

Chapter 31

First the good news: dinner went over like the Academy Awards. Honest to God, I've never played a better room.

Shona ate so much she gasped that she had quite frightened herself. "God, I hope this doesn't bring on the baby."

"Not here darling!" Rupert guffawed, then proving himself the true template for a modern gentleman, added, "Wouldn't want to leave this marvelous Pouilly-Fuissé!"

Dore spouted some sick-making crap about Rupert's palate: "Wow! Do you know your way around the vineyard!"

No one gave me any credit for choosing the vino in the first place, not even my pal Marl, who just mewed, "Oh Dore!" at the suavity of these two buffoons in finding Pouilly-Fuissé a great wine.

Nina tucked in like a champ. "The turkey is superb and the cherries are such a clever idea."

Hedy told Lesley, "Oh I do wish I could cook, but there's always been someone else who did that sort of thing."

Lesley answered: "Well you just have more important things to do." She said this without sarcasm and I wondered if she'd been affected by the cognac fumes while making the gravy.

Maureen congratulated Lesley and me, but did her Greek chorus bit over the "out-of-sight cholesterol levels."

Maureen's soul sister from the food police, Pandora, hectored, "We must realize that 85.5 percent of all the fat content of food on earth is eaten by the developed world ..."

The rest of her lecture was drowned out by Paco. "Yeah, but you fuck up your hair without fat in your system! Look at the Italians, and the Spaniards, they have great hair because of all that olive oil ..."

Daniel just pulled a "ditto" of his earlier comments. He played with the food on his plate as if indifferent to pleasures of the palate and got a wan smile from Pandora for his efforts, or lack of them. I wanted to stuff him like a Strasbourg goose, then make him breathe on the silly bitch to see if she

fainted. I won't say my sense of rejection went deep, more like a paper cut really – it doesn't hurt for long, but it sure does smart some while it lasts.

I convened with my staff in order to prepare the pies for serving and to open a few more bottles of wine. Simon followed us carrying a pile of plates, Dore, surprisingly, right behind him. The mystery of his loyalty was soon solved.

"I told Rupert to relax, I'd decant the port," the pompous git announced. A "little lady" body language went on, but mercifully no more than that. Marl dithered around, thanking him as effusively as you would thank the Bank of America for lowering the interest by half on your thirty-year mortgage. "I need a cheesecloth for the sediment," he demanded, sending Marl into a tailspin.

"Shall I clear the dishwasher and start stacking the next load?" Simon wanted to know.

"If you cook as well, I'll marry you," Maureen threatened.

"Poor me, I'm afraid I don't," he said, smiling with teeth that were no stranger to floss. "My daughter Helen claims the dishwasher is my only skill in the kitchen."

"Every little bit helps," I told Simon. "My ex – okay a bit of a liberty, but I had a call in to my lawyer – "couldn't even manage that."

"Simon's divorced," Lesley told me over the whirring of the hand mixer as she whipped the cream topping for the pies. I gave her a look but the cream didn't curdle so I guessed I was losing my touch. To prove it, she added: "Just in case you were wondering."

"I wasn't," I said, hoping not to pull a Pinocchio.

"I've been divorced twice actually." Simon wanted one of us to know.

"Twice?" I raised an eyebrow.

"No murders involved." Simon meanwhile, had cleared the dishwasher, found out where to put the clean plates all by himself (a male first) and was stacking the dishwasher like a champ. God, the guy could talk and do something else at the same time! "I learned something though."

"What?" Dore asked, fussing about with the cheesecloth found under the sink by Marl, who appeared weak from relief at pleasing him.

"Hmm?" Simon clicked the machine into action without the usual querulous "How does this work ...?" routine. "Sorry?"

"Learned what from being married twice?" Dore reminded him.

"To think long and hard before doing it a third time."

"You'd do it a third time?" I shook my head. "What an optimist."

“Yes, actually I am,” Simon smiled, wiped his hands on a dishtowel, putting it back on the bar of the oven exactly where he’d found it.

Lesley watched him and grinned. “An anal optimist into the bargain,” She transferred the cream to a serving dish.

“Maybe that’s what frightened off the first two,” Simon told her.

“You’d never say that of me,” Dore boasted, dropping the sediment stained cheesecloth onto the counter. “I leave everything lying around, huh Marl?”

“Yes, but that’s so totally a chap thing, darling,” Marl congratulated him, wiping the counter after disposing of the cloth in the rubbish bin. “It’s just the way you are.”

“My oldest son’s sixteen and he’s a slob too, but I’m working on the problem” – Maureen told us this with such menace that we all fell silent, busying ourselves with our tasks. Simon being the new guy on the block, jumped in.

“I ask out of professional interest, considering your son’s age, but just how have you managed that?” he asked.

Maureen gave us her Draconian take on parenting skills.

“Ah yes, well.” Simon straightened his tie – the last time he would need to adjust that particular piece of neckwear if I had anything to do with it. Then he went on where thousands have feared to tread. “Yes, I suppose there are elements of behaviorist techniques to your approach.”

“Yeah? No kidding!” Maureen was pleased. Lucky for him. “You mean there’s a word for the way I bring up my kids?”

Simon wisely expanded the definition of “behaviorist” to include elements of conduct usually classified as psychotic, while the rest of us gathered up the dessert makings. Dore insisted on taking the port along to reassure Rupert: “Things are being done the right way around here.”

“Thank you Dore, what would I do without you to dot the ‘i’s” and cross the ‘t’s for me?” I told him.

“Not a problem, babe,” he beamed, proving himself as much a stranger to irony, as he was to chin.

“What a ridiculous man,” Simon whispered, taking a pile of dessert plates from the table and heading toward the dining room.

I decided right there and then that Simon might just be Mr. Right in a Mr. Okay sort of a way. Hey! Why push your luck asking for the moon, when the clouds have finally parted enough for a girl to see the stars?

Chapter 32

Simon and I agreed later that our strange little group had nothing in common. I brought them together to celebrate an occasion they didn't for the most part care about in the first place - well, you know how long *that* keeps things afloat. Simon felt adults should sing for their supper no matter how dull the band. He may be a shrink, but he isn't suckered into giving slack just because it's there to do.

Dessert was over, the port served and raved about, Dore taking the credit as if he'd personally stomped on the grapes. We trudged into the sitting room with lots of congrats to the cooks (who smirked prettily), groans from everyone on how stuffed they were (not Pandora), and jokes on how the ingenuity of Americans had been well and truly proved by our talent for breathing a little life into pumpkin.

My staff insisted I stay with my guests while they refreshed the coffee supply. I kept handing out the Godiva chocs (more groans, only one refusal) and checking to see that everyone had what they needed. Many women tell me this is the best part of the evening for them: when the hostess, freed at last of her responsibilities, gets to sparkle. I don't sparkle so well though; I tend to have a bit of an energy dip about then and would love it if everyone just left – you know, like they do at a restaurant. I want to clean up, pick at the leftovers and put on a video of the soaps I've recorded that evening. I was just starting to zone out altogether when Shona hoisted herself out of a chair and asked where she could find the nearest supply of Evian. I offered to fetch it for her, but she insisted on following me to the kitchen.

