

LORI HYLAND AUTHOR WEBSITE

BOOK EXCERPTS – NEW YORK

FROM PROLOGUE: Brothel Maisson 1.2.2, Paris

The Brothel Maison 1.2.2 stood as it always did, a bourgeois estate dating from the Haussmann era and the recreating of Paris in the mid-19th century. The exterior architecture belied what was inside, the most famous brothel in the City of Light, hiding its secrets well in an attitude of ennui and indifference. To the unknowing eye, the building carried the same ambiance and housed residents and guests of the same high station as others of its kind. Its affective qualities were familiar only to patrons who chose to be intimate with its inner nature and experience during the occupation.

Standing guard over the brothel, as she had for years, was the Proprietress, Madame Jamette, a sensual woman of indeterminate age and beauty. She bore a countenance that defied scrutiny as she watched keenly and warily over the brothel that not only served during the Occupation Era but dazzled within it. By all accounts, it was a true “gentlemen’s club” where all desires and tastes were presented and served to an unlikely parade of patrons — wealthy French businessmen, Nazi officers and their Vichy counterparts, military officers, and American businessmen and movie moguls. They fraternized in the refined atmosphere where the highest class and style commingled with one’s most primal desires, indifferent to the political interests or undertakings of the others while within the brothel’s walls. If ever there were a place for enemies to lay their weapons down, a safe zone to put the pain and deaths and atrocities of a most atrocious war on hold, the Brothel Maison 1.2.2. was it.

Jamette utilized just the right amount of *laissez-faire* and emotional understanding of the disparate patrons to juggle the delicate scenario into an exquisite dance of personalities. She catered to all sensibilities with finesse and brilliance, appealing directly to the tastes of her clients, making them feel she knew their hearts as well as they did. She combined her business skills with her charm and wiles to make this work for all four years of the Nazi occupation, a master exhibit in diplomacy if there ever was one.

Yet, things had changed. Markedly. The Allies had fought their way into a torn and beaten Paris and ended the brutal Nazi occupation. The war was over. Once again, Parisians were learning how to live and walk their once golden, renowned streets in freedom as they began to deal with the aftermath, the awful task of having to rebuild most of a city from the rubble of a brutal occupier's attacks and defacing of their most treasured buildings.

Relative freedom, that is. As their liberators, the Americans and Allies were starting to act like invaders with uncouth appetites themselves, descending on the spoils of war like ravenous thieves at the wake.

FROM CHAPTER 1: NEW YORK — The New World

What a place. What a city. What a feeling. What energy!

Madame Jamette alternately walked and skipped down the statue- and tree-lined promenade as she made her way through Central Park. She took in everything, deeply inhaling the sunny day, marveling over the interplay of high-rise buildings and the trees and meadows that surrounded her. Everyone and everything felt so open, liberating and full of the vibrant energy that had filled the city since the Germans surrendered to Allied forces and ended the War. It lifted and fed her, nourishing her creative impulses and her thoughts about the new gallery with the same delectable touch as the meals she'd eaten in some of the city's finest restaurants.

She approached the boat basin, where a half-dozen couples floated lazily on the water, their hearts and minds far away. Jamette smiled, closed her eyes, blew them a kiss from her heart, and headed out toward Central Park East. She sped up her walk, lengthening her stride, suddenly feeling the need to finish her business and return to the Gallerie 1.2.2 in Upper Harlem, the city's new hotspot for art, fashion and music, black people from all over streaming in and making it happen. Ever since meeting the soldier, McDougal, on the day she and her treasures left Paris, she'd been fascinated with the culture.

Now, her new Gallerie was in the middle of it.

A man walked slowly ahead of her, hat tilted to one side, enjoying every sight and moment as well. She quickly caught up to him.

"Monsieur, the time, s'il vous plait?" she asked. She noticed the timepiece in his houndstooth's coat and tapped her pocket, unsure if her two words of English were correct.

He turned and captured her immediately with his stark blue eyes. *"Je parle couramment le Français,"* he said, tipping his hat. "I speak fluent French."

