few minutes about the latest season at the opera. Fallieres was an enthusiast. He even owned an opera house. Their discussion was interrupted by the voice of the young girl cracking mid-note. She stopped, embarrassed, and started again. Fallieres' face darkened. Her voice broke again.

"Stop that miserable croaking!"

"I'm sorry, Your Grace, may I have some water?" Her speaking voice was high and sweet. Larousse noticed a bruise on one bare shoulder. He suddenly desired her.

"None of your excuses! Just get out. You've spoiled my mood." Fallieres threw a pillow at her, hitting her in the face. She choked on a sob and ran out of the room in a flutter of pink lace.



Jubilee enjoyed the cards immensely. She was also fascinated that Marie and her childhood friends had gambled on the turn of these cards.

"In America children don't gamble. We probably wouldn't be allowed to if we thought of it."

Marie's mouth turned down oddly at one corner. "Jubilee, in America, were you poor?"

"No, not really. I don't think we were rich, but Papa owns—owned—an import firm with offices in New York and, I think, a warehouse in Boston also. We are in Paris to buy aristocratic goods confiscated by your government. There is a very big demand for such things in America."

"So you were not poor."

"No, I suppose we were rather well fixed."

"Then you didn't beg for a coin or two and gamble hoping to win enough for a little food or a pair of second-hand shoes."

"Of course not! Oh, Marie, did you? How very awful for you."

Marie smiled. "I survived very well, actually. Soon I learned to play cards with those who were not so poor as I. I was very good at cards."

"You handle them beautifully."

"Merci." They played the next hand in silence. Marie won, but not by as large a margin.

"Tell me," said Marie slowly while she shuffled the deck. "What happened to your mama and papa?" Jubilee studied a ripple in the blue satin of Marie's dress.

"Brigands broke into our house last night and killed them both. Then they brought me here," Jubilee recited softly. She felt as if a giant hand was pressing her down onto the bed. She didn't resist. Her mother's hidden dagger was an odd-shaped lump under her ribs. Jubilee began to cry.

Marie patted Jubilee's shoulder and made soothing nonsense sounds until the storm wore itself out. "I'm sorry to make you remember, and I'm very sorry about your parents, but you and I are alive, Jubilee, and we are here in this place. That is not good. I have a feeling that something very terrible is planned for us." Jubilee wiped her eyes on a corner of tattered blanket and sat up. She strove to concentrate on what Marie was saying.

"What sort of terrible thing?" She had not yet considered that she had a fate. She realized that, in spite of Marie's kindness, she still felt suspended in purgatory. Not dead, but not alive, either.

“Well, for one thing, we are in a whorehouse, not a convent.”

Jubilee blushed. “But I . . . I’ve never . . .”

“You are still a virgin? I thought so. That only makes you more valuable. You can be sold for a great deal of money, especially if the buyer thinks he is raping an aristocrat.”

“Oh, my God! That’s terrible!”

“What? Speak French, *Cherie*,” said Marie.

Jubilee translated.

“True enough,” said Marie. She was idly cutting the deck over and over with one hand. Her fingernails had traces of silver paint. “Something else worries me, though.”

“What?” Jubilee couldn’t imagine anything much worse.

“When they were dragging me away, the maggot who sent me here said ‘bon voyage.’ It has bothered me ever since.”

“It is very odd.” It didn’t seem such a serious thing to Jubilee, compared to being sold to the highest bidder.

“Anyway, I am planning to take my leave of this place somehow.”

“Escape! Of course, I will escape also. I remember Mama said I must escape.”

“A very sensible woman, your mother.”

Jubilee got up and went to the window. They were on the third floor. The street was several yards away. An old woman hawked brooms by the gate. “We are rather high up. I thought perhaps we could go out the window. At our house in New York I used to slip out of my bedroom that way.” Jubilee turned around and leaned against the windowsill. “There was a trellis to help, though.”

Marie came over to the window and looked down. “The window is still a possibility. We shall escape together, then.”

Jubilee’s stomach tightened. It was a very long way to the ground. “I would be very grateful for the help. How soon can we try?”

“I don’t know. I’ll work on Rat-face as much as I can.” Marie patted Jubilee’s arm. “I should go. They’ll bring supper soon, and they shouldn’t find me here.”



The ancient chapel was small and simple. Jake knelt in the dimness lit only by candles flickering in small red glasses and the thin light that found its way

through windows partially blocked by the building next door. Three coffins rested on trestles between the first pew and the communion rail.

After a while Jake gave up trying to say anything to God and sat back in the pew. He thought about these people who had been his only real family. He had loved them without ever realizing it. Now they were senselessly snuffed out and he felt the loss deeply.

He thought of his own father, a rough, crude and dangerous man. They had never really known each other. Ezekiel Dawson had wanted better things for his son and so Jake had spent a good bit of his childhood in a boys' school. In the summers Ezekiel taught his son riding, shooting and trapping—all the things Ezekiel thought men should know. Jake lived for these times. When Ezekiel was knifed in a drunken brawl Jake was left utterly alone. Neville and Christiana had melted that loneliness more than he knew.

Jake had been disappointed when Jubilee refused him, point blank, so to speak. Until that moment, he had not realized that he had been looking forward to marrying her. He thought that his only intention was to save her from marriage to Jules Larousse. Larousse Pere had intimated that his son's betrothal to Jubilee was nearly accomplished. "It's obvious the two children adore each other," Larousse had said, "and Neville is anxious to form an alliance between our two families." It was not obvious to Jake, who could not imagine what Jubilee saw in Jules. He himself saw



only a selfish, arrogant, and not overly intelligent lout. Jubilee could not possibly have been anything but miserable with Jules Larousse.

Jake sighed. It didn't matter now. He would never see Jubilee blossom into womanhood. She would always remain a girl in his memory. He went to the alms box and shoved in a few francs. He lit three candles and turned to leave. A plump little monk was sweeping out the entryway. A revolutionary cockade made an odd spot of brightness against the front of his drab robe.

"Excuse me, Pere. The family inside had a housekeeper. Where are her remains?" The monk stopped sweeping, looked up at Jake, and blinked.

"The police brought only the three bodies, *Monsieur*."

"I see. Thank you."

The little monk nodded and went back to his sweeping.



Jubilee stood by the window watching the sun set. On the edge of hearing, a din of shouting and screaming troubled the night. She had read about the riots in the newspapers, and of course everyone talked about them, but they had never intruded into the Joneses' quiet suburb.

She hugged her bare shoulders. The warmth of Marie's wine and her company had left and in their place was a gnawing terror. She had never been in trouble before. She had never been unsafe, cold, or hungry—hunger gnawed at her now, she hadn't eaten since this morning. Marie had never known security. How could she be so self-assured? Danger seemed only to make her angry. Jubilee felt like a helpless morsel about to be devoured. She wanted to escape now—tonight. She wondered what "working on Rat-face" actually consisted of.

Just then the door opened behind her. She whirled. Two men stood there. One, dirty and furtive-looking, could have been a brother to Rat-face. He had a chunk of bread in one hand and a bowl of something that smelled like stew in the other. His companion was small, shorter than she, in long green-and-white-striped pants. He grinned wolfishly.

"Well," he said. "You are awake now. I don't think you remember me from last night."

"No. Who are you?" Fear roughened her voice. Was this her first . . . customer? She glanced over to the bed—her mother's dagger was still hidden under the blankets.

"I am Andre Marot. Although our acquaintance will be short, it will be a happy one, eh?"

"What do you mean? Stay away from me." She stepped back but only bumped into the wall beside the window. At a signal from Marot the boy shuffled into the room and put the food down on the little table beside the bed, then went to the doorway and lounged there, looking bored.

Marot, meanwhile, approached Jubilee until he was standing much too close to her. She shrank against the wall. He smelled of sweat and something else nasty that she didn't recognize. The large pores in his nose were clogged with black dirt.

"*Dieu*, you are even more beautiful than I thought."

Jubilee tried to sidle away from him, but he grabbed her around the waist and dug his fingers into her buttocks. She gasped. A tentative flare of anger made her tremble.

"Get away!" She pushed futilely against his chest. He didn't move.

"Such a pity. I could make a fortune pimping you, my dear. As it is—well, after tomorrow we'll have some fun together until it's time for you to depart." She didn't know exactly what "pimping" was, but she could guess. Her budding anger was quickly smothered by fear.



"Depart? Where are you sending me?" He shrugged, and idly plucked at her nipples through her nightgown. She pushed at his hands.

"It's none of my affair. You are merely a guest here for a little while." Marie's remark about someone saying "bon voyage" flashed through Jubilee's mind followed by her mother's voice saying "I wonder how much an Egyptian bordello charges for a French aristocrat?" With a rush Jubilee understood what she must have meant.

Marot planted his wet mouth on her neck. Jubilee's stomach lurched and she tried again to pull away.

A sharp yelp came from the hallway, followed by running feet.

"Marot! Marot!" A boy of about fifteen burst in, flushed with excitement. His thin blonde hair hung in greasy strings. Marot's face curdled.

"What is it?"

"That du Montpar bitch up and hung herself! The boys just cut her ladyship down."

Marot spat an obscenity. He pinched Jubilee's breast again, but this time he hurt her. "We'll continue this later, girl." He hurried out. The boy followed, gabbling the details with great relish.

When Jubilee was alone, she wrapped her arms about herself, trembling violently. She went over to the bed and sat down. Her eyes burned with unshed tears—fear wouldn't allow them. She was lost—lost! A cold wind swept through her, freezing her bones and chattering her teeth. The light waned, night was closing in. She tugged on the tattered bedclothes to pull them up around her, desperately needing protection, no matter how thin and symbolic.

Her mother's dagger fell from the blankets. Jubilee studied it meditatively without touching it.



Chapter 4

The crowded market baked in the afternoon sun. The old woman leaned on her twisted stick, patiently waiting for the porridge seller to fill her bowl. He was surly. She knew she made him nervous, and would have avoided him and close contact with anyone if she could, but she had to eat to stay alive. She dropped a coin, the last of a careful little horde, into his blunt-fingered hand and accepted the bowl gratefully. Working her way to the nearest patch of unoccupied shade, she lowered herself, carefully managing the bowl lest she spill some of it.



She caught the porridge seller watching her out of the corner of his eye as he called out his wares under a canopy that once had been green. He also sold bread and cheese, but such fancy fare was beyond the old woman's means. Soon she would have to earn some money, probably by way of the battered old tarot deck hidden in a secret pocket. It was dangerous, but starvation was the alternative.

Turning away from him she concentrated on the food, wolfing it down in great gulps, she knew it wasn't her skin, the color of ancient leather, that bothered him. There were many of her race here in the city. No, her eyes disturbed him. He knew her by sight and wasn't fooled by the eye patch. One of her

eyes was ordinary, black within brown so dark it was almost black, the other—blue like a jewel set in old mahogany.

A fly settled on the rim of her bowl. She waved it away with a gnarled brown hand. She knew she did not have the evil eye. Some of those she tried to curse even prospered better than they had before. Still, in happier times, such an odd appearance was profitable—now, it bordered upon lethal.

The king was in prison. For a great many the hated Bourbon's incarceration represented an end of a hellish way of life, but for others . . . Even for some of those who rejoiced, this was regarded as a time of evil, and therefore her sort of "evil" would be strengthened, and more strongly feared. Others feared that the king reigned by divine right and therefore his downfall would call down the wrath of God.

The porridge seller, absorbed in serving a new customer, seemed to have forgotten her. She decided that this would be a good time to slip away in the direction of the public water pump. He would probably tell his friends how she had vanished into thin air.



Jake couldn't keep his mind on the horserace in front of him. Heated by anger burning barely under control, his thoughts shouldered each other aside, refusing to come to any order.

The jubilant noise of the crowd clashed against him. All of Paris was celebrating—the king and queen were being taken to prison today. Jake waited impatiently for an opportunity to get away. He glanced at Larousse who sat next to him in the open carriage. Larousse watched the race with mild pleasure while his son shook the carriage leaping up and down howling for his favorite. Jake noted sourly that Jules' grief for his beloved Jubilee wasn't spoiling his birthday.

Jake clenched and unclenched his hands thinking about his conversation earlier with Larousse. Jules had insisted that they stop at a café that offered strawberries. While Jules was occupied with stuffing himself, Jake took the opportunity to ask after Yvette.

Larousse seemed surprised and then lowered his eyes. "I don't know if I should tell you this," he said slowly. "You will have to keep it in the strictest of confidence."

"Of course."

“My investigation of the matter has turned up no trace of the housekeeper. I am forced to believe that she was involved somehow.”

“Yvette?” A roaring in Jake’s ears made it hard to listen.

“Yes, I’m afraid so. She must have fled with them, there was hardly any reason for the killers to take her captive.”

Until today Jake had not considered that there was an intelligence behind the deaths of Jubilee and her family. It had seemed senseless—random. Now a rage ripped through his veins that must have been there all along, waiting for a focus.

The carriage jerked. Jules had thrown himself back into his seat, exhausted. He was in such a good mood that he wasn’t even sulking about his horse losing.

When the crowd became relatively quiet between races, Jake made the politest adieux he could manage.

“Are you sure you wouldn’t like to come to supper with us?” said Jules who looked like he was considering a pout.

“No, I am going to leave Paris this afternoon.”

“Leave Paris!” Jules turned to his father with his mouth gaping.

Larousse regarded Jake thoughtfully. “Going away for a while and getting a rest would probably be the best thing for you,” he said.

“I agree, but I shall not be resting. Yvette is from a small village not far from Paris. I’m going to begin searching for her there.”

“In that case, I would be grateful if you took one of my men with you. He might be useful.”

Jake hesitated. “Thank you,” he said. “But I shall be leaving within the hour.”

“I’ll send a note asking my man to meet you at your villa.” Jake climbed out of the carriage before he answered.

“Very well, but I’ll leave without him if he’s late.”

“I will warn him to make haste. Good hunting!”

Jake tipped his hat to Jules and wished him Happy Birthday, which Jules accepted with moderately good grace.

The next race was lining up at the post. As Jake forced his way through the crowd he promised himself that he would personally feed Yvette to the guillotine.



Jubilee awoke the next morning wrapped tightly in blankets that were too warm. She lay curled around her mother’s dagger. When her eyes opened they were

filled with the glitter of the scabbard. She ran her fingers lightly over the amethysts and topazes set among silver leaves and vines against ebony. She sat up, pushing the blankets away, and pulled the blade out a little. The cold steel was sharp and business-like.

A rattle outside the hall door caught her attention. She snapped the knife home in its case and shoved it under the pillow. Rat-face or one of his cohorts entered carrying a tray. Jubilee had trouble telling one dirty-faced adolescent from another in this place. He set the tray down with a bang, spilling a little coffee, and left without a word.

Jubilee sipped the coffee, which was tepid, but could not interest herself in the porridge. A sudden image of her mother's hands serving breakfast filled her mind, but she dashed it away along with the accompanying tears. Trembling, she groped under the pillow and gripped the dagger without pulling it out. She had to get out of this place! She couldn't endure the thought of Marot touching her, she had to get away, to be free of the horror. The dagger might be her only hope. Marie seemed trustworthy, but after all, she was a stranger, and there might be no hope for escape even though Marie seemed so confident.

Jubilee searched the bedclothes until she found the fichu that her mother had tied around her waist. It was badly wrinkled. With one tentative finger she traced the elaborate monogram in one corner. She remembered her mother embroidering it—this or one just like it. She smoothed out the cloth and draped it around her shoulders. It made her feel better. She went over to the window. The ground was far below. The stone façade of the building was almost featureless and would make poor climbing. She turned to face the door. It was the only way out, and Marot and all his hoodlums were through that way.

The morning wore away while Jubilee's thoughts exhausted themselves on the impossibility of her situation. Hunger drove her to eat the cold porridge and then there was nothing left to do but wait.

About noon Marie tapped on her door and invited her to play cards, Jubilee accepted gladly, tired of being alone with her thoughts.

"Have you figured out how we are going to escape?" Jubilee asked. Marie, still in the blue satin dress, but with all of the powder brushed out of her hair, shrugged. They sat face to face on the bed.

"No, sorry. The royal family is being sent to the Temple today. The city is celebrating." Marie shuffled the deck. "This place will be doing a lot of business

tonight. We shall have to wait until tomorrow—perhaps just before dawn.” She dealt the cards with a rapid snap.

“I—I don’t have until tomorrow. I’ve been sold to someone for tonight.” She fought a rush of tears and gathered up the cards, dropping a few.

“I am sorry you will not escape as a virgin, but it cannot be helped.” Marie’s tone was sympathetic, but she continued to sort the hand she had dealt herself.

“But you don’t understand. Someone is going to come here tonight and they are going to, going to . . . I’ve got to get out of here!” Jubilee leapt up suddenly and took a step toward the door.

Marie tossed her cards down and caught hold of Jubilee’s arms. “Listen,” she said. “If we try to leave tonight we will be caught and then they will tie us up, or worse, much worse. We will only get one chance.”

Jubilee was crying, barely listening. “I can’t, I can’t—do that—with some horrible man, I’d rather be dead.”

Marie, her face a study in sympathy, soothed her. “I’m sorry. Truly I am. It is not as terrible as you think. It hurts for a moment. A moment only. And then after that it is wonderful if you are with a man that you like, but no matter how terrible it is, it isn’t worse than death. It isn’t worth what they might do to us if they catch us trying to escape. We could be maimed to insure that we don’t try it again. It would not reduce our value to them. It might even increase it.”

Jubilee stepped back, brushing away Marie’s hands. “You’re horrible! No one would do such a thing!”

Marie’s fist hit Jubilee’s chin with such force that she sat down hard on the floor. Stunned, Jubilee looked up at the small woman who towered over her, fists planted on hips.

“Horrible am I? These people destroyed your parents like they were insects. Do you really think they would hesitate to make you a cripple? If you insist on behaving like a sniveling, spoiled brat they will give you the fate you deserve.”

Jubilee rubbed the sore spot on her chin. “I’m sorry,” she muttered sulkily, and got to her feet.

“Not sorry enough. Tonight you will spread your legs for whatever pig they send you, and you will not make a fuss—not unless you are too stupid to survive.” Jubilee had started to cry again at this last.

“But I don’t want to!”

Marie's anger was spending itself. Her voice softened. "I don't expect you to enjoy it. When he's gone, knock on my door. Just before dawn, when things have quieted down, we will try to leave. Do you understand?"

Jubilee struggled to follow Marie's words. She could feel darkness encroaching, lapping at the edges of her consciousness. She was lost, lost. She fought to listen to Marie, the only fixed point in a world with no landmarks, with no light, only approaching darkness. She sat abruptly on the edge of the bed. "Can we play cards?" she said, shakily gathering the pasteboards into a pile.

"Of course," said Marie slowly, watching her. "Do you understand what you are to do?"

"*Mais oui*," said Jubilee as if she was reciting. "I am to tell you when he is gone."

"Good," said Marie. She sat and shuffled the cards without taking her eyes off Jubilee, who couldn't meet her gaze.

They played One Eyed Mouse. Jubilee quickly became fascinated by the colored cards, their meanings and relationships. She loved the feel of the cards and their smell. A little part of her mind told her that there was something crazy about this sudden infatuation, but she dismissed the tiny idea and then it was no more. She won the third hand.

"*Dieu!*" Marie's lower lip pushed out in amazement. She quickly gathered the cards, shuffled, and snapped out new hands.

Jubilee won the next hand and the next. She lost the sixth hand by one point but won the seventh. Marie swore foully under her breath, and paused for a moment frowning at the deck of cards in her hand. "This is a child's game," she said shortly. "I will teach you how adults play." She dealt the cards. "This is called Four Lads. You get eight cards, four of them face up . . ."

Her instruction was sure and rapid. Jubilee, engrossed to the exclusion of all else, learned quickly, but didn't win any more. The afternoon wore away. Marie was showing signs of getting tired, but Jubilee felt renewed and cleansed. She even smiled when Marie made an especially clever play.

The door opened, freezing them both in mid-motion. Scowling, Marot stood in the doorway holding a large bundle. "Get to your room!" he bellowed at Marie.

Marie dropped the cards she was holding. "Screw yourself!" she said and strolled to her door.

"You sluts aren't to fraternize!" Marot yelled after her.

He leaned back out the door. "Rat-face, I told you to lock all the adjoining doors!" There was a whining reply that Jubilee couldn't hear. "Get in here now and lock this one." Rat-face shuffled in and locked the door, whimpering his innocence.

Marot dumped his bundle on the bed, an intricately embroidered sacque dress marred only by a streak of dried blood across a part of the hem. A tide of half-forgotten fear rose in her.

"You've got a special customer tonight, girl. Put this on and make yourself presentable. There's a comb in that drawer over there—use it." He squinted at her with evil little eyes. "Where'd you get that bruise on your chin?" he answered before she could think of a quick lie. "Doesn't matter. Enjoy yourself tonight. Tomorrow it'll be you and me!" He flashed her a nasty smile and left.

"Screw yourself," Jubilee said to the closed door.



The coach was choked with dust. Gerome fidgeted, bored by the novel he held to his bespectacled eyes. He despised traveling and hated surprises almost as much. He also hated having to travel in a public coach, but knew it was too dangerous to ride outside Paris in a private coach. One risked attracting the attention of some band of peasants who might mistake a couple of bourgeois Americans for aristocrats. Master Jake's insistence on this wild trip also disturbed all the plans to return to New York, something Gerome longed for. He allowed his mind to drift wistfully back to the years he had spent there. He had emigrated to America because, as the youngest son of a poor French lawyer, he had no prospects. In a very short time, however, he had become a passionate American. When Jake's business called him to France, he had, of course, wished to take his French-speaking secretary with him. Gerome had reluctantly agreed.

He glanced over at his employer, who stared blankly at the fields that drifted by outside the coach window, his fists clenching and unclenching. Gerome knew there was a loaded pistol under his master's coat.

When Jake had returned from the races, his gaze would have ignited stone. Gerome was ordered to leave with his master for Alme. No word of explanation was forthcoming and there was no more than a curt introduction to the new man who turned up without warning. The new man, Lazar he called himself, snored heavily in the seat across from Gerome. Beside Lazar sat a charming matron who

held a caged rooster on her lap. Lazar's filthy hair was tied up with an equally filthy green bandana, and a scar on his cheek traced a jagged path that ended under a black eyepatch. He was not French and spoke with a thick accent that Gerome could not identify. This was not the sort of person that Master Jake was in the habit of taking into his service. The fact that Lazar was sent by Larousse was almost explanation enough. Gerome distrusted Larousse totally. Larousse had a sly look that made Gerome want to keep his hand on his wallet at all times.



Gerome winked at the matron who dimpled and blushed. "Where are you bound, Madame?" he inquired.

"To Alme, good sir," she replied prettily.

"What a marvelous coincidence. We are to stay a day or two at the inn there."

"Ah, perhaps we will see each other."

Perhaps, indeed, Gerome thought. Perhaps this unpleasant journey could have its diversions. He fanned himself with a handkerchief and chatted amicably, discovering her name and the name of the inn where she might be staying.

"Are you going to Alme for business or pleasure?" the matron asked.

Gerome glanced at Jake who didn't seem to be listening. "Perhaps a little of both, I'm not sure," he replied uncomfortably, conscious of his employer. Jake looked around for the first time in hours.

"It will be neither, Madame," Jake said hollowly.



Jubilee reluctantly pulled on the dress that Marot had left her. The nightgown she still wore had to do for an underdress. The sacque fit loosely and was meant for someone a trifle taller than herself. Even so, it was the most beautiful dress she had ever seen, closely embroidered with red roses on a dark blue ground. The trace of blood on the hem was disquieting, but it was somehow suitable to the damaged

elegance of the room. After she combed her hair she moved a chair so that it faced the window. She seated herself with the dagger in her lap.

The door opened behind her. Quickly shoving the dagger into her sleeve, she turned around. A fat, blowsy chambermaid carrying a large vase of flowers, ignored Jubilee and went over to the bed. She set the flowers on the little table beside the bed and then stripped the bed and changed the sheets. Rat-face entered a moment later bearing a tray upon which were a wine bottle, glasses and a couple of candlesticks. He set the tray on the bedside table next to the flowers and stuck the unlit candles in the wall sconces above the head of the bed. When all was ready, they both left. The bedclothes were turned down to reveal the new sheets, clean and lace-edged.

The sun had set and the room was growing dark. Down below Jubilee could hear drunken singing and incongruously the breeze carried a hint of baking bread.



She had read once that Roman ladies who had been disgraced or who were tired of life would open the veins in their wrists and genteelly allow themselves to bleed to death. Outside Jubilee's window the clouds were still edged with gold from the last rays of the sun. Life had once been very sweet and she didn't want to leave it genteelly or any other way, but now it had become terrible beyond her strength. The dagger left its sheath with a faint ring. The elegance of the gems on the handle contrasted oddly with the cold utility of the blade. Jubilee studied it. She allowed it to fill all of her attention as she turned it in her hands

gathering her courage and tasting bitterness in her throat. Finally she held it with both hands, the tip against her heart.

Tears trailed, barely noticed, down her cheeks. The amethysts and silver, as warm as living flesh, sparkled in the last of the graying light.

Voices off at the edge of hearing laughed and sang and suddenly she remembered her mother's last birthday. Her father had hired a clown with scarlet hair and torn hose for the amusement of the party guests. The clown had pantomimed a

drunkard on ice, falling on his bottom over and over again. Everyone at the party, including Jubilee, laughed until they cried.

She squeezed her eyes shut and tried to block the memory out, but it wouldn't leave her. She saw him fall, his scarlet wig gone a little crooked. Her hands, holding the dagger trembled. She decided to push in the blade on the count of three. One . . . Two . . . She saw her mother's face, white with fear and grief, "Don't ever turn this against yourself . . . I couldn't bear it." Weeping, Jubilee murmured apologies to her mother and started again. One . . . Two . . . Three . . . but the blade was still.

Slowly she lowered it, her hands still trembling a little, and shoved it with a snap back into its scabbard.

Her mother's fichu was still tied around Jubilee's shoulders. Jubilee unknotted it and coiled it into an improvised belt just as her mother had done. The sacque dress had slits in the side seams so that a lady could get to her coin purse or scratch a stray flea—or quickly reach a weapon. She hung the dagger off the fichu and reaching through the side slits of the dress, tied it around her waist. As the last of the light stole away and the room darkened, she turned the chair to face the door, and sat down to wait.



Marie leaned in her doorway and poured another glass of wine for Rat-face. "They work you entirely too hard," she said with a sympathetic little smile. "When will they let you go to the party down stairs?" She had removed her fichu and had pushed the shoulders of the dress down to expose her upper arms.

He grinned, revealing yellow teeth. "Well, the party downstairs is for the customers, but we're having a party in the kitchen. I get off at midnight, it's a pity you can't come."

"Why not? Won't I be working here just like you?"

"They'll probably send you to the ship with the others. I would like it if you stayed, though. You're not like the others." He said it so earnestly Marie wanted to laugh. Instead she curved her lips into a smile and lowered her gaze modestly.

"Well, some of us aristocrats grow tired of men who are perfumed and painted. Some of us prefer men who are more . . . " She looked up at him out of the corner of one eye. " . . . rugged."

He blushed and seemed to swell up. He pushed his fingers through his stringy hair and gulped some wine. Marie took a tiny sip from her glass. How to ask him where that ship was going and when?

"Would you like to come in and play cards? We can leave the door open so you can hear if anyone comes."

"Are you sure you want to? I always win."

She permitted herself a small laugh. "How can I mind losing when the company is so charming?"

"Well, you—" He was interrupted by heavy footsteps climbing the stairs at the end of the hall. "Perhaps later," he said hastily.

"I look forward to it," said Marie, her spirits sinking as she stepped into her room and closed the door. Jubilee was probably about to receive her first customer. Marie's heart went out to the poor child.



Jubilee has been sitting in the dark for a small eternity. She strove to remember how Four Lads was played, visualizing the cards in as much detail as she could manage. It comforted her and kept her from thinking about anything else. When the door opened again, Jubilee's heart leaped to her throat, but it was only Rat-face with a taper to light the candles.

When Rat-face left, Jubilee could no longer bear to sit. She paced back and forth, the sacque dress trailing. With every step the dagger bumped against her thigh. That was a comfort also.

When the door opened again, Jubilee pressed her hands together to stop them shaking. Jubilee gasped. Larousse entered followed by Jules, whose chin fell with shock.

"*Monsieur* Larousse!" Jubilee almost shrieked with gladness. "You have no idea how happy I am to see you! Oh my God, you have come just in time!"

"Papa! You told me she was dead!" Jules laughed as if at a huge joke. "You have brought me the best birthday present ever!"

"What?" Jubilee's soaring relief faltered.

"Unfortunately it is only for tonight, my son, but for tonight you may enjoy yourself as much as you like." Larousse's face glowed with affection for his son. Neither of them were paying the least attention to her.



“But, *Monsieur* Larousse you were friends with my papa! How can you do this?” She held her hands out to him, her hopes withered.

“Your odious papa is dead. You should be grateful that my son wanted you or you would be dead also.”

“Oh God, you killed them!” Jubilee babbled in English. A fire flared in her chest, spreading upwards.

Larousse shrugged and turned to his son, his indulgent smile returning. “Well, my boy, I’m going to leave so that you can unwrap your present.” Jules leered. “Happy Birthday!”

He left with Jules effusively calling thanks after him.

When the door closed, Jules ran to Jubilee and threw his arms around her planting an enormous wet kiss on her mouth. He reeked of wine.

Flames of searing anger filled her mind. Jubilee fought to break away from his embrace but in spite of the softness of his flesh, he was amazingly strong. He released her, oblivious of her struggles and peeled off his coat. He sat on the edge of the bed to remove his boots.

“Take off your clothes.” He giggled. His round face glistened with sweat in the candle light.

Jubilee barely understood him. “Your father is a murderer, he killed my parents,” she said, unaware that she still spoke in English.

“Stop that gibberish, and take off your clothes. I want to see your legs.” He had his shirt off and was untying the strings that held up his breeches. He giggled again and pushed them down. His pink, tumescent penis wagged.

A tendril of fear touched the heat of her fury but was snuffed out. “He killed my mother and father to get me as a present for you!” She launched herself at him, beating his face with her fists. The momentum of her onslaught knocked him over backwards on the bed. He rolled over on top of her and dragged her skirt up. The heat of his lust jabbed against her thigh, shocking her back to her senses. He held her in a travesty of a hug with her arms pinned to her sides. She pushed with all her might against his arm trying to reach the dagger, while he thrust upward and upward. Her cry of pain was drowned out by his howl of victory. In his excitement he released her arms. His face above her was loose with rapture, his eyes were screwed

shut as he pounded hard between her legs. Jubilee fumbled for the dagger, rage tearing through her. Finally it was in her hand. Jules was pumping faster and faster. She took a deep breath and plunged the blade into his side.

Jules uttered a wet gurgling scream. Blood sprayed from his open mouth. He threw himself away from her landing on his back half off the bed. Jubilee was upon him babbling incoherently, stabbing him, killing him again and again until the red roses on her dress were soaked with blood and Jules was very dead.

Chapter 5

Marie played solitaire rapidly trying not to listen to the sounds coming from Jubilee's room. Half the people alive don't deserve their fates, she told herself sternly. It didn't help.

Jubilee was a child, touchingly helpless. Marie had never been so young. When she was Jubilee's age she had a lover who was not the first. Jean was his name, a revolutionary of the first water. He died of consumption three weeks before the Bastille fell. The memory of Jean had never settled comfortably. Six months later Marie worked for La Passy and six months after that La Passy and her household had joined the court hoping for protection.

A horrible animal noise brought Marie out of her reverie. She covered her ears and tried to persuade herself that it was impossible to interfere. A few moments later there was a sharp knock on the door. Marie jumped up, scattering cards, and rushed to pick the lock. When she got the door open Jubilee stood there panting, her pale gray eyes on fire, her hair wild. The front of her dress was soaked with blood. Her hands, which were red with it, held a knife also very bloody. Even her face was splattered.

"God in heaven," said Marie reverently.

"Marie! You must come quickly," Jubilee turned. "I think—well you must come. Please, please help me make sure Jules is dead. Is he dead? I killed him. I think I did. Is he?"

When Marie saw Jules she turned her eyes away. "Yes, Jubilee, he is definitely dead."

Jubilee put the knife on the table beside the wine and began to tug on the arm of the boy sprawled naked and bloody across the bed. "You must help me hide him. Then I'm going to wait for *Monsieur* Larousse. When he returns, I will kill him too. He killed my father and my mother to get me as a birthday present for Jules. I killed Jules. I'm going to kill *Monsieur* Larousse, too. Jules, he—before I killed him, he—well, I'm not a virgin anymore. Then I'm going to find Jake, I think he helped somehow and I'm going to—"

"Jubilee!" Marie said it sharply hoping to shock the girl out of her maniac babble.

Jubilee jumped, dropping the boy's arm. "What?"

"You can't stay here, *Cherie*, you'll go to the guillotine if you do. I have to get you out of here somehow—quickly."

Jubilee held out her hands palm up. Marie's heart went out to the girl. "But I've got to kill *Monsieur* Larousse. I must. I can't allow him to get away. He's horrible. Terrible." She sounded near tears, but she was calming.

"You can come back later and do it then, but for now we must go." She took Jubilee's hand, sticky with drying blood and led her back to her own room.

How to escape? She racked her brains for some clue as to how it could be done. Well, first of all Jubilee had to be cleaned up. There was no water on her washstand so she went to Jubilee's room. There was none there either. She was tucking the wine bottle under her arm, almost automatically, when she noticed the flowers. She tossed them on the floor and went back with the vase.

Marie sat on the bed taking healthy pulls from the bottle and mulling over the problem while Jubilee—quiet now, almost absorbed—stripped off her dress and washed herself. The blood had soaked through to the nightgown underneath, leaving Jubilee nothing to wear but a sheet from Marie's bed.

Soon someone would come to check on the boy, or Rat-face would come for his game of cards. Then she and the girl would be up to their necks in offal. The time to leave was now—but how?

She looked at the window, knowing that way was hopeless. She had once escaped from a second-story room by making a rope out of the bedclothes. Her young male companion had lowered himself easily, but she simply hadn't the physical strength. She ended up falling twenty feet, breaking her arm and nearly getting shot by the innkeeper whose bill they were dodging. Going out the window wouldn't do. Cleverness had always been her strength, not the muscles in her arms.

Then, the solution dropped into her lap all at once.

Jubilee had retrieved the dagger from her room and was washing it in the last of the water. Marie watched her for a moment, mesmerized. Where in the bloody hell had the child gotten a dagger?

"We have to go soon," Marie said. "How do you feel?"

"I don't know," Jubilee said. She dried the dagger carefully on a corner of the sheet she was wrapped in. Her eyes were the color of smoke, fires still darted in them. "One side of me says I have done a monstrous thing and the other side is glad. Which is the right way to feel?"

Marie hesitated, not wanting to answer. "Monstrous people have done things to you that they should not have done. Feel glad that you have survived."

"I'll try." Jubilee snapped the dagger into its scabbard. Her small face was sober, earnest. Again Marie felt a rush of pity.

"Now we have to get dressed," said Marie.

"In what? I haven't any clothes."

"Jules has no more need of his."

Jubilee's eyebrows shot up. "Men's clothes?"

Marie took another sip of wine and handed the bottle to Jubilee. "We must join the party downstairs—briefly—and they have quite enough naked ladies." Jubilee blushed and smiled. In her eyes was a spark of the carefree girl that Marie had caught glimpses of before, little flashes of who Jubilee had been before her world was shattered.

Marie went back to Jubilee's room one last time and gathered up all of Jules' clothes including his hat and stick.

It took a good bit of folding and rolling up to hang the clothes of the well-rounded Jules onto Jubilee's slight frame. The toes of his boots had to be stuffed, before Jubilee could walk in them. Using the dagger, Marie shortened Jubilee's hair by three fourths, and braided it into a queue which she tied with a bit of her dark green fichu. Jubilee slipped the dagger into a boot top at Marie's suggestion.

When they were done Jubilee looked like a boy who had rifled his father's wardrobe, but ill-fitting clothes were no novelty these days.

"This is all very well for me," said Jubilee, "but there is nothing for you to wear."

"Don't worry, *Cherie*, my ensemble is right outside. Rat-face is wearing it. You must stand beside the door over there and I will call him in."

“Oh, Marie, I don’t think I could kill anyone else tonight—except for *Monsieur Larousse*.” Marie nearly laughed, but stopped when she saw Jubilee was deadly serious.

“No, no. Just knock him unconscious with the walking stick. That will be enough.”