“Sorry to be such a bore.”

I said it wasn't any trouble, and ushered her toward the kitchen.

“How nice this party has been.” Shona hit just the right note of condescension, as if she was throwing potato peelings to the mob. I busied myself getting the water out of the fridge, finding a clean glass; Shona didn't strike me as a from-the-bottle type. She squeezed herself into a chair behind the kitchen table and, changing tack from faint-hearted endorsement of *my* hostess skills, fuffed on with much enthusiasm about the charms of my

thimble-sized repro of *her own* spread in Holland Park. Finally, after a sip of France's best she got to the point – and it was some point.

“Rupert told me everything about the two of you.” She sounded puzzled, whether by the actual indiscretion or his candor in the matter I couldn't guess. I was too shell-shocked to struggle with that for now.

“Oh, did he now?” I felt too embarrassed or ashamed to come up with any snappy patter. Just as well. This wasn't an audition for my big break as a featured lounge act in Vegas.

“You aren't going to ask me how I feel about it, are you?”

I shook my head. “No, I know.” And God knows I did.

“You aren't the first, you know.”

I'd figured that one out. No tears, no accusations, no curses. I'd got “just the facts ma'am,” as Detective Joe Friday, pride of the L.A.P.D. (in those far off days when we were still deluded enough to be proud of the L.A.P.D.), would have wanted.

“How do you stand it? If you know what Rupert is up to, how can you be so calm?” I asked. I really wanted to know; I was coming to respect Shona for some reason and I wanted to sort out why: it wasn't her dress sense, that was for sure. I knew class (literally and metaphorically) when it came my way and that had something to do with it.

Shona smiled. “His betrayals are petty. Oh, they hurt, but our life together isn't affected in the long term.”

I bristled a bit at the intimation I was nothing more than a slipped stitch in the tapestry of their life together, then I came to my senses. I would need to respect myself, as much as I did Shona, by the time my head hit the pillow that night. I bit down on the bullet.

“I'm sure you're right. You know your marriage better than I do.” I sighed, went on, “For what it's worth, I'm sorry. It stopped as soon as I met you.” Okay, okay – lame, but at least I was honest.

“Oh, I knew it would.”

“So you knew about me when I came to your house?” God I was feeling creepier and creepier about these two: the fly paper was becoming less of a mystery ...

“No, but he told me later that evening, he always does.” Shona shifted herself and stood. Her ankles were puffy and I felt even worse. “Rupert is so predictable,” she said. She sounded marginally pissed off by that fact and I was glad she moved slowly so that I could head her off at the knife drawer if I needed to.

Now, I'm sure there's a protocol for such situations, but I didn't have the book at hand and I'd winged it for as long as I could or wanted to. Shona seemed on top of things; I'd said what was expected of me and was sincere in my apologies. *Fin.* Wow, did I feel European – sophisticated, you know? I was Simone Signoret and Jeanne Moreau, smiling wisely behind a veil of un-PC cigarette smoke, putting memories aside after a moment of regret. Life goes on, *je ne regrette rien* ...

Je was a few respectful steps behind Shona as we headed back to join the others when she paused at the kitchen door and threw a curve ball that blew my Simone/Jeanne fantasy out of the ballpark.

"This isn't Rupert's baby, you know." Christ, what an arm the woman had. Breeding tells, huh?

"No, I didn't. Does he?"

"Oh yes. Oh yes indeed." Ah the "killer" gene. It takes as many centuries to develop as a great lawn. She laughed like a drain, the first human reaction she'd shown during our exchange, one of that even one of the lower orders could connect with – in a throat drying, stomach flopping kind of a way. "He just doesn't know who, of course."

I flashed on her having had it off with a contemporary equivalent of Mr. Brown up on the fish farm, but the image was gone before I could really play with it. I wondered at the suitor who had the persistence to see past Shona's minus zero allure quotient – but still lochs run deep.

After being hit by this chill drollery, I wasn't without a certain sympathy for Rupert. True, it was a relief to know that a woman I'd labelled as a doormat was anything but; still, playing so dirty – oh fuck it! Why not? Rupert needed that kind of relationship at some level, or he wouldn't stick around, and if the fish farm and the house in Holland Park had anything to do with his unwavering loyalties, then he really deserved to wade in shit with straws up his nose.

I sensed these two were caught up in a comedy of manners, perhaps more of a cultural difference type of thing than anything else and my life's too short to wonder about anthropological *dreck*. People just aren't the same everywhere that's all – trying to find the common denominator is like trying to make something out of the fact that "dog" spelt backwards is "God."

Shona linked her arm through mine. We were girlfriends now. Wow. I had a question, though – before we starting hanging out together.

"Why did you tell me about Rupert not knowing who the father is?"

“Because I knew *you’d* understand why I was telling you.” Shona stopped smiling and slid her arm away from mine. A dismissive gesture that let me know I was now a non-person in Shona-land.

I told you she had class.

Chapter 33

Feeling the size of Thumbelina in flatties after my chat with Shona, I slunk upstairs to do repair work on my face and my ego. However, since I seemed to be well on my way toward a straight flush in the weird confrontation sweepstakes, my walking in on some sexy thrashing around between two of my guests on my Ralph Lauren bedspread seemed just the trump card I needed to complete the hand I'd been dealt for this evening.

I'll say this: Hedy rumped and embarrassed was as gorgeous as Hedy sleek and ready for the kill. Lesley looked like a middle-aged lady doctor making a fool of herself over someone she knew to be as thick as clotted cream. On the other hand, she was clearly not interested in Hedy's grasp of Hegel.

No one knew what to do, of course. There was a lot of dithering, with me trying to get out of there the way I came, but getting my sleeve caught on the doorknob. Lesley made what are known primly as adjustments to her clothing, starting with what are known even more primly by Rigby and Peller (by appointment to Her Majesty the Queen, and there's a pun in there somewhere, but I refuse to touch it) as her underpinnings. Hedy just flung her braid over her shoulder and gave me a killer look as if I was the intruder in my own bedroom, if you please! God, the arrogance of the stupid.

"Sorry about this," I said, despising myself for letting Hedy get to me.

"No, no! Please!" Lesley sounded desperate.

"No, really, I shouldn't have come in without knocking."

Now I was being ridiculous, making an apology for walking into my own bedroom at a Thanksgiving dinner; why, even Hedy looked sorry (ish) for me.

She slid off the bed. "How were you to know? Don't feel too embarrassed, I'd hate you to feel too embarrassed," she said.

"Oh, fine." Can you credit such crap? I guess I was ready to swallow such *chutzpah* whole because my mother always told Beverly and me that a good hostess never commented on anything done or said by guests in her home. She was talking about spilling wine or the odd cigarette burn on the

carpet, but a lot has changed since *The Donna Reed Show* and you gotta roll with the punches, right?