"Oh, *Merci,*" she said, touching his wrist in thanks. She continued, in French, "I do not yet know English so well. I am still new here. Thank you."

He smiled the smile of a hundred street lights, bringing an effusive grin from Jamette. He removed a pristine Elgin pocket timepiece, studded with jewels – she quickly counted at least a dozen. Definitely a man of means.

"Madame, it is almost 3 p.m. 1500 hours. Is there a specific destination you are headed to?"

“Oui, Monsieur. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is a little bit further this way?”

She pointed north towards the reservoir that fed the city its drinking water and also gave walkers a 2,500-meter loop with a tremendous skyline and tree views.

“Oui.” He took Jamette’s arm and hand, held it as if they were to dance, and then pointed a little further. *“When you get to Central Park East, turn and walk about 1,000 meters — you will see it on the left. The entrance is very large. The steps are regal. They will remind you of the steps to opera houses and cathedrals. You cannot miss it.”*

FROM CHAPTER TWO — Gallery of Lost Souls

Jamette retreated to The Gallery of her creation. The Lost Souls were sequestered in a remote area unseen by visitors and patrons, a sacred room where she found solace and serenity. In the unidentifiable paintings, as well as the priceless treasures she also spirited out of France, she felt the pain of those artists and rightful owners of the art being taken to their imprisonment or death by the Nazis. The paintings were woven into her life, Tourette’s life, and their dual mission to find the missing artists and owners, or at least their families.

The darkened environment reminded her of a cathedral with ceilings carved in a dark heavy oak. She pictured herself walking down the tree-lined streets of upscale New York or Paris in the 19th century, which contributed to the solemnity of the room. When entering and looking at the walls, it was easy to feel and imagine a time far removed from the present. Niches of paintings, separated by artists, period and culture were presided over by sculptures, many of Saints tasked with guarding the remnants of a world gone mad. Their appearance seemed benign, defying and maintaining a silence on what they had witnessed, the Nazi history of theft and killing.

Jamette shook her head. The most challenging and heartbreaking part of it? The world would never again see the vision of these artists.

A slight stroke or gesture of the brush, perhaps overlooked by others, served as a kind of code for her. She sometimes felt as if it was communicated only to her, wrapped around a longing that could never be satisfied. Who are they? What did they witness? Did they have a place of honor in their former life? Did they understand their fate, perhaps receive a slight suggestion or a premonition? Did they witness a lover's bed? Or read a bedtime story to a child? How will I know their lives, so clothed as they are in secrecy?

The hushed room seems to demand an answer and challenge her. Yet, in its arrogance, it kept an impenetrable silence, determined to defy her will.

As for the Nazis? Now a year removed from the war, the paintings were more than the spoils of a war they lost. Those in her sanctuary were the few rescued works, tragic remains of looting on a massive, industrial scale as big as the Nazi war machine itself, using a precise bureaucracy and attention to detail, encrypted in their genes, that missed nothing.

FROM CHAPTER 6 — Understanding Among Thieves

The end of World War II proved a pivotal moment. After Allies and freedom-loving citizens the world over celebrated the end of the interminable dark night of Fascism, it landed again in New York in the guise of Nazi art dealers and sympathizers who profited during the occupation. Now they sought the works of the formerly loathed and persecuted, now esteemed Central and Eastern European artists who held witness to the savagery between the two world wars; their works were hot items on the New York art scene. There was no paucity of players, a keen competition among both classic galleries like the Knoedler and fresh-newly opened spaces. The Nazi art dealers could taste a new way to financial gain as Modernism was soon showing its teeth.

Dealers seized the moment, quickly dismissing the all-too-common 19th century works, the war-horses of the *bourgeoisie*. Young abstract-expressionists like Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Mark Rothko staked their places along with those who painted the so-called “degenerate art,” a term coined by the Nazis who loathed and dismissed the work. Immediately it was a new reality in the art world, though minus the important education new movements typically created. All it took was for a few New York cultural leaders to show interest, and praise from the art critics, to give license to buy. The prevailing taste among buyers, collectors and dealers alike immediately jumped from paintings of nude ladies in boudoirs and beatific children in bucolic countryside settings to the strange colorations and shapes of Pollocks and Rothkos.