“Very well.” Jubilee positioned herself beside the door with the stick and Marie stuck her head out and called to Rat-face. When he came in, grinning, Jubilee struck him savagely. He tumbled over like a piece of meat.

Soon Rat-face, in his filthy underwear, was trussed up with strips of sheet, and most of a pillowcase was stuffed into his mouth. His clothes fit Marie fairly well, by virtue of the fact that they were too small for him.

“If we are stopped,” said Marie. “I will be Felix, your manservant. Who would you like to be?”

Jubilee hesitated only for an instant.

“*Monsieur Couteau*.”

“Mister Knife?”

“Yes. The dagger was my mother’s. Will it be too odd?”

“Your mother must have been amazing. There are stranger names. You can have that one if you want.” She turned to the door. “Now we must go.” She paused a moment, briefly remembering her escape from the palace. She prayed fervently that this escape would go as easily as that one.

The hall was empty. “Walk slowly,” Marie whispered rapidly to Jubilee. “Remember that we have to act like men who have a right to be here,” They sauntered toward the stairs.

On the second floor the party noises were much louder. Off key, drunken singing accompanied sloshing feminine giggles.

“*Vive la Republique!*” someone slurred, surely not for the first time this evening. Nevertheless there was a general happy cheer.

The stairs to the ground floor were about halfway down the hall. They passed a few open rooms with little furniture in them besides rumpled beds. Marie guessed that these must be the bedrooms where the girls earned their living. There were very recognizable sounds coming from behind the closed doors.

The thump of someone on the stairs caused Marie to step into one of the open doors pulling Jubilee after her. Marie pretended to dust off Jubilee’s coat, while the footsteps neared. A dapper, ferret-like man passed the open doorway. Jubilee gasped, pulled the dagger out of her boot and took two rapid steps toward the

door. Marie was instantly after the girl, reaching around her, clamping her hand on Jubilee's mouth and pulling her back into the room by her head.

"Are you insane?" cried Marie in a fierce whisper.

Jubilee eyes flared. "It was *Monsieur Larousse*! I'm going to kill him." She obviously expected this to be a reasonable explanation. She turned toward the door again. Marie caught her sleeve.

"Later. You can kill him later. Not now with so many people around."

"All right, but you must promise to help me look for him later." Jubilee sounded disappointed, but she put away the knife. Marie breathed a little easier.

"*Cherie*, when he finds what we have left him upstairs he will look for you."

They continued down the stairs cautiously. About halfway down they met a man with an oversized cockade pinned crookedly to his waistcoat. A young woman in a very thin nightgown hung on his arm. Hair heavy with henna hung loosely down her back. Jubilee tipped her hat very believably, Marie thought, as she herself passed with an oafish duck of the head. The stranger groped for a hat that wasn't there and nodded when he discovered the lack of it.

The stairs ended in another corridor, this one very grand. The walls were lined with mirrors, only a few of which were cracked. Tables were every few feet with pots of cheap chrysanthemums on them together with bottles and glasses—some upright, some on their sides. Someone sawed enthusiastically on a violin and a dozen raw voices broke into the Marseilles. Marie led the way toward the music, knowing the front door was beyond it.

They had gone only a few steps toward the staircase when a scream seared the air with the horror of hellfire and the anguish of the damned.

Marot pounded down the hall toward the stairs flanked by two thugs, each with a brace of pistols stuck in his waistband. Marie and Jubilee flattened themselves against the wall to avoid being run over. Marot ran by them without so much as a glance.

Marie felt sweat trickle down her back. She didn't enjoy this sort of thing as much as she did when she was younger. The pulse-pounding thrill of the chase didn't have its old charm. She let out a long sigh not realizing that she had been holding her breath. Jubilee was staring coldly after Marot. "Come on," Marie muttered, worried that Jubilee might want to kill him too.

The main salon was very dim and very noisy. A few smoky wall sconces guttered low. The singing had stopped and in one corner on a low platform someone read aloud from a newspaper. Only a few of those nearby were listening. Several

knots of animated conversation dotted the room. Women in various stages of undress circulated, some smiling seductively, some merely bored.

Marie threaded her way through the crowd, keeping her walk casual, noticing that Jubilee did the same. Always Marie drifted toward the front door. It was maddening, but imprudent to be too eager to leave.

A group of people, a few of whom wore the red caps of the Paris Commune lounged near the door. A short, pockmarked man in their midst expounded the evils of the clergy to them, a sheen of sweat on his forehead. Marie and Jubilee



pretended to listen. Marie whispered to Jubilee that they would wait until a party of people went out the door. They would trail after them in order to attract as little attention as possible. The pockmarked man's listeners were muttering dark agreement to a particularly telling point when Marie nearly choked on a cloud of cheap perfume.

"Hello, there, you handsome thing, would you like to have a good time?" A girl draped in a large red scarf that concealed very little had put her arm around Jubilee's shoulders. Jubilee gasped and then blushed. To Marie's relief, Jubilee had the presence of mind to smile.

"Uh, no thank you—that is—I've already had a good time."

"You're just a boy! Boys your age can't ever get enough." She giggled drunkenly. Her lip rouge needed refreshing. Jubilee sputtered and threw Marie a desperate glance.

"He certainly never gets enough," said Marie gruffly. "But I've got to get him home to his mother or she'll have my head."

The girl winked broadly and transferred her embrace to Marie. "What about you? Is that boy old enough to find his own way home?"

She nuzzled Marie's cheek. Marie ordered herself not to flinch away.

"No, I uh, have an old war wound. Which I . . . deeply regret in the presence of such beauty as yours." She saw Jubilee quickly suppress a smile. However, the line worked. The girl drifted away as if Marie had ceased to exist. She pressed her red scarf against a man a few feet away. "Hello, there, you handsome thing . . ."

Marie wandered a little closer to the door. "I'm glad that I could amuse you," said Marie tartly.

Jubilee smiled. "Such beauty as hers?' God, I hope I'm ever half as clever as you are!"

Marie smiled back grudgingly.

"You haven't a chance."

Just then there was a muffled explosion from above—a pistol shot. Marie's heart jumped to her throat. Little startled shrieks from the women pierced the room. Then a roaring babble broke out as people began to talk all at once. A few people ran toward the sound and a few ran out the door. Marie was among the latter, dragging Jubilee along by the sleeve.

Marie gloried in the freedom to run at last. She loosed Jubilee's sleeve and they sprinted side by side down the long gravel drive to the street. Sweeping past the broom seller, asleep, crouched by the gate.

They paused a few blocks away to catch their breath. Marie looked around, she could see the tower of the Hotel des Invalides in the moonlight which meant they were in the Faubourg St. Germain. She stretched her attention listening for pursuit. There was none.

"We're free," said Jubilee when she could speak.

"And still alive," said Marie. "For now."



Larousse covered his face to block out the sight of his son. The picture still hung before him. For a very, very long moment his mind was blank as if it were burned away. When thoughts returned they were sickening, not to be believed or trusted.

He removed his hat and was thoroughly sick into it, but not before stepping away from the doorway. It would not be possible to keep his sanity if he looked into the room again. When he was done, he put the hat on a table and wiped his mouth with a white silk handkerchief. By then he could hear a group of people running up the stairs.



“Larousse!” It was Marot and a couple of his men. “Did you hear someone scream?”

“Scream? No, I heard nothing. I’m glad to see you so alert, though. Perhaps you can tell me how my son was killed.” Larousse’s thoughts were very clear now, clear and still. Marot turned the color of curdled milk.

“Killed? No, I—” Larousse gestured toward the open doorway. Marot licked his lips, stepped over to the door and peered in. The two men fingered the butts of their pistols nervously. Marot jumped back as if Satan had pinched his nose. “I swear to God, *Monsieur*, I know nothing . . .”

“Nothing? Of course you know nothing. My son was killed by a whore in your house. Why should you know anything about it?” Marot’s men shuffled their bare feet and glanced uneasily at each other and at their master.

“She was a slip of a girl. A virgin, the very one you specifically requested. How would I know that . . .” His voice trailed off and his eyes darted to the room.

“Had she been searched?”

“Why should we search her? Girls like that do not go armed.”

“This one did.” Larousse watched Marot sweat. The terrible clarity that had invaded him revealed Marot as some dirty animal, grunting and slaving. Larousse could smell the stink of Marot’s fear. Jules, his beautiful son—he had always been such a miracle. Larousse painfully cleaned his mind of such thoughts.

“Perhaps she had an accomplice who came and helped her,” Marot offered hopefully.

Larousse thought of Jake briefly, but knew that Lazar was keeping an eye on that one. “No. She had a weapon, a weapon that you let her have, because you were careless.”

"No, I was not," Marot whimpered. He licked his lips again and edged a little toward the stairs. "Look. I'll find her for you. I'll kill her with my own hands. I swear it." Larousse's stomach rolled and his thoughts, so clear, were darkened. The pistol in the sash of the man nearest Larousse was suddenly in Larousse's hand.

"All of you put your pistols on the floor here in front of me and step back." The two men fumbled for their weapons without protest. Marot laid his beside theirs.

"I didn't kill your son, it's not my fault," Marot was practically babbling. "I'll kill the girl, I'll get even for you, I swear it." Larousse simply stared at him, waiting for Marot to be quiet, needing for him to be quiet.

Marot's eyes were soft and wet with terror. He fell to his knees, his mouth working, having run out of words. He held his hands out just as Larousse fired. A hole appeared in Marot's left cheek and he collapsed to the floor. Larousse had never killed a man before—not personally. It cleared his head.

Larousse laid the empty pistol on the table beside his ruined hat. "I am going to report this to the police, now. I will send someone for . . . my son." The two thugs hung on his every word. "Obviously, whoever killed my son killed the brothel keeper also. If either of you ever say different all of the evidence will point directly at you." They thanked him profusely, relieved that he was leaving them alive.



Jake rapped on the cottage door with the head of his cane. The cottage sat in the middle of a quiet little garden on a backwater street, unpaved but pleasantly shaded by soaring poplars.

"Are you sure this is the correct address?" Gerome asked from behind him. They had left Lazar at the inn.

"The postmaster was sure of it." He knew why Gerome wondered. This didn't seem a den of thieves and murders, but, if Jake's information was correct, Yvette's parents lived here.

The door was opened by a small, tidy woman who, although very plump, resembled Yvette greatly.

"Oui, Monsieur?"

"Are you Madame Laurier?"

"But of course."

"We are trying to discover the whereabouts of your daughter, Yvette."

"And who might you be?"

"I am Jacob Dawson, at your service Madame. This is my secretary Gerome Laveran." Gerome tipped his hat. She nodded at him pertly.

"I thought you were from the police at first, but your accent is terrible. Are you Dutch?" Jake felt inexplicably at a disadvantage.

"No, I'm American. We are trying to find your daughter, have you—"

"American!" Her rosy face broke into a smile. "How marvelous! Please, please come in."

Jake smothered his annoyance and followed her in to a little parlour, simply furnished except for a sideboard of exquisite design. Madame Laurier pressed them to sit and then bustled away only to return a few minutes later with freshly brewed tea and diminutive apple cakes. Jake's annoyance melted in the face of the little woman's wholesome charm.

They chatted about the American revolution. She told them how, a few years ago, she and a group of her friends had formed an American Supporters League and followed the American war for independence in the newspapers. She was delighted to be meeting a flesh and blood American at last.

Jake was finding it difficult to believe that this woman's daughter could be a murderess, and furthermore he didn't have the heart to inform her about her daughter's deeds. Still, he had to find the woman who destroyed Jubilee and her parents. He waited until there was a lull in the conversation.

"I'm sorry to be so persistent, Madame, but I need to know the whereabouts of your daughter."

"Oh, of course, I had quite forgotten. May I ask why you are looking for her?"

Jake was stuck. He gaped at her, trying to think of something that wouldn't alarm the poor woman.

"We believe she may have witnessed a crime without realizing it," said Gerome smoothly, adjusting his spectacles. "We merely need to ask her a question or two."

"Oh, la, I see! Well, she works for a family in Paris—Americans like *Monsieur*."

"But she—left their service a few days ago," said Jake, grateful for Gerome's glibness. "Did she tell you where she might be going?"



Madame Laurier's eyes widened. "*Mais non*. She wrote me just last month that she was very happy with the Joneses, and of course she mentioned the riots. Dreadful business that, eh?"

"Yes, indeed," Jake uttered politely. "Could we perhaps see the letter?"

"There is not much in it that would be of help to you, I'm afraid, but you may see it all the same." She bustled out

"Many thanks. You saved me on that one. What do you think?" said Jake.

"I think she's wonderful. I want to ask her to marry me."

Jake smiled. "You want every woman to marry you."

"Not true! Only most."

Just then Madame Laurier came back with a small sheaf of carefully folded papers. She handed them to Jake. They were scraps of Neville's personal stationery partially covered on the front side by his small neat hand. The back sides were closely written with a more rounded, childlike cursive.

"Dearest Mamman," it said. "How I miss you and Papa. I think about you every day and pray for you every night. This evening I am very tired. Today Madame and I made 28 loaves of bread for the St. Therese Orphanage. Mille. Jubilee helped us for a while after her piano lesson." Jake's throat swelled. He remembered hearing about the bread for the orphans the following day at luncheon. "Mille. Jubilee talked about nothing but the young man she has a crush on." Jake felt sick. Jules, of course. "He is her father's business partner. Not the old one, the one who came with him from America." Jake felt his face go numb. He flicked a glance up at Gerome who was chatting pleasantly with Madame Laurier. He caught his breath and read on. "The older partner is not a nice man. In fact I have heard terrible things about him from La Grevey. He was once friends with the Viscount. La Grevey knows him and doesn't like him at all." The next paragraph was filled with an account of a handsome baker's assistant that had caught her eye. And then some more small doings of the Jones family. There was nothing worthwhile in the letter. No clue that Yvette was anything more than she seemed.

"Madame," said Jake. Madame Laurier looked up from her conversation with Gerome. "Who was the Viscount that she mentions and who was La Grevey?"

"Yvette once was in service to the Viscount who's district this was—that is she worked for his daughter, La Grevey. The Viscount was a terrible man and was beheaded two years ago for crimes against the people. Yvette left his service when he was arrested. It is beyond my understanding why, but she remained friends with La Grevey and they corresponded regularly."

“We would very much wish to speak to her,” said Jake eagerly.

“I’m so sorry, *Monsieur*. La Grevey has been taken to Paris and is going to the guillotine.”



Jubilee stumbled on a loose cobblestone. Marie had said they were near the river and Jubilee could smell it. The Seine was pungent in the damp night air. Jubilee had only been in the central part of the city twice before, and then in a closed carriage. Her mother had deemed it much too dangerous. According to the newspapers, mobs formed on street corners at any time for the least excuse, especially when the weather was hot and news from the war front bad.

Tonight all was quiet at least in this part of the city. The bells had tolled midnight a long while ago. The dark buildings jammed together in row after row seemed to hover over Jubilee, their windows like dark eyes watching her.

She didn’t know where they were going. She followed Marie, who seemed to know. Once, they ducked into an alley to avoid a torchlit patrol.

Jubilee stumbled again. The fire that burned in her earlier had withdrawn and left bitter exhaustion. She wanted a bath, a real bath, not the hasty washing she had done in the brothel. Were they really going somewhere? Or were they just going on like this, walking forever? She looked ahead at Marie whose glance constantly darted around, quick and alert. Jubilee wished that she could go home to her own bed and then pushed the thought away. She would never see that bed again. Bed and home were gone forever. The queen of hearts popped into her mind. She smiled.

“This is it. On the second floor.” Marie’s whisper was almost inaudible.

“What is it?” said Jubilee groggily, looking up at a three-story building very similar to its neighbors.

“I once had a friend who lived here. Come.” They climbed the stone steps up to the door, which was locked. Marie performed her magic trick with the hairpin and entered on tiptoe, motioning Jubilee to follow. The front hall smelled dank and musty. It had a very old and unused feel to it. Jubilee woke up a little. This was like the haunted houses in tales she used to tell her cousins back in America.

They climbed the stairs, staying very close to the wall so they wouldn’t creak and awaken anyone. Jubilee didn’t feel anyone existed to be awakened. Finally, they were in a hall that was nearly pitch black. Marie went to a particular door without hesitation, and tapped on it very softly. No one answered. Jubilee could hear a

scratching that told her that the hairpin was in use again. The door opened with a low moan and Marie pulled Jubilee inside.

The inside didn't seem so dark because starlight filtered through a couple of windows. Jubilee could barely make out the dim shapes of furniture. This room smelled even danker than the hall downstairs except here there were faint traces of patchouli and frankincense.

Marie went carefully over to the windows and pulled the curtains shut. Then she fumbled around looking for something. Her face was suddenly illuminated by a struck match. She lit a sooty lamp with very little oil in it.

"What is this place?" Jubilee looked around, her skin prickling with apprehension. The room was cluttered with odd mismatched furniture, intricately woven rugs and brightly colored hangings in strange designs. A clumsily painted Egyptian mummycase leered from one corner. Bunches of dried weeds were all around the room, stuck in wine bottles, old boots and milk pitchers, anything that would hold them. Dust was thick over everything.

"It belongs to a friend of mine—or did. A man I don't trust told me she is dead."

"I feel like we oughtn't be here. Are you sure it's all right?"

Marie looked around at the dust and clutter, and odd furnishings with affection. "Yes, it's all right," she said. "We'll be safe here for a little while."

Jubilee sat down in a sagging settee, too tired to stand anymore. "Why only a little while?"

"I saw the face of the man whose son you killed. It was not a soft face. I heard his scream. Someday soon he will come to our door." Marie sat down, too, on a chaise not far from Jubilee. "When he comes we will have to be ready for him."

"No," said Jubilee, lying down and pillowing her head in the crook of her arm. "Long before that I will find him." She was asleep almost instantly.

Chapter 6

Hunger and exhaustion were winning against the old woman. A long line waited at the public pump. Housewives with empty buckets balanced on their heads stood alongside beggars, ladies' maids, and whores. The afternoon sun hammered them mercilessly. Everyone sweated as flies swarmed and landed, swarmed and landed again whenever anyone or anything moved. Somewhere, not far away, a baby cried and a woman screamed irrational abuse at it.

When the old woman finally got her turn at the pump, she drank deeply and washed her hands and face. The people behind her got restless and a couple of them were rude about her slowness. She wished for a bottle, or bucket with which to take away some of the water. She sighed and moved on.

She found a shady spot and sat. Death plucked at her with cold fingers. Iron will pushed it away for now, but she knew it would come for her tonight or tomorrow, if she did not eat soon, and if she could not find some place to rest.

She positioned her right leg carefully; the knee was very swollen. She lay her crooked walking stick on the cobble stones. Clearing away the trash and dirt in front of her, she dealt out the faded tarot cards. She was tempted to tell her own fortune, but as usual she didn't want to know it. So she told the fortune of the city of Paris. She arranged the cards in the Grand Wheel. In the hub of the wheel was death, as she had expected.

Somewhere, not far away, the baby stopped crying abruptly and the woman moaned.

A coin landed in the old woman's lap. A skinny whore who had sweated off most of her makeup squatted. "Tell my fortune, Grandmother." The old woman nodded and redealt the cards. The whore's face lit up as she was told more or less what she wanted to hear. When it was done she called to a friend who also paid a sou to hear of a wonderful fortune.

After a while the old woman was becoming alarmed at the number of people attracted to her and her faded pasteboards. A satisfactory amount of money now clinked in the concealed pocket of her skirt, but she had not really expected this much attention. She cursed herself silently. The king was in prison and the war was going badly. Times were precarious. People were frightened, uneasy. They crowded around her at a short but respectful distance, men as well as women, almost huddled together, their sweating faces tense. Everyone wanted to know about their futures—if they had futures.



She noticed that a few officious Communards, some with their dirty red caps tucked into their belts, had joined the crowd. She gathered the cards to herself and announced that she had grown weary—true enough—

and that she would come back tomorrow—untrue.

The cards disappeared into a pocket and the old woman tried to disappear as quietly as possible. A couple of ladies' maids bracketed her against a lamppost and insisted on discussing their fortunes. Before the old woman could break away, the red-caps had surrounded her. She inserted a hasty goodbye into a silly question and nodded casually to the nearest Communard as she tried to brush by him.

A heavy hand fell painfully onto her shoulder. "Madame, you are under arrest in the name of the Republic." Her head spun and she reeled, leaning heavily on her stick.

"No," she gasped hoarsely, squirming in his grasp. She looked hopelessly into his red and sweating face. He was not a bad man. He wasn't enjoying this.

“You have been denounced as a witch.”

“That is insane! You have no proof.”

Another red-cap stepped up, small and dark with ropy arms. “We were told to remove your eyepatch.” He jerked it down roughly. He let out a little involuntary gasp. Even Red-face stepped back, his mouth loose with shock. She knew her hidden eye looked like a sapphire set in old mahogany. It was disquieting even to her when she caught a glimpse of herself in a glass.

She felt the sun beat down on her head. Her throat ached. She could almost feel the guillotine take her head from her shoulders. She would be one of those who fed the great death that was coming. It would not even notice such a small, dry morsel as herself.



When Jubilee awoke Marie was gone. Sunshine seeped around the heavy curtain, dimly lighting the cluttered apartment. Jubilee stood up and nearly tripped in the oversized boots she was still wearing. She sat back down again and pulled them off. The dagger thumped on the floor. The gems on the scabbard sparkled faintly at her in the dim light. The events of last night flooded her for a moment and then drained away leaving a peculiar taste in her mouth.

She explored the apartment, hunting for a chamberpot. One door led to a tiny kitchen which smelled of cold ashes and, faintly, of rot. A door off the main room proved to be a bedroom, the corners of which were festooned with cobwebs. This room too, was cluttered. The bed bore a coat of undisturbed dust, but was neatly made up. The chamberpot was underneath it.

Jubilee fumbled with the fastenings of the unfamiliar clothes and sat. She wondered why Marie had left. She shrugged off a vague feeling of abandonment. Surely Marie would come back. She had guided Jubilee this far, why desert her now? When Jubilee was finished she went over to the wardrobe to see if she could find some clothes more suitable than Jules' baggy knee breeches. On the way she discarded the waistcoat, which was too hot anyway, and the vest. The few clothes in the wardrobe were of very flamboyant design and gaudy colors. Although clean, they were threadbare. Jubilee pulled out one of the plainest dresses, heavily flounced in dark blue with deep yellow edging.

In the back of the wardrobe there was a little stand with a headdress—an elaborate heap of peacock feathers worked into cloth-of-gold and large—too large to

be real—red, green and yellow jeweled studs sewn all over it. Fascinated, Jubilee reached out to touch it.

“What are you doing?”

Jubilee whirled, suddenly guilty. “I was just—finding something to put on.” The anger in Marie’s face mellowed into annoyance. She was still wearing Rat-face’s clothes.

“First of all, don’t trifle with the things you find in this apartment, some of them are dangerous. Second, if you go out of this house in a dress you would be dead within an hour. Twice this morning I was stopped and asked if I had seen an American girl with gray eyes and dark brown hair. Your friend, *Monsieur Larousse* is already on the hunt for you.”

Jubilee threw the dress she was holding back into the wardrobe. “I’ll find him first!”

“What? Speak French.”

Jubilee repeated.

“That is nonsense,” Marie said with total finality.

“No. Don’t you understand! He killed my mother and father. He’s a monster. He’s going to die and I have got to see to it. I’ve got to kill him or . . . or . . .”

“Or what?” Marie crossed her arms and leaned against the bedpost.

Or what? Jubilee wasn’t sure. Her hands trembled and a tear rolled down her cheek, though she wasn’t crying. She wished with all her strength that it was Larousse himself who had died last night. Jules was a stupid pig but probably didn’t deserve to die. He had raped her the same way she had seen him gobble down chocolate mousse at his father’s fancy dinner parties. It was, oh so very much, Larousse Pere who needed to die. Jubilee wiped away the tear.

“I don’t know what, but I won’t stop until he’s dead,” Jubilee’s tone was bleak.

“Look, you are a baby before these wolves. Do as I say and you will survive to have any revenge.”

“What do you think I should do?”

“Well, they are looking for a girl, so we must both stay boys for a while.

Jubilee looked down at her oversized outfit. “But I hate these clothes and they don’t fit.”

“The fit we can take care of. Do you hate them more than Larousse?” Jubilee shook her head emphatically. “Then come and see what I have bought.”

Marie led her into the living room where some bundles were piled on a table that had been cleared of its clutter and dust. "I'm afraid that *Monsieur* Couteau no longer has a walking stick."

"Who? Oh, yes." Jubilee blushed a little remembering the outrageous name she had given herself last night.

Marie spread out the food—bread, cheese, some slightly green apples and two bottles of dark beer. Jubilee suddenly realized she was hungry. While they ate Marie showed Jubilee the other things. First, a spool of gray thread and a paper with two needles stuck into it.

"I searched the whole apartment this morning," said Marie fiddling with the needles while she crunched an apple. "I couldn't find La Zollier's sewing basket anywhere. I know the lining was stuffed with francs and Assignats."

"Perhaps it was stolen." Jubilee took an experimental sip of the beer and liked it.

"Perhaps, but the apartment doesn't show any evidence that someone has broken in."

"True." Jubilee looked around. The dust was untouched except where they had disturbed it.

"Therefore I can hope that La Zollier is alive somewhere."

"That's wonderful." Gladness lifted Jubilee's heart. She hoped very hard that Marie's friend was still safe somewhere.

Next Marie fished out of the bundle two pieces of very fine white muslin each shaped something like a halter. Jubilee had never seen anything like them.

"What are those?"

"Actresses use these on the stage. You put them on so." She demonstrated by holding one to her chest. "They flatten the bosom, and make it very easy to pretend to be a boy."

Jubilee looked down at her own chest and blushed. "I hadn't thought of that."

Marie chuckled. "You haven't much to hide, but it's still noticeable."

Jubilee took one of the things and held it up to her chest. "It's going to be very odd dressing and acting like a boy. All my life I've been told to act like a lady. Someone's going to see through me."

Marie leaned back in her chair and took a swig of beer. "You would not believe how often people see only what they expect to see. No one will notice you. This morning I walked all over this part of the city. No one so much as raised an eyebrow. It was '*monsieur*' this and '*monsieur*' that all morning, and I made no effort

to deepen my voice or change the way I walk.” Marie grinned so infectiously that Jubilee smiled back. “La Zollier used to say that if people could be persuaded to see the obvious, the street magicians couldn’t make their living and there would be no politicians.”

Jubilee digested what Marie had said. How could it be?

The last thing in the bundle was a deck of cards which Marie began to shuffle absently with one hand.

Jubilee sipped her beer. Somehow, thoughts of Jake drifted up and presented themselves to her. Had Jake been involved in the killing of her parents? It was fairly obvious that her father thought Jake was Larousse’s partner in everything, that they were both scoundrels. Larousse was more than a scoundrel, but what was Jake? Jubilee closed her eyes. Perhaps it was the beer that made her dizzy. When she opened her eyes she watched Marie play with the cards.

“Speaking of making a living,” said Marie. “We have to consider what we are to do.” She began to rapidly deal out the cards for casino.

“I hadn’t thought of that. We will have to manage somehow,” said Jubilee studying her four cards.

“*Monsieur* Couteau’s walking stick will only keep us for a couple of days, then we will have to get more money.” Jubilee had the distinct feeling that Marie had a point that she wasn’t coming to. Then a thought struck her.

“Oh, I know! I’ll go see my father’s lawyer. Everything belongs to me now. We’ll have all that . . .” She trailed off under Marie’s hard gaze.

“Don’t you think that Larousse has thought of that? Any of your parents’ friends, your house, even your father’s ships will be watched. I imagine even the gates of the city are watched. He knows you’ll need money. He’ll be waiting for you to try to get it.” Marie finished her beer and set the bottle down. Jubilee waited expectantly, hoping whatever that was bothering Marie would come out now.

“No, I’ll have to play cards.” Marie’s eyes were dark, her fine skin had a taut look to it.

“Why does that bother you so much?”

“I . . . made a promise that I would never do it again.” Marie’s gaze wandered around the room as if she longed to catch a glimpse of its owner. “The world has changed since I made that promise. So now, I’m going to have to break it—but only for a little while. Only until we have enough to get you on a ship back to America, out of Larousse’s reach.”

“No!” Jubilee leaped to her feet. “Break your promise if you wish, but I must destroy Larousse!”

“That’s stupid!” Marie tossed her cards on the table.

“Stupid or not, one of us is going to die!” A flurry of the white heat Jubilee had felt last night caught her and made her tremble. “You can’t stop me! Marie, you mustn’t even try.” Jubilee sat back down. The heat left her almost as suddenly as it came, leaving her a little weak.

“Afterwards, if I am still alive, then I would like to go home.” A thought of the clean, wild hills of New York flitted through her mind. “But I can’t go home yet.” She realized that she’d said this last in English, and repeated it in French.

Marie studied Jubilee with what seemed like a mixture of respect and worry. “Very well. Today we’ll work on your clothes and then tonight I have to go see an old enemy—alone. Do you agree to stay here and not go out?” Jubilee agreed. “Then we’ll see about your Larousse. I don’t mind helping you kill a monster like that, but I don’t want to go to the guillotine for it. Do you agree to let me help you?” Jubilee agreed again. “Good, I can’t let you feed yourself to a wolf.”



“He was actually killed in the adjoining room through there,” Larousse pointed with his heavy, hawk-headed cane as if gesturing with his hand would have been too personal. He was very cool. No, Jake thought, he was very cold.

The connecting door was open and lit with a flickering glow. Jake glanced in. The blood-soaked bed had not been disturbed, but was flanked by candles and large baskets of white roses. Jules’s body had been removed early this morning and lay in state at the Cathedral de St. Gervaise a few blocks away, but this room was decked out like a shrine, a holy place where the beloved boy had last walked, laughed and breathed. Jake had returned to Paris less than two hours ago. He had barely stepped foot in his house when the messenger came with the news of Jules’s murder. He’d come immediately. Larousse had seemed quite displeased when he saw Jake and hid it poorly.

Jake stepped back away from the holy shrine, but Larousse continued to contemplate the bed as if what he had seen there last night had burned into him and he was seeing it again. Jake studied the room he stood in. It also seemed like nothing in this room had been touched since the murder. There was an exquisitely embroidered, but bloody gown, a small pile of shorn hair, a basin with a little dark water

in the bottom of it, a half-empty wine bottle on a small table. A white gown, a little less bloody, perhaps a nightgown or underdress, lay in a pile near the table. Tracks of small bare feet, dark red turning brown trailed through the doorway. Jake picked up a lock of the hair from the pile. She had cut her hair off before she departed. Why? Beautiful hair, crisp, polished brown and curly. He realized that it could be used to identify the woman if she were ever caught. He carefully folded the lock into his handkerchief and proceeded to poke around the room with his walking stick.

“Is there any hint of a motive?” Jake asked.

“Probably for the few coins in his pockets. Who knows?” said Larousse without disturbing his contemplation of the bed where his son spent the last moment of his life. Could the murderous prostitute have been Yvette? Jake thought of Yvette and Yvette’s mother. He shook his head. Yvette was neither a prostitute nor a cold-blooded killer; if she were either, then he was the poorest judge of people that ever lived. He poked his stick at the embroidered dress. It turned over all of a piece, it was so soaked and stiffened. There was nothing under it. Then he did the same with the linen shift. Under that was a scarf, also stained, but coiled up as if into a rope. He uncoiled it a bit with the tip of his stick. What he saw stunned him. He glanced at



Larousse who was still absorbed in his meditation on the bloody bed. Jake quickly scooped up the scarf and stuffed it into his coat.

“I have closely questioned the employees,” said Larousse. Jake jumped guiltily but Larousse had not turned around. “I have learned nothing from them.”

“Have you been home yet? Have you had anything to eat?”

Larousse turned distractedly and glanced around the room. He seemed not to have heard Jake’s questions. His face seemed fleshless, vicious and cold. Jake recalled Yvette’s letter. “He is not a nice man,” she had said. He could almost hear the young maid’s voice say it. Perhaps not a nice man, Jake thought, but a grieving father.

Larousse caught sight of the pile of hair and walked over to it casually. “They left here disguised as men.” He said poking at the hair with his stick as Jake had done. “Jules’s clothes were stolen. One of the guards was bludgeoned and his clothing was taken also.”

“Unbelievable!” Jake was struggling to be polite and calm. The scarf stuffed into his coat felt like a coiled snake against his ribs.

“I questioned the guard closely. There were two women. One older, one younger. That—” he nodded to the sacred room, “was the room of the younger one.” He stepped on the pile of hair and ground it into the floor. He looked up at Jake with an animal’s eyes. “She will beg me for death,” he said.



The warehouse district was nearly deserted just as it should be at this time of night. Larousse waited until there was no one in sight and then stepped from the carriage. He paused to adjust the hang of his coat and take one quick look around. There was no moon, but a street lamp cast long, soft shadows. Satisfied that there was no one about, he walked quickly to a door that was usually locked but was not just now. Behind the door was a narrow landing and then stairs plunging down into darkness. This place belonged to Fallieres. Larousse had only been here once before.

At the bottom of the stairs was a hallway—a tunnel really—lit every few feet with oil lamps. At the end was another door. Larousse rapped upon it with his hawk-headed cane, chosen for this occasion. The cane was the heaviest he owned, the hawk’s head was solid gold.

Gouche, one of Fallieres’ men, opened the door. He was thin and covered with old scars left by the pox.

“You have him?” Larousse asked. He found himself in a dimly lit little room that was lined with stone and smelled faintly of blood.

“Of course, just as you requested.” Gouche’s misshapen lips drew back in an ingratiating grin, revealing deeply yellow teeth.

A man who had once been fat sat trussed up in the only chair, his face bright red where it showed around the gag and blindfold. Rat-face had said his name was Gaston. Behind him stood Etienne, tall and burly, who had once been a stevedore. Nearby was a table spattered with rusty brown spots and littered with various knives, needles, darts and clamps. Otherwise the room was empty.

“Take off the blindfold and gag. I will talk with the prisoner first. One of you bring me a chair.”

Gouche ducked his head and scurried out. Etienne freed Gaston’s head. The gag was hardly out of his mouth before Gaston spoke.

"Gracious Sir! I assure you before God that this is all a mistake. I have done noth—"

"It just might be a mistake," said Larousse deliberately interrupting Gaston's outpouring. "You might be released immediately." Insane hope flared in Gaston's eyes, his loose jowls were still scarlet.

"Yes! It's all a mist—"

"All you have to do is tell me where you have hidden Jubilee Jones."

Gaston's mouth hung open shapelessly for a moment. Hope died on his face, quickly replaced with fear. "Who is she? I will gladly tear Paris apart stone by stone to find her for you. Whoever she is, she is yours." The chair arrived. Larousse positioned it so that Gaston was within easy reach and sat.

"Oh, but you must have hidden her," Larousse said it softly almost enjoying Gaston's widening terror. "She's not sleeping in doorways. She couldn't possibly have disappeared so quickly without help." Larousse began to tap Gaston on the shoulder, gently, as if the hawk were feeding. "Therefore she had help, and she only could have gotten it from you!" Larousse punctuated the last word by bringing the hawk's head down hard, not hard enough to break anything, but enough to make Gaston squeal.

Gaston began to weep and protest his innocence. Behind him Etienne seemed to be suppressing a smile. Larousse wondered if Gouche also enjoyed this sort of work.

Larousse waited patiently for Gaston to subside. Gaston's fear soothed Larousse, and warmed him. "Now, then," he said when Gaston had quieted to a whimper. "Tell me where she is hiding." The hawk's head tapped the other shoulder.

"I swear to you, before God, *Monsieur*, I do not—" Again the hawk swooped down. Larousse allowed him to blubber a while, and then he decided that Gaston was growing ripe.

"Tell me where to find Marie."

Gaston's reddened eyes went wide. "Marie? Is that bitch in this? I sold her to a brothel. I'll take you there!" He glanced around desperately, no longer allowing himself to hope.

"So you do know Marie. Where is she?"

"She is at the Hotel du Villiers on the Rue De St. Germaine. I will take you there!"

"She escaped last night!" The hawk smashed against Gaston's arm. "The murdering Jones whore was with her." Again the hawk fell. Gaston howled. Larousse's

blood ignited in his veins. Gaston's animal noises were music to his ears, spurring him on, bringing strength to his arms. Larousse raised the hawk high above Gaston's head ready to bring it down for the killing blow when he suddenly realized what he was doing. Etienne's grin was a death's head grimace and Gaston stank of fear.