Lesley messed about with her hair, making it look even worse. “I’m glad you’re taking it so well – . We just came up here to talk and well ...”

“One thing led to another?”

“We couldn’t help ourselves.”

“It was just one of those things,” Hedy told us, rounding out the cliché fest.

I was in shock, but still functioned at one or two levels.

“Lesley, go and put on some makeup, you know where it is.”

She did, hurrying into the bathroom, shutting the door. I heard a lot of drawer slamming, indicating Lesley was nervous, but in control enough to seek out the right shade of blusher.

Hedy smiled. “Are you surprised?”

“By what?”

We both knew by what, but dummy looked uncertain because I hadn’t given the answer she expected. God, what a shitty lawyer she would have made. “By my being gay,” Ally McBeal explained. “Remember how I laughed when you asked if I wanted to bring Brandon tonight? Well I knew you thought I was having it off with him, but I’m not, of course.”

“Thanks for explaining,” I told her, then got to the interesting part. “Do Nina and Daniel know?”

She missed a beat before answering. “More or less.”

Which meant they suspected something, but being in denial about everything else in life, they just kept on trucking in delusion-ville about Hedy’s sex life. I didn’t like any of the Wolfe family that evening, so decided to have some fun.

“Which is the more part, and which the less?”

Hedy sat on the edge of the bed, not answering. She shot anxious glances at the bathroom door, but her Lady Lancelota didn’t appear to rescue her from the horrid dragon.

“Oh let me guess,” I was blowing a little smoke out of my nose – metaphorically that is – just to scare her, which was fun and almost made up for her stealing my friend away. “The ‘more’ part is that Nina knows or has guessed, but you don’t talk about it. The ‘less’ part is that Daniel doesn’t know and you aren’t sure how he’d take it.”

“Who’d take what?” Lesley asked, coming out of the bathroom. She looked better, or at least neater. My Bobbi Brown Sand Pink blusher and

Brown lipstick didn't do it for her, but at least her poise seemed restored to the normal range. "What are we talking about?"

Hedy and I made a contract with our eyes. "We're talking about Paco – ."

"Get out of here!" Lesley swept aside my bullshit. "You're talking about Hedy and me and where this is going. You're wondering how the family is going to take it."

"More or less," Hedy repeated what seemed to be her mantra for the night, slithering over to Lesley and tucking an arm through the doc's. She didn't acknowledge the good intentions of my failed cover, but Hedy owed me one for the effort and I aimed to collect. "They'll be okay. They have to be," she added. "This is going to last a long time."

Lesley glowed. "Yes, it is."

They walked out of the room without even a "how's by you?" – jostling one another on their way downstairs, giggling and pawing body parts like a couple of deviant prom queens.

I went into the bathroom, took a wee, slapped on the old Bobbie Brown myself, looked up and discovered Simon standing in the doorway.

"Hello young lovers?" he said.

And we both laughed so hard it was a good job I'd just taken a pee, otherwise I would have pissed myself.

Chapter 34

Simon stuck around until the end, which came sooner than it should have done, but not a moment too soon for me. I was worn out by the subterranean goings on, I'll tell you, and not sorry to see the back of the whole bunch.

Lesley clearly wanted to get out of here; Hedy seemed more circumspect, but that was for Nina and Daniel's sake, no doubt. I had a passing thought for where Pandora might stand in the matter of her daughter's sexuality, but someone that self-absorbed probably wouldn't notice if her offspring opted for bestiality – so I lost interest. Hedy left first, making noises about studying her lines for something or other, and in about two pulse beats the lady doc was out out here with some crap about seeing a patient. Simon and I didn't dare look at each other as they floated this shit by us.

The rest of the Wolfe pack left together. They'd had "a wonderful time," I was told by Nina, who had loved meeting my "interesting friends." We promised vaguely to meet up in the future, but I didn't drag out my diary and neither did she. Looking at my feet, Daniel told me his assistant would call to let me know a taping time. Pandora gave me a disinterested "thank you, so kind," and herded the other two out of the house. I waited to see if Daniel looked back, but he didn't, so that was that.

Shona took Rupert home after he'd killed the rest of Gerry's cognac and any chance the rest of us had at making adult conversation. I wondered why I'd got into bed with the man in the first place, admitting to myself that it was his interest in me that got me over the hurdle of feeling shitty about Gerry, so I decided it was dumb to feel guilty about something I'd already done. Anyway, God knows the Thorntons could fucking well take care of themselves. We did the usual routine about getting together "soon," but all three of us knew we'd sooner eat ground glass and so another love of my life made his exit.

Paco wanted "to hang around" but his cats needed feeding. Truth was, Nina, Hedy and Pandora's indifference to him smarted and I guessed that what was left of the evening needed to be retrieved profitably by cruising his favorite gay bar. Who could blame him? We did a double-cheeked "mwa

mwa,” Paco absent-mindedly shaping my bangs with his fingers and he was gone, a stranger in the night.

Maureen made me promise to leave the dishes until the next morning (oh, right) when she felt well enough to help. She excused herself, exhausted from jet lag, her cold, eating too much fat and water retention brought on by not drinking enough water.

Marl and Dore offered to stay and help with the dishes more immediately. Well, one of them did, but the other was blowing in her ear and she didn’t look or sound sincere to me.

“I’ll stay and help,” Simon offered.

“Brilliant!” Dore gurgled, taking his tongue out of Marl’s ear long enough to reply, “I don’t think our little friend here will mind, right?”

He winked at me and I considered disemboweling him.

“Dore,” Marl muttered in warning.

“What?” Dore massaged her butt with his paws and winked at me – again! That was twice in as many minutes –grounds for murder in any court. “Chill out Marl,” he scolded. “Mimi knows I’m just taking the piss, it’s between friends, right babe?”

He directed a third wink (!) in the direction of the babe in question. I opened my mouth to give Dore the skinny on my standards of friendship and his failure to meet any of them. Simon stepped in.

“Why don’t you two get off now? We’ll get on with this.”

“Thanks, Simon,” Marl said and grabbed Dore. They were halfway down the hall when she called something over her shoulder about “thanks for everything” and the Dore-ism of “catching me tomorrow.” We heard some obscene banter as they put on their coats by the front door, then with a slam of said door they were gone. I turned to Simon.

“Thanks for getting rid of Dore.”

“Not at all,” he smiled, adding “I’m used to dealing with difficult children.”

“Him or me?” I was curious.

“Both, but 75 percent of it was him. Your behavior was more a response to unique stimulæ than a manifestation of ongoing personality dysfunction.”

“That’s a relief.” I meant it. I started unloading the dishwasher.

“Anyway, he won’t be in her life for much longer, so I won’t have to put up with him past about next Passover.”