While competitors in the traditional sense, thieves interacted a bit differently in this shady world of pillaging gutted cities, villages and homes. Camaraderie and good manners between thieves was essential; after all, they had to deal with even more thieves in the course of doing business in stealth, so a certain understanding of cooperation was typical. Travel was no longer difficult, either by air or ship, and overland commerce between Germany and Switzerland was again frequent.

Still, Bruno Lohse considered Hildebrandt Gurlitt his inferior, a view he held for most men.

A big impressive man flush with power, Lohse operated throughout the war with impunity, accompanied by his pseudo refined manners and demeanor afforded. He was not well known in the larger world of art thieves, but his position was probably more secure and more powerful than any of theirs; after all, he was both Hitler's and Göring's advisor on art "acquisitions". Lohse chose the selections and served them up for Hitler to place in his museum in Linz, or for Göring to add to his collection at his Carinhill estate. He would always be quick to celebrate his impeccable credentials, his place within the inner circle of Hitler, a badge he wore proudly.

In particular, Lohse specialized in selecting the seized and stolen works from the *Judisch*, the Jewish citizens of France. While selecting works from the appropriated pieces at the Jeu de Paume in Paris, or other sources, Lohse occasionally funneled select works to serve his voracious appetites as well.

His counterpart, Gurlitt, seemed like a filament of flesh lurking behind the blazing light of Lohse, his demeanor sad and lonely. The shadow on the other side of the light. His father Cornelius, a respected art dealer who served the Nazi regime out of obligation rather than desire, quietly accrued a collection of rarely seen Old Masters and impressionist paintings. Upon his death, the collection was inherited by Hildebrant, who sequestered them in a small neglected apartment in Munich. From that, the son expanded the horde of treasures, most obtained illegally. His rapacity was stunning; he was starting to lose track of the full extent of everything he brought into the flat. Stacks of work laid carelessly against one another in the dungeon of an apartment, leaving only small pathways to the kitchen and bed, matters of survival more than anything else. He kept no inventory, took no photos or wrote letters... just gathered, with the obsessiveness of the hoarder and the eye of a finely-tuned art history expert. He only sold a painting when he needed the odd few million Deutsch marks. He would eventually amass more than 1,500 pieces.

FROM CHAPTER 9 — Obsession

Tourette understood him well, a name prominent in his dossiers along with his singular obsession for the art he lusted no matter the price or the moral dealings. Under the tutelage of Göering he efficiently obtained what was desired without any thoughts of brutality, the price he had to pay unassailed with thoughts of honesty. Tourette knew of his witnessing the killings of Jews, an adjunct and willing bystander saving only those necessary for economic reasons and war production. The Lohse's of the Nazi world were very common, and with a common mindset, able to justify their work by rightfully claiming they are not harming anyone and simply following orders. But when Tourette thought about what happened to the owners of those paintings, and how Lohse would never be concerned about anything but the value of their works, it turned his stomach all over again. Complicity is no excuse for doing the right thing.

After all, Lohse was so calculating that he personally negotiated deals with Jewish collectors to obtain paintings at a fraction of their worth to save their lives. It was a rare defeat in Tourette's life that he escaped a lengthy prison sentence with the equivalent of a mild rebuke for his significant thefts and major role in Hitler's inner circle.

And now, he had a curious Jamette with whom to contend as well.

"Jamette, I know this guy, and he is going to know where you are and what you have," Tourette said, beginning to tremble, his fear growing for her safety and the gravity of the situation. "Your life is in danger, there is no way to guard the treasures you hold in your possession. Not with the very few security measures we have in place here."

The discussion grew prolonged, brought up again when Jamette, Tourette and Chance talked at the Gallerie during another exhibition. "What painting might you suppose the Nazi Lohse wants?" Jamette asked Tourette.

“One of the *entartete kunst* artists, the degenerate artists,” Tourette said.

“But different.”

