

The Lunar Lady



"Empress of Art, for Thee I twine this wreath, with all too slender skill. Forgive my Muse each halting line, and for the deed accept the will." - Lewis Carroll

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An Age that began with an exclamation mark! That is how she saw the 1920's. It was a time of mystery and art, where she, Marguerite du Maupassant, could reign supreme as queen of the era. Marguerite always believed that it was a blessed life. She had been born into an age that suited her like the proverbial hand in glove. She knew from her first glimpse of artists and patrons, models, writers, and dancers sitting at Cafe le Dome on a colorful autumn day in 1910, which would be her world as well one day. Though she was but ten years old that momentous day, she was touched by the hand of destiny, and that evening at her parent's home on Rue Nicholas Flammel, she swore a solemn oath, in the name of the great Alchemist, that she would dedicate her life to Art. She did not know then, her "Art" was to be her life, her body, her "looks", her sense of unparalleled style, in short, her presentation. Even at her tender age, she sensed the astounding implications, though could not see the far flung results.

When Marguerite entered the Ecole des Beaux Arts she had already begun to develop her unique style. In the post-war euphoria of Bohemian Paris, the impact of creative thinking was evident. All around were reminders of chic demi-monde, and the excitement of the new, the courageous, and profound. And she, the beautiful and exotic girl of dark beauty was not least of the luminaries. The neighborhood baker, Monsieur Boudin, called her, "The Lunar-Lady", a name

which clung to her, like the black silk of her calf-length shifts. Indeed where-ever she went heads turned, for her beauty was not commonplace, like rosy windswept Swedish girls, but unnamable, captivating, like the early morning embers that remain in the fire, glowing electric blue and orange, and full of a radiant heat.

Jade green mascara and lips of deep maroon was her color selection that blustery March day when she first met Lou Lou Framboise.

"This morning is a morning of destiny!" Marguerite mused, as she steadily applied her eye-liner with a twist upward at the fish-tail end of the eye, to resemble some Egyptian princess. She chose a dress of muted greens and reds, covered with gold threads, and delicate embroideries of grape clusters. Her profile cut the stillness of her bedroom as she donned an avocado green cloche, allowing only the slightest view of her blue-black bob to greet the world. With a jazziness and savoir faire that was uniquely her own she descended the stairs to the streets below, and with an angular precision zigzagged her way to the Cafe for her petite dejeuner.

From another building, somewhere near the Rue de la Pompe, a spoiled and very rich young lady of uncertain age, but clear originality, opened the door of her Italian motor car and with a decisive turn of the key also made her way to that same cafe. This woman, graceful, lanky, with curiously distracted expressions and story-book eyes is Lou Lou Framboise.

How did she acquire the name "Framboise"? This is another story.

It is one that shall be told later, because it involves Marguerite, whom she has not as yet met.

Her real name was Lou Lou Montpellier. She was the third daughter of the noted French archaeologist Anton Montpellier and Agnes Flavia Montpellier, her mother. She had been raised in the finest of drawing room societies and rubbed elbows with the crème de la crème of the Noblesse Oblige, but she had always maintained a curious interest in the world outside her class and particularly Bohemian Paris. Much to her parents chagrin, Lou Lou became more and more unconventional as time passed in her life, until by her twenty-second year she had adopted the brilliantine and bobbed hair of her racier contemporaries and began to frequent those cavernous and clandestine clubs that unfold like surreal hothouse flowers in the heavily opiated mauve Parisian nights of Montparnasse.

Marguerite had already been served her cafe and croissant, when she felt a sudden wind, and thought for an instant she heard a blast of trumpet music. She looked up startled from her table. Her eyes were drawn like a pencil mark through calendar days, toward the entrance. There stood the most alluring woman she had ever seen. Tall and enigmatic in a tube of clinging black gabardine, bejeweled with ivory bracelets and ropes of pendulous amber, the woman barely motioned to the head waiter, telepathically suggesting her favorite seat. As this vision of fluid grace melted through the crowd, like spring snow on sun-warmed marble, all eyes stayed fixed upon her, such was the intensity of her magnetism.