“Why do you say that?” Simon was lining dirty glasses up like soldiers on the counter, ready for the reloading exercise.

I paused, a platter in hand. “You think he’s sincere?”

“Oh yes, very.” Simon looked at me. “He’s in love with her? Can’t you tell?”

I had such a weird feeling then. I don’t know how to describe it, just to say that it had to do with feeling sick on the one hand, and wanting to cry on the other. Honestly, tears welled up and I had to turn away.

“You’ve had a couple of shocks tonight haven’t you?”

“Three, as long as we’re counting,” I corrected him when I could speak again.

Simon put his arm around my shoulders. “Why don’t we walk the dog and you can tell me about it?”

So we did just that.

Chapter 35

Things settled down for me a lot after meeting Simon. He's an anal compulsive, so order is important to him and God knows (!) my life was as long overdue for a tidy-up as was my closet. Actually, it's great having a man around who knows what's going on with you and cares into the bargain. I mean, how many guys would rather talk about you, than listen to you talk about them? Yes, Simon has a brother, but don't bother taking a number because he's gay.

Simon explained a lot to me on our walk that first night, mostly about my feelings when I caught Lesley and Hedy having what the English refer to so romantically as a snog. While Otto got into a pissing contest with a tree, Simon told me it was clear I hadn't wanted to deal with Lesley's sexuality in the first place, so the shock of actually finding her with another woman was a double whammy.

"We're talking denial?"

Simon shrugged. "That's it, basically. Although I think we can leave the jargon out of it. You assigned her a place in *your* life, but you pushed aside the fact of her sexuality because you didn't want to deal with the reality of Lesley having a part of *her* life from which you are, by necessity, excluded."

"That's for sure," I brooded. Otto was in circling mode, then changed his mind about depositing his crap in the fiftieth tree well of the evening we'd passed by. We went in search of a more appropriate venue. "I feel as if I've lost a friend."

"Well, in a way you have."

"What?" I hate it when people agree with insights I'd rather not have had. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"You'll have to adjust to her as part of a couple, just for a start," he added, "I think what's pissed you off to some degree is that she's fallen for Hedy, instead of someone you consider worthy of her. Happens though; lightweights have their attractions." He sounded a bit moody with that last bit. I figured there was an experience or two that rankled on a personal level for Simon Freud, but I wasn't about to go there. Yet.

“Yes, okay that has a lot to do with it,” I admitted. Otto finally gave St John’s Wood his gift for the night so we were able to turn around and head for home. “I’m not crazy for Hedy. Not only is she dumb and so self-absorbed that she wouldn’t know if war had broken out, she gave me a hard time about ...” I stopped, but Simon finished my sentence for me.

“Her father? I shouldn’t imagine that patronizing old cow of a mother was about to shout welcome to the family, either. As for that mad wife, she’ll never let go. You’re well out of that if I may say so.”

I was about to tell him he was full of shit, when I realized he’d summed up my phantom relationship with Daniel in four sentences. The guy knew his business, or mine – if we’re going to be exact. But how? Christ, I’d known him for five nanoseconds. “How do you know about the Wolfes?”

“Marlene and Dore told me.”

“Oh right.” And I might have guessed Marl shared my private business with her pet snake. “How did the subject come up, anyway?”

“I sensed a certain tension between you and Daniel and asked her about it. You’re obviously good friends, so I assumed she would know what’s going on. Anyway, I’m curious about you.”

“Oh.” That was okay then.

“Do you mind?”

“It depends on whether it’s a professional or a personal curiosity.” Twice bitten and a girl gets shy; if Simon was to be dumped, the sooner the better.

“Very personal.”

“Good.” Very good.

We reached my front door. Otto tugged on the end of his lead, impatient to claim his *après* walk biscuit. We went in and he rushed down the hall to the kitchen, head shaking impatiently in the direction of the Shapes basket on the counter. I gave him his treat and he was happy.

Then I remembered my scheduled trip with Lesley to the Ciudad de Los Angeles. “What am I going to do about Christmas?”

“You’re Jewish, you don’t have to do anything.”

I explained my plans.

“I don’t see why you can’t still go.”

“Because Hedy will be there, that’s why. She was already set to go anyway to make a TV thing.” I picked up an opened bottle of wine, found two reasonably clean glasses, and headed for the TV room, with Simon and Otto following me. Simon sat on the sofa next to me, Otto curled up on the floor.

“Want a drink?” I offered. Simon shook his head, so I drained what was left of the wine into a glass.

“You aren’t going just to be with Lesley. You’ll have Maureen and your family, surely?”

“Yes, but Hedy will be around.”

“She’ll be working, won’t she?”

I hadn’t thought of that. “Yes, that’s the idea...”

“That’s good, isn’t it? You’ll have time to talk things through with Lesley.”

I didn’t go for talking things through and said so.

Simon shook his head. “You should learn.”

“Why, it doesn’t get things back to the way they were.”

“Why should things get back to the way they were? You can’t win them all, you know. Talking straight to Lesley, exploring your feelings with the one person who can give you some honest feedback, will get your friendship back on track, even if the track is a different one. Shame to throw away what you have because you don’t want to look at things as they are or because they aren’t what you want them to be.”

“I don’t play the reality card very well.”

“You watch too much television.”

I wasn’t pleased. Trimming the fat is one thing, but he was cutting into the muscle. “I bet you say that to all your patients.”

“Only to very special children.”

I gave up. “Can’t I feel sorry for myself for just a little longer? I’ve lost a girlfriend, you know.”

“No,” Simon shook his head. “You’ve just reached another level in the relationship and you have to sort out how to get on with things.” God, the guy was relentless.

“Yes, but it’s that way with Marl, as well. Everything is changing, now that she’s met Dore,” I complained. “I don’t know where I am anymore, with anyone, even with my ex - .” I tried to bite back the last bit, remembering my porky of earlier in the evening – that Gerry and I were history, when as far as the law was concerned, we were still current affairs. Simon didn’t seem to care, though.

“Actually, Marl filled me in on your marital status – .” Oh, naturally, how could I have forgotten my unofficial biographer, “– and I can see you have a lot to deal with. You’ll have to change along with everyone else.”

I knew he was right, but I didn't like it. Why couldn't my life be like June Cleaver's? The only thing she ever changed about herself was that shirtwaist dress. Oh well, at least there was one constant in my life.

"Yes," Simon agreed. "I can't imagine Maureen changing ever, if that's any comfort. Every idea she's ever had is preserved in cement."

"Yeah," I smiled for the first time in quite a while. "Her mind must look like the forecourt of Grauman's Chinese." See, I've said it before that Maureen always cheers me up.

"Do you mind if I make myself a coffee?" I nodded and Simon got up, flipped on the electric kettle, searched through the cupboard for a mug, and then found the jar of instant coffee. No really, he did all of this on his own. He turned, leaning against the counter.

"What's with the two out of P.G. Wodehouse?"

"I take it you mean the Thorntons?" I stalled.