Within moments, it hit both Jamette and Tourette: *the painting the desperate woman dropped off in Paris*. Between its tragic origin story and its theme of obsession on the part of the artist, the painting was an emotional and creative magnet... and, as always, a conversation starter.

“Tell me Jamette, what do you think of obsession?” Tourette asked. “At the Maison you must have been witness to plenty, mostly harmless, though not so harmless to the participant... I suspect there is a thread, a very elusive one that is connecting Lohse’s pursuing a certain painting and willing to pay a steep price to get it for a particular client. Something about having infinite money to pay for what he must have, yet it is also totally out of the sphere of what is considered of consequence.”

While Tourette kept speaking with Jamette, a dialogue inside his chest quickly arose, building to a near crescendo, the dialogue of realization that must be acted upon: *“Lohse is zeroing in on Jamette, the central figure in his play.”*

FROM CHAPTER 12 — The Degenerate Art Exhibit

Nothing excited or engaged Madame Jamette more than a gallery filled with a diverse gathering of patrons and collectors, equally excited to see the exhibition of the Weimar Republic's 'Degenerate Art'. Between run-up articles in *The New York Times* and *Art in America*, patrons quickly understood what the Gallerie's classy, flamboyant proprietress had just achieved — boldly presenting the stylistic, artistic antithesis of anything Adolf Hitler and the Nazis liked. And in doing so, she also brought back to life the names of many unknown artists, many now disappeared or dead, who produced the remarkable work. Jamette elegantly stepped from one patron to another, gauging their impressions of both particular pieces and the overall collection of 50 works she'd gathered for the exhibition. Her sweeping gown swept along the floor like a river flowing behind her, her presence and charisma a powerful magnet that resulted in some patrons viewing her as a moving human art piece amidst an exhibition the likes of which they'd never seen.

Even in the refined atmosphere of upscale New Yorkers, her French mannerisms and classic beauty caught the eye. Jamette maintained a self-awareness, her effect on others as closely curated as her shows, clearly conscious of the effect she created with her own personal piece of art. The only difference? Jamette was not to be bought.

"Monsieur," she said, walking up to a patron and hooking her arm through his, "I see you've been staring at this piece for quite some time. Can I ask what it does for you? How is it, eh... *move* through you? What do you see? The, eh, story it tells to you right now?"

"Madame, I am taken by the truth in the painting and at the same time ashamed, that we, considered as the pinnacle of civilization, have clearly misstepped our boundaries of decency, as shown in the truth of these paintings," he said. "Surely, there are no words to describe the anger and pain that is depicted here by this work by Max Beckman.

“The ragged demented brushstroke, created without thought or hesitation from the deepest part of his soul, showing the truth without artifice and yet the artist’s brilliant painterly genius is evident.”

The man paused and turned to Jamette. “I commend you, Madame, for your courage, to fully expose the work of this painter and the others of the time without ceding to the demands of what is expected from a Gallerie, new on the scene and untested. You have the courage to hand over your passion for all to see and comment upon.”

FROM CHAPTER 15 — Gathering Forces

Tourette greeted Jamette as they always exchanged welcomes, holding each other’s hands while kissing the other’s cheeks. A traditional European greeting, with a little added affection borne of their longstanding friendship and how they leaned on each other, Jamette for security, Tourette to relieve the grief of losing his wife.

“Thank you for coming, Inspector,” Jamette said, her voice turning softer, less edgy.

“Always for you.”

“May I get you some espresso and a croissant?”

“That would be too kind.”

“Not kind enough,” she said, the first smile of the day crossing her face.

“Those two have a thing going on,” McDougal said to Chance.

“No they don’t. They are great friends who help each other, McDougal. Nothing more. This goes back a long time. Back into Paris, years ago. They fought many battles against the Nazis together in their own ways, and protected a lot of girls, especially a couple girls named Arlette and Maya, saved a lot of art and other treasures. They are as tight as tight can be.”

“These girls around?” McDougal asked.