Larousse lowered the cane slowly and reluctantly sat. His thoughts crackled and refused to come to order for a moment. When he had the upper hand on them he thought about the facts at hand. The dress that he had seen Jubilee wearing was found, covered with blood, in Marie's room. Both of them were missing, so it made perfect sense that they were together. Rat-face had supplied the name of Marie's seller. Perhaps this piece of garbage could disgorge some other names. Gaston had quieted again—as much as he was going to.

"Now. I would like for you to begin to talk about Marie. Tell me how you know her, and everything you know about her." Larousse took out a white silk handkerchief and carefully polished the hawk's head. "If your memory fails, our friend here will help you remember.



No lights shown from the cracked windows of the Heroux Cafard which surprised Marie very much. The sun had set only two hours ago bringing relief from the day's heat and affording Marie the darkness she needed to slip out of an apartment building that, she had discovered, was supposed to be totally abandoned. She cautioned Jubilee to keep the curtains drawn and the lamp turned low so as to attract as little attention as possible.

Marie stood in the deep shadow of a doorway across the street from the inn and watched for a while, puzzling over the Cafard being closed during what should be its busiest time. Marie fingered the throwing knife strapped to her wrist under Rat-face's jacket and wished again she could have found a cheap pistol. It was enormously risky coming back to Gaston after what he'd done to her. But he was the only man in Paris she knew who could arrange the kind of high stakes card games she needed. It could mean death to be thought an aristocrat these days but wealthy men, as always, had all the pleasures they could afford and many wealthy men enjoyed gambling.

Worries about Jubilee intruded on her vigil. A pampered, sheltered girl straight from the heart of the bourgeoisie wasn't going to survive a confrontation with a

man so cold blooded that he would kill two people just to get their daughter as a present for his son. Marie remembered with a shudder the mutilated body of the boy Jubilee had killed. Or perhaps Larousse should watch out.

Something about Larousse's reasons for killing Jubilee's parents bothered Marie. It wasn't reasonable. Years of experience had taught her that all killings, no matter how strange were always extremely reasonable.

With effort she pulled her thoughts back to the present. She had satisfied herself that she hadn't been followed and that no one watched the inn. No one had gone in or come out and there were no signs of life inside. She slipped from the doorway and crossed the narrow street. The front door of the Heroux Cafard refused to give way. Marie didn't know it could be locked. She checked again to make sure nobody was watching and then went to the end of the block and around to the alley.

She hated the alley. It was absolutely black; not even moonlight could come there. She trailed her hand along one side counting the doors. The Cafard should be the sixth one. Occasionally her fingers found something slimy. She shivered, not even willing to wipe her hand on Rat-face's filthy breeches. She was glad when she finally came to the door.

She had only entered the Cafard by this door twice—once in daylight and once by lamplight. She had, however, left this way many times. The door opened easily, unbarred as she had hoped. In her experience it was never locked, left open for delivery people during the day and for the use of customers at night.

Inside was a wide kitchen. Usually a lamp lit the doorway but tonight it was dark. The kitchen, charmingly cozy in winter was oppressively hot in summer. Marie crossed the room as rapidly as she could in the dark, avoiding the big work table that she remembered at the last moment.

The kitchen door opened onto a hallway across which was the entrance to the main room. On the right were the back stairs to the second floor and to the left was Gaston's office. Charlotte, Gaston's cook and chief barmaid, slept in a little attic room too miserable to rent to a guest.

Marie satisfied herself that the public room was indeed deserted and then headed for Gaston's office. She hoped she wouldn't have to kill him. She didn't hope that he would return her little bag of jewels. She could just possibly talk him into staking her in a couple of discrete games where she could make all the money she would need. There were perhaps thousands of card games all over Paris—probably going on at this moment—that she could sit in on, but they were, more often than not, for very small stakes. It would take a good deal of risky exposure to ac-



cumulate the large amounts needed to smuggle Jubilee out of Paris and get her on a ship to America. If the girl succeeded in killing Larousse, a quick and quiet exit from France would be extremely necessary. In these times she wouldn't get any sort of trial, Jubilee's neck would be under the guillotine before she could even pay a bribe.

Marie shrugged inwardly and put all that away for now. Now she had to concentrate on bringing Gaston around. She crept to his office door. It had no lock and would open easily, but she took a deep breath and with all her strength kicked it in. The door flew open and cracked against the wall, bouncing back a little. Empty darkness. She turned and ran lightly for the stairs. If Gaston was in bed and heard the noise, she had to reach his room before he got up.

His room was also empty. Marie went to the narrow stairs that led to the attic. Perhaps he was sleeping with Charlotte. Marie knew it was a condition of the poor girl's employment. Charlotte's room had no door for Marie to kick open dramatically. The stuffy little attic was empty anyway. The only window looked out on the roof. That window was ajar. When Marie looked out she found Charlotte, curled up on a blanket sound asleep. Of course, Marie thought to herself, how could anyone sleep in this nasty little room?

"Charlotte!" She didn't stir. Marie crawled out the window and knelt beside the sleeping form. Marie had to call her name a couple more times before Charlotte sat

up and looked around groggily. When she saw Marie, she squeaked and pulled the sheet up to her chin.

“Who are you?” Charlotte squinted at Marie. The moon was up, but it was only a thin sliver. Marie was surprised that she wasn’t recognized, even considering the dim light, but there was no point in not using the advantage.

“It doesn’t matter, I won’t hurt you. Just tell me where Gaston is.”

“I don’t know. Some men came this afternoon and took him away.”

Marie was suddenly very alert. “Think carefully. Did he leave with them willingly or was he forced?”

“Oh, most definitely he was forced. I was cleaning the front bedroom. I thought I heard him calling me from the street so I looked out the window. He was being dragged into a carriage by two men. His feet were barely touching the ground.” She giggled, remembering. “I have never seen him like that before. He was the color of—.”

“Jubilee!” Marie was on her feet and running toward the window before Charlotte finished her description. “Thank you!” she called over her shoulder. “Thank you very much.” She raced through the darkened inn as quickly as could, barking her shins now and then on invisible furniture. She left by the front door and hit the sidewalk running hard.

Larousse had Gaston. The chances were more than excellent that he also had Jubilee.

Chapter 7

Gerome!" Jake bellowed as he threw open the front door.

"Yes, *Monsieur*!" Gerome called from the library, he appeared, almost running, struggling into his jacket, his spectacles crooked.

"Bring me some water and a basin!" Jake had spent an hour trying to persuade Larousse to leave the brothel and go home. He had failed. Finally he left Larousse meditating on a bloody bed.

Gerome brought the basin of water, setting it on the lace-covered dining room table, and Jake dug the coiled cloth, stiff with dried blood, out of his coat pocket. He worked the fragile fabric in the water which quickly turned muddy brown and then carefully unfurled it. Gerome, standing at his elbow, gasped when he saw what emerged in Jake's hands.

"That scarf belonged to Madame Christiana!" he breathed.

"Yes, I believe it did," said Jake. The elaborately embroidered "C" was clear and unmistakable. They had both seen her wear such a scarf. Jake had spent many hours watching her do this kind of exquisite embroidery with long elegant fingers, working quietly while he and Neville discussed business or events of the day. "Therefore how did it come to be in the possession of the woman who killed Jules Larousse?" Jake added.

"Yvette?" Gerome suggested it, but he had no confidence in the suggestion.

"I believe that as little as you do! But it was not Christiana herself. She is dead. Also, the brothel employees agreed the murderess was a very young woman, barely out of childhood."

An small frown passed over Gerome's face. He was silent. Jake pulled out his handkerchief and carefully unfolded it, exposing the lock of hair.

"There was a person who had dark hair like this who could have had that scarf in her possession. She was a very young woman, barely out of childhood."

"No!" said Gerome.

"Jubilee," said Jake at the same moment. He reverently laid out the bit of embroidered tulle flat on the tablecloth, ignoring the brownish-red water stains. "I must know a great deal more than I do about *Monsieur* Larousse," he said quietly. "Come with me!" he said, abruptly striding out the door.

"Where?"

"To prison! We are going to save La Grevey from Madame Guillotine. I must know what she knows about our friend Larousse!"



About sunset Jubilee drew the curtains against the graying light. Jules' clothes fit her now. The task had taken most of the day but the increase in comfort was worth it. Now she felt ready—for what she wasn't sure. Groping across the darkened room to the table, she lit a lamp, keeping the flame low as Marie had instructed, and sat down. Wearing men's breeches imparted the distinct feeling that she was parading about in her underdrawers, a feeling she hoped would fade in time.

She had intended to play a hand of solitaire, but she felt fretful—restless. The walls confined her too closely. So instead, she took the knife from her boot and laid it on the table under the lamp. The amethysts twinkled at her. Little flakes of brown were imbedded among the delicate silver leaves and vines. A good washing with a soft brush would get them out. She knew she should be more sorry that she had killed a man and that there was blood on this last and most beautiful gift from her mother, but she wasn't sorry and she knew there would be more blood on this knife before her own life ended. She traced the vines with a finger, admiring them, and then pulled the blade a little way out of the case. Its cool sheen soothed her a bit. She pushed the knife back into the case, but couldn't put it away just yet.

Shadows crowded the corners of the room. The mummy case with its clumsily painted eyes watched her mournfully. She wished Marie would return. She wandered back to the window, knife in hand, and peered out between the curtains. A man in a soft red Commune's cap lounged against the lamppost below puffing on a small clay pipe.

From this distance, he looked a little like Jake. Or perhaps Jake was just in the back of her mind. She really didn't want to think about him. Even if he was in-

nocent of the deaths of her parents, he was still friends with Larousse. Her father had believed they were involved in the same dirty business together. A vague, hollow ache started in her breast. In spite of everything she yearned to see Jake. She wandered around the room. A wardrobe with a door missing bulged with shapeless bundles. Books draped with cobwebs were stacked in lopsided towers. Even if Jake was an enemy he would be a familiar point in all the chaos of the last few days. She had loved him so much then, but the world had left her with very little but a flaring hatred always at her elbow. Now when she thought of him she longed for something lost. She wished to see him, just a look at his face. Perhaps from a distance lest he betray her to Larousse.

The wish grew so strong, Jubilee scooped up the dagger and strode over to the door. Her hand rested on the knob before she remembered her promise to stay until Marie returned. She released the knob reluctantly and went back to the window.

Now there were three men beside the streetlamp. Little hairs prickled on the back of her neck. One of the new arrivals perched on the edge of the curb near the Communard examining the bottom of his shoe and the other leaned in a doorway. All faced her direction. Another, in green and white striped pants, strolled up and nodded quiet greetings to the others.

A carriage clattered by. It caught the interest of the Communard but as it passed the red-cap shrugged at the man on the curb and resumed his position against the lamppost, glancing up at the window where Jubilee stood. Her stomach tightened. Until that moment she hadn't been sure that they had come for her. Now, she only wondered what they were waiting for. Larousse, of course.

She dropped the curtain and looked around. There was a bar for the door, but it didn't look all that sturdy and wouldn't keep out Larousse anyway. She still carried the dagger in her hand. She pressed it against her cheek for a moment and then pushed it reluctantly into her boot. Attacking five men would not get Larousse dead; she would have to find a way to escape him tonight and go after him some other time. She dropped the bar in place across the door.

She heard another carriage in the street below. It clattered to a stop and creaked softly as someone descended. Larousse had arrived.

A flash of the terror she had known on the night her parents were killed revisited her. Just as quickly, it left. Her thoughts were very still and the pressure of the dagger against her ankle stood out starkly against those thoughts. She looked all around, studying the apartment. There were plenty of places to hide, but most of them were also obvious places for Larousse to look. She went into the bedroom

and opened a window. There was a narrow ledge just below which also ran under the window of the apartment next door which gaped open. Jubilee knew that the rooms next door were uninhabited as was the entire building. She opened the curtains wide and then hurried back into the living room. Heavy footsteps thudded up the stairs.



Marie hadn't let Jubilee look inside the mummy case, she had hinted darkly that it was dangerous. Jubilee hoped as she pried it open, that it wasn't occupied. It wasn't. Someone tested the front door and, finding it barred, threw his body against it. Pausing only to take out her dagger she stepped into the sarcophagus and pulled the lid shut behind her. Light leaked through many cracks and she realized she'd forgotten to blow out the lamp. She put her eye to one of the cracks, but could see only the thinnest strip of the room. She had been right about the bar across the door. It cracked on the second blow and gave way before the third.

"Spread out. Search all the rooms—quickly!" Jubilee could hear a trace of strain in Larousse's voice. Bitter gladness caught her throat. He suffered. Good. Her fingers ached from gripping the dagger too tightly. He was so very near. She wished she could see him, but all that passed the tiny crack was a dark flicker. She had an urge to fling open the lid of the sarcophagus and have an end to him. Only the fact that the other men would stop her kept her standing there, breathing what she fancied was mummy dust. Sweat trickled down her forehead. She didn't dare move to wipe it away.

"In here!" called a muffled voice from the bedroom. A discussion took place, too low to catch more than a word or two. All she heard was "you two" and "that whore."

A moment later she heard them return to the living room. Three of them passed her tiny field of vision. The other two must have been ordered out the window onto the ledge. "Remember, she's not to be killed," Larousse said. The chill of death was on his voice. "If she dies what I have planned for her will be done to the man who kills her." Larousse received frightened assurances from the two men.

For a while all was quiet except for some distant thumping—perhaps the slamming of doors—and the rhythmic sound of running feet. She hoped they would

assume that she had gotten away somehow. If not, they would return and search the room.

When it had been quiet for a very long time, she began to think of leaving her hiding place. Hot and stuffy, the sarcophagus seemed to press against her after a while. If it were not for the cracks of light, reassuring her that air was coming in also, she would have had to get out much sooner.

She had resolved to leave her hiding place when she heard someone creeping quietly up the stairs. She might not have heard them at all but one step groaned loudly. Jubilee stiffened, breathing shallowly. Carefully, slowly, she transferred the dagger to her left hand and wiped the sweat off the palm of the right and took a fresh grip. A single soft step on the landing told her whoever was out there had arrived.

"Merde." A hissing whisper, but definitely Marie. Jubilee pushed open the sarcophagus lid and stepped out. Marie stood poised beside the splintered door, the blade of the throwing knife ready between thumb and fore-finger. Startled, Jubilee stepped back, stumbled, didn't fall but caught herself stiff-armed against the back of the mummy case. A knife blade popped out between her fingers. One knuckle bled, a tiny patch of skin having been scraped away.

"What were you doing in there?" Marie demanded lowering her knife.

"Hiding from Larousse and his men." She pushed herself upright, jiggling the case enough to cause another knife to spring out. She glanced at the rusty old blade wondering why she was still alive.

"They've been here?"

"Yes, they only left a few moments ago." She explained what had happened and the ruse she had used.

"Since they haven't found you, they'll watch the place. We have to leave now." Marie inspected the inside of the mummy case. "I'm surprised you weren't killed in this thing. The mechanism must be rusty."

"I was hoping that Larousse would think it was a solid statue. I wasn't sure they would be fooled by the open window." A smile flickered across Marie's delicate features.

"You may survive this yet."

Jubilee warmed to the left-handed praise. She shoved the dagger back into her boot. "What do we do next?"

"Good question. Get the hell out of here, I think. If we can. How long since Larousse left?"

Jubilee shrugged. "Ten minutes maybe."

"That means he may not actually be gone. In any case the building is being watched. If I was seen coming in they'll be here any minute." She pursed her lips thoughtfully. "La Zollier told me that she had a secret way out of here, but she never got around to showing it to me. We'll have to improvise."

Jubilee followed the small woman through the shattered door. They couldn't risk a light so they had to fumble through the dark hallway and up the stairs that led to the floor above. Jubilee wished that Marie had taken the time to explain what she had in mind. She hated to follow the woman blindly—literally in this darkness. Marie had been a reliable friend so far, but Marie obviously didn't care about killing Larousse and Jubilee feared that Marie would interfere somehow. Jubilee barked her shins on some unidentifiable piece of debris. Now was not a good time to discuss her misgivings.

From below, a muffled squeak of unoiled hinges shivered through the house. Marie gasped. Jubilee bent and pulled the dagger from her boot. It left the sheath with a reassuring ring.

"Put that away," Marie breathed. "I don't want you running around in the dark with it in your hand. Especially not so near my back."

"Sorry." Jubilee reluctantly put it away.

"This way."

Jubilee felt her way through a narrow door and up narrow steps. At the top, Marie collided with something that toppled over and clattered heavily on the floor.

"*Zut allors!* That'll bring them," Marie whispered fiercely. She grabbed Jubilee's sleeve and led her to a wall. Marie groped around until she found what she was searching for. An unearthly moan preceded the appearance of a square of starlight in the wall. Marie stuck her head out. Jubilee did likewise. A ledge ran below very much like the one beneath the window in La Zollier's apartment. A very long way below lay a courtyard.

Marie climbed out onto the ledge. Jubilee hesitated, her knees suddenly a little weak. "Come on!" Marie hissed. "They'll be here any second." Jubilee swallowed hard, climbed out after Marie who sidled quickly along the ledge toward the corner of the building.

Jubilee followed slowly, keeping her eyes focused on Marie. The rough granite wall radiated heat like an oven. Soon her face and hands dripped with sweat. It took all her strength not to dwell on the dark nothingness below. The window they had just come through suddenly bled yellow light. "Search well, boys!" The speaker had

a rougher voice than Larousse's. "We ain't falling for the same trick twice tonight!" The crash of splintering wood followed.

Jubilee had nearly caught up to Marie by the time she turned the corner. "They ain't in here. Out we go!" Jubilee nearly ran the last three steps to the corner. Marie waited on the other side panting.

Three buildings met here in a sloppy cul-de-sac. The building directly across had a waist-high iron fence surrounding its roof. The connecting building had a steeply pitched roof edged with a deep, granite rain gutter supported at intervals by wide flanges. The easy way would be to run up the rain gutter to the fenced roof. This was the way Marie was headed. Jubilee had a sudden inspiration.

"No. That way!" Jubilee pointed along the sloping roof away from the iron fence. Marie shrugged and they ran along the rain gutter to the nearest flange. There Jubilee crouched and Marie did likewise.

About three heartbeats later: "Which way, Jacque?"

"That way!" The clumping footsteps ran up the gutter to the fenced roof. As soon as the sounds of their pursuers faded Marie and Jubilee made their way along the drain to the next building. They scrambled up onto its roof with difficulty. Once on top, they sat gasping for breath.

"You saved us a lot of trouble back there," said Marie.

"Thank you, I'd be dead if it wasn't for you though."

Marie shrugged. "Pas de quoi, it's nothing."

They didn't talk for a while, resting. This roof stretched out mostly flat. It was the top of an apartment building Jubilee guessed, although very little could be seen in the dim starlight. They were so high up, there was actually a breeze. Jubilee turned her face to it gratefully, tendrils of hair drying against her forehead.

Marie was the first to stand. "We had better get going," she said.

"Not just yet, ladies. I wish a word with Mademoiselle Jubilee."

A thrill of excitement raced through Jubilee's veins. Her fingers and cheeks tingled. He could not be seen in the darkness, but it was Larousse.



The prison stank of despair. Row upon row of jail cells were overfilled with filthy, huddled women. Jake knew there was another place like this for men. Probably larger. But here it was all women: women in fine satin, women in rags, women who were fat and women who were very, very thin. Many looked ill. Some of the

women called to him, making suggestive proposals. The law that stated a pregnant woman could not be beheaded drove these women to do anything to stay alive even in a place like this. Jake pitied them. He knew most often their crimes were that of poverty—or simply the crime of having the wrong last name or the wrong sort of relatives.



The little pig of a turnkey, who had accepted Jake's bribe without a blink, led Jake down a narrow passageway, cluttered with offal, straw and rat dung. The stench hung in the air like an evil fog. The jailer consulted a little scrap of paper and stopped at a particular door, battered and scarred like the others. It swung open unwillingly. "Grevey," he called. There was no answer. The jailer called again.

Some woman with frowsy blond hair raised her head up listlessly. "She was taken out last night. The guillotine's got her by now."

"Shut yer gob," said the little pig-man "She ain't scheduled till tomorrow."

"Shut yers," the blond woman replied, her muddy eyes kindling. "She was taken out last night. Look around—is she here?"

There were only two other women in the cell. One of them was quite young and huddled listlessly in a corner. The other was an old African woman in ragged gypsy clothes.

"She's been taken," said the old woman. She had startling mismatched eyes. "Not to die, I think, though she may wish it so." Her old voice rumbled like rocks in a barrel. Jake focused his attention on her.

"Why is that?"

"Now wait," the little jailer interrupted nervously before the old woman could reply. "If she was taken out of here she's a head shorter."

"Are you sure?" Jake said dryly.

The jailer turned on him his beady eyes narrowed.

"Get out. The prisoner you paid to see isn't here. Now, get out."

Jake hesitated. He sorely wanted to flatten the little man's already shapeless nose—almost as much as he wanted to talk to the old woman.

Jake left the cell, but waited out in the passageway. He followed the little man in silence for a while. When they were nearly to the front courtyard, Jake stopped him.

“Would you like to earn a little more money?”

“Doin’ what?”

“Meet me somewhere after your shift and I’ll tell you.”

The jailer’s round face was a study in inner conflict. “Alright, meet me at the Laughing Cow just after six o’ the clock.” Jake suppressed a smile.

“I’ll be there,” he said.



Gaston oozed back into consciousness. Every tremor and quake of the wagon sent ripples of pain through his battered carcass. He forced his eyes open a crack and peered furtively at the broad back of the cart driver and his much smaller companion. He assumed they were Gouche and Etienne.

Gaston smelled the stink of the river and guessed what they were going to do with him, because he knew what he would do with them if he got the chance. He longed for his pistol. The thought of blowing a hole in the back of Gouche’s head warmed him. He would have smiled if he wasn’t afraid it would hurt his face.

Discarding the thought, he turned his attention to the need to escape before they stopped the wagon. He moved his legs ever so slightly. The pain in his ribs dragged a moan out of him. He licked his lips smeared with his own dried blood. He was sure his left shoulder was broken and his left arm was almost useless. He knew that just the attempt to roll out onto the street would hurt like seven bloody hells—succeeding would probably conk him out again, but there was a thin chance that he would wake up before they came looking for him.

Gaston set what was left of his teeth and rolled over. A red flash of pain sealed his eyes shut for a moment, but when he opened them, he saw the gate across the back of the wagon. He relaxed into misery. Done for. He might as well be in a tumbrel.

He spent some time cursing Marie, who had gotten him into this. Why did she have to kill—to help kill—the son of some rich piece of shit? Gaston was going to die for it and that little weasel, Marie, would get away scot free. Thick self pity rolled over him.

When the wagon jerked to a halt Gaston knew he must have been asleep, because he awakened from an evil nightmare. They were stopped on a bridge. The wagon shook as its driver and companion descended. Gaston pretended to still be

unconscious. He wished he was and didn't have to know what was going to happen next.

A scrape of wood on wood told of the tail gate being opened and then rough hands grabbed his arms and dragged him out. All the broken places in his body that had been merely throbbing now woke up screaming. Gaston howled along with them.

"Ah, yer awake," Gaston could just see Gouche's wolfish grin.

They set Gaston on his feet but his knees buckled, so they carried him over to the parapet and hoisted him up onto it.

"It's a warm night, eh, mon ami," said Etienne chuckling. "A nice night for a swim." Gouche laughed heartily at his companion's jest.

"Excellent," hissed Gaston through broken lips. "Perhaps you will join me?"

"Maybe later," said Gauche and pushed him off.

Gaston managed a brief shriek before the water knocked the breath out of his body. All of his limbs suddenly came alive, even the left arm he thought he couldn't move. His shoulder felt as if it were run through with a red hot poker, but it was nothing compared to the terror of the water. Finally, miraculously, his head popped above the surface and he gulped in great lungfull of beautiful, heavenly, precious air only somewhat mixed with the filthy water of the Seine.



Darkness coiled around the blacker shapes that were Larousse and his men. Jubilee's hatred hummed inside her. She couldn't see him and she was certain he could not see her—but she could sense him, almost smell his malignance.

She tightened her fingers around the dagger hilt. She had to be sure, she had to force him to speak.

"Murderer! I'm going to send you to hell, Larousse." Jubilee's voice sounded shrill in her own ears. Marie gasped. Larousse laughed, almost an hysterical cackle.

Jubilee lunged. Marie snatched her back. "Stop it!" Jubilee wailed. Marie gripped her arm like iron. Larousse was only a few steps away. She fought to get to him.

"Let her come to me, young man." Larousse's tone was playful. "No, wait! You must be Marie. I have business with you as well, but that can wait. It is Mademoiselle Jubilee and I that have an assignation to keep."

“Monster! Demon! Murderer!” This last almost tore Jubilee’s throat.

“Slut! You are the killer!”

Jubilee strove to free herself from Marie’s grasp, but her mind was clearing. Finally, she remembered that Marie was her friend and ceased to struggle. She trembled like a racehorse at the gate.

“Remember your promise,” Marie whispered. “Now is not the time.” Larousse gestured sharply. The men crept forward, circling like wolves.

“We are going to die in a few minutes,” Jubilee whispered back. “He must not outlive me. Now may be my only chance.”



“Don’t be so sure. I know this building,” Marie pulled her back and to the right.

“Stop,” Marie called. “I have a loaded pistol. Whoever takes the next step dies.” The circling men halted. A few turned uncertainly towards the shadow that was Larousse-

se. Marie, still with a grip on Jubilee’s arm, sidled more to the right and back.

“Get them!” Larousse’s voice had a shrill edge. “If you have a pistol, young woman, shoot it, because I mean to have the little whore.” Marie didn’t answer, but took a few more steps back and one or two to the left. Jubilee felt they were engaged in some lunatic dance. Larousse’s men spread out and flanked them. In a moment nothing would matter except to get Larousse first.

Marie pressed her mouth close to Jubilee’s ear. “On the count of three jump up as high as you can.”

“What?”

“Just do it.” Larousse was only a couple of paces away. His dark shape was distorted as if he were holding out his arms.

“All right.”

“Un . . . deux . . . trois!”

Jubilee sprang upward with all her might. Marie still clung to her. When they landed there was a dry crack. A neat square of boards under them gave way and they were falling through space.

Chapter 8

Jake stared into his tankard and tried to hide his boredom while his new best friend Grillier the jailkeeper told him a filthy joke. They sat in a dark ale house that only had one window to let in air and light. Unfortunately it also let in flies. Jake had been buying drinks for an hour and had learned almost nothing. Jake's thoughts drifted to the prize he had found at the Hotel du Villiers. His heart soared at the thought that Jubilee might be alive. He yearned toward that hope, nurturing it tenderly. It was just possible some young girl had gotten the scarf from whoever killed the Joneses, but another explanation was simpler. Jules had wanted Jubilee. If Larousse had killed Neville to hide his complicity in some dirty business, he might have seized the opportunity to procure Jubilee for his son. Such a thing was well within Edouard's capabilities. She would have found herself faced with an eager rapist nearly twice her size. Jubilee could have been in that room, her nightgown soaked with blood. Jules Larousse's blood.

As soon as Grillier's joke was over, Jake had laughed politely and motioned the barman to bring another. The straw scattered on the floor was moldy, well mixed with food scraps and kicked into heaps. The barman nearly tripped on something hidden in the nasty mess which turned out to be a rib. A cow's rib, surely, Jake thought. When Grillier had taken a healthy pull on his full tankard, Jake pressed him again about La Grevey.

"So who did you ask about the aristo?" Jake shooed flies away from his tankard, touched the rim to his lips and faked a swallow.

"I asked the guy on the night shift. He's a mean bastard." Jake endured an illustrative story about the meanness of the night shift bastard. Grillier's tiny pig eyes crackled with emotion.

"You said he didn't get the names of the men who took La Grevey away, but did he happen to mention what sort of men they were?"

"Scum." said Grillier, "he said they looked like scum." He drained the last of his fourth tank of ale, "but they all look like scum to him!" He threw back his head and laughed at his own jest. Jake bared his teeth and made some noises that he hoped could be taken for laughter. "He said Rat-Face was with 'em."

Jake quickly smothered his reaction. "Rat-face?" he said, elaborately casual.

"Oh, he worked at the prison for a while last winter. A decent enough chap. Works at a whorehouse now. Talk about a cushy job!" Laughter exploded again. This time Jake's accompanying laughter was genuine. He leaned back in his chair and ordered another ale for his friend. He even took an actual swallow of the sour stuff. As soon as he could, he left.

Jake's carriage waited outside, parked under a street lamp. He could here musket fire in the distance. Military exercises? Or what was left of the government trying to keep the peace? He had too much on his mind to care about it. Even though the sun had set long since, the air was still too warm and humid for comfort. He would be glad to get home so he could shed his waistcoat and cravat.

"Well, Gerome, how did it go?" Jake said as he climbed into the coach.

"Excellently, *Monsieur*. I would like to introduce to you Madame Zollier." Jake could just make out an ancient mahogany face in the dim streetlight.

"*Je suis enchantée*, Madame," said Jake. She didn't reply, her expression unreadable. "I hope you are not ill, but if you are . . . or if you are injured I will summon a physician for you." Again silence. Jake felt suddenly awkward. Jake wanted to bombard the old woman with questions, but somehow it seemed . . . disrespectful.

"Thank you for having me released." The old woman's voice rumbled out of the darkness. She had a slight accent that Jake couldn't place.

"My pleasure," said Jake.

"Bullshit, *Monsieur*." The dryness of her response almost made him laugh. His trepidation receded.

"Why do you say that?" He was grinning. He hoped she couldn't see him in the dark.

"You want me to tell you what happened to La Grevey."

“Yes, but if you are tired or hungry, and I suppose that you are both, you need not do that now.”

“I am both, as you say . . . “ Her voice bore witness to the fact. “. . . but I will tell you all I know now.”

“If you wish.”

“She was taken away by very bad men. There was evil in their faces. She went willingly. They told her they were hirelings of her family. “

“You did not believe that?”

“*Mais non.* They were lying. I could see it. I see many things others don’t.” Jake didn’t doubt that for an instant. “Later one of the women told me those same men come every few days and take away a young woman—always a young woman, never a man or an old woman—and always an aristocrat. No one knows why.”

“Not even you?”

“No.”

“But what do you ‘see’ or guess about the matter?” In a flash of streetlight he caught a glimpse of a loose cap and torn rag fichu—and strong white teeth. A smile or a grimace, he couldn’t tell.

“I see that these young women will not be killed, but many will wish to die.”



Jubilee’s ankle was sore and her stomach quivered with the cold remains of her anger as she stumbled on through the darkness behind Marie.

They had fallen through the little trap door and plunged through the darkness into a pile of foul smelling linen. Jubilee could hear Larousse’s animal shriek above. A strong smell of soap marked this little hole as a laundry room. Marie shoved Jubilee into a tiny doorway which turned out to be a laundry chute. They slid down and down and down until they popped out of the side of a building into a narrow dark alley. Jubilee turned her ankle when she landed, but Marie dragged her to her feet and they ran willy-nilly into the darkness until they could run no more. Then they stopped, gasping for air, listening for pursuit.

A church bell tolled mournfully. Jubilee didn’t bother to count the chimes, she just let the sound wash over her. “Where are we?”

“I’m not certain. I think that was the bells of Notre Dame, so near the river somewhere.” Marie turned down a narrow, twisting street and Jubilee limped after her. There were no lamps here to light the cobblestones, only thin moonlight that

found its way down between buildings that were probably old when Jeanne d'Arc was burned at the stake.

The air stank and the stench grew as they walked on until the air was thick with it. They came to a wider avenue lit at wide intervals with flickering lamps. A mob of men with torches marched toward them chanting in time to their steps. "Monsier Capet go to bed! In the morning look for your head! Don't ask the Missus 'cause she is dead!"

"They're talking about the King," said Jubilee groggily.

"Shut up!" hissed Marie and dragged her into a deep shadow.

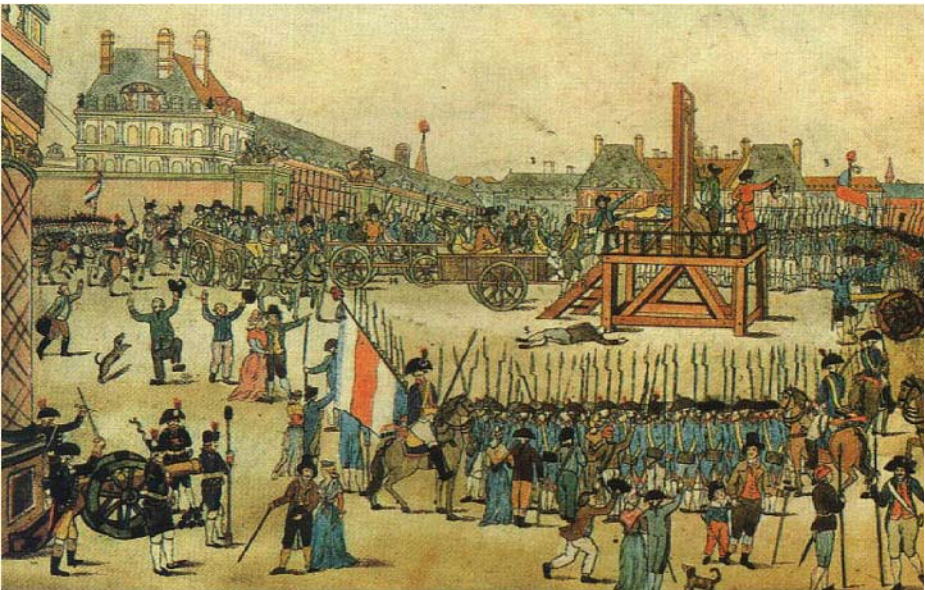
The sick smell of rotten meat and blood seemed to press against Jubilee's face. She thought she might gag if she couldn't get some air. The chanting men marched on by their rough, angry voices receding in the distance. Marie stepped into the street and peered around the corner.

"Whew, can you smell that? There must be an abattoir—"

"No not an abattoir . . . well, yes, but not exactly," said Marie.

"What do you mean? You aren't making any sense." Then she was standing beside Marie seeing what she was seeing.

Jubilee had only ever seen drawings of it in the newspapers. They did not do the real thing justice. It stood high on a platform ghostly in the dim light.



“La Machine,” Marie breathed. The guillotine. “This is the Place de la Concord.” Marie took off running up the boulevard. Jubilee followed with the last spark of her energy. After a very short while she was going to have to stop or fall down.

Marie didn’t get far before her burst of energy failed her. A dark garden provided a place for her to fall to the grass and Jubilee threw herself down beside her friend.

“Where are we going?” Jubilee asked when she stopped panting enough to speak.

“I’m not sure.” Marie’s voice sounded thin and exhausted. “We must hole up some place and sleep. In the morning we will find a way to leave Paris.”

“No.” Jubilee wasn’t sure Marie heard her. If so, she didn’t react. Jubilee knew that if she left Paris she might never see Larousse again. She couldn’t allow that. She would go mad. Larousse must die at all costs. Jubilee’s head spun and exhaustion waved over her and yet she burned to see him dead. She might not be far from madness now.

Marie sat up beside her and looked around. “This is the Tuileries garden. I escaped from here a few days ago.” She sounded thoughtful, as if she were talking to herself. Marie only wanted get away from the danger, of course, and who could blame her? Larousse would have killed her without a second thought. Jubilee didn’t want Marie killed for her sake.

“Is it safe to sleep here somewhere?”

Marie shook her head vehemently. “I couldn’t sleep here.”

Jubilee understood. The smell of rotten blood was still faint on the breeze. “Could you find the Rue de Hareng?”

“Why?”

“My father has—had—a warehouse on that street. If you still have your magic hairpin perhaps we can sleep there.” In the dim light Jubilee could see Marie smile faintly.

“In my hands all hairpins are magic.”

Jubilee smiled back. “That’s good to know.”

“Rue de la Hareng is about a half mile to the south,” said Marie. “Do you remember the number?”

“No, but I’ll know it when I see it.”

“Lead on, then.” It seemed an eternity before they found it. Jubilee had seen the warehouse only once last fall on a sunny afternoon. At the time she didn’t



think she might want to find it in the dark someday. At last, they did find it. Jubilee pointed out a building with only a little confidence.

"I'm pretty sure it's that one," she said.

"If it's not that one, we are going to break into the warehouse of a stranger and frankly I don't care."

"If it's the right one, there's a door around in back," said Jubilee.

Marie led her around to the back where, indeed, there was a door not visible from the street. Marie immediately went to work on the lock. The door opened to the smells of dust, leather, straw and hundreds of other aromas that Jubilee remembered from another lifetime. The warehouse was utterly dark.