"I didn't know such types existed anymore. They'd be anomalies in any crowd. How do you know them?"

I opted for *non-sequitur* as the best defense, a British ploy and not a bad one at that. "You don't seem to like my friends very much."

He poured boiling water into his mug. "I like Marl and Lesley. Even Paco has his charms. The rest of them seemed to be people you know rather than real friends. That doesn't answer the question of how you know those two, though does it?"

"Around. A dinner party I think." I fed Otto some turkey from the carcass on the table and he was thrilled. I didn't want to get into the Thornton mess until I'd come to terms with it on my own, but Freud of Scotland Yard was on the case. "He's a bright man doing the upper class English buffoon act, and she's a piece of work."

I was interested. "How do you mean?"

Simon grinned. "Let's say that Pandora Wolfe is small beer compared to the lady laird."

Having been on the business end of the lady's fishhook I wasn't about to disagree. I still didn't want to pursue the subject. "Yeah well ..." was all I could manage.

"Our Rupert likes you."

I expected that. "Yeah, well ..."

"It's none of my business, is it?"

“No, not yet anyway.” I stood up and went over to him. “Are you staying or what?”

“Both,” he told me, which turned out to be okay.

Chapter 36

I'd never seen a pop-up wedding invitation before, but Simon thought the concept *could* catch on. Twin flaps opened (embossed with a riot of blue metallic wedding bells), then a champagne glass full of bubbles popped up with Marlene and Dore's grinning heads peeping over the brim. The glass rested on two, intertwined Stars of David with an invitation to join them at a celebration of their marriage on the 3rd of May at the Berkeley Hotel, seven for seven thirty. I assumed the card was stage-managed by Dore's agency, since Smythson of Bond Street would have closed their exclusive doors forever rather than have any truck whatsoever with a pop-up of any kind.

Smythson did have truck, however, with the events that marked the lives of the Thorntons. A plain card with pink trim had arrived in February to announce the birth of a daughter, Victoria Fiona Diana, weight 8 pounds 9 ounces, to my pals Shona and Rupert. I sent a silver picture frame from Asprey's engraved with the birth date and a note saying how pleased I was, how nice it must be to have a girl after two boys, blah, blah, blah. Shona isn't the only one with class around here.

Back to the wedding. Marl had opted for a private ceremony in the rabbi's chambers with only close family in attendance. Dore had agreed, but insisted on the splash-out at the Berkeley to celebrate their mutual good fortune, and who could blame him? In his own way, he was truly smitten with Marl and for that I could forgive him anything but making me dance with him at the reception. I told him so, but he just winked and said I'd change my mind.

I rsvp'd via the enclosed card, then started worrying about the two "whats" of any wedding: what to wear and what would be considered a suitable gift?

"I don't care, you don't have to get us anything," Marl told me over lunch at Harvey Nicks. She was swooningly happy. "I have stuff left over from the first two times I haven't even looked at."

"Even so ... "

"Don't be silly ... "

"I insist ..."

“You don’t have to...”

We played this game for a while then got down to business. There was something Dore wanted and I was the designated giver of: “whiskey tumblers of some sort.”

I was instructed, with efficiency belying the casual approach to the subject, on the manufacturer, the preferred pattern and where the objects of desire could be purchased. No price ceiling was discussed, but I wasn’t counting on a bargain.

Marlene wasn’t as fussy about what I wore. “Just don’t look better than me.”

I settled on a silk Calvin Klein sheath – in red, at Simon’s insistence – then had Harrods send a set of six Waterford crystal whiskey glasses at fifty quid a pop. Simon was under instructions to wear his new Cerruti navy blue, summer weight wool. I reminded him to book a session with his stylist, to make sure his hair looked right.

Maureen called to tell me she was coming for the big night and that led to recent news of Lesley: Hedy had dumped her for someone big, big, *big*, in the industry.

“Who?”

Maureen told me.

“No shit. I didn’t know she was gay.”

“She isn’t out, but everyone has known for years.”

“But she has a kid – .”

“Hello!” Maureen sneered. “You don’t need guys for that anymore. They take a turkey baster or something and that does the job. Come to think of it – ,” she gave a mirthless honk, “– I’ve known guys who were about as good at it as a turkey baster, so why not the other way around?”

“But I thought they were getting along so well, Hedy and Lesley I mean. They were like lovebirds when I was there over Christmas. I felt like the cuckoo in the nest.”

“Hold on. Mimi – ” I heard Sidney asking something about background music for the Dybwa opus in progress. “Christ!” she yelled right into my ear, “Can’t anyone but me do anything around here?” Sidney answered with more spirit than was usual for him, “I told you what I wanted to do yesterday and you called me a *yutz*.” “I always call you a *yutz*,” Maureen reminded him, “but it never stopped you before – .”

“Hey!” I called out. “Anyone remember me?”

“Yeah, right,” – Maureen told Sidney to get out, which he must have done because I heard the office door shut with a flounce.

“Where were we?”

“Lesley and Hedy ...?”

“Well, it’s a career move, isn’t it? Fucking gets you where you want to go in this town, don’t let anyone tell you different.”

No one ever had, or was likely to. “I take it the new squeeze can do her some good?”

“Not some. A lot.”

I sighed. I wondered why I hadn’t heard from Lesley. I’d been leaving messages for about a week now. When had this happened?

“About a week ago.” I could tell Maureen was losing interest. A stranger to tender feelings, the suffering of others could hold her only during the telling.

“She needs to talk about it. I’ll try and get her to come over here for the wedding reception. Cheer her up some.”

“Yeah, right. I’ll work on her, too.”

I considered Maureen’s short, not so sweet “get over it” approach to cradling people through crises. “Let’s not push it too hard. I’ll float the idea and see what happens.”

“Yeah, okay.” She paused. “You know what’s funny?”

“What?”

“Well, what happened between Lesley and Hedy? I mean falling in love, then one dumping the other? Ordinary kind of stuff?”

“What about it?”

“Well”

“Tell me?”

“Makes you think ...”

She was driving me crazy. “Think about what?”

“Well, I guess I didn’t realize that lesbians acted like us. I mean, this emotional crap is just like the kind of stuff that happens between normal couples, huh?”

The doorbell rang, a godsend in fact as well as fiction. We said our goodbyes, I rushed to open the front door to find Daniel Wolfe on my doorstep.

Chapter 37

“I brought you a tape of the show. It’s very good indeed. One of the best programs we’ve ever done for *See/Hear*. You did wonderfully.” He handed me a bulky manila envelope.

“Thanks.” I felt awkward. “I mean for the compliment – as well as delivering the tape in person.”

“Nothing but the truth, and it was the least I could do.”

We stood there, neither of us knowing what to say. The taping *had* gone well and I was not surprised, after catching a glimpse or two of playback later, that we’d created good television. Daniel and I had a certain *rapport* on camera, even while being none too chummy off. I had a nice line of patter and looked good; he played straight man like the born host he was; the clips Maureen’s assistant had selected after many hours in the archives were spot on.