Marguerite too followed the fabulous figure until quite unaware of her stare; the sultry lady was seated with much fanfare at the table next to hers.

When Lou Lou had removed her shawl of fanciful embroidered peonies and finished scrutinizing herself in her compact of jet and rose gold. She coyly raised those shadowed, animated eyes and with a throaty almost husky voice asked Marguerite, if she wished to join her. Marguerite, whose eyes had not left the mysterious Lou Lou, almost hypnotically arose from her seat and drifted to the chair diagonal to her hostess. Extending a languorous black-nailed hand of notable length and sensitivity, the charming woman crooned "Hello, I am Lou Lou Montpellier". Marguerite, extending her own hand, and slightly offering a lingering squeeze, said, "Marguerite du Maupassant". Cigarettes were lit and for some moments nothing else was said. Until finally, with eyes rolled upward, and with extreme drama, Lou Lou said "I couldn't help but notice you sitting there. I've seen you before actually. Last week. You were here with Hubert Galle, the sculptor. Were you not?" Marguerite nodded an affirmation through thick blue smoke.

"Yes, we have been friends for some time."

"You must watch him my dear, he is a scoundrel," Lou Lou spoke with assuredness.

"OH don't worry, I know about his amorous escapades. We are just friends anyway." Marguerite took a sip of coffee.

"Are you an Artist also?" Lou Lou, whose voice was like an echo in a bottle, adjusted her earrings of jet and baroque pearl.

"Very much an Artist", Marguerite said, with an air of seriousness peppered with irony.

"I have a feeling we shall be friends", Lou Lou murmured. Marguerite said nothing. But removing a pen and note card from her bag, wrote out her name and address, and sliding over the table to Lou Lou, smiled her famous smile which is larger than her face and yet not a smile of amusement, but a smile of intrigue, resembling an Egyptian reed boat afloat the river Nile on some starry ancient evening.

Had she but known that the meeting with Lou Lou would alter the flow of her life's river so thoroughly; Marguerite may have stayed at home that morning in 1922. But she was aware from the soothsaying of her uncanny intuition that the day was one of Destiny. Never one to let her fears monkey her curiosity, she left the house sensing that something was afoot in the realm of fate. Later that day, she, by chance, saw Hubert Galle at the book market along the Seine. Hubert, who was always unshaven, with a thick tangle of hair which resembled charred sticks from a quenched fire, was pouring over an old Volume of Voltaire. His clothes, almost always grimy, were wet with dew and his hands, stained coppery green from his metal work, were slightly shaking in nervous bobbing jerks. Marguerite approached him from behind, and whispering over his shoulder said, "Ideas for your new sculptures?" Hubert, who smelled of tobacco and resins, bread and cognac, stood there motionless, saying nothing. "You are angry?" asked Marguerite with precaution. Hubert turned. His eyes were black and swirled in his head like tiny maelstroms. "I don't love you any more." He grumbled in voice that cracked like toasted seeds on hard rolls. , "Good," She purred. "We were not meant for love, not in the grand Romantic sense of the word. Our world is

marmoreal, moonlit, and angular; a landscape of mystery but not conventional love Mon Cher."

Hubert, who always thought in concrete terms, looked blankly at her. His eyes became stilled like stagnant wells. "Let's make love," He suggested, looking to his left, then right, to see if passersby heard him. Marguerite recalled the words of Lou Lou Montpellier earlier. "You men are all alike. You think that women can be mastered by the need to be loved. It takes more than a crack of the whip for me Hubert."

The smoky turquoise sky was full of Impressionistic clouds as she turned and faced the murky pastel river. She clasped her coat high around her chin and without the slightest "goodbye" walked away from Hubert and into the jostling crowd and the bookstalls, alive with merchants and browsers.