Chance nodded. “I am certain Maya will be here today. You will meet her. Arlette? I never heard what became of her... Jamette and Tourette know, but I never asked. All I know is the Nazis killed Arlette’s family, she took revenge, Jamette and Tourette protected her by hiding in the Brothel that Jamette ran...”

“Knowing Jamette, I don’t think that was the arrangement, it was more an act of protection for the Jewish girls, my impression there were a few of them but again, I don’t know the facts and am not going to ask.”

Chance knew further, the full details as Jamette recounted them, but as McDougal would doubtless understand from his military service, the information was on a need-to-know basis. McDougal did not need to know.

As Jamette walked to the coffee service, Tourette turned to Pirelli. “One more is to arrive, Officer,” he said. “Tall man, very dignified... he is to come in. But no one else.”

“Do you want me to radio for a patrol on the streets?”

“*Oui*. A very good idea. *Merci*, Officer.”

As Pirelli grabbed his two-way radio and called the dispatcher, Tourette turned to Chance and McDougal. “Chance, I know Jamette has your full trust in this Gallery. Stay at her side, not to leave her side. Talk to her — about the weather, the present exhibit, anything. She is very worried.”

He turned to McDougal. “Monsieur, you are from Patton’s Third Army, *oui?*”

At that, Officer Pirelli turned his head. “Patton’s Third, young man? You served with the great General?”

McDougal smiled. “I served *for* the Great General, Officer. No one served with him. Not him. We all served him. He only served two people in this world — Generals Eisenhower and Bradley. Well... and his wife.”

Pirelli chuckled. “Yes, of course. Well, you boys helped win us the war. Can’t thank you enough.” He extended his hand. McDougal shook it, a bit embarrassed.

McDougal turned back to Tourette as Pirelli shifted his attention to the street. It started to fill with pedestrians and cars as Harlem awakened to a bright, sunny Saturday, every working man’s ideal way to begin the weekend. “Did that answer your question, sir?”

FROM CHAPTER 20 — Incident in the Alley

As soon as they arrived in the alley, Maya found a dark corner behind a hive of trash cans. “Make sure no one sees, including you. I’m going to change now,” she said.

After a quick minute, during which Chance yearned for a peek he never took, she emerged in an all-black bodysuit, the curves of her muscular body showing, looking like an alley cat you didn't mess with. An alley cat with a face as intense as a scimitar, and just as ready to wreak havoc on whoever crossed her path.

She looked up at one of the staircases that zig-zagged five stories to a dimly lit window. "I'm going up there," she said. "I must penetrate the secrets, there is something there that bides me, that shields the ghost of him in a way of directing my hand, to know what awaits my fate and fulfill my obligation..."

"What are you talking about?" Chance whispered.

She clipped the device to her collar, too focused to hear his question. "These metal contraptions only seem complicated. They're supposedly made for safety, but if I view them in a different way, they are inviting me to explore some secrets, and the message he has for me." She stopped and stared into Chance's eyes, her own a hundred miles away, devoid of all emotion and concern for anything but her mission. "It is time to go to work."

"Just let me know what I need to do," Chance said, her comment reminding her of the difficulty following what she and the oracle were talking about not an hour ago in East Harlem, a conversation from which they both drew greatly as he sat on the other side of the room, trying vainly to understand. She seemed so far away then, too, but in a different way than now, as if swept into a current or a realm far beyond his comprehension of anything he'd ever seen in his life.

Now, though, he knew very well what he saw — a huntress locked into a mission, full of resolve.

Maya scampered up the staircase while Chance watched for any movement in the window, also scanning both sides of the alley. He spotted a sudden flash at one end — only two brothers, one chasing the other down the street. His nerves jumped and then settled.

Then, from the other entrance to the alley, the one furthest from the Gallery, a set of headlights. Chance whistled softly, catching Maya's attention, ducking into the darkest nook behind the staircase, and watched the lights.