I invited him in without sincerity; he declined in the same vein. I would have closed the door, but curiosity got the better of me. “How’s Pandora?”

“She’s gone back to Tanzania for a while.” He shuffled around a bit, then came out with it. “Perhaps you and I could have dinner soon?”

Great, then you can mess my head around again. “No, I’m sorry. I’m involved with someone now.”

“Ah, a shame.” Daniel didn’t look all that disappointed but who can tell with people, right? I know I wanted him to feel like shit because as someone smarter than me once observed, revenge is a dish best eaten cold. Always.

“Yes. How is Hedy? Lot of changes in her life for you to get used to, huh?” Okay, below the belt but can you blame me?

“Ah ... yes ... well.” He looked at his feet. “She’s doing well on the career front. The pilot’s been picked up, there’s a film in the offing with that friend of yours, as I’m sure you know.”

I did. Brandon and Hedy must have been on drugs to agree to a three-picture deal on the terms offered by Dybwa Productions. The first of the trilogy was starting production even as I spoke to Hedy’s papa. Some muddled crap in which Hedy played a professor at some unspecified Oxford college who finds

herself the target of a hitman hired by what passed for the government of some hellhole in eastern Europe, with an equally unspecified grudge against her. The two successive scripts didn't sound much better, but Maureen didn't give a shit; the best plot here was the bottom line.

"Got her dirt cheap and it's written in stone. There's no way that little snoutnose Brandon can negotiate his way out of this one!" Maureen had crowed. "She's bound to make it big within the first ten minutes of being seen by the troglodytes in head office when ABC airs her series in the fall season. I'll make a bomb!"

Hedy's dad didn't seem as jubilant over his daughter's prospects. "Her personal life isn't going as I expected, however." He looked at me helplessly and I softened toward him. The guy had so little practice at dealing with real life that coping with the emotional complexities shoved in his face by Hedy's sex life had him looking like a pinch-hitter facing a devious curve ball from a left-handed pitcher: dazed and confused. I guess it's true that there's no hurt like that suffered through your children, because this guy looked poleaxed.

"Hedy's a grown woman, she has to sort out her own life and she will. She'll be just fine, you know."

"One hopes," he said, but didn't sound sincere.

I was sick of the subject so leapfrogged to something in his life that interested me even less.

"Any word on Ilona?"

"Oh yes, well, Ilona's fine. She's out of hospital and at a terribly nice place where they look after her. We haven't found another housekeeper, but Pandora and Hedy thought it important I stay on at the house. Anyway, Nina's nurse is a great help – ."

"Nina's nurse?" Had I heard him properly?

"Oh, yes." He looked surprised. "I assumed you knew?"

"About what?"

"Her stroke." Daniel scuffed a Gucci-ed foot on my doorstep.

Can you believe the man? He stands on the doorstep, chatting away about his miserable kid and finally – finally (!) gets around to telling me his mother had a stroke. Okay, so he looked upset around the edges when he told me, but talk about a fucked-up sense of priorities.

"How would I know? Oh ... right." I realized he meant Lesley via Hedy, but the doc and I didn't speak all that often anymore. Christmas in L.A. had gone okay, but there was no getting around the fact that we just weren't as close as we had once been. We tried, but we couldn't quite connect and I'm

only guessing, but I doubt our shadowy estrangement broke Hedy's heart. "When did it happen? How serious is it?"

"She collapsed about three weeks ago." He shook what I once thought of as his handsome head. I mean his head was still handsome, but my lust was gone. "She has no movement on her right side and she can't speak. Pretty serious, I'm afraid."

Daniel didn't sound afraid by my standards, so I nudged him in the right direction.

"Sounds more than pretty serious, it sounds just about as bad as it gets. Poor Nina, she must be terrified."

He actually took a second to think about that. "I'm sure you're right."

The guy had a gene missing. I told him to give Nina my love, promised to visit her within the week, then blew the schmuck off with the speed of sound. And let me tell you something for now and forever: I was never as relieved in my life to close the door on a man, as I was to slam it shut on Daniel Wolfe.

Chapter 38

Gerry, Rosie and the baby moved to L.A. in February. I couldn't believe it when I got a letter from Gerry asking if I would release my interest in the Brentwood House, in exchange for the London place – which is how I found out about the move in the first place because it would have taken someone with balls to give me that news in person.

I called Gerry immediately to ask what was going on, but it was nothing sinister, just the L.A. office needed him as one senior partner had retired and the other died. Rosie was a good sport about the move, he told me, she looked forward to having a swimming pool, although she thought the dark green tiles – my pride and joy lining the oval shaped basin – a little dull and considered a switch to turquoise. As soon as they knew of the move, they'd signed William up for future enrollment in a crack pre-nursery school with a great record of getting toddlers on the right track for the Ivy League. Gerry thanked me for being reasonable about the divorce. I assumed he referred to the speed of our negotiations – because he couldn't have any gratitude for the financial hunk of flesh exacted. He arranged a last weekend with Otto, expressing his regrets at being so far away from the little feller in the future. I thought it was quite fair that Gerry should suffer loss and I still thought the bastard was getting off easy.

His going back to LA depressed me though. I said as much to Simon when he came over that evening, bringing some wonderful deli from Villandry. I couldn't go there after getting into a fighting match with the sour Frenchman owner a few weeks before, but Villandry was close enough to the hospital that Simon didn't mind picking up my favorites. I'd recorded a segment of my favorite soap, *EastEnders*, the night before, so we ate in front of the TV, Otto hovering.

"It has to feel rather odd." Simon was full to the brim with empathy, as usual. "You came to London together for his career, now he leaves and you're left to put your life together on your own."

"I feel a bit left out. I mean she's going to be in my house for Christ sake; it's as if he's done an exchange and got confused."

"Oh that won't last for long, living in your house, I mean." Simon spread a bit of bread with brie and gave it to Otto who looked starry-eyed with

gratitude. “You can be sure she doesn’t like it any better that you do. They sell and buy something else in six months.”

That really pissed me off. “I love that house! I put a lot of time into it. The idiot doesn’t even like the dark tiles, everyone wants dark tiles these days – and that idiot plans to change to turquoise. It’ll look like a cheap motel.”

“What’s going on here?” Simon changed the subject and who could blame him? He referred, of course, to the brutish Grant Mitchell, flexing his muscles and scowling at an equally pissed-off young woman with a shrill voice across the bar from him in the Queen Vic pub, the Mitchell family fiefdom. Grant grabbed her wrist, eyes bugging out of his head, and she, in turn, wisely shut up. “I hope he’s a villain because he appears to be a psychopath.”

“No, he’s an antihero, sort of. He just has a bad temper.”

“I’ll say!” Grant had just shrugged off the restraining hands of a tiny blond creature dressed up like Barbie out on the town as she hurtled down the passageway behind the bar from the force of his rage. Simon pointed at her fast retreating figure. “My God, who was that?”