It was springtime in Paris. The streets were a flood of people. From her Balcony on Rue Madame, Marguerite observed the crowd of passing men and women. Splashes of gay colors, stood out amid the common thread of brown and black that sustained the tapestry as background in this living weave. The gentle wind offered the smells of flowers, and baking bread. The sun softly caressed her naked arms, as she brushed her raven hair. The sky was pink, as was her mood. Last evening she had received an invitation to dine with Lou Lou Montpellier at her chic salon apartment on the Rue de la Pompe. Today, since she was in such good spirits, was a day for a new dress, and perhaps a hat. She wanted to be perfect for the evening. Something about Lou Lou suggested perfection and Marguerite wanted to stand out like ruby in a Nubian's ear.

Marguerite had been modeling for the House of Madame Jenny on the Champs Elysees for two years now. Everyone considered her a modiste deluxe and said of her profile that she was "kinetic as well as classic". Madame Jenny herself, one of the most modern women in town, frequently made lavish gifts of gowns, or sportswear to Marguerite, not in any way to bribe her top mannequin but simply because Marguerite was the quintessential "Jenny" woman. However, Marguerite was unfathomably individual in her creativity, and often took her ideas to the streets to bend and shape the fashion world as she would. For her, self-expression was the ultimate experience. More than several times had Marguerite predicted a trend, and tested it on herself in public, only to see the next season's collection awash with a certain Marguerite color, or silhouette. Everyone wanted to paint her, and most did. Even the photographs of Man Ray could not quite contain the enigmatic charm of the "Lunar Lady". Marguerite did not work today, yet, she wanted to attend the regular 10:30 fitting and act as Vendeuse for Madame Jenny. One of the most celebrated clients, Bibi Printemps, was scheduled for the morning, and Marguerite felt that if she performed well Madame Jenny might see fit to bestow a special bonus.

Bibi Printemps, beacon of social soirees, was fabulously wealthy. She had worn Poiret's gowns since the master had come upon the Paris Dressmaking scene and ascended to the world of Haute Couture. She was remote, cold, and unabashedly hedonistic. Her red hair, and iridescent blue eyes, her chalk white skin, and savage cheekbones, reminded one of the white peacocks shown by the gypsies at the Saturday bird market. She once appeared, naked skin exposed, in ropes of

pearls, and an incredulous headdress at the Opera. Since then she has been photographed constantly for social tabloids; Bibi as she arrived at Lanvin, 29 Rue d'Anjou or perhaps with Mrs. Reginald Fellows on her Yacht in Antibes, or many similar social settings; even a shot of Bibi buying shallots at the vegetable market, or more absurd, the photograph of her shadow at the dedication of the sculpture by Paulanship, at Werner Schillers garden one very dull summer! Marguerite had used her best wiles to play the game of fashion cards with Bibi Printemps. And how it paid off! Bibi had purchased seven of Madame Jenny's newest creations, including her seasonal white gown. Bibi wept spontaneously, at the presentation of this item, batting her weepy eyes like a baby deer as her tears fell into her sherry. Madame Jenny rewarded Marguerite with a dress so modern that it at once vexed and clarified its wearer. Unprecedented, yet strangely familiar, the dress that had been the product of yesterday's musings, sketches, swatches, and finally nimble seamstress fingers now adorned the charismatic Marguerite. Clearly Madame Jenny had been inspired. Mixing the Colors of Czechoslovakia, and the line of Italy, adding the sensuous length of an Arcadian goddess' tunic, and the controlled chaos of the Futurists, she had composed a work of art in cloth. Marguerite felt that this particular ensemble had been created especially for her anyway and that somehow its appearance at the atelier had been pre-ordained. Marguerite gave thanks to the statue of Apollo at the Jardins Luxembourg on her way home. Now she was prepared. "Oh come glorious evening" she sang to herself, "for now I am perfumed and ready to step upon Love's golden barge."

Marguerite luxuriating in her bath evoked the spirit of the evening in her. She tilted her head sideways and pulled her lips inward slightly. Her reflection in the mirror opposite, her ebony wet hair, and the alabaster urns and the tapestry by Pierre Chareaus all served to accent her beauty. She had a sudden feeling of awareness about Time. In that instant she saw herself poised in that stylish vignette. She saw the transience of things in space and in time. She observed their current meaning in their most present sense and sensed their incongruity in both past and future. Thus lifted out of herself temporarily, she held her pose through eyes no longer personal.