She also noticed them, and crouched over her haunches, now at the window. She quickly peeked inside, and saw two men hovering over a bed. On the bed was an architectural blueprint, two pistols, a rifle, a round object that looked like unexploded grenades she saw in a few gutters in Paris after the occupation, and clothes as dark as the ink-black suit she wore. The men were young, intent, no smiles, their eyes locked on the blueprint. One held it while the other traced over it with the eraser end of a pencil, careful not to touch the surface. She recognized one of them, the tall, thin blond-headed man holding the pencil; he'd been in the gallery the day before.

She'd guessed right. With utter silence, she flipped on the listening device and tucked herself into virtual invisibility, a little ball beneath the window, hoping Chance could somehow distract whoever sat inside the car with its headlights blaring down the alley.

"Comrade, I'm telling you, that back door in the alley is the way in," she heard the dark-headed man say. He was big, muscular, not a man she wanted to tussle with... he looked like it would take a high-caliber gun and many rounds of ammunition to bring him down.

“And I’m telling you, *comrade Baum*,” the blond-headed Nazi, said, growing more frustrated, “that I have been in the gallery, and I cannot tell from this blueprint what lies on the other side of the east – wall – there.” He tapped hard on the blueprint, the sound pounding into Maya’s eardrums. “It could be nothing... or it could be the room where the paintings are. I think that is the case. If so, we have to assume they will have someone on the other side of that door.”

FROM CHAPTER 23 — The Heist

Lohse and Oberlander found three others at the staging area, an Italian delicatessen a block from the Gallerie Maison. The owner, Federico Panagi, a hunched-over grandfather of six from Palermo, was a staunch follower of Mussolini who had secretly funneled hard-earned sandwich earnings to the cause before and during the war. Besides being a secret part of Salvatore Maranzano’s extended family in East Harlem, which converted Italian-American gangs into five organized families that now controlled much of the city, Federico loved art, his taste and reverence dating to Botticelli, Bruneschelli, Caravaggio and the other Renaissance masters. He supported the Hitler-Mussolini alliance, feeling it a travesty that they lost the war, and always welcomed those who believed the same. He also welcomed the one thousand dollars Lohse handed him for the use of his back room for the night.

“Here are the keys, the room is cleared, please be sure you leave it as you find it with its many treasures that have found me through the years .” Federico said. He wiped his leathered hands on a dirty apron, and put the ten crisp \$100 bills in his pocket. “I thank you very much for your generosity. In return, I have prepared my finest sandwiches for you and your men, Mr. Lohse.” Federico surveyed the men, all hard-faced Germans that towered over him. “Capicola, all the meats—” he pinched his fingers together, put them to his lips and kissed them “—with the blessings of the Panachi family. I wish you great success in your endeavor.”

“Your generosity will be honored by the Father—” Lohse sucked the words back into his mouth. “We will one day say that again. But those who keep up the fight for our world order, and the people I serve, thank you for your assistance. And for the sandwiches. We have worked up a significant hunger tonight.”

Federico and Lohse shook hands. After Federico left, Lohse and the men dug into the thick, folded-over slices of capicola, the next few minutes were silent but for random grunts and sounds of smacking lips and culinary ecstasy, the Italian’s sandwiches are works of art on their own. Afterwards, Lohse pulled down the window shades and they unpacked the dark bags they’d brought into the deli, unloading rifles, pistols, handcuffs, and a half-dozen *Funkgerat* devices, Fu.Spf.4 models, handheld communication units that could transmit up to five kilometers. Superior in range, signal and clarity to the Americans’ so-called ‘walkie-talkies’, they worked perfectly for outdoor-to-indoor contact. Plus, they could not be intercepted by anyone not on the same ultra-high frequency.

Lohse pulled out one of the devices and called his men who had been flushed from the apartment earlier by one of the whore Jamette's friends. "What has happened since that cat-woman, or whatever you call her, delayed your preparations, Baum?"

"Now is a good time for us to obtain the paintings," Baum said. "She and her accomplice are gone. There is no movement in the alley, or in front of the gallery. Leidinger is checking again now. We have to assume someone is inside."

"Or two or three," Lohse said. "What is the police patrol pattern? I know with Tourette in town, we must assume police are here patrolling."