“Peggy, his mother,” I explained. “Anyway how do I know I won’t want to live in L.A. again? Where will I go?”

“Your life is here now, but if you went back to L.A. you could stay with your sister, couldn’t you?” I gave him a look, but he was too used to my fulminating to care. “And there’s me, of course. You wouldn’t want to leave me, would you?”

“There’s an ‘us’ for me to leave?”

Simon laughed, handed me a piece of *ciabatta* loaded with *prosciutto crudo*. “You know there is.”

I did, but didn’t want to be easy. It was a reflex action, my setting about creating some obstacle to our happiness, but Simon was absorbed once more by the TV.

“Aren’t there any policemen on this show to stop this sort of thing?” Grant continued bullying the unfortunate brunette in his grasp. She, meanwhile, regained her power of speech, demanding in nasal, BBC cockney that Grant get a life and stay out of hers. Simon shook his head. “I can’t understand what anyone is saying, anyway. Their accents are absurd, I’ve never heard anything like that in my life.”

“How do you know how they sound in the East End? You’ve never been east of ... east of ... the Barbican Centre to hear the LSO.” My sense of direction could best be described as challenged, so I wasn’t all that confident about my finish, but needs must. I was in a bad temper over Gerry, Rosie, the house, the pool, and I needed to vent.

Which Simon took in his stride. “I don’t have to camp out on the Isle of Dogs to know that most of the residents of the East End are Pakistani these days. The lot we’re watching here were thought up in nostalgia central at the BBC.”

“Oh yeah?” I sulked. Otto gazed at my *prosciutto*, eyes limpid with desire. “No more. It’s bad for your stomach, makes you sick,” I said spitefully. Otto, used to the winds of war, sighed and waited.

“Now what? Who are these two people?” Simon pointed at the screen. What’s she on about?” A red-headed shrew berated a sweet-faced simpleton, who was ill-equipped verbally or intellectually to stem the abuse streaming from his wife’s rosebud mouth. She marched out of the garage where he worked, shoulders bowed down from anxiety.

“Bianca,” I explained. “Ricky’s her husband, but he’s a fool.”

“With that rogue temper of hers she should get together with Grant.”

“She hates Grant, because of what he did to Tiffany.”

“Tiffany?”

I started to explain, but Simon shook his head, throwing his arms up in surrender.

“Never mind. I’ve never come across so many angry people. I haven’t seen a single character who wouldn’t benefit from intensive therapy.”

“Exactly,” I told him. “Most people are pissed off and miserable so this is a catharsis. If you took the poetry and royalty out of Greek tragedy and left in the *dreck*, you’d have soap opera. Dull and horrible lives elevated by crisis into drama.”

“So this crap is nothing more than an exercise in mass wish fulfillment,” Simon sighed.

“Sure. Why else would anyone watch crap like this?”

“You have a point. It’s an idiotic point but it’s a point.”

“It *is* for idiots, what other sort of point could I make?”

I had him there. Simon shut up and watched tiny Peggy give her son a smack across the face that left him looking livid. The first few drum rolls of the *EastEnders* theme music indicated we’d have to wait until the next evening to see which Mitchell might end up in Accident & Emergencies.

Chapter 39

Lesley arrived just after lunch, having circled Heathrow for hours. She and Maureen were on the same plane, so the doc dosed her up on board before a bug of any kind could take hold. They weren't alone though: sister Beverly was with them! Boy, was I pleased by that surprise. I got everyone settled in, they took naps, baths, snacked, borrowed my makeup and generally turned the house upside down before settling down in the kitchen in the early evening.

We drank wine, waiting for Maureen to join us. I'd booked a table at the Lanesborough for 8:00. At Simon's urging, as a concession to my newly independent state, I planned not to charge the whole thing to Gerry, but instead to have Maureen, Lesley and Beverly chip in. Gerry still chipped in if you want to think about it that way, just by agreeing to a generous settlement, so magnanimity was not the sacrifice it could have been. Simon insisted I cut up the platinum card, which sucked. I lied and said I had. There was no reason for him to know everything, right?

Beverly planned to wear the same gray dress, the aborted choice for the *bar mitzvah*, to the reception. She wanted to know, not without an edge to her voice, what I planned to wear? I told her and got a big take in astonishment mode.

"So you're wearing red? I'm shocked! How come?"

Maureen answered for me, why I don't know. "Simon likes her in red, that's why."

Beverly turned back to me. "So this Simon? A doctor, nice. When do I meet him?" Her tone of voice when she said "doctor" hinted at a budding envy quotient – which I wanted out of play as soon as possible.

"Tomorrow at the reception. Anyway, doctors here are not the big deal they are in the U.S. They aren't richer than God." There was a mew of protest from Lesley, but I ignored her, "and no one believes they are high priests, either."

"Sorry, I just wondered. I am your sister, after all." Still, Beverly looked relieved not to have to cope with being outdone in the status sweepstakes.

I'd avoided any mention of Hedy since their arrival, but we had time to kill. I refilled Lesley's glass and jumped in. "So, seen anything of Hedy?"

"Yeah, they ran into each other last week," Maureen answered, gnawing on an Orinoco from the package not cracked open since her last visit.

"How was it?" Lesley's lips moved, but the words came from another direction.

"Fine, they talked and Lesley didn't want to kill her."

"So tell me, Lesley," I tried again. "is she still with ...?"

"Sure!" Maureen interrupted, sweeping Orinoco dust from her lap. "Think she'd drop a contact like that?"

"I'm right here, Maureen!" Lesley was getting irritated. "I can answer for myself, you know."

"Who's stopping you?" The woman actually sounded astonished.

Lesley looked at Maureen for a long moment and I had high hopes for a faceoff, but Marl whirled in and spoiled the moment.

For Marlene there was lots of kissing, hugging and "*mazeltovs*." Maureen wanted to know where she and Dore were going for the honeymoon, soon adding, "The Seychelles – wow! Where's that?"

Marl explained, adding: "Just as well, we're exhausted from planning things."

"Always the way," Beverly nodded. "My *bar mitzvah* nearly killed me. How are they treating you at the hotel?"

Marl and Beverly went off on a tangent so boring I considered eating an Orinoco to stay awake. Lesley looked moody and hit the wine bottle again. Maureen, not having to observe the protocol between sisters as well as disliking Beverly in the first place, put a stop to the chatter about colorblind florists and vengeful musicians.

"Hey folks! Let's get this show on the road! How are we getting to the ..." She snapped her fingers. "Where are we going?"

"The Lanesborough. It's a hotel," I told her.

"We thought of the Lanesborough," Marl One Note told Beverly as we went out of the front door. "But Dore said ..."

"Christ!" Maureen was already in the street, looking for a taxi. "Don't they ever shut up?" she said to no one in particular.

I finally had a moment with Lesley. "How do you feel about things?"