Dressing with unfailing focus she stood away from her dressing table. The room glowed with an amber light, as the Paris sun sank into the bosom of France. Marguerite stood framed by her dressing mirror. How different this version of her regard." No hat on Earth can compliment this garment." She brushed her short hair close to her temples and smiled a birdlike smile that flew from her face. She turned back to her table and quickly opening a jar of pomade Armand She greased her black hair thoroughly achieving a plus fonce look of bleu-noir, which when combed backward was so like the current men's fashion in hairstyle. Now again examining herself she was struck by her presence and breathed in the atmosphere of its continuity. Conforming to her natural feminine angles, the shape of the female form, brave orange and green embroidered gryphons ascended and descended along trails of black and white checkered strips. A cowl of chartreuse chiffon rested on her breasts. The sheath itself delicious soft crushed velvet of smoked maroon hues cascading into what was perhaps the first bold use of the uneven hemline that dominated the next decade. How like some visionary

goddess was she. She seemed like a legendary Teutonic priestess, who could change from fox to woman or mesmerize men into that forever-sleep, where they forget their affections for their wives, and always lose at chess. Now she seemed some sprite, who moving through the beveled corridors of streamlined skyscrapers contrasted her mask both Kabuki and Cubistic. Was she not truly a reflection of something not yet known to exist? Was she not like those deep sea creatures that generate their own light, or those living crystals that refract their identities in perfect cubic cleavage? Or perhaps she was like the music one hears in dreams at once consoling and foreign; those melodies that suckle the homesick mind, and yet flee in xenophobic fear. All this and more was she when finally her bracelets circled her naked arms, and the shoes of black suede and gold embroidery, with a slight Mandarin heel, slipped over those tiny feet swathed in emerald green stockings.



II

In a quiet and very rich area quite near the Rue Pompe, on the fashionable Right Bank, secure in rooms elegantly decorated by Jean-Michel Frank, and enlivened by Picasso's and Marie Laurencin's paintings, Lou Lou Montpellier, adjusted her diamond wristwatch, calmly awaiting the arrival of her guests. Tonight she would entertain Gerald O'Hara, the Irish millionaire who inherited a fortune from his ancient family of land-barons, and who doubled that fortune with his tobacco

farms in America. His subsequent products, "O'Hara's No. 6 Pipe Tobacco" and "Bentley Golds" and "Bentley Argents" cigarettes, were sold in every tobacconists shop in Europe. He was the kind of man that commanded respect, though often distracted, and seemingly cold. His business sense was strictly American, but his manners and tastes were European. He was considered by some to be one of the handsomest men in Paris. Tall, broad, and irresistibly manly, he had also a curious shyness, in his hazel eyes, which compelled a freely given sympathy from others. His boyish bravado would surface then, and his smile, with a space between his front teeth large enough to pass a caper through, would curve into his cheeks rippling with dimples. Many a woman had paraded for his attentions, and though polite he always remained unattached. It was rumored that he visited the Brothels of Madame Regine frequently, but no-one seemed to care. Lou-Lou had also invited Hubert Galle, always good as a dynamic presence at gatherings. She had invited Princess Belosselsky-Belozersky, a Russian of perplexing moods, deeply religious, jarringly beautiful, and one of the most alluring Modistes in Paris. Of the Princess it was said "She prays with one eye open, and makes love with her backside". She was not liked by everyone, and her beauty bore jealousy like the multiplication of rabbits. It was also said that her mother had swallowed the semen of Rasputin and became pregnant. Her father prince Belozersky when hearing of his wife's condition, shot himself. The prince it seems was sterile but escaped certain other torments as the next day the revolution officially began. Lou Lou looked at the clock. Soon they would arrive. She tipped her long neck back and breathed deeply as the strains of romantic music lilted in the air from a Victrola that had been wrapped in silk scarves to muffle and soften its volume. "Then there is Marguerite"! she spoke inwardly. "How shall she be received?"