"Let's find somewhere to hide and get some sleep," said Marie.

"How?"

"How what?"

"How are we going to find somewhere to sleep.?"

"Look around the door for a candle or a lamp." They both groped the walls on either side of the door. Nothing. "We will just have to stay awake until it is light enough to find a place to hide," said Marie. She sounded desperately tired. "We can at least sit down on the floor."

"You sleep. I'll stay awake." Jubilee felt like a traitor saying it. As soon as she was sure Marie was asleep she would disappear and go after Larousse on her own. She hated deceiving Marie, but it had to be done.

"You are a child. You will be asleep in five minutes," said Marie.

"Nonsense. You sleep. I'll keep watch."

Marie sighed. "Very well," she said.

She could hear Marie finding a place to lie down. Jubilee sat on the floor beside her, leaning her back against the rough boards of the wall. She waited for unmistakable sounds of sleep from her friend, which would be her signal to slip away. She her mind drifted in the darkness. A memory gradually filled her with soft light. She remembered her mother coming to say goodnight. Christiana always lit the way with a little lamp which touched her nightcap with silver. Jubilee warmed herself

with the memory of soft hands tucking in the quilts and gentle lips brushing her forehead . . .

When Jubilee awoke, broad daylight streamed through high windows and gruff voices echoed somewhere in the building.



“Gerome,” said Jake “I am about to give you an assignment I know you will enjoy.” Early morning sun slanted through the curtains, splashing on the Brussels lace table cloth and glinting off the silver and china. The cook set a plate of soft-boiled eggs and toast in front of Jake and a similar plate in front of Gerome. Gerome’s eyebrows went up.

“Oh?” he asked. He lifted a China porcelain coffee cup to his lips.

“Yes, I want you to visit a whore house.”

Gerome set down the cup a trifle forcefully. “*Monsieur*, I don’t think I understand you.”

Jake smiled. “Perhaps I’m teasing you a bit.” He paused while he spooned egg onto his toast. “I need for you to look for a nasty young man named ‘Rat-face.’”

Gaston pulled a long face and adjusted his spectacles. “A man? What a pity! My tastes do not run that way, *Monsieur*.”

Jake chuckled. “Sorry to disappoint you, but he may be a key to these murders.” Jake sipped his coffee. “Rat-face works at the Hotel du Villiers, the brothel where Jules Larousse was killed—at least I believe that he does. You do not need to speak to the young man, merely ascertain that he works there. If my suspicions are correct, this brothel is a place where a prostitute who is also a Comtesse or a Baroness is available at the right price for the right customer. I wish you to confirm that this is the case.”

“If *Monsieur* says so, but Comtesses and Baronesses do not become prostitutes!”

“Not willingly. You will pretend to be a gentleman’s gentleman making an appointment for a master who wishes to breathe such rarified air and has heard a rumor that such august ladies are available. You will not mention my name or anything about me. I was there last night with Larousse, they might recognize me. Make something up if you are asked pointed questions.”

“Bien entendu. When do you wish your appointment?”

"It doesn't matter. I only wish to have such an appointment, not to keep it." Jake seemed distracted. It was as if he watched part of his history in the bottom of his coffee cup. "The day before Neville and his family died he had come home very angry. Furious at me! I tried to ask why but he wouldn't say. It's as if he were embarrassed to speak of it. He was a very straightlaced man. I wonder if he found some Comtesses and Baronesses where they didn't belong? I mean to find out, Gerome, and when I do, we shall pay a call on *Monsieur* Larousse."



Jubilee sat bolt upright, perfectly awake. Outside the light was broad and the hurly-burly of the docks drifted in to her. Men were shouting, thumping and swearing lustily.

It was the voices inside the warehouse that had wakened her. She listened breathlessly. The conversation wasn't distinct enough to make anything out. She and Marie had lain in plain view of two doors and one very dirty window. Only a miracle had prevented their discovery. Marie still lay sound asleep, curled up tight, breathing softly. For a moment, Jubilee considered slipping away before Marie awoke. But only for a moment. She couldn't leave her friend exposed to possible discovery. Jubilee crept to Marie and put a hand over her mouth. Marie instantly awoke. Jubilee took her hand away and put a finger to her lips. Then she pointed to some crates. Marie nodded and they quietly crept behind them. After a little while footsteps receded and the warehouse fell silent.

"I'm not much of a lookout," Jubilee whispered.

Marie shrugged eloquently. "Let's make sure they are gone and then search for some food or something we can sell. Then we must get out of here!"

There seemed to be no one about and not much to steal. Most of the crates were nailed shut with enormous spikes. They had labels like "*tiretaine*" and "*coutellerie*." It was quite discouraging. Finally Jubilee found a crate stamped "*fromage*."

"Marie! Come look!" Jubilee called in a loud stage whisper. "Hallelujah!" said Jubilee to herself in English. "Cheese!" Her stomach rumbled. She had eaten nothing but a few morsels since yesterday morning. Marie grinned at her.

"A spot of *petit déjeuner*! There must be a pry bar somewhere," Marie said and looked around. Jubilee waited, not having the slightest idea what a pry bar was. Marie returned shortly with a length of iron in her hand. She wedged it under the

edge of the crate lid and pressed down. The nails gave way with an ear-splitting, spine tingling shriek. They both froze.

"*Mon Dieu*, what is that?" called a high fluting voice in the distance. Both of them stood perfectly still, barely breathing. "Oh God, who is there?" A girl spoke, perhaps a child, obviously frightened.

Jubilee and Marie looked at each other. Jubilee wavered, she wanted to go to the little voice. Then a choked sob pulled her in that direction. Marie grabbed her sleeve. Jubilee looked back. Marie shook her head emphatically. Jubilee shrugged off Marie's hand, pulled the knife out of her boot and turned toward the distant sound of soft weeping. Jubilee slipped from one hiding place to another, careful to stay out of sight of the few windows. She glanced back once. Marie was a step behind her with the pry bar in her hand. Finally, they came to a heavy door, chained and locked.

Jubilee knew that Marie could probably pick the lock but wasn't sure if that was the wisest course. "What should we do?" she whispered to Marie.

"Get the hell away as quickly as possible," came the quick reply

"No! I want to help this person, can't you hear her crying?"

Marie sighed. "Who is in there!" She called through the door. "What are you doing in there?"

"What? Who is there? Who are you?" Jubilee drew breath to answer but a gesture from Marie cut her off.

"Nothing doing, you first!" called Marie. There was a pause. Then the reply came in a quavering voice.

"I am La Comtesse de la Grevey."

Jubilee and Marie looked at each other incredulously. An aristocrat!

"Why are you here?" Jubilee wanted to know.

"I am a prisoner. They won't let me out!" Petulance edged the last statement.

"We should get out of here," said Marie. "This is none of our affair. We are already up to our necks in offal without meddling in this."

Jubilee didn't answer. In a way she agreed with Marie, though the impulse to rescue this helpless sounding creature was strong. Also an important question begged to be asked.

"Why is this woman in my father's warehouse?"

"Who cares?" Marie said it without strength. Curiosity seemed to be taking hold of her.

“Open the door, Marie. I must talk to her.” Marie hesitated. For a moment Jubilee thought Marie was going to argue or simply refuse, but she just pulled a hairpin out of her pocket and went to work on the lock. In two minutes the door was open.

A young woman stood in the middle of a tiny room that looked like it might have once been an office. Powdered hair was piled high on her head and she wore a dress of many yards of pink brocade that frothed with lace at the bosom and sleeves. She was small and plump with a delicately pointed chin and enormous eyes puffy from weeping.

“But you are just boys! Did my family send you to rescue me?” she quavered uncertainly.

“No,” Jubilee answered. “We were not sent to rescue you. Why are you here?”

La Comtesse sank into the only chair and pulled an elegant, if dirty handkerchief out of her sleeve and held it to her mouth. “I am lost!” she wailed more to herself than to them. The black patch next to her bow-like mouth hung loose. Jubilee wanted to pick it off.

“Perhaps you are lost,” said Marie matter-of-factly. “But tell us why you are here.”

La Comtesse then wept in earnest. Jubilee put away her knife—no need of it now—and knelt at the woman’s feet grasping her free hand. “We will help you,” she said. “Tell us why you are here.” Jubilee waited patiently while the storm of weeping passed. “Tell us why you are here.” Jubilee reiterated softly.

“Why do you wish to know?” came the timorous reply finally.

“This is my father’s warehouse. I must know if he was involved in your imprisonment here.”

“Your father is in trade?” La Comtesse’s question was slightly cool.

“Yes,” said Jubilee, beginning to lose patience. “Now tell me. How did you come to be here?”

“I was in prison. My trial was a joke,” she said contemptuously. “They said I was an enemy of the republic. That’s so stupid! I don’t care anything about the republic I’ve never cared anything about commoners!”

“I’m sure that is utterly true,” said Marie dryly.

“Yes! it is!” she was obviously relieved that Marie understood. “Anyway, I was in prison waiting to go to the guillotine.” She shuddered. “But night before last some men came and said they were from my family, sent to rescue me.” She began to weep again softly. “But they were not from my family they brought me here



instead. They said I had been sold. Sold! can you imagine it?" A fresh storm of tears interrupted the narrative.

"Sold!" Jubilee was stunned. "Like a slave?"

"Oh . . . don't say that!" Now she was howling in earnest, her round shoulders shaking.

"Shut up!" Marie barked. "Sold to whom?"

"To an Arab Prince," said a deep voice behind them. They whirled. Marie gasped.

"Fallieres!"

A tall man with heavy-lidded eyes filled the doorway. He wore a plain black waistcoat and white cotton stockings, but his bearing was decidedly aristocratic. There was something else about him, something disturbing, that Jubilee couldn't quite fathom. She thought his mouth looked cruel. A shorter, nut-brown man in foreign dress stood behind him with a couple of muscular guards.

"My, my, you boys have stumbled into a bit of trouble!" said the nobleman mockingly.

"*Mais oui*, it looks as though we have caught a couple of little mice," said the Arab in slightly accented French. "What shall we do with them?"

Fallieres raked Marie with a glance. "That one knows my name. Have you been having a nice chat with these little mice, Your Grace? Did you hope that they would help you escape?"

La Comtesse sniffled into her kerchief and didn't answer, but she did spare him a wicked glance.

"If you had not told them my name, I would have let them go with a beating, as it is they will both sleep at the bottom of the Seine tonight." He said it so matter-of-factly and with such certainty that Jubilee shivered. She glanced at Marie. Marie did not look frightened. She looked angry.

Fallieres shrugged at the guards. "Tie them up," he said. "Bring them along, we'll dispose of them after La Comtesse is safely deposited at the villa.

"No!" Marie growled and bolted toward the door, partially blocked by the aristocrat and the foreigner. She slipped easily past them. The nearer guard reached for her but she still held the pry bar and she brought it down on his wrist with all her strength. He howled and cursed. Jubilee was rooted to the ground for an instant startled by Marie's sudden action. Marie was raising the pry bar to strike the second guard when the Arab neatly caught the weapon and jerked it out of her hand. The guard tackled her in a bearhug, pinning her arms to her sides. She screamed and thrashed like a wild woman. Fallieres laughed—a nasty cackle. The first guard fell to his knees clutching his wrist. He blocked the doorway, but Jubilee easily slipped past him. She dove at the man holding Marie, pounding and kicking him, hoping he would be distracted enough to let his flailing captive go. It almost worked. He was forced to free one arm to defend himself against her. Jubilee felt someone catch the back of her shirt. She twisted and jerked away from the grasp that held her fast, but she felt herself dragged back.

The Arab had her, holding her tight-pinned. He deftly drew her arms behind her and rapidly tied her wrists with something that felt like a kerchief. "What vicious mice you have in this country, Fallieres!" His keen dark eyes studied Jubilee appraisingly while keeping a tight grip on her bound wrists. She ignored his gaze and tried not to shrink away from him.

"Fallieres," said the Arab, smiling at Jubilee. "This is a very beautiful boy."

Jubilee could see the guard binding Marie's wrists. Marie no longer struggled but her eyes glittered dangerously. La Comtesse had begun weeping anew.

Fallieres looked at Jubilee as if he hadn't noticed her before. "Yes, he is, indeed. Would you like an hour or two with him before he goes to the bottom of the river?"

"Perhaps, my dear Fallieres. Perhaps." The Arab began to unbutton Jubilee's shirt.

"No!" Jubilee gasped.

Fallieres had already turned away and offered an elbow to La Comtesse. "I trust you will not wrestle with me, Your Grace?" She sneered at him, but took his arm. "Farruk, what are you doing there?" Jubilee's blouse was half unbuttoned.

"Satisfying curiosity, Excellency."

Jubilee felt her throat closing. "Stop!" she said weakly.

"What do you not want me to see, little mouse?" His face was very near hers, his grin exposing enormous teeth. He put his hand inside her blouse and pulled

down the gossamer web that held her breasts. "Small, but beautiful perfection," he said. Jubilee felt herself flush deeply.

"A woman!" Fallieres gasped.

"A very beautiful young woman," said the Arab. "And very enticing in those breeches!"

Fallieres turned toward Marie and studied her face. The illusion was broken "You are a woman as well!" Fallieres looked from Marie to Jubilee and back again. Jubilee could feel a hot tear trickle down a hot cheek. Her bosom was still exposed. She felt more naked than if she had no clothes on at all.

"Horace, take that one out to the carriage and come back for the other girl," said Fallieres to Marie's guard. "Pierre, get up off the floor and help Farruk."

Pierre, white-faced but obedient, got clumsily to his feet as Horace dragged Marie out the door. He pushed his hand—the wrist swollen and obviously broken—into the front of his shirt and grabbed Jubilee's arm with his other hand.

"This is all very interesting indeed," said Fallieres.

"Yes, indeed! Who are these mystery ladies?" Farruk slowly rebuttoned Jubilee's blouse. "Who are you, little mouse?"

Jubilee struggled to control herself. She wouldn't cry—she wouldn't! She found and nurtured a seed of fury. She hated these men. The urge to blubber like a child was slowly incinerated by rage.

"Speak up, girl, what is your name?" Fallieres was again offering his arm to La Comtesse.

"Go to hell, you bastard!" Jubilee's voice shook. She heard the Arab behind her gasp and then bark a brief laugh. Fallieres' face darkened with rage. He shook off the small comtesse, strode to Jubilee in two steps and struck her across the face with the back of his hand. She would have fallen if Pierre didn't still have a grip on her arm.

"No gutter scum bitch talks to me that way. Tell me your name or I will kill you with my bare hands!" Jubilee's courage failed her for a moment and she would have stepped back if she could.

"Go to hell," she whispered. Fallieres curled up a fist and drew back for a second blow.

"Stop!" It was La Comtesse. Fallieres hesitated and glared at the woman. "She told me her father owned this warehouse."

Fallieres reluctantly lowered his fist and turned to little comtesse. "Is that true?" Jubilee's face ached from the blow he had given her. She didn't move a muscle.

“That is what she told me.”

“You are Jones’s girl? You are supposed to be dead!”

“This little mouse is very much alive,” said the Arab. “Let us go, Fallieres, I must treat her face before a bruise develops. It would be a pity for such a lovely face to be marred even briefly.”

“Very well,” said Fallieres “But I will get to the bottom of this mystery. Next I will be hearing that the other girl is Marie Antoinette!” He took the comtesse’s elbow and then looked up and snapped his fingers. “Marie! Yes, I thought she looked familiar. Well, well, we meet again!” He laughed, an ugly sound in his throat.

Pierre pushed Jubilee through the warehouse and out the street-side door with the Arab beside her and Fallieres and La Comtesse bringing up the rear. A closed carriage waited; the horses stood in the hot sun, twitching their tails at the flies. There was no one near the carriage or inside it. No guard was in sight and neither was Marie.

Chapter 9

Jake stood in the dining room peering into the kitchen through the connecting door which was only opened a crack. He knew the cook had to go out to the cistern, to the pantry, or perhaps to the watercloset at some point leaving the kitchen empty for a moment. He felt a little foolish escaping from his own house like a burglar, but Lazar was lurking somewhere, presumably watching everything. Lazar, who was sent to him by Larousse. It was impossible to tell who else on his staff could be in Larousse's employ. Finally the plump, middle aged cook took the water bucket and clumped out the side door. Jake strode through the kitchen which wrapped him in wonderful smells. Partridge for supper if he was any judge. He slipped through the back door and out into the kitchen garden. He darted behind an enormous clump of fennel and then made for the garden gate. The gate hinges were stiff with rust and made an unholy racket, but he was out in the street before anyone appeared at the kitchen door to investigate.

Madame Zollier sat at the edge of the street with her back against the garden wall, a row of faded cards laid out on the ground in front of her. She looked up when Jake's shadow fell across her.

"To the river?" she said.

For a moment, Jake thought of denying it. "Yes," he said finally.



“Good!” She scooped up the cards in a single deft motion, and disappeared them into a pocket in her skirt. “I will come with you.”

A protest leapt to his lips and died there. He was well and fairly trapped. “If you must,” he said and strode in the direction of the river without looking back.



The Hotel de Villiers had once been a beautiful villa but like so many it had been looted by the mob. Now, stripped and dilapidated, it was a brothel. Gerome sighed. He approved of the Revolution and the birth of the Republic. But the violence . . . and the depressing sense that all beautiful things were now in the hands of barbarians.

He nodded at the broomseller beside the gate and went in. The courtyard was littered with trash and horse dung. There were flies. He gave a moment of thought to the irony of a broomseller at the gate of a place so badly in need of sweeping and walked past the horses hitched at the dry fountain. At the door he knocked and waited. After a moment a ruffian poked out his head

“No need to knock, come right in!” The man held the door for Gerome. He had a deep scar on his nose that made it look like a small potato. “This time of day most of the ladies are napping, but any of them would be willing to rise to the occasion!” He guffawed at his own joke. Gerome laughed like they were old companions.

“I wish to see the manager,” he said. “I’m interested in procuring a particular style of lady.”

“Oh, ho!” said the man, tapped his potato with a filthy-nailed finger. “We may have just what you are looking for! I’m afraid Marot is no longer with us, but I’ll get *Monsieur* Detaille for you. He’s the new manager.”

“I was not acquainted with Marot, *Monsieur* Detaille will do nicely.”

The doorman disappeared down a hallway and left Gerome in what must have once been a grand entryway. Now it was furnished with battered odds and ends of furniture that was sagging and worn. Wall sconces had been carefully scraped of gold leaf and lengths of red velvet hung where rich tapestries must have once been. Only the frescoed ceilings were untouched. Plump cherubs flitted around the heads of scantily clad nymphs who capered through fantastical woodlands that could never have existed.

Gerome wandered around the room until he came to the banister of the white marble staircase. He looked up wistfully. It would be so much simpler and easier if he could just search the place and be done with it. That was impossible, of course. A charade must be enacted with great care.

"How do you do, *Monsieur*, I am Detaille." The man had approached so quietly that Gerome hadn't heard him. He was tall and thin and his hands were soft and white as those of a priest.

"Bonjour, *Monsieur*," said Gerome bowing slightly. Detaille held his gaze with cool interest. "I have come on behalf of my employer on a matter of some delicacy. May we speak in private?"

"But of course, please come this way." He turned, his movements languid and graceful.

Gerome followed him into the same long hallway down which the potato-nosed man had disappeared earlier. Empty squares on the wallpaper testified of paintings that must have once hung there and a couple of empty frames that still held shards of mirror. All the doors along the hall were closed, except for one set of double-doors that stood wide open. What Gerome saw there stopped him cold for a moment.



A beautiful young girl bent over a bin which appeared to be stuffed with clothing. She herself, wore the simplest rags and what looked like men's shoes, but when she stood up it was with the most exquisite grace. Behind her was a wide ceiling-high window covered with a thin white curtain. Light glowed about her, seeming to come from the girl herself. She held a dress at arm's length, examining it critically, then held it to herself. Her hair was short, hanging in loose curls to just below her shoulders. Gerome was certain that he had made not a sound,

but she caught him staring at her and raked him with a glittering, diamond-hard glance. He realized he'd been holding his breath.

"*Monsieur?*" Detaille was several paces down the hall, waiting expectantly. Gerome hurried to catch up with him.

"Who is that exquisite creature?" said Gerome when they were in Detaille's office and the door was closed.

"The girl in the parlour? She's new. I hired her only an hour ago. Do you find her pleasing?"

"Yes, is she available?" Gerome knew that he shouldn't allow himself to be distracted from his mission, but this was an exceptional circumstance.

"All of the ladies are always available," said Detaille coolly. "Do you wish to conduct business first? or afterwards?"

Gerome hesitated and got a grip on his emotions. "Business first, of course," he said with as much composure as he could manage. He explained his master's taste in aristocratic ladies, stressing that they must be genuine bluebloods. Detaille listened without a flicker of emotion. His eyelids were thick and concealed much.

"There is a possibility that I may be able to supply what your master seeks," he said. "May I ask how your master knows to inquire after such ladies here?"

Gerome was at a loss. It was an unexpected question. His mind whirled for an instant. "My employer has contacts among the Jacobean," he lied. "He did not say who recommended this establishment. He just told me to come here and inquire." Detaille's bland expression made it impossible to tell if he was satisfied with the explanation.

"May I ask your employer's name?"

"He is a government official who wishes to remain anonymous for the moment."

Detaille did not go so far as to smile, but he didn't seem far from it. So he was pleased by attention from men in high places, Gerome thought.

"I believe we can accommodate your employer," Detaille said.

They haggled over the price for a while and then stood and shook hands.

"My employer and I will return this evening," said Gerome. "But for now, the lady in the parlour?"

"Ah, oui, of course." Detaille rang a little brass bell and a moment later potato-nose appeared in the doorway. "Tell Marie she has her first customer."



The closed carriage was hot and stifling. Jubilee was heartsick and determined to not let a trace of it show on her face. Her wrists had been rebound in front of her and the Arab had his arm hooked companionably into hers. The comtesse was on the seat opposite next to Fallieres sniffing into her handkerchief off and on. She'd discovered the hanging black patch on her cheek and had carefully pressed it back into place. One must have priorities. Everyone was sweating but no one made a move to lower the windows. After a while the carriage ground to a halt and Fallieres got out, pulling the comtesse behind him. They were gone quite some time. Fallieres returned alone and they were off again.

The Arab ran his hand idly down the length of Jubilee's thigh. She shivered and pushed his hand away. He grinned, his face an inch from her face in the gloom of the carriage. She thought he was going to try to kiss her and she shrank back.

Fallieres chuckled. "You'll pay for that privilege, Farruk," he said. The Arab grinned and sat back.

Jubilee thought of the knife in her boot, snug against her calf. You will pay, Farruk, she thought. The Arab smelled of patchouli and cinnamon. It made her queasy. No one said anything for the rest of the ride. Finally the carriage stopped and the door opened, revealing a bewigged servant. Fallieres descended and then the Arab pulled Jubilee out after him.



Jake thought that he could outwalk the old woman but within a few blocks she was at his side struggling, but keeping up with him. After a while he relented and slowed his pace.

It would have been convenient to take the Rue St. Martin to the river but the newspapers this morning had reported rioting there. He had no wish to see blood-splashed cobblestones and perhaps corpses not yet removed. Even on the side streets occasionally a knot of people would be grouped around someone reading from a newspaper or broadside. The Austrians were advancing on the French frontier. Jake felt that the French Republic was in serious danger and he was far from alone in that opinion.



La Zollier broke into his reverie. Jake wasn't interested in conversation, but obviously she was. "Why are you so closely concerned with this La Grevey? Do you fancy yourself in love with her?"

"If I were, it would be no concern of yours."

"Indeed." She walked in silence for a half a block. "She is alive you know."

"La Grevey? She was saved from the guillotine. Of course she is alive."

"No, the young girl. The one you thought murdered with her mother and father." Jake stopped in his tracks and turned back toward the old woman. She wore a patch over her blue eye which made her look less odd. As far as he could tell, the only expression on her wrinkled face was alert attention. She was astonishing and strange, but something about her inspired confidence. Gerome . . .

"Gerome has been gossiping with you," he said.

She shrugged eloquently. "He thinks he has cleverly and correctly told me nothing."

Jake couldn't suppress a grin. "He is no match for you."

She grinned back at him, a beautiful smile. "I suspect not, *Monsieur*."

Jake shook his head, thoughtfully and resumed his trek to the river. "I'd love to know how you got it out of him, but I won't make you reveal your secrets. Tell me how you know she is alive."

"I asked the cards. She is alive, but in great danger."

Jake shoved his fists into his pockets. "The danger is not a surprise. If she is alive she is in great danger. I have begun to suspect that she lives. I don't know if I actually believe it or if I very much wish it to be true."

“You love her?”

“Yes. I was stupid. I didn’t realize it until after she . . . was gone. I respected and admired her mother very much and her father was my closest friend. She was just a child when I met them. I still thought of her as a child.” Jake was beginning to see how she got so much out of Gerome. I see things others do not, she had said that night in the carriage. He had thought that was the brag of an old charlatan. Now he thought she might be right.

As they walked Jake discovered himself telling her about the day Neville and Christiana were killed. It felt good to talk to the old woman.

“So we are going to see what *Monsieur* Neville saw,” said La Zollier.

“Yes, I think so. I am not sure he visited the barge that day, but it makes sense. We buy confiscated goods from the government, they are loaded on the barge and ferried to the ocean-going vessel in LeHavre. When the ship’s hold is nearly full it sails to Gibraltar where it takes on a load of spices and tea. From there it goes to New York. One of us inspects the barge before it leaves for LeHavre.”

“Us? You and *Monsieur* Neville?”

“No, Larousse usually did it. But sometimes he would ask one or the other of us to do it for him.”

“Did you make an inspection without his request?”

“Not I. I mostly did the purchasing and collected the goods from various agencies.”

“Would *Monsieur* Neville have done it?”

Jake looked at her. “You know what I’m thinking. I’m thinking Neville did inspect the barge without Larousse’s requesting it and he saw something that Larousse didn’t want him to see. Since I am the purchaser, Neville thought I was collaborating with Larousse.”

“It is what I think as well.” She said it very matter-of-factly as if she had been in on all this from the beginning.

The faint hint of rotting fish on the breeze alerted Jake that the Seine and the docks were near. “I want you to hang back and let me handle this. The barge captain is almost certainly in the pay of Larousse.”

“Oui, d’accord.”

When they got to pier 23—the company pier—a stevedore was rolling a barrel up the gangplank. Jake waited until the wiry little man shoved the barrel onto the deck of the barge and then followed him. “Ahoy! Is Capitaine Palan about?”

The stevedore pushed back his cap and regarded Jake with squinty little eyes. He looked like a criminal, but most sailors looked like criminals to Jake. "Yar, the Cap'n be below," he said. "I'll fetch'm fer ye." He went below and Palan emerged almost immediately.

"*Monsieur* Jake!" said Palan. "Here for inspection? We returned from LeHavre only last night, the hold is nearly empty. *Monsieur* Neville inspected the cargo before we left." His explanation seemed a trifle rushed and breathless. His eyes darted nervously from Jake to Madame Zollier.

"*Monsieur* Neville has been killed. I am here to inspect the barge empty or full."

Palan's face took on a sly look. There was no expression of surprise at all. He knew.

"I'm deeply sorry for your loss *Monsieur*."

"Thank you. You may wait here. I'll return shortly." Jake headed for the companionway. It made him uncomfortable to turn his back on the capitaine. Madame Zollier trailed after him, ignoring his request that she hang back. She negotiated the ladder with difficulty. It would have been dark below but for small oil lamps here and there on the wall. The hold was, indeed, nearly empty. The hatch, open to the sky, revealed a few barrels and crates stacked in one corner. The deck had been swept clean. Jake turned down a low, narrow corridor and looked into other small rooms. One was the captain's quarters, with a table, a narrow bed built into the wall and a small shelf above that filled with a few books on nautical subjects. Another door revealed a tiny galley, another the crew's quarters. The next room resembled the crew quarters but was empty of personal effects. It contained only two bunk beds, a chair and a table. No duffel bags, no newspapers or crude drawings of women.

"This door has a bolt on the outside," said Jake.

"That seems an unkind thing to do to poor passengers" said Madame Zollier dryly.

"Indeed!" Jake sighed and turned his back on the empty room. He had hoped to find something there. Jubilee herself, perhaps? No that would have been too foolish to hope. Some aristocratic women on their way to a life of degradation somewhere, women who could give him a clue that led him to a young girl barely out of childhood. A girl in danger. Finding the empty room felt like running into a blank wall. He moved on to the next room which was a water closet and the next

which was a pantry. That was it. He was ready go. Madame Zollier was nowhere to be seen.

“Madame?” he called.

“In here, *Monsieur*.” Her voice came from the empty room.

“What are you doing in there?” A couple of long strides took him to the still open door. Madame Zollier was on her knees with her head under one of the beds. Only her thin derriere and the bottoms of her worn shoes were visible. Bemused, Jake crossed his arms and leaned in the doorway.

“What are you doing?” he repeated.

“I think there’s something under here,” she said, her deep rumble muffled. “If I can just reach it.” More of her disappeared under the bed.

“Madame, perhaps we should go.”

“I have it!” She backed out from under the bed and then rolled over. “Ah! Dieu! I shouldn’t be on my knees for so long!” She sat on the floor and massaged her left knee. There was something in her fist. Jake crouched in front her.

“What have you got there?”

She held it out for him. It was about three inches of exquisitely delicate lace.



Potato-Nose led Gerome to a room dominated by a wide bed. Gerome’s heart pounded. He couldn’t believe how nervous he was. He had been with many lovely women, some of them prostitutes but none like this one. He was worried that somehow his eyes had deceived him and he had not seen the vision he thought he had. He laid his walking stick on a small table by the door and slipped off his jacket, draping it over a chair obviously looted from a very fine house and clumsily repaired. The room had once been a small parlour, he guessed. A cold fireplace graced one wall, the gilt mostly scraped off the filigree around the mantel piece. He paced, feeling like a schoolboy about to get his first kiss.

A soft knock on the door almost made him jump out of his skin. Before he could take a step toward it, the door opened and she entered. He had not had an imaginary vision. The dress she had chosen from the heap was rose silk which set off her dark beauty perfectly. It had been tailored for someone taller and fleshier, but she managed to transform it.

“You requested me, *Monsieur*?” she said softly.

His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth and he just gaped at her dumbly.

"*Monsieur?*" she cocked her head to one side and raised her eyebrows.

"Oh, yes!" he said. Then collected himself. "Yes, I did."

"Payment up front, of course," she said. Her voice was light and there was no trace of hardness about it.

"But, of course," he said and turned to get his wallet out of his jacket. He fumbled and the jacket fell to the floor. "Damn!" he muttered and bent to pick it up. Pain exploded in his shoulder. "*Merde!*"



The girl held his walking stick poised for a second strike. He grabbed her arm. She fought, amazingly strong for such a little thing. He wrestled with her and finally managed to get her in a bear hug with her arms pinned at her sides. She squirmed uselessly, while an astonishing stream of invective flowed from her mouth.

"Shut up!"

She ignored him. He repeated the command and shook her. Whether she obeyed or just gave up was impossible to say, but she stopped. He trembled and realized he was acutely disappointed.

"Now! Tell me why you tried to cave my head in. My wallet perhaps?"

"No! Let me go!" She tried again to shake him off, but he held her fast.

"Stop that! Why, then?"

"I wasn't trying to kill you or rob you, you must believe that." He did. He wouldn't admit it to her, but he did. Her hair smelled like sweat and summer and wild things. It made him dizzy and he wished he could hold her for another reason.

"Very well," he said. "Tell me the truth."

She was silent for a long moment.

"I'm not a whore," she said. "Or a thief . . . I'm just looking for a friend."

"A friend? He is not here."

"She."

"Your friend is a prostitute?"

"No, just a young girl. Please let me go."

"Will you sit and talk to me? Tell me about your friend?"

"Perhaps. Will you let me go?"

He didn't want to. He wanted to stand like this with his arms around her for a very long time. He opened his arms. She stepped away from him and turned to regard him with deep brown eyes. He felt himself sinking into those eyes. She glanced away and then launched herself at the door. He stepped in front of her and she collided with him.

"Stay. Please."

She studied him for a moment and seemed think over his request. Then she shrugged eloquently and plopped into the chair. His coat was still on the floor. He picked it up, laid it on the bed and then sat down beside it.

"Why did you hit me?"

The unfathomable dark eyes regarded him for a moment. "Because I did not wish to have sex with you."

"It's your profession. Am I so terrible?"

"It is not my profession. I am a lady's maid—was a lady's maid."

"I see. So you did not wish to have sex with me and you are not a prostitute."

"Yes."

"Then why are you here?"

She rolled her eyes impatiently. "I told you I'm looking for a friend. She's in trouble. I thought she might have been brought here." Gerome's ears pricked up at that. He decided to gamble.

"Oh, ho! What kind of trouble? Is she perhaps wanted for a murder?"

Marie instantly paled. "I cannot say. Please don't ask."

Gerome looked at her for a long moment. She had crossed her legs and her arms. Very closed off, self-contained. He pitied her and ached to hold her again.

"Very well. Are you in trouble?" The question obviously startled her.

"Why do you ask?"

"You are here under false pretenses. Your friend is in trouble and you are here to rescue her. The people who run this brothel might object both to her rescue and to the fact that you lied to them. Therefore you might be in trouble yourself. Am I wrong?"

"No, I suppose not." He knew he wasn't going to get more of an explanation out of her.

"Have you found your friend?"

"*Mais non*. They have come and gone and they brought the wrong woman. My friend is with them if she is still alive."

"I suppose you won't tell me who these people are?" She shook her head. "Very well, you have discovered what you needed to discover and we must get you out of here."

"I was about to leave when they told me I had a customer." She said it like it was all his fault. He chuckled softly.

"Then I must make amends," he said.



Jubilee closed her eyes and thought lovingly of the knife in her boot as Farruk kneaded her thigh. She didn't think she could ever use the knife again on a man except Larousse, not even on this filthy rat, but she longed to hold it at his throat and see his eyes grow wide with fear. They sat at a glossy mahogany table with the remains of a stuffed artichoke luncheon. Jubilee was in almost too much internal turmoil to eat, but her hunger overtook her. She was now ignoring the elegant but heavy *millfeuille* for desert. She was still wearing Jules' clothing, which seemed to please the Arab mightily.

A girl in voluminous and frothy pink silk sat at a piano at the other end of the room playing softly and singing in a small silvery voice. It was a hot summer after-



noon. High windows were thrown open to catch any breeze. Farruk and Fallieres had made inane conversation throughout the meal, while Farruk touched her casually here and there—patting her knee, brushing her hand, playing with a tendril of her hair. As ravenous as she was, it was difficult to eat with his constant insinuating attention. She knew she ought to be afraid. And perhaps somewhere down in the pit of her stomach the fear lurked behind anger and disgust, but her anger burned strong.

The servant in a pale blue satin waistcoat and powdered wig

brought coffee and took away the dishes. He shot her a disapproving glance when he saw the untouched *millfeuille*.

"Well, my dear Fallieres, how much are you going to rob me for this girl that we captured together?"

"She is very beautiful, Farruk." Fallieres leaned across the table and took her chin between thumb and forefinger. She jerked away from him. He laughed. The laugh did not warm the cold eyes that glittered in a fleshy, dissipated face. "500 gold louis," he said.

"You are a thief!" said Farruk with expansive good humor. "The child practically jumped into my arms." He leaned back and looked her up and down. "But I should pay you something since I need your help spiriting her out of the country. 200 louis."

They continued to haggle like a couple of housewives while Jubilee chewed on the phrase "... spiriting her out of the country." No! He would do no such thing! She looked at the windows. They presented an excellent view of the housetops of Paris. She thought briefly of the brothel. Why was she never held prisoner on the ground floor? She stood up. Her knees were weak but she could no longer sit still and she needed to get away from Farruk's perfumed hands.

"Where are you going?" Fallieres asked sharply.

"Nowhere," Jubilee snapped at him. "I can't sit anymore."

"If you are considering anything foolish I can raise my voice and have a dozen guards around you in two heartbeats."

She ignored him and walked over to the windows, looking down into the courtyard. Another servant in blue satin swept the already-clean cobblestones. She recognized the entry way she had seen when they came in. Someone had stabled the horses but the carriage was where they had left it. She turned her back on the windows and slowly paced the perimeter of the room. The walls were covered with paintings of fleshy Bourbons whom Jubilee assumed were Fallieres's ancestors. Above the fireplace a broad painting that went nearly to the ceiling depicted an elegant hunting party with dogs and horses and blushing young ladies admiring bewigged men shooting at birds. A cluster of realistically dead pheasants was prominent in the foreground. Jubilee shivered. It was the richest and most beautiful room she had ever seen and there were few rooms that she had ever wished to leave more.