"They come by every fifteen to twenty minutes. Two cars. Criss-cross pattern. One keeps driving past the gallery and parallel streets, the other is running perpendicular. Constant watch all night ... but we have a fifteen- to twenty minute window, Herr Lohse."

Lohse looked over to Oberlander, Dietz and Walther, a sharpshooter they'd contracted simply to shoot whoever moved. Hopefully he didn't decide to engage in friendly fire. The man had a reputation: he did not miss. If he thought you were a target, and his finger held the trigger, then your final breath had already begun. Everyone had their form of artistic expression, Lohse chuckled to himself, thinking of the gun brand that left thousands of Allies dead and rotting on the European countryside. Probably half of them were eliminated by Walther himself. *Good name for a hired assassin.* He looked at his men again. Everyone was prepared, bags on their backs, dressed in black and ready for battle.

“Okay, Baum. You, Leidinger and Walther proceed to that flat where you were earlier tonight. Maintain surveillance. Walther, once you arrive, find a position in the alley, near the back of the Gallerie. We’re on our way.” Lohse turned to his men. “On behalf of the Fatherland, of our mission and our purpose, of the people for whom we reacquire these works, I thank you for your roles in this mission. May the great and merciful Lord bring success to this evening, so we may be done with these enemies and secure another treasure in the glory of the Reich.”

FROM CHAPTER 24 — To India

“You must talk with Maya. She will be here soon.”

A few minutes later, Maya and Tourette walked into the Gallerie, both dressed as if they were on their way to a Broadway show, Maya in a resplendent early summer white, Tourette in a trim suit. She wore a strange red dot in the center of her forehead. As they reached Jamette and Chance, Maya took Chance’s hand and pulled him to the side.

When alone, she released his hand. “I need to talk to you.”

Chance nodded and decided to play it safe, cool, and allow her all the room. He envisioned her as someone with whom to build something to last, maybe a lifetime, not to cajole into going to bed with him right now. No matter how much his brain and body desired her.

“I know you Maya, forever I've admired you, trying to never allow my strong feelings for you to intrude, or show or express anything romantic.” He paused, thinking of how she held his hand in the Gallerie after eating in the Indian cafe, their touching hands in the cab when they met with the oracle before surveilling Lohse's men in the alley. “Too romantic.”

“You are a gentleman, Chance, and I like you. You are a great friend, and now we have survived something that makes us closer. And we both love Madame Jamette.”

Chance read the look in her tone, her face, the solemn delivery of her words, her eyes sad but unyielding. No man wants to know the feeling that comes with the picture he was seeing, but virtually every man does. The feeling of *goodbye*. His heart plunged into his stomach.

She smiled warmly, as if at peace with the entire universe. “I am now to be known as *Amanpal*, Chance. I have decided to go back to India, with Tourette, to help my people. There is a pain in my life that will never leave me without redemption. The only way I can earn that redemption is to go back to where all the pain began, my homeland. And help those who truly have no hope. Madame has made me confident, and you have made me feel beautiful. You, Chance. I have never felt beautiful before. I have never been beautiful; I still am not beautiful, but you make me feel beautiful—”

“—Have you looked in the mirror lately?” Chance asked. “You are a beautiful woman.”

“Well, thank you.” She kissed Chance on the cheek and held it for a long second before stepping back, leaving a slight trace of lipstick, a teenage lover’s trick she’d decided to use. So he would also never forget her playful, mischievous side. Another wrinkle he’d begun to open within her. “But I now need to share everything all of you have given me here.”

She patted her heart. “I do find gratification when I serve Madame, but in my deepest parts, still I am in pain and must leave. I admire the holy men with their begging bowls, the *sadhus*, the sense of peace they have I do not share, so I must be one of them to find that peace. Until then, nothing will truly heal me, and if I am not healed, then I can never be a full woman. After that? Maybe our paths will cross again.”

Chance took a step back, as though hit by a stiff wind. “And Madame knows about this?”

“Yes. I told her two days ago. I told her not to speak to you about it until I spoke to you first.”

“When are you leaving?”

“Tonight our ship departs.”