"If you mean Hedy, I wish I was dead." Lesley said and I swear there were tears in her eyes.

“You’ll get over it,” I said, which is what people always say at moments like this.

Chapter 40

My appearance on *See/Hear*, which aired in April, was a success, resulting in really sexy payback. The closing credits had barely rolled by when the phone started ringing. The *Guardian* and *The Independent* sent A-list hacks to interview me, *Vanity Fair* and the *Sunday Times Magazine* offered me hot commissions, and there were other terrific offers I couldn't accept because I risked overextending myself. All of a sudden, it seemed the world couldn't get over me: what I wore, thought, said. It was wonderful! Things got better, though.

And speaking of Simon, by the way, things were going well in that department. We settled into a good arrangement, expecting so little that what we got seemed a bonus. Simon was so nice that I seemed nicer by association – not at all bad. Oh sure, there weren't many surprises, but so what? Anyway, I liked his daughter Helena, a trainee barrister, a lot. It was like having my own kid to go shopping with, and take to lunch, but I didn't need to worry about her the way real moms did. Her own mother, Simon's number one, was cool about all of this. Simon's number two had been strictly fast food, a union producing neither kids nor many memories as far as I could tell.

Not long after Marl and Dore's reception, Simon and I went to a dinner party given by the parents of one of his former patients. I was seated next to an unprepossessing guy, with beige hair and slippery eyes. He whispered his name, I asked him to speak up, and found out I was talking to Sir Darryl D'Arbo, the New Zealand media tycoon, the "Tabloid Emperor" as he'd been labeled by some broadsheet journalist. Well. Even more exciting, he had caught me on *See/Hear* and had been impressed. Well, well. Was I familiar, he wanted to know, with the satellite outlets under his control?

"Of course. I watch Channel Six all the time." That was the biggest of his concerns, a popular and much watched *mélange* of tabloid news, gossip, American comedy, drama shows, movies, and cartoons.

"Good, good." Sir Darryl, I learned, never raised his voice above a whisper, whether because he couldn't or wouldn't was something no one knew. "How about doing something for me?"

“Like what?” I was pleased, but cautious. He had a reputation for turning perfectly normal types into buffoons as fodder for the screen. “What kind of a format are we talking about?”

“Oh ...” he thought for a second, took a sip of his water and hit me with an idea that screamed my name. “Five-minute spots between shows, where you give a critique of what is coming next. Lots of one liners, sound bites.”

“Sight bites,” I said.

“Yeah, yeah, that’s good. That’s what we’ll call it. *Sight/Bites.*”

So *Sight/Bites* it was, and the concept took off like a rocket. It was cheap to produce (Sir Darryl D’Arbo was no DeMille), and the format suited an audience with the concentration span of a kindergartener high on sugar cubes. I was a star of sorts and it suited me.

Everything’s in the timing, isn’t it? Think of all those poor bastards out there, sending in CV’s and tapes, hoping for a spot on television and it turns out to be just being in the right place at the right time. Okay, so I earned my spurs but so do a lot of people; they just don’t get to sit next to media giants at dinner.

Of course, life is like that. No one expects it to be fair except the people who don’t get what they want. But is what you want what you *really* want? I thought I wanted my life with Gerry forever, then I wanted Daniel Wolfe; I didn’t get either – which wasn’t fair then. Now my former life doesn’t look all that great to me because I have what I want even though I didn’t know I wanted it then.

Say goodnight, Gracie.

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About the Author



Dorothy Linick, né Dorothy Judith Goldstone, was born on October 16, 1940 in Bolton, Lancashire – the daughter of Hyman and Anne Goldstone, who had married in 1933. The family moved to a number of UK sites during the war as Hyman Goldstone followed various assignments related to his work for Rolls-Royce. Much of Dorothy’s early schooling was in Hastings – where she was the victim of a number of anti-Semitic incidents. A younger sister, Naomi, was born in 1947.

In 1953 the Goldstones, following the lead taken by other family members, emigrated to America, first to New York and then to the Los Feliz district of Los Angeles. Dorothy attended John Marshall High School and, after a stint at Los Angeles City College, moved on to UCLA in Westwood. She worked part-time in her mother’s beauty salon in Glendale and served as a page at the Democratic National Convention, the one that nominated JFK in the summer of 1960.

In 1964 she graduated from UCLA with a BA in History and in the same week married a graduate student in this department, Anthony Linick – who had earlier co-edited the avant-garde literary magazine, *Nomad*. The following year the Linicks moved to East Lansing, Michigan, where Anthony would now to take up a post as Assistant Professor of Humanities.

In 1967 the Linicks undertook a summer-long exploration of European sites, also visiting Anthony’s mother and stepfather, the composer and conductor

Ingolf Dahl, a professor at USC. Many additional summer trips to European sites followed, particularly ones to London.

In 1972 Dorothy began graduate work at Michigan State in Theater, eventually earning an MA here. Her interests in theater also included both acting and directing. She played such roles as Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Mrs. Prentice in Joe Orton's *What The Butler Saw* and undertook the direction of a number of productions in local Lansing theater. Her work in the latter category earned her a Best Director award in 1979.

In 1979-1980 the Linicks enjoyed a sabbatical year in London, finding life here so congenial that after one more year in East Lansing they made a permanent move to England in 1981, settling in Maida Vale. They both served as substitute teachers at the nearby American School in London (in St. John's Wood), with Anthony joining the faculty on a permanent basis in 1984 and Dorothy undertaking the role of special projects coordinator for the high school – including work with the famous Alternatives program.

London provided a useful base for additional travel, with visits to Stockholm, Berlin, Rome, Florence, Bilbao, Sintra, Vienna (where the cover photo was taken in 2002), Prague, Budapest and, repeatedly, to Paris. There was also a period as kibbutz volunteers in Israel and, moving farther afield, trips to China, India, and Egypt. Many of these expeditions were taken in the company of Anthony's little magazine co-editor, Donald Factor, and the latter's wife, Anna.

In 1985 Dorothy began work as student activities coordinator at the American College in London, on the Marylebone High Street – where she also taught courses in theater and film. In 1992 she moved on to work in development for the St. Nicholas Montessori teacher training school in Princes Gate and after a year or so here she returned to the American School, resuming her role as special projects coordinator and teaching courses in film as well. She was responsible for the establishment of the school's distinguished speakers program and brought to ASL heroic hostage Terry Waite, U.S. poet laureate Billy Collins and American author Bill Bryson.

She retired in 2001, a year before Anthony, who had spent the last eight years of his tenure at ASL as chair of the high school English Department.

Dorothy had experimented with the writing of fiction while still in East Lansing but she returned to this activity in the '90's and, after retirement, she undertook many writing projects, of which *Sight/Bites* is the first to be made available in any form to the general reader. She was still at work on many projects when cancer ended her life on July 12, 2007. With her intelligence, wit and good heart Dorothy attracted the love and respect of many good friends throughout her life.