"Three hundred louis, you ungrateful wretch," said Farruk without a trace of malice. "And I will never capture another girl for you again!"

“Three hundred fifty or I will sell her to the Moroccans.”

Jubilee paused to study a small bust of Marie Antoinette resting on a delicate white and gilt table—at least she assumed it was the queen. The queen was in prison. She remembered that from before—before these times. Jubilee realized her whole life was now divided between the world of light that existed before her parents had been killed and the world of darkness all about her now. Jubilee felt sorry for Queen Marie Antoinette. She too now lived in a world of darkness and the queen probably did not have a knife in her boot.

Beside the table and the bust on it were a set of tall curtains that seemed to cover a window or a doorway. She parted the curtains and then jumped back, vertigo almost overtaking her. She was high above the orchestra pit of a theatre. The curtains covered a doorway that led to an elegantly appointed balcony box.

“You can’t escape that way, *Cherie*,” said Farruk.

“Except perhaps in your imagination,” Fallieres added.

“Is it really a real theatre?” said Jubilee, incredulous.

“An opera house as you will discover this evening,” said Fallieres.

Jubilee didn’t answer him. She was thinking of the last time she had been to an opera. She’d sat between her father and Jake feeling so elegant and grown up. And happy.

“All right, you poor excuse for a highway robber. 350 but not a sou more, I swear!”

“Done!” said Fallieres, rapping the table with his knuckles. “*Laquais!*” he shouted. “Bring paper, pen and ink!”

Chapter 10

Jake sat at the dining room table. Before him was the freshly laundered fichu that had once belonged to Christiana, a lock of long brown hair and a small piece of lace. He picked up the lace. A few ordinary people went about in lace now that the sumptuary laws were abolished, but not many. Not many wanted to be reminded of their hated overlords and even fewer wished to be mistaken for them. Even those accustomed to wearing lace, seldom wore it openly these days. Many of the doomed women in the prison wore it, though, having been snatched from their homes by mobs or the Communards.

Jake replaced the bit of lace on the table and touched the lock of hair. It looked like Jubilee's hair, but . . . he let out a sigh. He'd been studying these things for quite a while hoping they would form a story, would speak to him in some way. They remained mute. He touched the fichu. It had certainly belonged to Christiana. Her death, Neville's death and that of Jules were all connected. And Jubilee? If she was alive, she was with a killer—or she, herself, was a killer. He thought of Jubilee as he had last seen her in the summerhouse—vibrant, beautiful, innocent—she could not be a murderer!

Jake looked up when Gerome came into the room. "What did you discover at the Hotel de Villiers?" he said without preamble

"Well!" said Gerome buoyantly. "I have brought something very beautiful and very interesting!"

"And what would that be?"

"She's waiting outside. I have the footman watching her in case she tries to slip away."

Jake's heart skipped a beat and he jumped to his feet. Before he could stride toward the door Gerome had gone out and brought in a pretty young woman—not Jubilee.

"This is Marie!" said Gerome grinning as if he had pulled a rabbit out of a hat. Jake recovered from his insane hope and bowed slightly.

"*Enchantée*, Mademoiselle. I am Jake Dawson. Please come sit in the salon." He gestured toward the open door.

"Jake? That is an odd name. I—" she stopped suddenly and took an involuntary step back. Then her face became impassive and she went quietly through the door indicated.

The salon was cool and dim. Madame Zollier sat in one of the overstuffed chairs. She had pulled a low tea table in front of her and covered it with cards. She studied them deeply, not looking up as they walked in.

"*Mon Dieu!*" Marie exploded. "Madame! Is that you?" La Zollier stood and stepped around the little table.

"Marie!" She was nearly bowled over by the younger woman who threw her arms around her and then burst into tears weeping like a small child.



"What shall we do with your clothes?" said Juliet, walking around them like they were a pile of horse manure on the floor beside the bathtub. A couple of quiet serving women were cleaning up.

"Burn them," said Jubilee who was sitting at the dressing table pulling on a blue silk stocking. At Juliet's nod the serving women swept up Jules' clothes and took them away. Jubilee felt a bit more human. She had been allowed to bathe and provided proper clothing to wear. Jubilee had found out that Juliet, the girl who sang so beautifully, was Fallieres' mistress. She had been given charge of Jubilee and told to make her ready. Ready for what, Jubilee could only speculate darkly. Keeping the dagger hidden had been a trick, but she'd managed it by pretending she was too shy to undress in front of the servants.

Jubilee tied the garter in place and pushed her skirt down over the prettiest and richest stockings she had ever worn. Then she turned to consider her hair in the mirror.

"Where did you get the bruise?" Juliet asked.

"Fallieres," said Jubilee, leaning forward to study the dark patch on her chin. Juliet sat beside her at the dressing table. She passed a small pot.

"He strikes me also from time to time. He enjoys inflicting pain. Put some of this on your face, it will hide it." A thrill of fear caught at Jubilee's throat. She'd almost forgotten the danger she was in. She took the pot from Juliet and started at it for a moment before she realized what it was.

"Face paint?"

"*Mais, oui!*" said Juliet. "Have you never worn it?"

"*Mais non.* I was not allowed. My mother said only a *coquin* would wear . . ." Jubilee realized her mistake an instant too late. Juliet's face crumbled. A lace handkerchief appeared from nowhere and she held it to her face and sobbed. "Oh, I'm so very sorry . . . I didn't mean that you . . ." Jubilee decided the best thing to do was shut up and just comfort the poor woman. She held Juliet's free hand and patted her shoulder. Jubilee realized that this was the second time in one day she had comforted a weeping aristocrat. Somehow it seemed a very incongruous thing for an American to do. After a while Juliet's storm of weeping subsided.

"I do not wish to be here!" she said. "My father was ruined by Fallieres . . . I was taken in payment of debts." She looked up, her face streaked. "It was my fault. Fallieres heard me sing . . . he . . . he did it all deliberately . . . to get me. My poor Papa . . ."

"He did this just to hear you sing?" Jubilee found it a trifle hard to swallow.

"Yes! He is devoted to the opera. He has even talked of forcing me to go on the stage."

"Would that be so bad?" Jubilee dabbed some of the paint on her chin and then a bit on her cheeks. She rather liked the effect. She put a little more on her forehead and then began brushing her hair.

"To be forced to go out on the stage like a strumpet to be gawked at by strangers? It would be unbearable!"

Jubilee gave her a sideways glance. "Yes. I see, of course!"

"It's a pity about your hair," said Juliet. "Perhaps Clotilde can do something with it."

Jubilee hadn't given any thought to her hair for quite some time. It hadn't been combed or brushed since the last day of her other life. Now it was tangled and still wet from the bath. Juliet called Clotilde who began to work on the matted mess.

Jubilee watched Clotilde work. She had not seen herself in a mirror since before . . . everything had happened. Her parents were dead, she had been robbed of

her virginity, she had killed a man, had sworn to kill another and had nearly been killed herself. Now she had been sold into slavery. All in less than a week. Less than a week ago in the midst of a tantrum she'd insisted that she was no longer a child. Now a woman with hard eyes gazed back out of the mirror. A knife hung from one of Juliet's scarves tied around her waist under her skirt. She would have to be very clever and very lucky if that blade was ever to find its home in Larousse's heart. Jubilee regarded the hard eyes in the mirror and swore to the child she once had been that Larousse would die.



"She's out there somewhere." Larousse stood at a window contemplating the night. A horseman had come by a while ago, stood expertly in the saddle and lit the streetlamp. Its soft flickering light lit the shadowy world of the night. A housewife hurried by, her basket over her arm. She passed a street vendor, pushing his closed up cart down the cobbled lane. Larousse didn't really see them. He merely stared and thought about Jubilee dying in his arms, her life's blood flowing out over his hands and her dying eyes staring up into his. He had thought about killing her in many ways. This image warmed him tonight. "Somewhere . . . and I'll find her," he said. He spoke to a small portrait he had had painted of Jules last Christmas. He spoke to it often now. It comforted him as much as imagining the different ways Jubilee could die.

He poured himself a glass of wine from one of many bottles he had drained this night. He found himself unable to get drunk no matter how much he drank nor could he find relief in sleep. Whenever he blinked he saw his son's mutilated body before his eyes. Nothing burned the sight away except for imagining all the hundreds of ways one could kill a woman. "She's somewhere . . ." he said raising his glass to the portrait. "And I promise you, I'll find her!"



"Madame, these are dangerous people. Are you a prisoner?" Marie whispered it in La Zollier's ear while she embraced her.

"No, indeed! We are not in danger!"

"Please sit down," said Jake. "Everyone sit down." Gerome, still looking quite pleased with himself, took a chair near Marie who sat next to La Zollier on the settee. Jake took a seat opposite them and looked from Marie to La Zollier.

"The two of you know each other?" Marie looked sideways at La Zollier. The old woman looked thinner but in good health and good spirits. She drew a tentative reassurance from it.

"La, *mais oui!*" said La Zollier as she put her arm around Marie. "When she was a little girl she tried to steal my broom!" She laughed hugely. Marie warmed at the memory and could not resist a smile. Jake smiled also. It lightened the darkness that seemed to lurk in his eyes.

"She forgave me," said Marie. "And has been my friend ever since." Marie studied Jake's face trying to discern what kind of man he was. He was handsome as Jubilee had said, but far too thin and tall to suit Marie's tastes.

"Now, Gerome, tell me where you found Marie and why you brought her here."

"I found her at the brothel," Gerome replied. Marie felt herself blush a little. Why was she embarrassed? She had never sold herself but she had done many illegal things in her life of which she was not the least ashamed. "She was merely visiting—looking for a friend," Gerome continued. She glanced at him. It was kind of Gerome to add that. "She had run into a difficulty which I prefer not to discuss and I offered my services as an escort." Marie almost laughed. He had distracted the guards while she slipped out and into his carriage.

"Now as to the reason I brought her here . . ." Gerome hesitated and glanced at Marie. "I believe the friend she was looking for is Jubilee."

"No!" Marie exploded, jumping to her feet. "How dare you! I know nothing about her!" She ran for the door but Jake stepped in front of her.

"You are not going anywhere," he said quietly. "Tell me where she is."

"I do not know who you are talking about! Let me go! Americain bastard!" She tried to dart around him but he grabbed her shoulder. She could feel his rage and the strong control he had on it.

"Don't know who I'm talking about? Do you realize how silly that sounds? You went insane at the mention of her name. You must tell us what you know about her." His grip on her was tight. She knew she couldn't break free of it. She also realized how stupid her reaction had been. Her panic had given everything away. She was going to have to think her way out of this. She looked up into Jake's eyes and mustered all her sincerity.

"We met a few days ago on the street. She was begging for coins. She didn't tell me she was in trouble. We—we played cards for a little while and had a bottle of wine. She won a little money from me." She tried to avoid La Zollier's gaze. That clear blue eye saw everything and she didn't know how deeply involved her friend was with these men. "We were supposed to meet by the brothel gate to play cards again and perhaps do some begging of the customers. She didn't show up." Marie tried to pull away from Jake. He still gripped her shoulder and it hurt.

"Do you . . ." Jake began.

"Perhaps . . ." said La Zollier at Marie's side. Marie jumped a little. She hadn't heard the old woman move. "Perhaps I should ask the questions." She rested her gnarled fingers on Jake's hand and he released Marie's shoulder.

"Do you believe that pile of horse manure she just shoveled at us?" Jake spoke to La Zollier incredulously.

"*Mais non*, I do not. Come Marie, please sit down." Marie allowed herself to be led like a child. She felt at sea and wished she knew what was going on. She settled back down on the settee beside La Zollier. "You must listen to me, Marie. These are not bad men, they will not hurt you. They have good hearts. I have seen into them." Marie regarded her old friend for a moment and remembered La Zollier was the wisest woman she had ever known. "Do you believe me?" Marie glanced briefly at the two men and then back to La Zollier. She nodded. She had trusted La Zollier many times in her life and had not been let down. Now she would have to trust the old woman again. "You were employed at the Tuileries. When it fell you escaped. I saw that in the cards. To whom did you go to for help—Gaston?"

"Yes, Gaston. What a pig! He sold me to the brothel." She nodded to Gerome. "The very one in which you found me. They behaved very oddly toward me there or so it seemed until I discovered they thought I was an aristocrat. Later I learned there were, indeed, highborn women held there. One girl was brought in about the same time I was. I listened to her weeping until I couldn't bear it any longer and decided to try to cheer her up. She was also not an aristo. She was American."

Jake who was still standing, gasped and took a step toward her. Only one step, though, and then stopped. He stood clenching and unclenching his hands. "Please go on," he said.

"Her parents had been killed and she had been kidnapped." She told this part directly to Jake "She was very young. I felt sorry for her. . . . The next night she was to have her first customer. There was nothing I could do except promise her that we would try to escape the following morning." Marie tore her gaze from Jake

and studied the carpet at her feet. She didn't want to say what happened next. Her instincts told her that such dangerous secrets should not be revealed to anyone. She sensed Jake's rage was not aimed at Jubilee. But according to Jubilee he had such close ties to Larousse . . .

"Please go on, *Cherie*," said La Zollier. "What happened next?"

The warm mismatched eyes of her oldest and best friend steadied her. She took the old woman's hand, turned back to Jake and lifted her chin. "She was raped by her customer and she killed him with a dagger. She told me the boy's name, but I don't remember it. I do remember the father's name, she talks of almost nothing else. Larousse." Jake and Gerome exchanged glances.

"Larousse," Jake echoed.

"She believed that Larousse and perhaps her father's other business partner—you—were responsible for the death of her parents."

Jake paced back and forth like an animal trapped in a tiny cage. His jaw set. "Her parents were my dearest friends. I would never have harmed them." He said it distractedly, to the air rather than to anyone in particular. "She killed Jules!" said Jake, still to the open air. "I had hoped it was you who'd killed him—yes, we knew there was a friend. But my heart told me it was she who had done it and I suspected why. Did you give her the dagger?"

"No. I didn't know about it until afterward. She must have had it with her all along."

Jake abruptly stopped pacing. His gaze wasn't hard or threatening. Marie thought he looked inwardly more than at her. "Was it about this long with amethysts set in the handle?"

"It was about that big but I didn't see the handle. It was covered . . . well I couldn't see it. I think there were jewels in the handle though."

"Her mother's dagger! Bless Christiana! What a woman she was." He glanced at Gerome. "That explains the fichu I found."

"It does?"

"Yes, she had coiled it up like a belt to hold the scabbard around Jubilee's waist. It must have been her last act before she was killed." His voice broke at this last. He turned his back and stalked over to the cold fireplace. He leaned his forehead against the mantelpiece for a moment. Marie's heart went out to him. She could see why Jubilee liked him. He was rough, almost crude, but his strength was laced with an innate tenderness.

"Where is she now?" said Gerome.

Marie sighed, bringing herself back to the moment. "Fallieres has her. I thought he would take her back to the brothel but he didn't. That means soon Larousse will have her."

"My God!" Jake exclaimed. "Larousse is nearly insane with grief for his disgusting little rapist. He has sworn to kill both of the women involved in the death of his son. Both you and Jubilee!"



"For what am I being made ready?" said Jubilee. She sat on a low stool playing with the fan Juliet had given her, practicing opening it and snapping shut with one hand. She had owned many fans in her life—none made of fragile handmade lace like this one—and had lost every single one of them. Finally, her mother had sworn she'd not have another one until she was older.

"What do you mean?" said Juliet. She was carefully painting her eyelids a delicate blue.

"Fallieres said that you were to take me and get me ready. Get me ready for what?"

"Well, for one thing, the opera."

"There will be an opera tonight? I saw the balcony room and the theatre downstairs."

"Oh, my, yes," said Juliet. She put the brush down and leaned back to admire her handiwork. Jubilee thought she looked very beautiful in an artificial sort of way. "There is an opera every night except on Sunday and there is a matinee on Saturday. It changes every month. This month it is 'The Three Jolly Archers.' The girl's part is very beautiful." She said the last quite wistfully and Jubilee wondered if Juliet would mind the stage as badly as she let on.

"What is the other thing?"

"What?" Juliet was applying a small black patch to her upper lip.

"What other thing am I being gotten ready for. You said 'for one thing.'"

Juliet cocked one eye incredulously. "Farruk bought you this afternoon. You are his. He obviously likes you in boys clothing but he can't take you to the opera in that get-up."

Jubilee dropped the fan. She watched it tumble out of her fingers and onto the carpet. She had heard the sale take place. She didn't realize he had bought her for himself. She thought she had time—time to concoct an escape. Damn Marie!

Damn Marie for vanishing into thin air and leaving her with these people! Jubilee did not know how to vanish into thin air. She leaned down and retrieved the fan. The dagger under her skirt lay heavy against her thigh. Its touch reassured her. She would find a way out of this!

The door opened and Clotilde entered. "Ladies, the gentlemen await you," she said. Jubilee jumped to her feet feeling a sudden urge to flee.

"How pale you look, Jubilee! You should have put on more rouge. Come now!"

Jubilee followed her out to the salon. Fallieres and Farruk waited by the curtains that cloaked the balcony. Each wore stiffly embroidered waistcoats and satin breeches. Even in formal dress Farruk looked like an Oriental despot. He smiled and bowed as he offered his arm to Jubilee. He smelled of orange blossoms.



Small knife in hand, Lazar had been paring his toenails on the veranda behind the kitchen when he heard the carriage pull up outside. Gerome entered with a girl. When he heard Gerome call her Marie he pricked up his ears and put away his knife. His master was insane to find two women—one of them was named Marie. Lazar hated being in the employ of the American, always having to smile, always having to be polite—it chafed at him. If Master Larousse found what he was looking for, perhaps Lazar could stick a knife in the American and go home. So he followed Gerome and the girl into the house. He cursed silently when he saw them go into the parlor. It was much more difficult to listen from the dining room than it would be from the kitchen, but it didn't really matter. If Cook saw him listening, she would never tell. Women her age were easily frightened and he had taken special care to make sure she was terrified of him. He smiled to himself. One never knew when it would come in handy.

When he tiptoed to the parlor door he realized he'd had a lucky break. The door was not entirely closed. "... told me the boy's name, but I don't remember it. I do remember the father's name, she talks of almost nothing else. Larousse..." Lazar smiled and nearly hugged himself with de-



light. He listened, grinning, as the girl told her tale. "Where is she now?" he heard Gerome say. "Fallieres has her. . ." He almost laughed out loud! An embarrassment of riches! He crept noiselessly from the room and then ran out through the kitchen. He walked to Larousse's villa chuckling and singing all the way.



"Did Fallieres' aunt have a villa in Paris?" Jake continued to pace, unable to sit for more than a few seconds at a time. His hair was wild from combing it with his fingers over and over. The cook had served dinner hours ago and Marie had continued to tell her story while Jake stopped her and asked for more and more fine detail. La Zollier had resumed studying her cards. Gerome sat quietly, not saying much, unable to take his eyes off Marie. He seemed quite bemused.

"Yes," said Marie. "But she abandoned it months ago to live at the Tuileries. I worked for his aunt there. She thought she would be safer at the palace and so did Fallieres." Marie shrugged eloquently. "And so did the king."

Jake paused mid-stride. "My God! You were at court? You hadn't mentioned that!"

Marie grinned. "Not exactly. My blood was insufficiently blue to actually appear at court even briefly. I was keeper of perfumes for La Comtesse De Passy." Jake resumed his pacing and Marie thought about those days. When most of the lesser nobility who usually served as maids and footmen had gone to the guillotine or fled the country, many nobles were forced to hire commoners to serve them. Marie had bribed her way to a good recommendation with almost disastrous results. Those days in the palace should have been lucrative and dull. Instead they had been terrifying and she had lost everything.

It made no difference now. She crossed her legs and leaned forward on the settee. She suddenly realized she was still wearing Rat-face's shoes.

"I thought Fallieres was dead," she said. "I saw him disappear in the mob. They got La Passy. I escaped later that night."

Jake stopped his pacing again and glared at Marie. "You are very good at escaping. How did you escape from Fallieres without Jubilee?"

Marie returned his hot gaze without flinching. "I was taken out first to the coach. Fallieres' coachman owed me money. He loved to take stupid risks with the cards. I told him his debts were utterly forgiven if he let me go. He told me that Fallieres would kill him if he did and I told him that would not be the case if he left

Fallieres service. He hadn't thought of that. His family had worked for Fallieres for many generations. Once he had thought about it a little while he really liked the idea. We left together." Marie sighed. "I thought about going back for Jubilee but Etienne—the coachman—didn't have a weapon and I knew I would be useless to her if I were recaptured. So I stole some clothes and made my way back to the Hotel du Villiers. I was quite surprised they didn't take her there."

Jake nodded briefly. He seemed satisfied with her explanation.

"Fallieres has been hiding himself somewhere—but where?" Jake shook his head. "That's a foolish question. He could be anywhere!"

La Zollier looked up from her cards. "He is in a large house," she said. "Full of music and frivolity."

Jake looked at the old woman and smiled indulgently. "I'm sorry, Madame. But no aristocrat would live so openly and lavishly these days."

"No wait!" said Marie. "Fallieres was insane for the opera. He owned an opera house. I went there a time or two with La Passy when her maid was ill. He could be hiding there."

"Do you remember where it is?" Jake stood in front of her, towering over her.

"But of course."

Jake glanced at the clock on the mantel piece. It had chimed 1 o'clock in the morning twenty minutes ago. "It's late, we should all get some rest. Tomorrow we have a lot of work to do. Tomorrow night we visit the opera!"



Jubilee had no memory of the opera she had just seen. She remembered only the scent of orange blossoms and the Arab's hand on her knee no matter how many times she pushed it away. There had been supper afterwards and now she was queasy from chicken in béchamel sauce—far too heavy considering how little she'd eaten the last few days. Juliet sat at the piano playing and singing softly and Fallieres and the Arab were noisily and boisterously playing cards. She wandered around the room casually—she hoped she looked casual—searching for weaknesses in Fallieres' elegant prison. There had to be some way to escape! She strolled to the balcony and looked down into the dark theatre. The smell of the oil lamps still lingered in the air. Too far to jump and no stairway down that she could see. Every doorway had a guard bearing a musket. There were more guards downstairs—she had seen them yesterday. She slowly crossed to the windows. She couldn't see down to the court-

yard at this time of night, but it was also too far to jump. She couldn't remember if there was a ledge under the window and it was too dark to see now.

"Jubilee!" called the Arab. "Come sit with us. Bring me luck, I need it!" Fallieres laughed.

Jubilee reluctantly came to the table and drew up a small chair. Farruk immediately put his hand on her knee and she pushed it away. The Arab and Fallieres exchanged glances and grinned. Jubilee's stomach rumbled around the greasy chicken. They returned to their cards and Jubilee watched for a while.

They were playing a variation of One

Eyed Mouse. She smiled to herself when she realized it and quietly watched them play a couple of hands.

"May I join in?" she asked. They both turned to look at her. Fallieres with one eyebrow smugly raised and Farruk with a grin.

"This is a gambling game," said Fallieres. "What have you to wager?"

"Nothing," said Jubilee. "Everything I have on is Juliet's." Almost everything she amended to herself. The Arab pulled a heavy emerald from his left forefinger and tossed it to her.

"Now you do," he said. "Deal the cards, Fallieres."

She won that hand and then had two gold louis in front of her in addition to the emerald. She won the next hand and the next, lost the fourth hand and won the fifth. An hour passed and the pile of gold in front of her grew. The Arab took it with great good humor but Fallieres grew more and more sour. Finally, when she had won an especially large sum Fallieres tossed down his cards.

"Petite chipie!" he said. "You will rob me of no more!" He leaned back in his chair and called for a fresh bottle of wine.

Farruk gathered up the cards chuckling. "You have quite a treasure there, *Cherie*," he said. "What are you going to do with all that wealth?"



An idea had been growing in Jubilee for quite a while. It was beyond hope that it would work but it must be tried. "I want to play one more hand," she said. "I wish to wager all of this against my freedom."

A footman entered bearing a tray with a bottle and glasses. "You impudent little bitch," said Fallieres without passion. He accepted a glass of wine. "You won't do it, will you Farruk?"

The Arab's seemed to be enjoying himself. His dark eyes sparkled. "Are you sure?" he said to her. "I bought you for myself, *Cherie*. Consider what you are throwing away. I would make you a queen someday."

Jubilee straightened her back. "I am an American," she said. "We don't have kings and queens." She faced Fallieres. "Or aristocrats of any kind!" Fallieres set his wine glass down hard. Jubilee was surprised it didn't break. He pulled his arm back to strike her but Farruk caught him by the sleeve.

"Not again, Fallieres! She belongs to me now!" Fallieres pulled his arm away with a jerk but picked up his glass of wine and looked away "They are only the opinions of a woman," said Farruk. "They mean nothing. I'll not have you damaging such beauty." His humor seemed to have dried up for the moment. "America will have a king again," he said to Jubilee. "Eventually France or England or Spain will gobble up the colonies. They are far too valuable to be governed by rabble." His comments stung, but she kept silent. She'd heard her father worry about the very same thing—when he thought she couldn't hear. Farruk poured two more glasses of wine and shoved one toward her. Jubilee noticed that Juliet had stopped singing and was watching everything intently.

"Now," he said. "You and I have a bit of gambling to do." He shuffled the cards smoothly. "If I win you will remain at my side and become my third wife. You will live in a palace with hundreds of servants. Someday you will bear the title of queen. If you win I will throw you out into the street barefoot, wearing only a shift. Are you agreed to these terms?"

Jubilee looked him straight in the eyes. "Agreed," she said.

"Farruk, you don't have to marry the wench. For heaven's sake, she can't possibly be of good family," said Fallieres. The Arab flashed Fallieres a grin.

"I love a good gamble!" he said. He continued to talk as he dealt the cards. "My first two wives are of very good family and have between them produced five sons. This little one will never be required to produce an heir. My father arranged both of my marriages and though both of them came bearing enormous political

advantages for my country, neither are even remotely as lovely as this wildflower.” He gathered up his freshly dealt cards. “You see Fallieres, I have nothing to lose!”

Jubilee arranged her cards. They were very good ones. She focused on them and pushed away the idea of being married to this man. She glanced at the glass of ruby wine that sat untouched beside her. Her hands trembled a bit but she studied the cards in front of her and the discards on the table. The wine remained untouched. She discarded, she drew from the deck. Carefully, carefully every bright pasteboard thoughtfully studied. She drew the one-eyed mouse—the jack of spades—which was wild. Her heart leapt in her breast. She schooled herself against a thrill of wild hope. She put it in the missing king’s position between the Ace and the Queen of Hearts. Farruk played quickly and almost distractedly. After a few minutes he began chatting about racehorses to Fallieres as if the play bored him. It annoyed her that he could be so casual. She began to get more and more angry. She had calmed herself but now her hands were shaking again.

Finally Farruk drew a card, looked it and said “ah!” He put it in position in his hand and then tossed the cards down face up. “The house is full,” he said. “I’m out!”

“No!” The word tore itself out of her mouth. She threw her own cards down and taking the edge of the table, heaved it over on its side and jumped to her feet. She raced for the door. Someone screamed, probably Juliet. Jubilee grabbed for the doorknob and was astonished that it was not locked. Just as she pulled on it she felt arms around her. She fought with her entire body and every ounce of her energy. She screamed “No! No! No!” He turned her around. The Arab held her pinned to him. Her stomach heaved. He grabbed her by the hair and pushed her mouth against his mouth, wet and hot, as she continued to fight him with strength she hadn’t known she had.

Suddenly he pushed her out at arm’s length. “What is this!” he snarled. He was holding her dagger through her skirt. He pushed her down onto the carpet and put his knee in her belly knocking the wind out of her. He dug through the voluminous skirts and petticoats until he exposed the dagger. She felt him loosen the scarf and pull it away from her waist. Then he took her by the hand and jerked her to her feet.

“Fallieres!” said Farruk. “Look what I have found!” He held Christiana’s dagger high in the air.

Chapter 11

Tell me where you were born,” said Gerome. Marie sat on the veranda overlooking the garden enveloped in Gerome’s dressing gown, taking in the seams the pink silk dress she had worn out of the brothel. Gerome was making a pest of himself while she made her only dress suitable for the opera tonight.

“I do not know where I was born,” said Marie. “But, of course, it was somewhere in Paris.” She pulled the shining fine thread through the silk and didn’t look up at him. She wished she had a better life to tell him about, perhaps a life with loving parents, nice clothes to wear and enough to eat. She con-



sidered lying—what difference did it make? She didn't want lie to him, though. It did make a difference.

"Who are your parents? Are they still alive?"

She regarded at him levelly. "I do not know who they were. My father was probably a man who had a half a franc to spend. My mother would have drunk the money. I don't remember her very well except she always smelled of cheap red wine." She looked out across the garden. The butterflies fluttered among the dilapidated rose bushes. Jake wasn't much of a gardener. Nevertheless it was lovely.

"La Zollier is my mother," she said thoughtfully. "She deserves the title." She glanced at him. "Now stop asking me questions." She focused on her needle and thread for a while and Gerome left her in peace. She could hear him fidgeting in his chair. She could almost feel his eyes on her. She glanced sidelong at him. He had taken off his spectacles and was cleaning them with a large white handkerchief. She finally relented. His apparently genuine interest in her life was at once irritating and somehow charming.

"My mother disappeared when I was very young. I survived by petty thievery and by playing cards for a few coins. La Zollier found me. She fed me and gave me a place to sleep and some decent clothes. When I was a little older she taught me to read and write. Everything good that I am came from her." She paused for a moment remembering the sunlight slanting through the heavy curtains illuminating the dusty herbs in La Zollier's house.

"What are you thinking about?" Gerome asked.

"Nothing! I've told you enough. Will you cease plaguing me?"

"You had the most beautiful expression on your face just then."

She glanced up at him. His round face was as clear and simple, there were smiling sparkles in the depths of his eyes. She had never seen such a kind face before—well, almost never.

"Why do you want to know these things?" she asked, but more gently.

He put his hand over hers, still full of pink silk. "Because I want to know everything about you," he said. "Everything."



Lazar did not get the welcome he had expected. Larousse's thin and haughty footman told him the master was sleeping and Lazar was to wait here by the door. Larousse's anteroom looked like a king's parlor to Lazar. A frail bench with gold leaf

on the legs sat along one wall. Lazar perched there, settling down for a long wait. Lazar had been in every room in Larousse's house at one time or another and it all looked like a palace to him. Lazar loved the feel of the marble floor under his bare feet; cool, it felt like wealth itself. After a while he leaned back against the wall and hummed a sea chantey softly to himself. He himself had never been to sea, but his father had. His only legacy from the old man was an enormous store of whaling songs.

Finally the footman returned. He glanced at Lazar's bare feet and twitched his nose like they smelled bad. "The master will see you now," he said and turned on his heel. Lazar followed thinking how much he'd like to stick a knife into this bastard's bony backside. That'd make him jump lively, Lazar thought to himself. He suppressed a chuckle.

Lazar was surprised that he was led to the library rather than the salon. Then he was astonished at the state of the room. Chaos reigned there. Books were tossed everywhere, there were bed linens on the couch and empty wine bottles laying all about. Evidence of many spent candles spattered every table top. The white marble ledge above the fireplace had been cleared of all the fine vases and figurines that had once stood on it—forcefully cleared, their shattered remains were still on the floor—and a small portrait of Jules Larousse had been placed there, flanked by two tiers of burning candles. It seemed very much like an altar and struck Lazar as faintly sacrilegious.

Larousse sprawled in a chair opposite the cold fireplace, a glass in one hand and a wine bottle in the other. He started raptly at the portrait on the mantelpiece. More shocking to Lazar than the state of the room was the appearance of his master. Larousse, always perfectly and stylishly turned out, was haggard and disheveled. He wore no wig and his hair hung in ragged strings around his face. His rumpled shirt looked as if he had slept in it and it was spattered with red wine.

"What are you doing here?" said Larousse, not taking his eyes off the portrait of his son. "You are supposed to be watching the American."



Lazar felt as if he were intruding. "I have brought news that you must hear," he said. He wanted to sit but knew he did not dare.

"I know where the girl is," he said. Lazar knew there was no need to explain which girl. At first there was no reaction and then the hand that held the glass began to tremble. Slowly, slowly Larousse turned to face him. The look in those eyes made Lazar's throat go dry.

"Fallieres has her, though he probably doesn't know who she is." His own voice sounded rough in his ears. He now had Larousse's full attention and he wished otherwise even though he knew Larousse's anger was not turned to him.

"How do you know for sure?" Larousse's words were clear and clipped, his bloodshot eyes steady.

"Dawson has her friend. I overheard everything. Also they know about the traffic in women."

"That is of no importance," said Larousse. "Fallieres will give the girl to me!" He poured some wine into the glass and raised it to the portrait. "Do you hear, Jules! The murderess is found!" He drained the glass. "She will be rotting in hell tonight!"



Mother's knife was gone! Jubilee's throat was raw and her eyes burned. She had spent most of the night crying and much of the morning. She wanted to drown in tears and weeping, in fear and despair. She could not survive without that knife. She needed it. She needed it! All these black days she had held it close, still warm with her mother's touch. Now it was gone and the world was filled with empty cold death and she had no weapon with which to fight back. She had nothing at all. Fresh tears trickled down her already damp face. She had to stop crying. Her head hurt terribly and this would only make it worse. She got up from the bed and stumbled over to the washstand. A heavy blue and white porcelain pitcher filled with water stood beside a matching basin. She poured out some water into the basin and washed her face and neck. She brushed her hair. She liked her hair short, she thought thickly, it was so much easier to get it untangled. She plaited it into a simple braid and tied it with a crumpled pink ribbon. She massaged her face and looked around for a handkerchief. Juliet had given her several dresses, making sure that Jubilee knew they were last year's fashions. As she pulled on one of those dresses Jubilee realized she was feeling a little better.



The room was very warm. The windows were open but covered with dark velvet. She pushed one of the heavy drapes back and stood there for a moment. A faint hint of warm breeze brushed her face. The courtyard was below, the same one that could be seen

from the salon. There was no ledge, nothing but a sheer drop to the cobblestones below. There had to be a way out of here, some avenue of escape!

Juliet had whispered to her last night that she had overheard Fallieres talking to the Arab. Farruk would claim his property in the morning. Jubilee would be taken aboard his cutter and whisked away to the ocean-going ship docked at Le Havre. Juliet seemed excited as she talked about it. What a wonderful adventure this would be for Jubilee! All the while Jubilee listened to Juliet's excited conspiratorial babble, her stomach was coiling into knots. She would never be a slave, she told herself. Never.

Jubilee rested her aching forehead against the window frame. If Marie were here she'd think of something clever. But Marie was not here and Jubilee would have to think of something clever for herself. She looked down at Juliet's lovely afternoon dress. It was a little tight in the shoulders but the stiff stomacher was covered with tiny white satin flowers and though it was shockingly low cut, a frothy chemise flattered her bosom, making her breasts seem a bit more than they were. It bothered Jubilee not in the least that it was last year's fashion. She thought about how her mother had always seemed driven to teach her good manners and womanly deportment. Jubilee had been brought up to be very polite and well behaved. Killing Jules had been the very first wild and wicked thing she had ever done. She didn't regret it. But now she was in these clothes and remembering those many lessons and remembering that she was Jubilee and what that meant. Courteous, polite, and well-behaved—Marie was none of those things. Jubilee realized that she liked being those things and that she longed to be in a safe world where she could be herself again. Today, though, she needed to be more like Marie.

She contemplated the door. It led to Juliet's bedroom. She knew there was no guard in the hallway. She had been told to stay in her room until called for and was expected to comply. She went to the door and opened it. Juliet's room was dim and cool. She still slept and probably would until early evening. Fallieres only required her presence at night and Juliet was also very well brought up and very well behaved. Jubilee walked quietly past the foot of the bed and out the door to the corridor.

The corridor was empty. She knew that Fallieres had gone out. She remembered hearing his voice down in the courtyard an hour or two ago. The corridor ended in a flight of stairs down to the anteroom. There would be guards there. Jubilee stood at the top of the stairs looking down. She could not slip past those guards. What was she doing? She stood there for a while waver- ing on the point of inde- cision. Then a thought oc- curred to her. Today she was not a nice girl. Today she was more like Marie. She straightened her back and descended the stairs as if this entire house and everything in it belonged to her.



Guards flanked the door as she knew they would. They were a little startled to see her and each threw a quick glance at the other.

"I'm hungry," said Jubilee. "Ask the cook to bring sandwiches and coffee into the salon." She turned her back on them and swept through the anteroom into the salon as if certain they would do as she told them. She was not at all certain they would obey her, but knew they were accustomed to following orders.

The morning newspapers were still on the card table, gathered and neatened by some servant. She picked up a copy of *Revolutionaire de Paris*, sat on the divan and pretended to read. Her hands shook a little. She couldn't focus on the print at first, but she knew she should be in this pose when the food arrived. She had not seen a newspaper since the last one she had pinched from her father's study. The Austrians were marching on the French frontier. There were bloody clashes in the streets of Paris nearly every day. An editorial warned that the Republic was in grave danger.

When the sandwiches arrived she laid the paper aside. No matter how grim the news, it was none of her affair at the moment. She wasn't really hungry, but needed an excuse to be in this room. Clotilde brought the tray. Jubilee was too preoccupied last night to notice how thin and unwell the woman looked. Now, Jubilee watched her as she efficiently and quietly laid out the luncheon things.

"Will there be anything else?" she said. Jubilee was surprised at her elegant diction.

"No, thank you, you may go." The woman curtsied and left. Jubilee wondered who she was. Fallieres and Juliet treated all servants like furniture. She quickly took a couple of bites of the cold roast beef and bread and stirred the rest of it around on the plate to make it look more eaten. Then she methodically began to search the room. There were three doors that she didn't dare open last night. Now she opened each of them one by one. The first door led down a small hallway to a watercloset. The second to a library, the third to a flight of stairs descending to the first floor. Hope flared up in Jubilee's breast. She crept quietly down the steps taking each one slowly. A babble of voices grew louder as she descended. Her hopes dwindled. Rough men were joking and laughing with one another. As she neared the bottom step she could hear them clearly. Fortunately the stairs did not face the room squarely but turned sharply after the last step. She edged around the corner until she could see the room. She counted six guards. There may have been more, but it didn't matter. She backed quietly up a few steps and then turned, lifted her skirt and ran as noiselessly as she could up to the salon.

She sat at the card table and caught her breath. The coffee was nearly cold but she sipped it while she thought glumly about her situation. She would not allow herself to be owned like a slave. She would not be that man's wife! His third wife! The very idea of being a third wife was disgusting and indecent.

She set down the coffee cup and walked through the curtain to the theatre box. The stage below was empty and dim. Tattered and forlorn without music and lights, it waited silent and still for the actors to bring it to life again. If she leaned over the velvet-padded railing she could just see the doors to the lobby. There were no guards there, but it would probably be locked at this time of day. She sighed. For Marie a locked door would not be a problem. She wished there had been time for Marie to teach her the trick with the hairpin.

She glanced back into the salon. Still empty. She had no idea how much longer she'd be free to explore like this. Best to make the most of it. She looked around at the box. The walls were lined with heavy maroon velvet drapes. They probably

concealed nothing but it was worth checking. Beginning at the right she pulled the curtains back one by one. Wall, wall, nothing but wall—door! She smiled at the door like she'd been given a gift. She turned the knob. Locked! One of those words that had once been exclusively her father's leaped to her lips. She didn't say it—it was still his word—but now she really missed Marie. She stalked out into the salon. She went over to the ruined sandwiches. The bread was beginning to get a bit dry around the edges. White bread, almost impossible to get in Paris these days. She nibbled a piece of lettuce while she thought. Her hair was tied with a ribbon and she didn't have a hairpin. Perhaps anything small that could be jammed into the lock would do. A small butter knife was beside her plate. She took it back to the balcony. It did fit into the keyhole but wouldn't turn like a key. She twisted it around hoping to break the mechanism somehow but all she succeeded in doing was breaking the knife. She went back out to the salon, hid the knife pieces under a couch cushion and searched for something else to use. She briefly considered going back to Juliet's bedroom for a handful of hairpins. Instead, she picked up the fork and went back to the balcony.

The fork was too wide to go into the keyhole. She had thought that it might be but it was worth a try. The handle was too thick. She forced the tines of the fork into the door jamb beside the knob hoping to pry the door open. Surprisingly, the tines went in with very little resistance and the door moved a bit when she pried it. She pulled on the knob and the door popped open. A flight of dark stairs lay at her feet, almost certainly leading down to the theatre.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est?" it was Fallieres' voice. She jumped and turned. She had thought he was right behind her but he wasn't, he was in the salon. She pushed the door nearly shut and let the curtain fall to conceal it. She longed to run down those stairs to freedom, but if she did they would only follow and catch her. No, tonight she would make her escape, after everyone was asleep.

"It is my luncheon," Jubilee said, loud enough to be heard in the next room. "I get to eat, don't I?" In her own ears, her voice sounded a little like that of Marie.



Gerome had been standing in the alley for over an hour waiting for the right person to come along. The back of Fallieres' opera house loomed over him. Gerome, dressed very plainly, hoped to pass for a carriage driver or a shoe maker. He'd wanted to wear sans-culottes but there wasn't time to find a pair. The opera house

appeared to have few entrances, other than the main front doors—the stage door, a side door protected by a courtyard and several guards, and this door. Jake watched the courtyard. Marie, wearing a skirt borrowed from the cook and one of Gerome’s white shirts, was stationed by the stage door. Gerome hoped this was the servant’s entrance. Another dull half-hour passed before anyone came out of the door he watched so carefully. A thin, middle-aged woman with a market basket over her arm appeared and nodded to him as she swept by. Gerome took a step toward her and then hung back. Somehow he didn’t think she would do.

He resumed his post and tried to look nonchalant, cleaning his fingernails with a penknife as he had seen waiting carriage drivers do. He had to approach the right person and he had to pick that person the first time. The wrong person would alert the household and all would be lost. They needed to talk to someone who would be willing to describe the inside of the opera house to anyone who offered enough money. Gerome had a sack of gold louis tucked into his coat. One of Fallieres’ servants would almost certainly like to have it, but not the woman with the lean and hungry look.

An athletic young man emerged from the door and hurried down the alley, pausing to urinate against the back wall of a shoe shop before stepping out into the street. Gerome ignored him. The next person to open the door was a lackey. He was slightly plump and rather tired looking. His cuffs were frayed and his hose had many repairs.

“Excusez-moi, Monsieur,” said Gerome stepping in front of him. “May I have a word with you?”



Everything had enormous clarity. Every motion, every thought, every word was bathed in living light. Larousse sat in front of his mirror perfectly still as the valet prepared his wig and set it upon his head. Perfectly still and perfectly alight. The chaos and turmoil of the last two days fell away into darkness behind him and he sat perfectly still in that light. The valet busied himself with the coat, brushing off stray flecks of wig powder and lint. The coat was the purest black wool. Larousse knew he would never again wear clothing that was any color but black. He knew he would grieve for what little remained of his life and once the whore was dead, he would be forever with his beloved son. The portrait of Jules sat on the dressing table in front of him. He could not bear to be parted with it and took it from room to

room. As long as he could look at that face, the darkness wasn't total. The memories of his son carried in them the memory of light and happiness.

Larousse stood and allowed the valet to help him into his coat. He accepted his hat and the walking stick with the gold hawk's head. He would have another head made for his walking stick, he thought. Something in onyx. Perhaps a horse. Jules had loved the races.

"Has the carriage been brought around?" Larousse took the small portrait of his son and slipped it into the pocket of his coat.

"Oui, *Monsieur*." The valet's eyes were lowered. He hesitated and then said "And I would like to say that the whole staff is pleased that you are going out. We hope that you find a bit of enjoyment among your friends."

Larousse almost smiled. "Thank you. I plan to enjoy myself very much this evening!"



Jubilee had finally been allowed out. Fallieres was shocked that she had been roaming about the apartments alone and ordered her to be escorted back to her bedroom and locked in. She had spent the remainder of the afternoon bruising her fingers and damaging several hairpins trying to figure out how to unlock the door. When the guard led her back to the salon, she was finally truly hungry and attacked the hors d'oeuvres tray with gusto.

Juliet already sat at the piano, accompanying herself in a light aria. The opera singers in the theatre below were already rehearsing for tonight's performance. Their voices seemed thin coming up from the empty hall below. Juliet knew her place, though, and struggled to stay on key in spite of the distraction.

Fallieres and Farruk sat together, deep in another card game. This time when Jubilee offered to play with them she was rebuffed. The Arab had grinned at her and chucked her under the chin.



"You will have many opportunities to play with me, *Cherie*," he said and brushed the back of his knuckles against her left breast. She slapped his hand away. He laughed and returned to his cards. Then she saw that her mother's dagger was stuck into his sash, its amethyst-studded silver leaves and vines had been cleaned of all traces of Jules's blood. The sight of it warmed her. It was a sweet reminder that once life was good.

Jubilee kept out of arm's reach of Farruk. She wandered around the room, restless, unable to sit still, but always returning for a glimpse of the dagger. She wished the window overlooked something besides the empty courtyard. She wandered over to the theatre balcony and sat glumly watching the singers and musicians rehearse. The open, unlocked door hidden only a few feet away filled her thoughts. It beckoned to her and at the same time comforted her. Tonight. Tonight she would be out the door and away. She wished hard for some way to take the dagger with her. It would take enormous luck for that and luck hadn't been in abundance lately.

"Your Grace, *Monsieur* Larousse is here to see you."

Jubilee sat up straight.

"You may show him in."

A sudden giddiness weakened her. She didn't trust herself to stand. Slowly, she turned around in her seat.

"Larousse! Old friend, come sit down, have some wine. I grieve with you over the death of your son."

"Thank you, Your Grace, and thank you for the wreath you sent to his funeral."

"Have you come to hear the opera? But surely you are still in mourning."

"No, Your Grace, I will always be in mourning. . . he was such a beautiful boy . . ." An awkward silence fell on the moment. Jubilee realized she had been holding her breath. She gripped the arm of her chair and forced herself to breathe normally. "But I have come upon a related matter," Larousse finally continued.

"Eh? Something I can help you with?"

"*Oui, très certainement*. You have in your custody, his killer."

Jubilee jumped to her feet. She looked at the curtain that concealed the open door, but only a glance. She didn't want to escape. Her throat thickened with bitter hatred. Rage flowed up through every limb as if she was extracting it from the earth. It burned in her belly and she longed to see him. She couldn't attempt escape now. She had to at least see him. She almost wept with frustration at the loss of her knife. If she still had it, it would be deep in his heart by now.

"No! Tell me who the blackguard is and he will be turned over to you immediately."

"It is a woman. Jubilee." Jubilee heard Fallieres' protests and heard the Arab laugh.

"That little one? She is just a little mouse. How could she harm anyone?" Jubilee moved to the open curtain where she was mostly concealed but could see the room. Larousse sat sideways to her between Fallieres and the Arab. Farruk might have seen her, but if he did he gave no hint.

"When you captured her," Larousse's voice was tight. "Did she have a knife in her possession?"

"Yes," said Farruk, pulling the knife from his sash. He tossed it on the card table between them. "That one."

It lay on the table, the amethysts in the handle glittering in the candle light, as beautiful now as it was when her mother had last touched it. Jubilee saw that it fascinated Larousse as much as it did her.

"She killed my son with it. She is a murderess and must die for her crimes."

Jubilee stepped fully into the door way. "My mother gave me that knife." Her voice sounded very odd in her ears. Then she realized she'd spoken in English. She repeated it in French. "She gave me that knife moments before she was killed by your men." Jubilee looked from one of them to the next. They all seemed frozen in place. The eyes of Larousse were black with madness. She imagined they were much like her own. "She gave me that knife because my father had already been killed and she hoped that I would only be captured."

While she spoke, Larousse rose slowly to his feet. "She begged me not to kill myself with it," Jubilee continued. "Instead I used it to destroy my rapist."

"You murdered my son." Larousse choked it out.

"You killed my mother and father to get me as a birthday present for that filthy little pig!" She threw herself at him. The few steps across the room she did not remember, only that she had to kill him—that he had to die. She beat her fists against his face, she clawed at his eyes. She didn't know he had his hands around her throat until she realized she couldn't reach him. She struggled wildly clawing at his hands, spoiling his grip. Suddenly he was jerked away from her. Fallieres had him by the elbows, howling for the guards. Larousse snarled and lunged at her, saliva dripping from his teeth, but Fallieres held him fast as the guards poured into the room.

Farruk put his arms around Jubilee and pulled her further away from Larousse. He held her tight, saying comforting things to her as if she were a child. She was

not. She trembled with hatred and rage and longed for the warmth of Larousse's blood on her hands.

"Throw that man out," Fallieres barked at the guards. "Larousse, if you ever come back here you are a dead man." Larousse howled and fought as they dragged him out.

"He's gone mad," said Fallieres sitting back down at the card table. He signaled one of the guards to pour him a glass of wine. "I shall have him quietly killed. He'll be dangerous if I don't." He lifted the freshly poured glass and drank it in one gulp. His wig was slightly askew.

"I would say he's dangerous in any case," said Farruk with his usual good humor. He gently stroked Jubilee's hair. It irritated her. She felt as if she were in the embrace of a viper, but she was coming back to herself, calming. She pushed the Arab away.

"I'm all right," she said. She crossed her arms over her chest and went toward one of the couches. She paused by the card table to take another look at her mother's dagger. It had vanished.

"My knife," she said. "It's gone!"

Chapter 12

Madame Zollier had never spent so much time in such a fine house. It made her nervous. So she often sat outside *Monsieur* Jake's garden gate, basking her ancient bones in the summer sun, and picking up a few coins reading fortunes. She longed for the peace and quiet of her own rooms, but the cards told her it would not be safe to return to them yet, if ever. She never could accurately read her own fortune. One way she saw them she would die abruptly very soon. If read another way they foretold a long journey into the sunset or a slower death. She sighed. No matter. She was very old and would die soon in any case. It just didn't matter.

A sewing notions vendor owned a little cart on the corner. He waved at her and shouted something that sounded like "good afternoon!" He was a very nice man. They had chatted before. Yesterday, she had bought a needle and thread from him to repair the rends in her skirt. Now she just waved back at him and lowered herself into the patch of weeds beside the garden wall, resting her back against the warm stones and laying her walking stick beside her.

It was good to see Marie, she thought. The child has grown into a good strong woman. Her own children, two daughters and a son, were far, far away—middle-aged now, most likely, perhaps dead.

She spread the cards out to attract a customer. *Monsieur* Jake's house was in the Faubourg St. Denise and La Zollier was unknown in this quarter of Paris. She could wear the eyepatch and fool everyone.

After a while a young woman with a large basket of laundry strolled up and tossed a coin in her lap. They were deep in a discussion of passionate love and grand good fortune when La Zollier saw Lazar slip out the garden gate.

"Help me to my feet, Child!" she said. The young laundress jumped up and did as she was told. "You will live a long and happy life, I see it in the cards," the old woman said hastily. "But now I must leave!" She followed Lazar down the street with the young woman calling after her, protesting and asking questions.



"She's there, and unconfined. I caught a glimpse of her in a balcony seat," Marie said. She and the others sat in the parlour. The plans were made, men had been hired, and all was ready. Jake and Marie would go to the opera. Gerome would have work to do outside the opera house. Marie's bordello dress now fit beautifully and rosebuds from the garden adorned her dark curls. She looked very much the grand lady, or so Gerome thought. Her delicate beauty caught at the back of this throat.

"I wish I had seen her," said Jake wistfully and picked up a riding crop that had been left on top of the piano. He restlessly turned it over and over in his hands.

"She seemed well," said Marie. Gerome caught a hint of compassionate reassurance in her voice.

Jake's face looked like a thunderstorm brewing. His broad shoulders seemed restrained and confined in his best waistcoat. His kneebreeches were the blackest wool. His stockings were the whitest silk. He still refused to wear a wig, his hair simply pulled back and tied at the nape of his neck with a coarse black ribbon. One small lock had already escaped. Gerome always thought it made him look a little like a wild man. Tonight it might be true.

"Did you tell the groom that the carriage was to be ready at a quarter to eight? Did you stress that?"

"*Oui, Monsieur*, I stressed it," Gerome said patiently. "He assured me there would be no problem. It should be in the courtyard promptly."

"Good. You think Fallieres' footman was telling the truth?" Before Gerome could speak, Jake answered the question for himself. "It doesn't matter. It is what we have. By God, I will get her out of there if I have to tear down the opera house brick by brick!"

Marie smiled bitterly. "You and I will get her out, Americain." Gerome knew that Jake had a small pistol in his breast pocket and Marie had its mate in her hand-

bag. He, himself would have one in each coat pocket. It was a mad and dangerous plan. He had no confidence in its success. However, he knew it would also be mad and dangerous to share his misgivings with his employer. "If they haven't sent her back to the Hotel du Villiers or handed her over to Larousse," said Marie to no one in particular, "then that means Fallieres wants her for himself or has sold her to the Arab."

Gerome watched Jake's expression as Marie talked. He seemed fascinated by what she was saying. The riding crop twitched back and forth in his hands.

"I had heard of the Arab," she continued. "Though I had never seen him before. He's one of Fallieres' gambling cronies. He's a prince of some sort and there's a rumor that his older brothers keep dying off in mysterious ways."

Jake methodically broke the riding crop in two and then broke the two pieces again.

"Gerome," he said. "Tell the carriage driver to meet us in the courtyard now."

Marie jumped to her feet. "Yes, now. Let's go."

Outside the darkness was gathering. The summer days were beginning to wane. Tomorrow would be the first day of September. The groom drove the carriage into the courtyard just as they left the front door.

"Marie!" It was the La Zollier's voice. Gerome peered into the gloom and saw Marie doing the same. "Marie!" There. She lay huddled by the front gate, hidden in shadow. All of them ran to her, Marie fleetest of all.

La Zollier clung to the bars of the gate, a dark stain on her tattered blouse. "You are still here," she said. "Thank heaven I have returned in time."

"What are you talking about?" said Jake gruffly.

"Shut up!" said Marie. "Can't you see she's hurt? Help me get her into the house."

Gerome could see that Jake's eyes flashed. But Jake said nothing and himself carried the old woman into the house and put her on the couch in the parlour.

"I need water and towels!" said Marie. "Gerome . . ."

"*Cherie* . . ." La Zollier's rumbling voice was soft. "The wound is a scratch. Most of the blood is not mine. I am just very tired." She smiled exhaustedly. "I'm an old woman and I've walked all over Paris this day. Leave me in peace!" The old woman took Marie's hand. "I have news."

"What is it?" Jake cut in.

"Lazar went to see Larousse and I believe Larousse went to see Fallieres."

"Lazar! Damn that blackguard! I knew he was a spy. I should have sent him packing as soon as I began to suspect Larousse!"

"I hid myself and watched at *Monsieur* Larousse's house all afternoon. Lazar didn't come back out for a long while. But *Monsieur* Larousse did finally. He left dressed in very fine clothes. He returned in them, but he returned as a madman, his fine clothes torn and dirty. His wig was gone and his hair was wild."

"That is actually good news," said Marie glancing at Jake. "Fallieres obviously refused to give her up. She is safe for the moment. Who did this to you?"

"Lazar. As I tried to return here I saw him and he saw me before I could hide again. He threw his knife and I pretended to die." She shrugged eloquently. "People see what they wish to see." Marie smiled at her. "When he came to me to retrieve his knife. I gave it back to him in a way he did not wish." She grinned crookedly. "He died with an amusing look of surprise on his face."

Marie hugged her gently. "You took a terrible risk," she said and then stood. "Gerome, do you have time to tend to her before you are needed?"

"*Mais bien sûr*," said Gerome. "All is ready. I merely need to give the correct signal."

Marie smoothed her gown. "Come, *Americain*," she said to Jake. "We have an appointment at the opera!"

"I very much agree," said Jake and held out his elbow for her.



Jubilee leaned against the velvet-padded banister and watched the crowd below. High above the floor the air simmered with heat. The night was warm and the footlights were now all lit, lending their heat to the already stifling air. She fanned herself with Juliet's fan, steeling herself against boredom. She liked opera, but she had already heard two rehearsals and one performance of this one and she was not looking forward to a fourth repetition. Besides this night needed to fly by with lightning speed. She must get away through that so very near unlocked door and end Larousse's life before Fallieres' assassin took that pleasure away from her. That right belonged only to her! If there was a way to do it, she would send a note warning Larousse. Stay alive, she thought. I am coming for you.

Fallieres and the Arab were playing one more hand of cards before the house lights darkened and the performance started. Jubilee tried to amuse herself by watching the crowd pour in and find their places. Even in these dangerous and un-

settled times, people still came to the theatre for an hour or two of respite. Nearly all wore clothes in quiet, sober colors, not wishing to seem aristocratic. Many of the men wore long sans-culottes. Suddenly one of the men caught her attention—a man whose broad shoulders and untame hair looked disturbingly familiar. As he turned to wait for his lady, his face came full into view. Jake! Jubilee's heart raced. Memories of her far away former life suddenly flooded in on her. Home. She caught a glimpse of home in his face and longed for it and for him. The intensity of it caught at her breath and brought tears to her eyes. Then she saw his lady. Marie. If Marie was here she knew this was no happenstance, no mere trick of fate to tease her with memories. They had come for her.

Jubilee pulled a hairpin out of the curls so careful arranged by Clotilde—she would never be without a hair pin ever again. She glanced around to see the Arab and Fallieres still deep in cards. She snapped open Juliet's fan and scratched some words into the gilding along one rib. "Balcony door is unlocked—come tonight."

Jake and Marie were in the row just below her and only a few seats further out. Jubilee closed up the fan and threw it straight at them.

"What are you doing?" Jubilee whirled. Farruk stood behind her, all trace of humor absent in his face.

"I just dropped my fan," said Jubilee, her heart racing. "I have such trouble holding onto them! My mother always said I couldn't be trusted with one."

He didn't answer. She didn't meet his eyes, but just flopped back in her chair, arranging the skirts of Juliet's cast-off dress. "It's terribly hot up here, could you send for another?"

"But of course," he said. There was a pause, but he turned and signaled a guard at the door. "You over there, bring Mademoiselle another fan." Then he sat down beside her and took her hand, engulfing her in the scent of gardenias.



Jake forced himself to not stare at the balcony box above him. She was there. He could feel her. Alive, so very alive above him. When he felt something hit his knee he practically jumped out of his skin. His nerves were drawn tight as violin strings. He looked around for what had struck him but Marie saw it first and her hand darted down to pick it up. A fan. She snapped it open and fluttered it at her face as if nothing had happened. He thought her behavior very odd, but didn't discuss it and disciplined his gaze forward, glancing upward briefly every now and



then to satisfy himself that it was indeed Jubilee.

It was unmistakable, completely, totally Jubilee. Alive so very alive! She wore an expression he had never seen before. She had a different look about her that he couldn't put his finger on. She sat next to a dark man in a fancy white wig and an expensively cut waistcoat. That must be the Arab. There was another woman and man in the box neither of whom he recognized but he knew that other man would have to be Fallieres. His eyes were heavily hooded

and his face was fleshy and dissipated. An aristocrat, even if he was dressed very soberly for one of the highborn.

Jake fidgeted in his seat. The opera was a comedic romance and he wasn't much in the mood for such things. He felt a little tap on his arm. "Look at this," whispered Marie. She held the fan partially open in a wedge of light that found its way between the seats in front of them. He could barely make out the words scratched crookedly along one rib. Balcony door? He looked up. Jubilee was watching him. His heart went out to her. He realized that this sharing of gazes was dangerous but he couldn't tear his eyes away. The Arab leaned over and whispered something to her. She shot him a look of the purest hatred and then focused her attention on the stage while he laughed as if he'd made some jest. Jake gripped the arms of his seat wanting to run to her, wanting to batter the face of that grinning jackal. Instead he grimly watched the stage and the foolishness that played itself out there.



Gerome waited in the doorway of a shoe shop across the street from the opera house. He'd made the rounds to make sure all the men were present, wearing appropriate clothing and in position. He was nervous and wished he could pace like Jake did. That was not Gerome's style. He chewed his thumbnail and waited. He had worried briefly that the old woman would delay him and all would be lost, but she had told the truth and her wound had been slight, the knife blade barely grazing a rib. Now she was bandaged and he had left her eating bread and milk in

the kitchen looking so tired she might fall asleep before she was finished. He had originally thought to walk to the opera house, but instead he took the remaining horse in the stable and had arrived before the first intermission.

There was not much left of Gerome's thumbnail when at last he heard the final applause from inside the theatre. Shortly, people began to pour out the big double doors. When the street was filled, he jumped out of the doorway. "Vive la Republic!" he yelled at the top of his lungs. "Vive la Republic! Vive la Republic!" came answering cries from up and down the street. "This is the house of a foul counter-revolutionary aristocrat!" Gerome shouted. On cue, the cry was taken up by his men. A couple of women screamed and about half the crowd scattered in all directions. The rest enthusiastically took up the chant "Vive la Republic!"

Gerome threw himself into the center of what he hoped was becoming a mob. "Liberté, égalité, fraternité! Death to all priests and aristocrats!"

"*Oui, mon frère!*" a man yelled and slapped Gerome on the back, nearly knocking him off his feet.

A couple of red-capped communards had appeared out of nowhere and had taken up the cry "Liberté, égalité, fraternité, ou la mort!" Someone had alerted the Citizen's Militia. Gerome could see a dozen armed men loping up the narrow street. He knew he'd better get moving or they might spoil everything in a misguided attempt to enforce law and order.

"Destroy the house of corruption!" Gerome yelled and pushed toward the door of the opera house. That was all it took. He was nearly knocked down by revolutionaries eager for permission to begin looting.

Gerome sighed. If this works it will be a bleeding miracle, he thought as he pulled one of the pistols out of his pocket.



Jubilee applauded politely after the skinny, heavily painted leading man warbled the final encore and the last bow was taken. Home, she thought. I want to go home. She took one last look at Jake. He was gazing up at her. He touched two fingers to his chin and pushed it up an inch and then smiled. Chin up. She smiled briefly and then turned quickly away before it was noticed. She passed by the unlocked door hidden behind the curtain and paused by a lackey holding a tray of filled champagne glasses. Her hand shook a little as she lifted the glass. That surprised her. The sliced beef hors d'oeuvres and goose stuffed with partridges mag-

nificantly laid out on the sideboard repulsed her. A sip of the wine, far from soothing her nerves, merely lay burning in her stomach.

The opera, which had been amusing last night, was garish and tawdry tonight. The balcony box reeked of gardenias. Jubilee knew she would hate that smell for the rest of her life. She'd watched Jake hopelessly, her heart missing a beat every time he glanced up at her. He was the same man she remembered, the same man she had loved so childishy once. She still loved him. Perhaps, she thought, as she took another sip of the sour champagne, she loved him again. Loved him anew. Now, though, everything was different. The young girl that had loved him was gone forever, but the woman that she had become looked into his face, into his clear blue eyes and saw her home.



A shot echoed through the theatre below. Juliet shrieked and ran out of the room. "What the hell?" Fallieres strode over to the door that led down to the guard-room and yanked it open. "Get out front! Something is going on! *Allez, allez!*" Then he went back to the balcony. Farruk followed him. Jubilee remained rooted where she stood for a moment. Then she remembered Jake's "chin up" gesture and smiled. She drained her champagne and set down the glass. Noiselessly, she crept up behind Farruk and Fallieres. Down below the guards poured into the theatre, and ran toward the big doors which still stood open. "*Vive la Republic! Vive la Republic!*" Many voices. There were other cries and shouts she couldn't make out. Angry yells and women screaming.

Farruk seemed to be amused. "The revolution is at your doorstep," he said.

"Rabble!" Fallieres' voice dripped with hatred. "Scum! Filth! Excrement!" He hammered the head of his walking stick against the balcony rail in rhythm with his chant.

"They are better men than you, Fallieres." It was Jake's voice. Jubilee laughed involuntarily and whirled around. He stood side by side with Marie. Each of them had a pistol leveled at Fallieres, the Arab—and herself.

"Who in seven bloody hells are you!" Fallieres growled.

Farruk grabbed Jubilee and interposed himself between her and her rescuers.

"Jake!" Jubilee called desperately. The Arab grinned down at her.

“So you know this rabble. Was this the man you were making eyes at during the performance? These two are perhaps friends of yours?”

“Yes! Let me go, you pig!” The thick gardenia scent smothered her.

“Fallieres! They’ve come for the mouse! Can you believe it?”

“Shut up, Farruk,” Fallieres snarled.

“Let her go!” Jake pointed his gun at Farruk who still stood between the gun barrel and Jubilee.

“I think not!” said Farruk. Deftly he turned. Now Jubilee was between him and the pistol. His arm snaked around her neck and held her fast. She could hardly breathe. The black wool of the sleeve of his waistcoat prickled her cheek. He brushed his lips against her hair. “Come along little one. You are mine and I mean to keep you.” He pulled her to the left—toward the hidden door. “Unlocked!” he muttered. “Did you know that, you clever girl? You are perhaps the one who unlocked it?”

She kicked at him wildly. “Jake! Marie! Help me!” she called with all her strength. He pulled her into the dank passageway and half-dragged, half carried her down the stairs.



When Jake saw the Arab pull Jubilee into a dark doorway his heart sank into his boots for just an instant. Then he ran after her. He could hear Marie a step behind him. Fallieres stepped aside as he ran by and then he felt his shoulder explode with pain. The pistol dropped from his nerveless fingers and fired, the ball slamming harmlessly into the wall. Jake caught a glimpse of Marie running through the doorway and down the stairs. The heavy walking stick descended again but this time Jake caught it in his good hand. Fallieres was stronger than he looked. They struggled for possession of the stick and Jake couldn’t wrest it out of the other man’s hand. Jake jumped back away from him glancing around for anything that could be used as a weapon. Feeling was rapidly returning to his right hand. It hurt and his shoulder hurt but he could clench and unclench his fist. The heavy walking stick swooped toward his head. He dodged and stepped backward. Another whoosh as Fallieres took another swing. Jake dodged again and took two more steps backward. He was now in the salon. He groped around for anything, anything that could be a weapon. A small table. He picked it up and held it before him like a shield. Slam! Fallieres hacked at it with the heavy head of his stick. Slam! The delicately carved rosewood was splinter-

ing. Jake turned it around so that the legs pointed at his enemy. Slam! One of the legs disappeared. Fallieres struggled to get at Jake himself. Wig askew, face deep red, he had the look of a madman. Jake twisted the table snaring the stick and Fallieres' arm, but Fallieres howled and lumbered away from him, holding his elbow and panting but still in possession of the stick. Jake glanced around the room. A vase. He threw it, but Fallieres batted it away. Fallieres continued to come at him. Jake stepped back felt something behind him—a chair. Before he could catch himself he fell backward. Fallieres howled with glee and ran toward him.



Marie plunged down and down into the darkness. She trailed her free hand along the wall and held the pistol tight in the other, running down the steps as quickly as she dared in the complete darkness. Ahead she could hear footsteps and the Arab's heavy breathing. Every once in a while she could hear Jubilee calling out. Her voice was muffled as if she couldn't get air properly. These steps could not be going down to the theatre floor as she had thought. They were going down much further. This was not just an access to the theatre. This was Fallieres' bolt hole. Finally the stairs ended and Marie found herself in a level passageway. She could hear the Arab still ahead but seemed no closer. He must be moving very quickly, because Marie was almost running and was not catching up to him. Suddenly Marie heard a clang and the shriek of unoiled hinges. The escape door. Now Marie did run, heedless of what she might run into in the unbroken darkness. A square of thin light appeared and a thick shadow passed through it. A door to the outside. Marie gained the opening moments after the Arab and Jubilee passed through it. The Arab was running down an alleyway dragging Jubilee behind him.

"Farruk!" Marie called. "Stop and let her go or I will shoot you!"

"No, you won't," he called back. "If you fire your weapon, you might shoot your friend instead."

Damn! He was right. It had only been a bluff. The Arab had slowed down, either because he was getting tired, or because he no longer felt any real danger. Marie was quite close now. She could see them both outlined in the dim light of a distant street-lamp. There had to be a way. "Jubilee!" she called desperately. "Help me!"

Jubilee looked back at her hopelessly for a second and then raised her chin. She leaned down and clamped her teeth deep into the Arab's hand. He howled. Jubilee's knees buckled. His grip relaxed enough to allow her to slip limply to the cobble-

stones. Marie took aim and fired. Farruk crumbled and Jubilee rolled away from him. Marie ran the last few steps to her friend and helped her to her feet. Jubilee almost knocked her over with an embrace.

“Oh thank you! Thank you!” Jubilee said into her neck. “I am so glad to see you!”

Marie’s eyes burned with tears she deemed utterly inappropriate at the moment. The Arab lay in a spreading pool of blood. She’d aimed at his chest but it looked like the bullet had torn a path through his head. Good.

Suddenly Jubilee pulled out of Marie’s embrace. “Jake!” She ran down the alley back toward the open door.



Jake swam painfully back into consciousness. He was, quite frankly, astonished to still be alive. His head throbbed and his eyes were full of his own blood. He wiped his forehead with the back of his hand. He was going to have quite a lump, but it was nothing serious. He heard a clink of glass to his left and carefully rolled his head toward it. Fallieres stood only a few steps away, back turned, pouring wine into a crystal glass. His walking stick leaned against the buffet table. Fallieres’ hands were shaking so much only some of the wine went into the glass. Stinking aristo isn’t used to doing his own killing, Jake thought. Fallieres drank several gulps of burgundy and sloshed more into the glass when it was drained. No time like the present, Jake thought.

He pushed himself to his feet as silently as he could. He took one or two steps and Fallieres must have heard him because his hand darted out for his stick. Jake leapt and kicked it out of reach. He grabbed Fallieres by the shoulder, pulled him around and then belted him as hard as he could in the face. Fallieres dropped like a sack of rutabagas and lay on the carpet groaning.

“Jake!”

He turned. Jubilee, pink cheeked and panting, a spatter of blood on her skirt, ran toward him from the balcony. Marie was a step behind her.

“Jubilee!” She threw herself into his arms. He enfolded her and held her tight, kissing her, tasting her, breathing her in. He held her so close he could feel the wild beating of her heart, the sweetest feeling he had ever known in his life.

“You are all under arrest in the name of the Republic!” The barked announcement cut through the air like a sword. Jake looked up, but he did not let go of

Jubilee. A captain of the Citizen's Militia stood in the doorway, his troops closely packed behind him, a few peering curiously over his shoulder.

"There on the floor is your traitor," Jake said.

"You are all here, you are all traitors, *Monsieur*. You are all under arrest!" His logic was unassailable. Stupid, but unassailable. Jake released Jubilee and took her hand.

"The balcony door," Jubilee whispered. Marie stood close beside them.

"Yes," she hissed.

"Very well, Officer," said Jake. Then. "Now!" The three of them ran for the balcony. The astonished captain barely had time to pull the pistol out of his belt. A bullet crashed into the door jamb as they plunged through it and slammed the door. The inky darkness engulfed them.

"Wait!" It was Jubilee's voice. Against his best instincts Jake stopped. "Marie," said Jubilee. "You can unlock doors, can you lock them as well?"

"*Mais oui!*" Jake felt Marie brush past him. Someone pounded on the door with what sounded like a gun butt.

"Jake!" It was Jubilee's voice again, frightened. "Help me hold it shut!" He felt for her and found her leaning against the door bouncing a little with every blow. He braced himself against it.

"How much longer?" he barked.

"Almost . . . Done!" Jake could hear Marie running down the steps. "Allons-y!" she called back up at them.

Jake took Jubilee's hand and they ran down together. Hot joy welled up when he saw the open door and light, however faint, coming through it. He laughed and heard Jubilee laughing beside him. She was alive! He could dance with joy. The memory of her lips was still warm.

They followed Marie out into the alley. Suddenly Marie stopped stock still. "Jubilee, look!" she called. Jake could see nothing at all but a dark stain on the cobblestones. He caught a faint whiff of gardenias in the air. Odd, for an alleyway.

"Oh, my God!" Jubilee exploded.

"What?" said Jake. "What's there?"

"It's what's not there, *Americain*," said Marie.

"The Arab," Jubilee whispered beside him. "Marie killed him! But he's gone."



Chapter 13

We aren't going to be safe here very long," Jake said. Gerome sat at the small writing desk in the study. Jake's mind raced but he was light as air. "If Fallieres doesn't know who I am," he continued. "Larousse does. If Fallieres doesn't turn us in as traitors to the Republic, Larousse will come for Jubilee—and he will not come alone. We must be gone by tomorrow morning at the latest." Gerome nodded.

"As you instructed, the Jones house has been all packed and sent to the barge—our barge, not Larousse's—and Mademoiselle Jubilee's things were delivered here last night. All the servants have been paid off and given letters of recommendation. They are all gone, except the cook who will leave this evening. Everything is ready."

"Excellent! This afternoon hire a wagon—no, buy a wagon, it will cause fewer questions. Don't try to pack everything—furniture and such—just my personal things. We need to get it all in one wagon. Then, we leave tomorrow at first light."

Gerome put down the quill and took off his spectacles. He cleaned the lenses and then put them carefully back on. He looked steadily at his employer, as if trying to think of a way to begin what he had to say. Jake noticed Gerome's hesitation and stopped pacing.

"What is it, man? Speak!"

"How many of us are going, Sir?"

"What?"

"I mean no disrespect, but if Marie isn't to come along, then neither will I. And if the old woman doesn't come along then Marie will not." Gerome sat quietly waiting for an answer.

Jake broke into laughter. "What a merry band we are!" he said. "Gerome, after what you have done for me I would book passage for half of Paris if you asked it!"

Gerome smiled, a little embarrassed. "It was nothing," he said.

"So of all the women you have chased after, Marie is the one who caught you, is she?"

Gerome blushed. "*Oui, Monsieur*. She is the loveliest creature I have ever seen."



"What about these stockings?" Marie held up a pair knitted out of buttercup yellow wool. Jubilee wrinkled her nose.

"Throw them away. My Aunt Mabel sent them to me last winter. I've never worn them."

"Oh, I think they are pretty!" Marie folded them reverently.

"They are yours! There are four nightgowns here. Take two of them."

"Which two?"

"It doesn't matter, but the one with the pink edging was always a little short for me. It might fit you better." Marie picked up the pink-edged nightgown and

held it to herself. They had spent the last hour dividing Jubilee's clothes between them. Jubilee was a trifle taller and Marie a bit slimmer, but they were near enough the same size.

Jubilee looked down and smoothed the skirt of her dress. She had forgotten she had owned this one. Tiny blue flowers were sprinkled over white muslin. The deep lace trim on the sleeves had been crocheted by her mother. The dress had originally had a ruffle at the elbows, but last spring Christiana had made the lace and dyed it the same blue



as the little flowers. Jubilee had worn the dress to dozens of afternoon teas since then. She used to think it made her look grown up and sophisticated. Christiana had also embroidered the little periwinkles on the fichu. They didn't quite match the dress, but they had been touched by Mother's hands and Jubilee wanted it around her shoulders.

The dress, the memories in the folds of all these clothes and the friendly, familiar faces made Jubilee almost feel like she was home. Almost. Something burned at the pit of her belly. This morning she could hardly eat breakfast—well, actually it was midday by the time everyone was awake. It had been a jolly breakfast. Everyone, even Jubilee, laughed and jested in relief that danger and receded for a while, in joy at being alive. Jake held her hand from the moment he had entered the room until she and Marie left to begin sorting and repacking Jubilee's things. Before he would relinquish her hand, though, he put his arms around her in a long and tender embrace that did not last long enough. With her face buried against his chest, she could feel tears begin to sting her eyes. When she came away and followed Marie upstairs, her eyes burned and her belly burned and she wasn't sure why.

"What are you thinking about?" Marie asked suddenly.

Jubilee had been picking lint off of a heavy blue wool cape. When Marie spoke, Jubilee realized she'd been fiddling with the cape for a long time.

"It's been a very difficult few days," said Jubilee. She knew the remark was so evasive that it bordered on a lie. She had been picturing Larousse's face before her as she had seen it last night. Wild. Twisted with glittering evil.

"Yes," said Marie. "And tomorrow it will be far behind us."

"Yes," Jubilee nodded slowly. Something writhed again in her belly. "And I'll be very glad," she said. Another lie.



The assassin had probably thought Larousse would be asleep. No lamp had been lit in his room, only a small candle had burned beside the bed. The assassin could not have known that Larousse would never sleep again. Sleep had not come to him in days no matter how hard he tried.

As Larousse lay in his bed he heard the door open stealthily and knew it was not unlatched by the hand of one of the servants. This man came at Fallieres' bidding. Larousse was astonished that the stranger had slipped so easily past the

guards who stood at every door, but after a moment's reflection he realized that he shouldn't be. Fallieres probably owned half his staff including the guards.

Larousse knew if he lay stone still in his bed, eyes closed, then all this agony would be blessedly over and he could join his son. A hot tear escaped and rolled down his cheek. He could not wait for the blade to find his heart as much as he would welcome it. Jubilee lived. When Jubilee ceased to breathe on this earth he would lay himself down on his son's grave and drink the small vial that he now always carried in the pocket of his waistcoat.

So when the assassin fell upon Larousse with his garrote, he met a short sword and died with a look of surprise on his face. That look was still there when Larousse dragged the man's body out to the hall and stuffed him into a linen closet.

Larousse did not arouse the household, but cleaned up the mess himself. He filled a purse with all the louis, francs and assignats he could lay his hands on, dressed himself in his simplest clothes and then left by way of the parlor window. Fallieres would soon discover that Larousse had escaped and send another assassin and then another until the task was eventually accomplished. Now, it was expedient that Larousse lose himself in the city. He had a murderess to destroy. He had work to do. Soonest begun, soonest ended.



"This has been a hard time for you," said Jake. "I will be very happy to have you safely away." He and Jubilee sat on the veranda overlooking the rose garden. She leaned against him and his arm was close around her. Everything was packed, everything was arranged. They would leave at first light. Paris would soon be a horrible memory. Jubilee smiled, listening to his heartbeat, savoring the safety of his arm. She wished the fist-sized knot in her stomach would relax. She could not eat luncheon. She had drunk a little chocolate and then excused herself, went to the watercloset and threw it up.

"It will be autumn when we get to New York," he continued. "The maples will just be turning. We'll take long drives in the country." He smiled down at her, his blue eyes crackled with life and joy. "With you beside me, I'll be the happiest man under Heaven."

She smiled back at him and squeezed his hand. "I can't wait," she said. "I love you. I'm sorry I got so angry that day in the garden."

He chuckled. "You were in such a fine temper you wouldn't let me explain. I thought you were going to marry Jules—I couldn't bear the thought of you marrying that lout."

"He . . . you know that he . . ." She couldn't think how to put it to him.

"Hush! I know." For a moment he held her so tight she could hardly breathe. "He got no more than he deserved." He loosed her a little and stroked her cheek. "No one will harm you again," he said and suddenly his warm mouth was on hers, tender, sweet. She met his kiss hungrily. The knot in her stomach eased for just a moment.

"Where you are, my home is," she said. Her voice broke on the last word. She buried her face in his chest and sobbed while he stroked her hair and whispered soothing nonsense. She cried for a small eternity, for an endless moment, until there were no more tears and still he held her, rocking her gently.

"I've gotten your shirt wet," she said.

He smiled down at her. "Did you? I hadn't noticed."



Larousse lowered himself onto a bench in a shabby little coffee house in the poorest quarter of Paris. Dawn had barely begun to touch the filthy streets with gray. Workmen, garbage haulers, street sweepers sat at their tables hunched over their thin coffee and black bread. A fat man in a dirty apron asked Larousse what he wanted. He ordered coffee and a roll.

"Send the newspaper vendor over," he added. The paper seller came by and Larousse bought one of every edition. The fat man eyed the stack of papers when set the full coffee cup and the hard black roll down on the table.

"You gonna read all that?"

Larousse smiled up at him. The fat man's eyes widened and he took a step back. "I'm going to try," Larousse said. Larousse handed the man a few coins and he scurried away. The roll was stale and Larousse soaked it in the coffee to get it soft enough to chew while he began to read. The war news was all bad. The Austrians were almost at the border. There were editorials stressing the need for loyalty to the republic in this time of crisis. There were dark hints that the Royalists were fighting to come back into power. The king and queen were still imprisoned in the Temple and had received the sacraments. There had been a riot at one of the opera houses last night. Larousse almost choked on his coffee. He set the cup down hard on the

table and read the entire story through twice. Then he grinned and took a big bite of his coffee-soaked bread. Fallieres was in prison.



The cook brought in a tray laden with coffee things, brandy and little cakes. She set them on the low table in front of the divan and poured coffee for Marie and Jubilee and brandy for Jake, Gerome and Madam Zollier. Jake had been standing



by the cold fireplace smoking a long, thin pipe. Marie and Jubilee had played One Eyed Mouse most of the evening. Gerome had been reading, or pretending to read. Jubilee had caught him several times watching Marie with puppy eyes. La Zollier sat in a corner off by herself laying out her weird cards and muttering softly to herself. She accepted

the glass of brandy from the cook with a murmur of thanks, put the glass to her nose and inhaled deeply. Then she lustily gulped down half of it, smacked her lips with pleasure and then turned back to the cards.

Jubilee considered trying one of the little cakes, but her stomach was still writhing. Supper had repulsed her and she had only sipped a little wine. She tentatively tasted the coffee and milk she had accepted from the cook and even that lay burning inside her. Marie had asked Jubilee twice today if she was feeling well. Jubilee had lied to her both times. Now Marie was watching her with sharp eyes while Jubilee forced down another sip of the coffee and set down the cup. Jubilee refused to meet Marie's gaze. For a while, she watched La Zollier lay out her faded pasteboards. The old woman's mahogany face was knotted with concentration. Her eyes narrowed until the black one nearly disappeared and the blue one became only a glittering spark.

"What kind of cards are those, Madame?" said Jubilee. La Zollier looked up, startled. She took another strong pull on the brandy before she answered.

"They are fortune-telling cards, *Cherie*. I can see the future in them."

"How marvelous! Can you tell my future in them?"

"*Mais oui*," said the old woman. "These are dark days. I have looked ahead for all of us."

Jake laughed. "The dark days are ending, though. Tomorrow we leave here forever."

La Zollier smiled at him. "Perhaps you are right. It is difficult to say."

Jake raised his eyebrows. "You disagree?" La Zollier didn't answer. She only leaned back and took another sip of brandy.

"Tell my fortune," Jubilee broke the awkward silence. "Please."

La Zollier fixed her with the bright blue eye and drained the last of the brandy.

"You have two very difficult decisions to make," she said. "The first is already decided, though you don't realize it yet. The second is more important, it involves the life or death of your soul. Both of your decisions involve great danger."

A long silence followed. Then Jake said, "This doesn't make any sense. It's foolishness!"

La Zollier shrugged. "Perhaps so," she said.

"And the rest of us?" said Gerome. "What of us?"

La Zollier put her glass to her lips, remembered that it was empty and set it down. "There is a great death hovering over the city. Paris is becoming insane with it. Death will come for thousands very soon. Tonight, tomorrow, I cannot say. But very soon. Nothing in this world is certain. Nothing in the cards is ever certain."

"What has this to do with us?" Marie asked. Gerome put his book aside and went to stand behind her, his hand on her shoulder.

"Yes," Gerome said. "What has this to do with us?"

"We are leaving. It has nothing to do with us!" Jake exploded.

Jubilee jumped and looked up at him. She had been deep in her own thoughts, barely listening.

"The great death is coming. The cards have been telling me this for days. And we will be in its path."



Larousse had walked straight home from the coffee house. On the Rue de la Paix he was forced to change his route to avoid a skirmish in the street. At the Place Vendome he saw two militiamen attempt to drag someone along while a crowd of

ragged women pelted them with stones. The toppled statue of King Louis XV had mostly been looted but the heavier parts of the horse still lay in broken pieces on the pavement. Already the day burned in breathless summer heat. That would not help matters. Tempers were flaring and knots of people talked intently together. Musketfire could be heard now and again in every direction.

Anton met him at the door. "There you are *Monsieur*. We were most worried about you!"

"Draw me a bath, Anton, and . . . there's a body in the upstairs linen closet."

"Yes, Sir, we had noticed. What would Sir like us to do with it?"

Larousse waived his hand airily. "Have it buried in the bottom of the garden. He was garbage and will fertilize the roses very well. But first draw my bath and bring pen and paper. I must send a message."

When he was bathed and dressed and a fresh snow-white wig set upon his head, he called for his carriage and set off for the Palais Royale. He once very much enjoyed going there and often took Jules with him. The beloved boy had delighted in the gaming rooms, coffee houses and bordellos. Larousse smiled faintly and pulled the small portrait of his son out of his pocket. What a lusty boy Jules had been! How he voracious he was for all the joys of life! All gone now, all gone. He shoved the portrait back into his pocket and watched sightlessly as the city passed by.

When the carriage pulled up in front of the Palais, Larousse wrestled his mind around to the business at hand.

Larousse had always thought the White Feather Coffeehouse smelled wonderful. He had spent many happy hours there drinking coffee, usually laced with brandy and playing cards deep into the night. DuPries was waiting for him as agreed at a corner table where they could talk without being overheard. He was a slight man in an obviously second-hand wig a little too large for his head. Larousse greeted him warmly. DuPries was the man in charge of questioning Fallieres and represented a vital step to obtaining Jubilee.

"DuPries, old man! How good to see you again. Would you like some glacee on such a hot day?" DuPries' face lit up. Glacee was an expensive luxury in these hard times.

They talked of the war and agreed it was not going well and then that led to the price of bread and the unrest in the streets.

When Larousse felt the moment was right he began his first gambit. "I read this morning that there was a riot at the opera last night."

“Oh, yes, yes,” DuPries scraped the last of the glacee from its little bowl. “In a way it was most fortunate. We captured two aristocrats, enemies of the Republic. One Duc de Fallieres and his mistress, a noblewoman from Arles.”

“That is fortunate!” said Larousse. “I think I recall Fallieres. Was he not a member of Louis Capet’s court?”



“I believe so, though he won’t admit it, no matter how sharply I questioned him. He’s most difficult, that one. They are all arrogant, but he is most exceptionally so!”

Larousse nodded slowly in sympathy. “The newspaper said three others got away? Do you know who they were?”

DuPries shook his head. The loose wig didn’t quite follow along as it should have. “We only have descriptions of them from the captain of the guard who made the arrest. Two young women and a man who spoke with a foreign accent, per-

haps English or German.”

“Perhaps Austrian?”

DuPries pricked up his ears. “Perhaps,” he said.

Larousse, fingered his empty coffee cup making sure a sober expression was clear on his face. “I’m sure you are a bit curious why I asked for this meeting,” he began slowly.

DuPries shrugged. “We have been friends, but not good friends. I thought perhaps it was in an official capacity. Do you know something about this business?”

“I may. It is only a suspicion, but it has been growing for quite some time.” Larousse paused and DuPries waited patiently for him to continue. “You have heard that my son was killed a few days ago?”

“Yes, I have heard. You have my condolences, *Monsieur*.”

“Thank you. I have reason to believe that he was killed by a young woman, the lover of my business partner. For some time I have suspected that this partner of mine was making secret deals with the nobles.” Larousse put the empty coffee cup away from him. “I have no proof, merely suspicion, you understand. Nothing to give you but his name. But if your captain can identify him and his lover as two of the three who escaped last night, then you would have all the proof you would need. I beg you to look into this, it has been plaguing my mind for some time.”

DuPries leaned forward on the table. His wig had slipped back revealing a tendril of thin brown hair. "I would very much like to question this business partner of yours and if he is harboring a murderess, then I will take them both into custody!"

"I have one more request, my friend. It would prove a great comfort to me if you would grant it."

"You have but to name it!"

"When you have the girl in custody I wish to question her—alone. If she is indeed my son's killer then she was with him in his last moments. I . . . I must know why she did it and . . . I must know if he suffered." Larousse cast his gaze down on the table. He could feel the comforting weight of a beautiful dagger in his pocket.

DuPries rested his hand gently on Larousse's arm. "Of course," he said soothingly. "Of course."



Jubilee couldn't sleep. Her head ached and restlessness refused to allow her to be still and close her eyes. Her vitals still burned. She massaged her belly which eased the tension there only a trifle. She tried to picture the sea voyage, the return home, the clean, open hills of New York. Her mind refused to focus on those pictures. Instead she thought only of Larousse and the contempt in his face the night he told her he had killed her parents. She wanted to make him hurt. She wanted to clean the earth of him. She wanted to cleanse herself of him and the memory of that face. Her eyes burned with unshed tears. The headache worsened. Her stomach heaved with every breath.

Finally, she sat up on the edge of the bed. Sleep would not come; lying in bed was useless. She got up and paced back and forth, nearly colliding with a chair in the unfamiliar room. She shoved it aside. She walked faster and faster, thinking about that contemptuous arrogant face. She bruised her knee on the foot of the bedstead and struck out slapping it with the flat of her hand. That hurt, but she felt a little better and her headache was less fierce.

She stole out to the hall, not really sure where she planned to go. About half way down the hall she stopped and realized she stood in front of Jake's bedroom door. She opened the door as quietly as she could. He lay sprawled across the bed tangled in a sheet, his hair a dark cloud around his face. His bare chest, just visible in the faint light from the open window, rose and fell in the deep breathing of sleep.

How she loved him! Her heart swelled with it. She longed to crawl in bed with him and stay sheltered in his arms the rest of her life. She took a step toward him and then stopped. The rumbling voice of La Zollier told her again one decision has already made. Jake's face looked so boyish relaxed in sleep. Jubilee managed to stifle a sob before she made a noise. The decision. She had known all along what La Zollier had meant, but she'd pretended, even to herself, that she did not. Now she couldn't pretend any more. She looked around desperately.

Jake's clothes from last night were draped over a chair where he had tossed them after stripping them off. All the servants were gone or someone would have tidied them up and put them away. Jubilee, as silent as a shadow collected his shirt, kneebreeches and coat. She had her own white stockings and good plain shoes. She held his clothes and looked down on his sleeping form and wanted, badly, to lean over and kiss him good-bye. She drank in his strong features as if to memorize them. There might not be another chance to see that face again and she wanted to make sure she could remember every curve, every crag and hollow.

She slipped as quietly out of his room as she had entered it and tiptoed back to her own. Jake's kneebreeches fit a good bit better than Jules' had. They were too long, of course, but they had drawstrings at the knee and waist and that held them on. The shirt was voluminous. It swallowed her up. She smiled a little to herself as she buttoned it up. It still smelled of Jake, a fresh, masculine scent. She tucked in the tails and rolled up the sleeves. It would have to do. The coat also was huge. She deepened the cuffs dramatically so that her hands were free. The tails nearly touched the ground. She considered not wearing it, but the binder that flattened her chest was long gone and though she had little to conceal, her life might depend on that concealment. She slipped quietly out of her room in stocking feet, her shoes under one arm.

Now she needed weapons and she knew exactly where to get them. She mourned the loss of her mother's dagger. That weapon was the one needed for this killing, but there was nothing she could do about that now. After supper, she had watched Jake and Gerome clean and load all the pistols in the house. They still lay neatly arrayed on the dining room table. She dropped one in each copious pocket of Jake's coat and headed for the kitchen. She wanted a knife as well.

In the kitchen she risked a candle to light the search for something suitable to bury in a rotten heart. She found a good, sharp knife neatly stowed in a drawer with other kitchen utensils. She also found a cold roast chicken and the stub end of a loaf of oat bread and noticed that her headache had vanished and her stomach

growled with hunger. As she ate she realized that for the first time in days there were no locked doors, no hands holding her, nothing between her and what she wanted to do. She felt almost peaceful.

When the chicken was half gone, and the bread entirely so, she hid the knife in an inside coat pocket. As she slipped out the back door, Jubilee wondered briefly what her second decision was to be about.



A stiff breeze blew from the direction dawn would come in a little while. Already the dark sky was a little grayer off to the east. Captain Moreau halted his horse under a guttering streetlamp and consulted the paper in his hand. Behind him a wagonload of militia men fidgeted and whispered among themselves. He didn't look forward to this morning's work. Picking up aristos was never easy. Captain Moreau had a superstitious fear that he was going against the will of God when he went against the will of his betters. Besides, they were always insulting and arrogant, usually well-armed and nearly always well-protected by loyalist guards. At least, according to the papers he had in his breast pocket, these weren't true nobles. Just sympathizers, co-conspirators. Not quite as bad. His conscience could rest easy about God's will, but these people might be just as dangerous.

Moreau folded the little bit of paper in his hand and signaled everyone to go left—24 Rue De Rossignol, only three houses down. Naturally the gate was locked. That was expected.

Moreau dismounted and the men jumped out of the wagon, arraying themselves behind him. Moreau quietly called for the man with the chisel and hammer to come forward. Three strokes—very sharp and very loud—and the gate swung open. A loaded wagon waited in the middle of the courtyard. Contraband probably, Moreau thought.

"Sergeant," said Moreau. "Count off five men and go around to the back." Moreau waited while that was done and then led the remainder of the men up to the front door. He wrapped on the door three times with the butt of his pistol.

"Open up in the name of the Republic!" he shouted. He enjoyed doing that, shouting something in the name of the Republic, even if it meant risking the displeasure of God. He didn't really expect someone to come politely to the door and inquire about his business. He paused only a few seconds before ordering the two men behind him to break the door down. When the door shattered, he stepped

over the debris and his men followed him in, fanning out as they had been trained to do. Before long he heard a shout.

"I've got one of them!" Two of his men came dragging along an old woman in tattered clothing. Obviously no aristocrat.

"This isn't one of them. She's a young woman. Jubilee Jones. Where is she, old woman? Is she in the house?"

"No! She is long gone!" the old woman's deep voice quavered with fear. She struggled weakly against the firm grip of the militia man that held her. Shots fired. One, then two more.

"Bring her!" Moreau shouted and ran toward the back of the house. The miscreants were in the kitchen obviously trying to get out the back door. They were trapped. Two men and a bold young woman with a smoking pistol stood together in one corner. One of the militiamen clasped a bleeding arm. The rest trained their muskets on the trio.

"Surrender or die!" said Captain Moreau. "You are under arrest in the name of the Republic!" Saying that phrase, as he had said it so many times before, filled him again with pleasure. He almost smiled.

Chapter 15

Except for two flights in the dark, Jubilee had never walked anywhere in Paris. Her father had insisted these were dangerous times and the streets were no place for a young lady of good family. Her mother hadn't liked for Jubilee to read the newspapers, but she did anyway when her mother wasn't around. The newspaper accounts had convinced her that her father was right. The streets were often full of violence and sudden death.

Several times she had to duck into doorways or alleys to avoid small bands of rough-looking men. Once she had to change her course entirely to avoid a brawl blocking the street. At one point three men, filthy and ragged, burst from the doorway of a noisy alehouse and nearly collided with her. They greeted her affably and went merrily on their way, all three of them bellowing a song about a woman with no underwear. Jubilee realized tonight she had again left the young lady of good family behind her and she prowled the streets as a boy dressed in ill-fitting clothes. Still, she thought it prudent to keep to the shadows and to always have one hand on the butt of a pistol.

Jubilee's family had often accepted invitations to Larousse's house. She been here many times and knew it lay four streets north of the National Assembly and two streets west, not far from the Place de Victoire and the Bibliothèqu. By the time she finally arrived, dawn tinted the sky pink behind her. Church bells rang all over the city as they did every morning. The deep voice of Notre Dame to the south filled her with strength and comfort. She passed a wizened old man herding a small flock of goats. He nodded to her as he went by, muttering a gruff "Bon jour."

A huge chestnut tree shaded the broad sidewalk across from Larousse's front gate. She realized this must be where La Zollier hid and watched—was it only yesterday? Time had become meaningless in the last several days. All these days had seemed like one continuous moment. Even though she had not slept at all the night before and even with the long hike to Larousse's house she did not feel the least tired. Quite the contrary, she felt elated. She had hoped to get to Larousse before dawn and now she wasn't quite sure what to do with herself until it was dark again. Just then a carriage shot out of Larousse's gate and turned down the street. He sat stiffly in the back, his face as cold as stone. She almost ran after him, in fact she did run a few steps before she realized it was foolish to chase after him that way. No, it was best to study his house, find all the doors and windows and decide the best way to get in tonight when all was dark and quiet. She had been in the parlor, the dining room, and the garden, but in no other part of the house. She shuddered thinking of those days. Thinking of Larousse and her father sitting like good friends talking politics over brandy. Filthy, lying murderer! Night would not come soon enough.



"Well, where is she?" Larousse practically danced with anticipation.

"She is in the interrogation room. She has given a false name, but it can be no other than she. I will take you to her." Larousse followed eagerly after the stiff-backed young captain. At last! He put his hands in his pockets. One hand held the portrait of his son, the other the knife that would bring justice to his son's killer.

When the captain unlocked a heavy wooden door and then fumbled with the latch, Larousse shoved him aside and jerked the door open himself. A dark young woman sat tied to a chair in the center of the room. Larousse had never seen her before in his life.

"Who in seven bloody hells are you?" he exploded.

"She is Jubilee Jones," said the captain behind him.

Larousse wheeled to face the captain. "No, she is not!"

"But, but . . . I arrested her with the American . . ." the captain sputtered and then stepped back away from Larousse.

"I am Marie, you bastard!"

Larousse turned back to the young woman and gaped at her as if the chair upon which she sat had spoken. His heart pounded and he felt like all the air had suddenly left the room. Blind, boiling rage threatened to consume him and he

struggled to master himself. He realized that his right hand was gripping the dagger in his pocket. He forced his fingers to release it and pulled his hand out of the pocket.

"You were with the American," Larousse said when he could speak.

Marie shrugged. "Obviously," she said.

"You know where Jubilee is."

"No, I don't. She disappeared last night."

Larousse took two steps toward her. "That's a lie!"

She glared up at him malevolently. "No it's not. The militia men searched the house. If she had been there, they would have found her."

"But you know where she is."

Marie shrugged again. Larousse found that gesture particularly irritating. "I suspect," she said. "But I do not know."

"Then you will tell me what you suspect." Larousse almost whispered it.

"Of course, I will not." Again the hate-filled gaze. Larousse took two more steps and struck her across the face with the back of his hand. She cried out and fell over chair and all. Larousse crouched down beside her and took her by the throat.

"Of course, you will," he said and pulled her and the chair back up right.

The girl's face flushed and she struggled to speak. Larousse released her throat.

"Well?" he said.

"Fuck you!" she gasped. He struck her again and this time held onto the chair so it wouldn't fall over.

"So," said Larousse in the most tightly controlled tones. "Where do you believe she is?"

Blood dribbled from the corner of Marie's mouth. It sprayed his shirt when she spat at him. Larousse went blind for a moment. When his sight returned the captain was gripping his arm and the dagger was only inches from the young woman's breast.

"*Monsieur!*" the captain said, his voice shaking. "You may not kill her! She has not yet even been to trial!"

Larousse again struggled again to master himself. A small pain was growing behind his eyes. The young captain's eyes were moist and round with fear.

"Yes, of course," said Larousse. He looked down at the small woman who still glared at him defiantly, almost daring him to act. Larousse jerked his arm out of the grip of the captain. He lowered the dagger and pulled the scabbard out of his

pocket. He meant to resheathe the blade but his hands trembled so hard he couldn't put the two pieces together. He gave up and shoved the naked blade and the sheath back into his pocket.

"You were with her when she killed him, weren't you?"

"I was in the next room. I could hear him raping her."

"It was his birthday . . ." Larousse's voice broke and he struggled again for control.

"She thought you had murdered her parents to get her as a birthday present for him," Marie said. "She didn't know about the slave trade."

Larousse looked at her for a long moment. "If you wish to continue living, you will shut up now." Then he turned on his heel and walked toward the door. The young captain had an odd look on his face.



Jubilee had found a few coins in Jake's pocket and around noon bought a piece of bread and a bit of cheese from a passing vendor. She was shocked at how expensive the bread had become. It took every sou she had. The nearest public pump was at the end of the street. She hated leaving her post, but thirst drove her to it. Later that afternoon a greater dilemma presented itself. She needed a private place to urinate. Not so much for the sake of modesty, but to conceal the fact that she hadn't the proper equipment to take care of the problem standing up. She skulked around the neighborhood until she found a blind alley partially blocked by an empty crate. She quickly dropped her breeches and squatted behind it.

The afternoon wore away, and Larousse did not return home. She studied all sides of his house as well as she could. The villa where she had lived with her parents was in a neighborhood out on the edge of the city. The streets were wide and clean and there were other small estates like the one she lived in, nearly all inhabited by well-to-do commoners. Larousse's house was deep in the heart of the city. Other buildings and businesses crowded around it, making it a difficult fortress to storm.

One weakness was the garden gate. She peered through the keyhole and through the gaps between the gate and the fence and saw there were guards on the back veranda—two of them—playing cards in the shade away from the heat of the day. The gate was stoutly locked. She broke two hairpins trying to unlock it and wished Marie had taught her the magic trick. The top edge of the garden wall was

about three feet above her head. She needed to find a way over since the gate wasn't going to be useful. The guards would not be such a problem after dark. She felt her chances of getting into the house were good if she could just get past this wall. She could almost reach the top if she jumped but she wasn't even remotely strong enough to pull herself up. She needed a boost. The alley was littered with debris and garbage as were other alleyways all over Paris, but nothing was large or sturdy enough to stand on.

Jubilee contemplated the wall for a long time. She almost stamped her foot in annoyance. All she needed was a ladder! Just then a wagon drawn by an old nag turned into the alley. The driver was a stocky, middle-aged man with rough hands and deeply tanned face. He nodded to Jubilee but didn't say anything, pulling up at the back door of a butchery. He descended from the wagon seat, glancing her way a couple of times as he unhitched the horse. Jubilee nodded casually to him and then, unhurriedly walked toward the street. She stopped before she reached the sidewalk, took off one shoe and pretended to empty it of a pebble while glancing back at the man and his wagon. She saw him lead his horse inside. She wondered if there was a stable in the back of the shop or if the nag was going to be someone's supper by this time tomorrow. It didn't matter. She smiled to herself. A nice tall wagon. Plenty tall enough to boost her over the fence once she pushed it down the alley a few feet. She resumed her vigil out under the chestnut tree and settled down to wait.



If stench could kill, everyone in the place would be dead, or so Gerome thought. Fifty years ago the Palais Guepier had been a grand and beautiful palace. Now it was a hot, filthy prison. They had taken Marie away at least an hour ago. Gerome was terrified that he would never see her again. Compared to that, fear for his own life was nothing. Jake paced one end of their cramped cell like a tiger. In fact, he growled whenever Gerome tried to speak to him. The old woman merely sat in the corner staring at the floor. She had said almost nothing at all since their arrest. Gerome steeled himself to slake his thirst at the dingy water bucket when the hinges of the door shrieked and someone shoved the bloody, bruised body of his beloved inside. She almost fell at his feet.

"Marie!" he leapt the span of refuse-littered floor that lay between them and knelt beside her. "*Mon Dieu!*" He lifted her tenderly.

"Is she alive?" Jake had materialized at his elbow. La Zollier also crowded close, whimpered dumbly with her hand over her mouth. Marie lay quietly on his arm for a moment and then coughed and opened her eyes. The fire that blazed in those eyes rocked him back on his heels.

"She's alive," said Jake to the old woman and patted her on one skinny arm.

"That fucking bastard . . ." Marie spluttered and then coughed again. "That son of a bleeding, leprous whore . . ."

"Not only is she alive, she's in a good mood," said La Zollier, a half-smile on her face.

"Dearest lady," Gerome said to Marie. "You must be quiet and rest. They have done terrible things to you!"

"That man is . . ." Gerome had been born in Lyons. His command of his native language was extensive. However, he heard a stream of invective from Marie's damaged but still beautiful mouth that taught him new ways to use that language heretofore undreamed. He sighed and patiently let her vent her rage and frustration while he poured some of the dingy water over his handkerchief and washed her face and neck. Finally she pushed away his hand and sat up.

"I am going to kill that bastard," said Marie. Gerome believed she meant every word.

"What bastard has earned your displeasure?" he inquired.

"Larousse!"

"You have been talking to Larousse?" Jake snarled.

"Yes. He thought I was Jubilee." She touched her lip gingerly. "He was very disappointed when I wasn't. Even more so when I wouldn't tell him where she is." She scooted over to the water bucket, took a dipperful of the nasty stuff and rinsed her mouth, spitting water and chunks of clotted blood on the floor. Jake crouched beside her. Gerome could sense the tension barely contained in his master.

"Are you saying you know where she is?"

"I can guess. You cannot?" Jake sat back on his heels but didn't answer. He seemed to be poised between two warring factions. "She's at Larousse's house," Marie continued. "Waiting for him."

"Why?" Jake's question was like a whiplash.

"To kill him, of course."

"She's just a child!" said Gerome. "She can't be planning to do such a thing."

Marie shook her head slowly and glanced at La Zollier as if for confirmation and then back to Gerome.

“She—”

La Zollier cut into Marie’s explanation. “She is no longer a child. She has made her first decision.” La Zollier seemed to fix Jake in the gaze of one glittering blue eye. “She could stay and escape with you or she could follow her heart. She was a child a month ago, perhaps a few days ago. But no longer. Now she wishes only to kill the man who killed her mother and father.”

“So she followed her heart and saved her own life,” said Marie to Jake. “She’d be dead now if she had decided to stay with you.”

“What?” Jake took Marie by the wrist. “Tell me what you mean by that!” Gerome reached over and put his hand on top of Jake’s. Jake glanced at him and pulled his hand away. Gerome left his hand on Marie’s wrist. He liked it there. Marie studied Jake’s face and ignored everything else.

“That fancy dagger you asked me about,” she said. “Larousse had it. He almost killed me with it, but the guard stopped him. However, if I had been Jubilee I believe that Satan himself could not have kept him from it.” Marie rested her bruised face on Gerome’s shoulder. “If Jubilee fails to kill that bastard, it would be my pleasure to do it,” she said.

Gerome put his arm around Marie and hid the joyous glow in his heart behind a sober face.

“No,” said Jake hollowly. “That task is mine.”



Larousse wept for the first time since Jules had been killed. He left the prison, told his driver to wait and sought the nearest alley. He leaned against a wall and felt like he would be violently ill. Then the tears came. The sobs ripped out of his breast. He felt as though his heart was being crushed under a great weight. To be so close to having her in his hands and to have that hope dashed so completely and so suddenly was unbearable. Utterly unbearable.

When the weeping finally subsided he was so weak he could hardly stand. He mopped his face with his handkerchief and continued to lean against the wall for a while until some of his strength returned. He needed to go home and lie down, but he couldn’t bear to go back there just yet. Too many memories. Every chair, every table, every detail of the house held its memory of Jules. Usually that was a comfort, but right now he needed to clear his head and do some thinking. He had to think

where she would go—what would she do? She could be anywhere. The possibility had to be considered that she might even get away and be out of his reach forever.

He reluctantly headed back to his carriage waiting patiently in front of the Palais Guepier. He was about to step into the carriage when the thought occurred to him that there was a way to strike at her even if he could not end her life. He turned back to the iron bars of the prison gate—and smiled.



Farruk had to find shelter. He had been walking for a very long time. His head throbbed. Every once in a while he would wake up face down in the gutter or on a sidewalk with people carefully stepping around him. The first time it happened he was mystified and frightened. The second time it happened his waistcoat had vanished. Eventually he realized he must be losing consciousness. At first he had an urgency to get somewhere, but he couldn't remember where. At first he couldn't remember his name and that also frightened him. Yesterday or today or . . . sometime he finally remembered all at once his first name and his father's first name. It was a small comfort.

He still had no idea where he was, beyond that he was in Paris. A place far away. He knew that very well, though it didn't occur to him to wonder far away from what. A place far away and very dangerous. Gunshots. He could hear them sometimes.

The first time he heard the blasts rip the air he fell to his knees and wept. People drew back with pale, frightened faces. After a moment he got to his feet and staggered away.

At some point he became aware that people were staring at him. He caught a glimpse of himself in a window and saw why. His face was covered with blood; he looked like a walking corpse. He got in line at a public pump and washed as thoroughly as he could. Another window showed him a man instead of a monster—a man with an angry red gash along his hairline.



When he could walk no longer he crouched on a street corner and sat cross-legged. A few moments later he nodded into lurid dreams. When he woke, someone had thrown two coins in his lap. The sleep, ugly as it had been, helped clear his head. He bought a piece of sausage with the coins and that steadied him even more.

He stumbled across the Jardin des Capucines, the name of the place leaping at once into his mind. People sat on the lawn and someone read aloud from "The People's Voice." He remembered that it was a newspaper and remembered reading it sometime or other. He sat with the other folk and listened. The imprisoned clergy were plotting to break out and massacre everyone in Paris, the man read. Farruk nodded. He remembered how much he hated the clergy. They were devils. The editorial called for the immediate execution of all clerics and hinted darkly that the king still had sway over the Assembly. The people in the park were horrified. They muttered among themselves that the clergy would destroy the republic. Some of the men wore red cloth caps. That meant something, Farruk was sure. The red caps stood for something. He searched his mind. The meaning eluded him, thickly obscured by clouds and mist.



Jubilee gratefully watched the sun finally set. It had been a long, hot, miserable day. Several times she had been tempted to take off the heavy wool coat that stifled her. Too dangerous. Not only did it hide her gender but it also hid the pistols. If some thief fancied it, she would be helpless. So she had kept it on and stayed in



the deep shade of the chestnut, only leaving occasionally to get water. She even dozed a little in the hottest part of the day. Larousse returned home in the late afternoon. Her heart skipped a beat when she saw him. She had the same urge to run after him that visited her earlier that morning. Again she saw it as foolish and kept her place. Now, darkness spread through the streets and her time had nearly come.

When the lamplighter rode up, stood in his saddle and lit the streetlamp beside the chestnut tree, she struck out for the alley. The wagon had

waited for her. In the dim light she could see it still where it had been parked in the afternoon. She braced herself against the tailgate and pushed as hard as she could. Nothing. It didn't budge. Astonished, she threw herself against it, pushing harder. No movement at all. She hadn't expected it to be easy, but this required an explanation. Was a rock bracing one of the wheels? Had it been chained to the wall? She looked it all over. She discovered the brake when exploring the left front wheel. When she noticed it, her face grew hot. How stupid! She climbing up onto the driver's seat, released the brake and climbed down.

Pushing the wagon was indeed difficult as she had expected. There was no one to steer it, she had to shove the wheels so they pointed in the direction she wanted it to go. By the time she had it near Larousse's gate she was sweating and exhausted. It was pitch dark. She decided no one could see her breasts, so she took off the coat and got truly comfortable for the first time all day. After a while, she realized that she was hesitating.

The garden wall towered above her. She was about to destroy the monster of her imagination in his very lair. She slowly pulled the coat back on. It needed doing and she wished it done. She wanted him to be as dead as her mother and father and no one else, not even Jake, could do this thing for her. The thought of Jake tugged at Jubilee's heart. She wished to live for his sake and the sake of the life she would have with him. She knew, though, she could never return to that life cleanly and freely with that monster lurking back in the darkness, the monster who had destroyed everything she had loved most in the world.

She climbed up onto the wagon and over the garden wall. Larousse was her monster and she must destroy him.



Jake had finally exhausted himself and dozed fitfully stretched out in one corner of the cell. His dreams were fragmentary, but they were violent and bloody. He saw the first man he'd ever killed—the man who had murdered his father. Old Barley had been a huge man who wore skins like a savage. In the dream he laughed showing big yellow teeth just as he had the day Jake had first laid eyes on him. A huge bear of a man, laughing . . . and then the laughing became the shriek of heavy hinges and the clang of a heavy door thrown back against the wall. Jake sat bolt upright, instantly awake. Four guards stood in the doorway of the cell. Three musket barrels pointed into the tiny cell.

"Come along," the sergeant said. "All of you."

Jake, Gerome, Marie and Madame Zollier all got to their feet. "What is this about?" said Jake.

"You'll find out soon enough. Move!" The sergeant turned on his heel and walked down the hall. They filed past the guards and followed him. They didn't have far to go. The narrow passage led to a wide courtyard, what had once been the castle keep. Outside the sun was setting. The last golden shafts of its light touched the guillotine crouched on a high platform in the center of the courtyard, one end thick with dark, dried blood which had dripped down in grisly puddles on the stones below. Jake saw Marie put her hands protectively around her throat.

"Come on, come on!" the sergeant snarled. "You'll get there soon enough! This way!" He pointed to a door across the courtyard and led them through it. Inside the floor was littered with moldy, much-trampled straw and a man in an oversized wig sat at a high table writing something in a large book. A lumpen prisoner in leg irons sat hunched over on a bench along one wall.

The man in the wig ignored them as they were herded to the open space before the table. "Citizen DuPries, the prisoners are here."

Citizen DuPries glanced up briefly. "I can see they are here. Leave me in peace a moment." He continued to write. Jake could feel his anger rising as he watched the goose quill in DuPries' hand jerk and shake. He wanted very much to rip this place to pieces with his bare hands. He kept still. He knew it was much more important that he get out of here and find some way to stop Jubilee before it was too late.



Finally the goose quill stopped and DuPries closed the book. "You are charged with sedition," he said without preamble. "How do you plead?"

"Not guilty!" Jake said, incredulous. "Who brought this charge?"

"That is none of your business. It is merely your duty to answer it."

"Precisely what is it we are supposed to have done?"

"You conspired with your friend, one Citizen Fallieres, to overthrow the Republic."

"My friend! He is most certainly not my friend! I'm an American, why would I want to overthrow the Republic?"

The filthy wretch on the bench laughed. "Because you are Austrian! Don't deny it." Fallieres. His face was blotchy and bruised. His clothes were torn and he was filthy, but it was most definitely he. Jake realized that he, himself, was the author of a good many of those bruises.

"Austrian!" It was Jake's turn to laugh.

"Laugh at your peril, Prisoner," DuPries snarled. "The guillotine awaits you."

"Larousse is behind this," Jake addressed this to Fallieres. "He's offered you something to say that. What? Your filthy life?" Jake turned to DuPries. "Larousse and this man were in business together. They were selling young women into slavery. One of young women was a friend of mine. I took her away from him and now he will say anything to get his revenge and save his own hide."

DuPries picked up a gavel. "Preposterous! You think me a fool? I judge that you and your accomplices are guilty." He banged the gavel on the desk. "Everyone knows," he sneered. "That the filthy aristos don't go into business! Guard!" He jerked his head toward the sergeant and the too-loose wig did not quite follow the gesture. "Take them back to their cell. They go to the guillotine at dawn!"

Chapter 15

Farruk had stayed in the Jardin des Capucines most of the afternoon. A water fountain splashed in one corner surrounded by neatly trimmed foliage. He loved fountains, he remembered that. He drank deeply and washed his face and hands again. He curled up under a tree and slept for a while, genuine sleep rather than the nothingness that he had experienced earlier. He could remember this morning, but everything before that was fog, mist, disconnected pictures. He remembered a pretty girl with dark hair. He remembered his own hands holding cards. He remembered a fountain somewhere much like this one. Fragments, pictures, all without labels.

Late in the afternoon a young boy hawking afternoon edition newspapers came through the park.

“*Écoute!* War news!” the boy shouted. “Verdun falls! War news! *Écoute!* Verdun falls!”

People anxiously snatched at the papers and those who couldn’t afford a paper or who couldn’t read crowded around those that could. Farruk had no money and couldn’t remember if he could read, so he joined a small knot of people to listen. A small, thin man read aloud in a quavering voice the account of a battle somewhere. Farruk wanted to ask where, how far away, and who or what was Verdun, but he was certain everyone else present knew the answers to those questions and he didn’t want to seem a fool.

What he did know was that this was very important and frightening news. There was a question he thought he could ask and not seem foolish.

“How long before the enemy reaches us?”

"That's not the point," said the reader timidly. His voice almost inaudible. Obviously he was uncomfortable with so many eyes on him. "Listen to this." He began to read an editorial which condemned the clergy now imprisoned with thousands of aristocrats. The clergy and the nobles were conspiring with the Austrians to destroy Paris. Soon they would pour out of the prisons and slaughter every living Parisian. A couple of women shrieked at this prediction and one of them fainted. Farruk didn't know who the Austrians were but if they were friends of the clergy they were his enemy.

"We can't let this happen!" Farruk called out. "We must arm ourselves." Many in the group babbled to each other, approvingly. Farruk realized that all eyes were now on him. The timid man seemed relieved and melted to the back of the growing crowd.

"We must find weapons. We must defend ourselves!" Farruk enjoyed everyone looking at him, it lent force to his voice. He remembered that people usually followed his orders. The crowd continued to grow.



Jubilee landed in a patch of rambler roses. Extricating herself, she thought she made enough noise to wake the dead. No guards came running out of the house, so she decided it might sound louder to her than it would to someone not breaking into a house with murderous intent. When she pulled the thorny branches out of her clothes, she noticed her hands were trembling. Whether from fear or excitement, she couldn't tell.

No distant streetlight penetrated the deep gloom of the garden. Memories from happier days weren't any help. She was certain there were no pools to stumble into and remembered tight rows of neat boxwoods lined every walkway. The garden was very small, it shouldn't be difficult to find one of those paths. Just as the thought crossed her mind, she tripped over a boxwood and fell face down in gravel. She pushed herself back onto her feet and brushed herself off feeling like an idiot. Then she noticed that the gravel was a shade lighter than the foliage on either side of it, and managed to walk to the house without falling down again.

The broad veranda was empty. The door to the salon which overlooked the garden was locked. Of course it was locked. She wished again that she had Marie's skill at picking locks. Thinking back, she realized that perhaps Marie had suspected long before Jubilee did that she would be going after Larousse. Jubilee shook her

head. If that was the case, why didn't Marie try to stop her? Surely, no one suspected where she might be.

She tried all the windows one by one as she traveled around the veranda. All were firmly locked—and in the summer! What an annoyingly stupid thing to do! However, no light showed. Though it was early in the evening, it looked as though Larousse had already retired. It would help if Larousse and his servants were in bed and all the house was silent. Finally she found what she was looking for. The curtains were drawn back, presumably to let in some air and the window was so wide open she didn't even have to raise it any further before she crawled in.

She stood inside and tried to see in the velvety darkness. This was the library, she was pretty sure. There were a handful of matches in the pocket of Jake's coat. Should she find a lamp and risk a light? Or stumble around the house in the dark? Just then, across the room, a few red sparks flew. A tiny flame appeared and touched the wick of a candle. Larousse's face was bathed in the glow.

"Welcome to my house Jubilee," he said in deeply rounded tones. "I was beginning to think I had guessed wrong and you would never come. Have a seat." She heard the unmistakable click of a pistol being cocked.



When the heavy door clanged shut, Jake expected the women to weep hysterically. He was surprised that they silently sat down face to face in the middle of the floor.

"Jake, Gerome please join us," Marie said. Intrigued, Jake sat cross-legged beside them and Gerome eagerly did the same. "We will die in this place if we don't do something."

"I'm in complete agreement," said Jake. "I've been trying to think of a way to get out of here all day."

"Jubilee said you are very good at unlocking doors with hairpins," said Gerome to Marie. "Could you give that door a try?"

"I've already tried it," said Marie. "The lock is too old and heavy. It wouldn't do us much good anyway. We can't get out of here without some kind of weapons." Marie nodded to La Zollier. "Let's see what we've got. Everyone put everything here." She cleared a space on the stone floor, pushing away the old straw and refuse with her hands. "While we were walking with the guards I stole everything I could reach. I assume, Madame, that you were doing the same."

"Mais oui," the old woman said and began to pull small things out of her bodice and from the folds of her skirt. A pocket watch, a pen knife, a few assignats, and a metal tube slightly longer than Jake's hand and smaller around than one of his fingers. "This is mine, I always carry it," said La Zollier as she pulled a length wire out of the hem of her skirt. "It's piano wire," she said. "It can be very useful."

"I can imagine," said Jake. He fished around in his pocket. They had all been thoroughly searched by the guards early on. All that remained to him was a soft leather tobacco pouch. There was nothing in it. He tossed it on the pile nevertheless. Gerome added a couple of pen nibs and two calling cards. Marie contributed a few coat buttons, another tobacco pouch, this one full, a half-dozen matches and a powder horn. She placed the last item on the pile with great care.

"Now that will be useful!" Jake said.

"A pity you couldn't steal a pipe while you were at it," said Gerome, half-joking.

Marie smiled. "I almost got caught taking the matches, but once I had the powder horn I knew we would want them!"

Gerome picked up the tube and looked through it. "Perhaps this can be made into a pipe somehow."

"Perhaps," said Jake. "Or we might make it into a sort of a pistol."

"Do you know how to do that?" asked Marie.

"Not exactly, but a pistol is just a tube that is closed at one end. Closing it at one end will be the problem, and of course there is no way to light the powder once it is in the tube. I will have to think about it."

"Is it the shape of the tube that makes the gunpowder explode?" asked Marie. "When I was a child my friends and I would set plates of gunpowder on fire just to watch it sparkle. We were very disappointed that it didn't explode."

La Zollier smiled. "I remember! You asked me why there was no explosion, but I didn't know. I was as mystified as you."

"It explodes because it is enclosed inside the pistol," said Jake. "If you had packed it in a jar or something like that, it would have blown your foolish heads off."

Marie and La Zollier burst into laughter. Jake seemed perplexed for a moment and then smiled grudgingly.

"So what are we going to do with all these bits and pieces?" said Gerome. "How will they get us out of here?"

"The knife is obvious," said Jake.

“So is the piano wire,” said Marie.

“We could put all the straw together and start a fire,” said La Zollier. “We could shout for the guards and then fall upon them when they came through the door.”

“The walls are thick, they might not hear us,” Jerome pointed out.

“True,” The old woman’s brow wrinkled.

Jake picked up the powder horn and turned it over and over in his hands. “Perhaps I have an idea,” he said.



Farruk had spent most of the afternoon at a run. About sunset a woman gave him a loaf of black rye bread and a tankard of beer. He gave her a long hard kiss in return. He had been talking, talking and talking. Verdun. It was on everyone’s lips. Verdun had fallen and everyone was in great peril. He knew he was a leader. When or why eluded him, but he knew he had led men into battle before. He could very well organize this rabble, and organize them he did. There would be forces at the gates of every prison in town. If the clergy attempted escape they would not find the people of Paris asleep in their beds! If the Austrians came to the city gates, the people would be ready even if the Paris Militia would stand and do nothing.

Farruk gave many speeches to crowds of people with frightened faces. He saw the fear harden into resolve as he spoke. By nightfall he had been given two pistols and a saber and led a small band of men armed with clubs, knives and a few



muskets. They marched to their objective and halted outside the high walls settling down uneasily to wait and watch, talking among themselves nervously, eyeing the gates of the forbidding Palais Guepier



“Sit,” he said and waved at a couch. The two pistols in Jubilee’s pockets weighed heavy but Larousse had his own pistol and the barrel was pointed directly at her belly. She sat.

“Dressed as a man, I see.” He sneered. “You seem to have an unnatural enjoyment of such clothing.”

His face was barely recognizable, his eyes pools of dark madness. Her mind raced, keeping pace with the rapid beating of her heart.

“Have you nothing to say?” he asked. “I have waited for this meeting for what seems like half a lifetime.”

“So have I,” said Jubilee. Her hands trembled, but not with fear. She pressed them together to keep them still. “You murdered my mother and my father. I have come to kill you,” she said simply.

Larousse chuckled. It was like the rustle of dry leaves. His fine hair was wild and unkempt and he looked ruined with the ravages of grief and exhaustion.

“And I spoil your plans with this pistol.” His voice was almost otherworldly. “You killed my son and soon I will enjoy the killing of you.” He relaxed into a smile as he thought of it. “After that, by my own hand, I will join my son.” She almost shivered in the cold of his gaze. “But not until you are dead. That is first.”

“I wish I could be sure you would kill yourself, I would die with a smile on my lips!” said Jubilee. “But you are a snake. A snake and a liar.”

Larousse smiled. “You don’t believe me?” He pulled a small vial out of his waistcoat pocket. “That is arsenic. I will drink it the moment you are dead.”

Jubilee shrugged. “So you say. I would rather see your corpse at my feet.”

Larousse laughed softly. He fished again in his pocket and pulled out a long narrow object. He held it close to the candle. “Do you recognize this?”

Jubilee gasped and tears sprang to her eyes. “Yes. It belonged to my mother.” Her voice shook a little. She struggled to calm herself.

“I have thought long what I would do to you when I finally had you. When I acquired this beautiful thing, the idea sprang full-blown into my mind.” He paused, smiling. Obviously savoring the moment. “In the next room I have the bed

in which my son died. In which you killed him. I'm going to tie you to that bed and then I'm going to stab you with this knife eight times. That's how many wounds my son had in his poor body. None of the blows will be fatal but the last one. I want you to taste each stroke. Then, when the blade has entered your heart, I will rest. I will drink that vial. You have my word of honor."

Jubilee believed him. She believed that the bed was in the next room, she believed that he would drink the vial. She believed the grief he felt for his son. She almost pitied him. Almost.

"I warn you," she said. "If you kill me and do not kill yourself, Jake will find you. Hell will not hide you from him."

Larousse laughed. "Oh, I almost forgot. Jake and your friends are in prison. If you would not come to me, then I needed a bit of insurance. I wanted to make sure if you lived, that everything you care about died. I arranged for them to go to the guillotine in the morning."

"No!" Jubilee's hands flew to her face. She pressed the heels of her palms against her eyes, shutting him out. No. It was too much! Mother. Father. Now Jake. Marie. Her past. Her future. Everything. She slowly pulled her hands away from her eyes. "You have me now. Send word to set them free."

Larousse stood. He gestured with the barrel of the pistol. "Get up," he said. Jubilee jumped to her feet.

"No! Send word to let them go. For the love of God, you must let them go!"

Larousse just grinned. He clearly enjoyed this. Again he gestured with the pistol. "Through there," he said. "*Allez!*"

Jubilee's thoughts skittered around wildly. She could die. She didn't want to die, but she could do it. Jake had to live. Something she loved had to live on and have a life, even if it wasn't to be her. A cold lamp sat on a small table beside the couch. On impulse she picked it up and flung it at his face. Startled, Larousse didn't have time to raise an arm. The lamp struck him full in the head. He dropped the pistol, struggling to keep his balance. Jubilee dove for the weapon. Larousse held his head with one hand, blood dripped between his fingers.

"Now you will take me to them," said Jubilee.

"You filthy little whore," said Larousse. He pulled a large white handkerchief out of a pocket and mopped his forehead. "I will not."

"Then I will shoot you dead where you stand," Jubilee said.

Larousse dabbed at his forehead. It was just a scratch, already the bleeding was slowing. "Do it," he said. He looked up and grimaced at her. Jubilee thought he

meant it to be a smile. "Your friends will die anyway. You do not know where they are held and if you did you couldn't rescue them."

For what seemed like a long time, they stood frozen in a tableau, suspended between life and death. Jubilee wanted so very badly to pull the trigger and make an end to this demon. She needed to think clearly and could not. Hot tears traced down her cheeks, she couldn't stop them. "You will free them," she said.

Larousse smiled and sat down. "No."

"Then I have nothing to lose. I will shoot you. I will have the small comfort of your dead body at my feet." Jubilee felt far away as if she was watching from a distance. She no longer knew who was speaking. "Then I will find Jules' body and have it dug up. I will feed his bones to every stray dog in Paris."

"No!" Larousse roared and jumped to his feet.

"I will do it. You have my solemn promise." Her throat was thick. It was getting hard to talk. "Or you will free them, and in return I will not kill you and when I see they are free, I will come with you. I will lie down in that bed for you. You will not even need to tie me." She wiped tears from her face with the rough sleeve of Jake's coat while she waited for his answer.

"How do I know you will keep the bargain?"

Jubilee thought about it for a moment and then shrugged. "Would you have kept a similar bargain to save the life of your son?"

"Without hesitation."

"Jake is all I have left."

For a long moment Larousse studied the blood-stained handkerchief in his hands. Then he stuffed it back into his pocket.

"Very well," he said. "I agree."

Relief flooded Jubilee. She lowered the pistol, uncocked it carefully and put it in a coat pocket. Now she had three pistols and a knife. She thought ruefully that soon she could start her own war. Larousse went over to the wall and pulled a bell rope. Moments later a tall, cadaverous butler appeared.

"Anton," said Larousse. "Have the carriage brought around."



Everything was set. Jake stood on one side of the door, Marie and Gerome on the other. La Zollier waited at the back of the cell.

"Everything depends on you, Madame," said Jake. "Begin when you feel you are ready." La Zollier nodded and crossed her arms over her breast, grasping her shoulders. She seemed to go inside herself for a moment. When she looked up her eyes blazed. It was quite alarming. She dropped her arms to her sides.

"Now," she said softly.

Jake leaned over to the door. The lock and hinges had been packed with gunpowder. Tendrils of rag hung out as fuses. He struck a match and set the rags alight, then leaned back and covered his face with his arms, as did Gerome and Marie. For a long tense moment the rag burned and then—bang-bang-bang! The door blew off its hinges and fell out into the corridor. Another long moment passed before Jake heard the clatter of running feet. Four guards appeared in the doorway. La Zollier raised her arms.

"I curse you!" she shrieked. "You will die in agony unless you submit to my will!" The guards stood frozen in the doorway, their eyes bulged and their mouths gaped. "Lay down your arms and do as I say or I will destroy this entire place! I will pull it down around your ears and you will die a horrible death! Do as I say! Drop your weapons!" She pointed one gnarled finger at them. Jake was surprised it didn't shoot fire. She began to chant gibberish in the most hellish voice he had ever heard. He, himself, had an urge to run out of the room. All of the guards had the same urge and stampeded out the door. Two of them dropped their muskets and Jake and Gerome scrambled for them. Marie laughed and hugged the old woman.

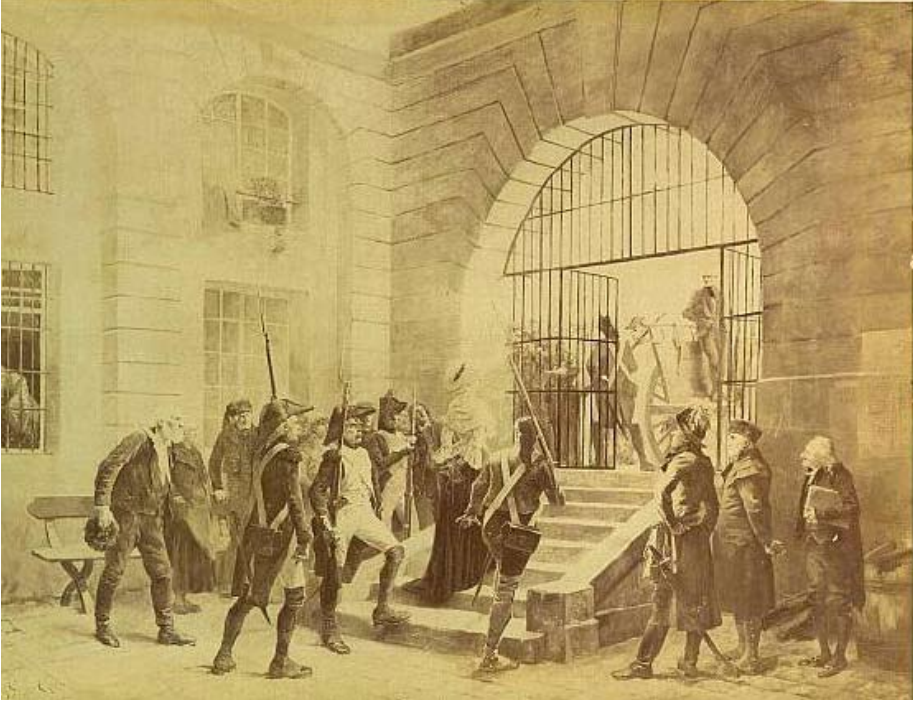
"Wonderful!" Marie said. "I was ready to piss down my leg!" La Zollier grinned, her startling white teeth shown in her aged mahogany face. She made claws of her hands and pantomimed a snarl. Then the smile returned.

"Come on," said Jake. "We are not out of this yet!" He led them down the hall to the courtyard where the guillotine waited.



Farruk's little army was becoming a mob. He wasn't sure he blamed them. The prison guards had noticed them and yelled at them to disband. Called them rabble. This did not sit well with the men. Farruk answered the guards, telling them the people had come to guard the prison, to prevent break outs. The guards laughed.

"They are in the pay of the aristos!" someone said from the crowd. "We are lost!"



“We are not lost,” Farruk growled. “We are fully armed. They will not get by us.”

“They all have muskets. Only a few of us have them.”

“We have all we need. We are strong! We are the people of Paris! If they attack us they die!” Farruk had repeated this—or some version of it—over and over today. The phrases came easily to his lips. It calmed the men for a moment but they whispered among themselves and pointed at the patrolling guards visible through the heavy iron bars of the castle gates.

A carriage clattered up the cobblestone street and halted. A man and a boy got out. As they passed under the streetlamp Farruk saw the face of the boy full on. Jubilee. As he walked toward her, everything that he was, everything that he had ever done, came rushing back to him. He laughed with the pure joy of it. “I know you” he said. “I am Farruk Hussein Mohammed al Hassan. I am the son of a king!” He threw his saber into the air and caught it. “And you, my lovely mouse, are Jubilee, the most beautiful woman in the world. Come with me and be my queen!”

She smiled, a small tired smile, and shook her head. The smile nearly broke his heart, he would take it with him to his grave.

"We have come to release four of the prisoners who are being held in error," said the man beside her curtly. Farruk thought he looked familiar.

"Very well," said Farruk. "I suggest you get them and take them out a back way, if there is one. It is not very healthy to be a prisoner here tonight."

The man stalked up to the gates, trailed by Jubilee. "I am Deputy Larousse," said the man. "Let me in."

After a few minutes a captain of the guards unlocked the gates to the prison courtyard. Three armed men crowded behind him, one of them holding a torch. Larousse said something quietly to the captain who nodded and stepped aside.

Before Jubilee slipped through the gates, she glanced back at Farruk one more time and then was swallowed up in the castle courtyard.

The captain of the guard stalked toward Farruk and his men, his hand threateningly on the pommel of his saber. "You rabble!" he yelled. "Disburse! There is nothing here for you to steal."

"It is the priests we want!" said a red-faced man who smelled of cheap wine. "Give them to us and we will go!"

"Are you insane? We have no priests. We have only a few nobles and . . ." All the men began to talk at once, drowning out the captain. Farruk tried to regain control but he could not be heard. The captain seemed to realize he had made a terrible mistake. He drew his saber and backed white-faced toward the gate. Then: bang-bang-bang! A sudden hush fell over the crowd. Musketfire? Pistol shots in the distance? Farruk could not even guess.

"They are escaping! They are escaping!" A man in a guard's uniform, his face contorted in terror, ran through the gates of the prison. "They are escaping!" He did not turn when he left the prison, but darted in a straight line across the street, just barely dodging an approaching carriage. The effect on Farruk's little army was electrifying. They stormed the open gates, knocking down the captain and trampling him underfoot.



Jake led everyone down the corridor, musket cocked and ready. They didn't see a single guard. "You must have terrified all of them," Marie murmured to La Zollier.

"Something is happening," said the old woman. "Something very wrong."



The silence was eerie. They passed many closed doors, cells like their own, Jake guessed. One or two stood open. Faint torchlight came through the barred windows. A man screamed in the distance. A death scream, suddenly cut off.

"You are right," said Jake. "Something is going on." Another cell door hung open. He went into it. They all crowded around the window. The guards were in the courtyard below fighting for their lives.

"A riot!" said Marie.

"It is the Great Death," said La Zollier. Terror saturated her voice. "It is beginning." Her voice sounded strange, not like her own voice at all. "It will crush us all!" She fell to her knees, her arms wrapped around her shoulders.

"No!" said Marie. "We will survive this, I swear it." She grabbed La Zollier by the shoulders and shook her. "You will survive this. Come now," she said to all of them. "We must hide ourselves. They will come up here soon."



While Larousse talked to a man in an oversized wig, Jubilee kept her hand in her pocket resting on the butt of a pistol. She barely listened, the shouts of the people outside distracted her.

"... can see as you came through the gate we have a situation here," the man in the wig was saying. "I suggest you take your friends and go." He tossed Larousse a ring with a heavy key on it. "I need all my guards at the gate. Your friends are on the second floor through that archway across the courtyard. They are the fifth door on the left. If you proceed on down the passage you will come to another corridor. Go to the left and you will come to an old postern gate that opens onto the alley. You can get out that way, it's bolted, not locked."

A muffled explosion thundered in the distance. The crowd outside howled.

"I suggest you go now. My guards cannot hold that mob back for long!"

They went to the doorway. There was a turmoil of fighting by the gate. The archway wasn't far. Jubilee sprinted for it. She could hear Larousse huffing and puffing right behind her. She took the stairs two at a time. The passageway was empty.

A heavy wooden door lay on the stones about half way down. Jubilee counted the doors. Yes, it was the fifth one that had been torn off its hinges. She ran to the open cell. Empty. The smell of gun powder hung in the air.

"No!" Jubilee screamed it with all her breath and all her being.

"Good. Fine. Let's get out of here," said Larousse.

"What are you talking about?" said Jubilee.

"Jake is either free or dead. It is not over between us. We have our agreement. You gave your word. Or perhaps a murderess has no honor."

Jubilee wanted to vomit, but her entrails were frozen. She wanted to weep but her eyes burned dry.

"What agreement?" Jake stood in the passageway behind them flanked by Gerome and Marie. La Zollier stood behind them. Jake and Gerome each had a musket cradled in their arms.

Larousse laughed. "She agreed to die for you. She is mine!"

"What?" Astonishment spread across Jake's face.

"If he set you free, then he could have me—kill me," Jubilee said. She felt light headed. Torn between the determination to fulfill her bargain and relief that Jake lived.

"We set ourselves free. There is no agreement. Jubilee come over here."

"No!" The intensity of Larousse's cry matched Jubilee's own. Larousse snaked his arm around Jubilee's throat and shoved his hand in her pocket. He pulled out one of the pistols and pressed it against her temple. "This little whore dies tonight one way or the other. Follow me and I will put a lead ball in her head." He dragged her over the fallen door and down the passage. Jubilee struggled but his arm was like iron. He sweated, she could smell him. When they came to the cross-passage he dragged her to the left, toward the postern door. She fought him with everything she had. His arm slipped and he grabbed her coat. She slipped out of the huge coat easily and took off running as hard as she could up the passage. She heard the pistol fire and saw stone chips fly off the wall in front of her. The passage ended in a stairway leading up into the darkness. She ran up them. She could hear Larousse's ragged breath right behind her. A rectangle of lighter gray appeared above. An open door. She flew through it and looked around wildly. Nothing but sky above her. City lights were all around in the distance. There was no place else to run. The roof was utterly empty, except for a flag pole bearing a tattered flag of the Republic. When the door slammed she whirled around. Larousse was turning a key in the lock. He held up the key ring DuPries had given him.

"All the prison locks have the same key," he said and threw it over the edge of the roof into the night. He had two pistols in his belt. He pulled one of them out, pointed it at her and cocked it. "Now, let's see. How shall I do this?" he grinned delightedly. "It won't be as poetic, but it will be just as sweet." His gaze swept the bare roof and then his eyes fell on the only object there. The flag pole. "Go over there and put your hands behind you," he ordered.

Jubilee hesitated. She knew what he had in mind. She considered forcing him to shoot her, but she did as he said. Larousse pulled off his cravat and tied her wrists behind her. His hands shook. He was trembling, she could sense his excitement. He tied her hastily in his eagerness to see her dead. She could feel the knot slip almost immediately.

"Larousse! Let her go!" It was Jake's voice muffled by the heavy door.

Jubilee strained to free her hands of the scarf. She didn't know why she was doing it. If she managed to free her hands, he would only shoot her. Yet she had to do something.

"Larousse! If you harm her. You will never leave this place alive!" Jake's voice had an edge of desperation.

Larousse uncocked the pistol and pushed it into his belt, then he pulled out of his pocket a small framed portrait, Jubilee's dagger and the small vial of arsenic. He lay them carefully on the stones near Jubilee's feet. He took off his coat and folded it meticulously. Then he picked up the portrait, kissed it and regarding it lovingly for a moment. "My dear sweet boy," he said. "It's all I have left of him now." His eyes burned into her. "Because of you!"

"I have nothing left of my mother and father because of you!"

He stroked the portrait as if she hadn't spoken. He kissed the little painting again and put it carefully on top of his coat. Then he stooped and picked up the dagger. It glittered in the dim light. He pulled the business-like blade out of the exquisitely delicate scabbard.

"It's such a beautiful thing, but deadly." He smiled at her. "You are very beautiful. I would have enjoyed having you as a daughter-in-law." He dropped the scabbard beside his son's portrait and studied the blade a moment. "But you were deadly and now must die." He looked her up and down and then put the tip of the dagger against her left shoulder. "On the eighth stroke," he said and shoved it into her. For an instant she couldn't believe steel was deep in her flesh. Then he pulled it out and blood poured down the front of her shirt.

A scream tore out of her. He smiled, an eerie, unnatural smile and put the tip of the blade against her right shoulder. Desperately, she grasped the pole, drew up her legs and kicked him in the stomach as hard as she could. He staggered and fell over backwards. His head hit the stones with a wet crack and he lay still.

Jubilee hung from the pole panting, sweat rolling down her face and blood saturating Jake's white shirt. Pain filled her body, radiating from her shoulder. She struggled against her bonds, afraid Larousse would wake up and continue his revenge. Finally, one hand popped free and the cravat fell off. With the sudden release, she pitched forward and fell on top of Larousse. She quickly rolled off. The stars wheeled above her for a moment as blood trickled out of her throbbing shoulder. After a moment she could feel the dagger under the small of her back. She groped for it, sending waves of agony down her left arm. When her fingers closed over it a kind of peace descended. She sat up and then knelt beside Larousse's inert body. He lived. His mouth was open and he seemed to be gasping for air. She held the dagger in both hands and prepared herself to plunge the blade into his heart, the heart in which this blade belonged all along.

She saw her mother fall again, saw her die. Saw the blood. She lowered the blade to his chest, resting the tip over his heart. She thought of her mother and her father. She thought of warm summer mornings at breakfast with them. She thought of Christmas by the huge fireplace in their house in New York. This man had taken all that away from her. Her hands shook and she tried to push the blade down into his heart. Tried and failed. A tear burned its way down one cheek. She tried again. She remembered her mother's face as it was the last night of her life. Firm, brave. Christiana knew what was about to happen and her only thought was to save her daughter. Jubilee felt her mother's love wash over her and she sat back on her heels.

She was Jubilee, the daughter of Christiana and Neville. She looked down at Larousse. He was a monster. She had nearly made herself into a monster.

Musket fire exploded and the door swung open. Jubilee stood up, feeling a bit lightheaded, but very well otherwise. An instant later Jake ran through the door, Marie a step behind him. Both stopped when they saw her. Jubilee ran lightly to Jake and he gathered her into his arms.

"You're hurt!" he said. She rubbed her cheek against his chest and smiled.

"I'll heal," she said. "Hold out your hand." She took his hand and turned it palm up. Mystified he let her do it. She carefully placed the dagger on his palm. "My mother gave me my life. It was her first gift. This was her last gift. I don't need

this anymore. I give it into your keeping.” He looked at it uncomprehendingly. Marie put a hand on Jubilee’s arm.

“Are you sure you are all right?” Marie said. Jubilee threw her arms around her friend. “You’re still bleeding,” Marie murmured. “We must take care of that”

“I’m fine, truly I am.” Jubilee felt Marie stiffen suddenly.

“Watch out!” she cried. Jubilee turned. Larousse was up on one elbow with a pistol aimed at her back.

Jake was a blur of motion and the dagger blossomed out of Larousse’s chest. He fell over backwards. Jake ran over to him, kicked the pistol away and knelt. He looked up at Jubilee who still clung to Marie. “He’s dead.” He pulled the dagger from Larousse’s chest and wiped the blade clean. Then he found the scabbard and put the blade into it. He stood up. “We had better go,” he said. “It’s not safe here.” He went to Jubilee and took her from Marie’s arms. Jubilee had a sudden feeling that the two of them conspired to never let her loose again. She didn’t mind at all. “Can you walk?” he said. She grinned up at him.

“I could fly,” she said. She told him about the postern gate.

Jake led them down the stairs, into the alley and then out onto the street. The noise of the prison gradually dropped behind them and the night became soft and quiet. Marie had her arm around the waist of La Zollier and her free hand held the hand of a smiling Gerome.

Under a guttering street lamp they found a hackney carriage with the driver nodding in sleep. Jake tapped on the side. The horse turned in its traces, regarding them with the bored gaze of working horses everywhere and twitched its tail. The hackney driver woke with a snort.

Jake tenderly helped Jubilee into the seat and settled down beside her.

“Where to, *Monsieur*?” said the cab driver, his voice thick with interrupted sleep.

“Yes, where are we going?” said Jubilee echoed his question.

“Home,” said Jake. He watched the others climb into the carriage—Gerome, Marie and La Zollier. “We are all going home.”

Jubilee smiled up at him. Then she lay her head against his chest and listened to his heart beat for a moment. “I am already home,” she said. “Wherever you are, I am home.”