That extraordinary evening fates were dealt wildly like a reckless game of cards played by intoxicated children. Surely it was that night that Marguerite's life began its steady amble down a path from which it would never veer. Gerald O'Hara impeccably dressed in smart black-tie, dominated the scene until the arrival of Marguerite. Her entrance into the salon had an almost dizzying effect on the others. She floated in like the aroma of an ancient cognac and for sometime no-one could stand too close to her for she was shielded by a dreamy aura which curved about her body like a cosmic egg. Princess Belozersky knew this, for she had the gift of second sight, and had studied the Eastern schools of mysticism, and been a student of L. MacGreggor-Mathers, the renegade founder of the Paris Temple of Light. To Hubert, who arrived late, drunk, and customarily unshaven, and casual, Marguerite was an object of loathing. He hated her rejection. Her flip way of regarding what he considered their finest moment of love. He felt as if she had used him for pleasure and tossed him aside as a child throws a wrapper of sweets into the wind. He hated her sense of chic, her otherworldly ability to immediately captivate an audience, her talent, her grace, and most of all her piercing intellect which chopped his thoughts and ideas with the knife of her mind, like parsley for the soup. To Lou Lou who was a Sapphite since girlhood, Marguerite was the Goddess Diana, that melancholy huntress who rides the moon. This was her vision of the "Lunar Lady", Marguerites, now public Sobriquet. It was foremost in Lou Lou's mind to be caught or capture Marguerite that evening, and introduce her, if she was not already privy, to the hidden world of lesbian love, which when practiced makes women eyes veiled and unintelligible to other

women, makes them reflect the eyes of men, whom after seeing them turn away like one who has seen a specter; and are only seen as female eyes by their own lovers. That love profane, which gives the skin a smell of opium and that is played out on barren ebony beds, draped with grey silk, which stirs not, under the weight of thick obscuring incense smoke. That delight that sweeps away its followers to dreams of remote temples by Grecian seas, where even the fish are named after Goddesses.

Gerald O'Hara smiled his gap-tooth smile at Marguerite. He, spellbound like the others, could see nothing but her. As he held high his cocktail in recognition of her beauty, and pleasure at their meeting, he knew that this was the woman who would change his favorite color from green to red! He saw in her face, the light that had failed, rekindled. He saw her as a ship on which he might sail into the fairyland sea of some impossible future, and knew with a certainty that made his heart race that she was his angel.

From then on the night raced ahead of them, making them feel the evening had already ended at every chime of the clock. Hubert was the first to leave, irritated and disgruntled, he could not bear the ambiance. Before leaving he shot a glare of contempt at Marguerite. She sensed some future danger curled like a menacing embryo in his eyes.

Shortly after, Princess Belloselsky -Belozersky bade her adieus, leaving a conspicuous hole in the salon atmosphere, around which still lingered her fragrance.

Gerald, who had said little to Marguerite verbally, now extended his hand, and raised hers to his lips.

"I hope we shall meet again Mlle. Du Maupassant", his voice was round and warm and encircled her the way a French horn envelops a melody. Although she said nothing, and Gerald left no calling card or address, he knew that Marguerite was already a part of him.

Once out into the March night air, he turned his face to the full moon, which crowned the Eiffel tower like a halo .He made a small prayer to St. Bridgett "Keep us from the fires of Hell, and shower us with roses; this I pray oh Bridgette seven times seven times."

Everyone had gone. Lou Lou sat close to Marguerite on the divan. Lou Lou was radiant then. She had worn a gown by Louise Boulanger, of creamy wine colored crepe, very classical in cut. In fact Marguerite had already thought of painting Lou Lou as Helen of Troy. Lou Lou's skin was as white as pearls. Her long nose which ascended between oval eyes, was crowned by eyebrows that spread out across her brow like palm leaves. Her fair hair was bundled, almost haphazardly behind, with a gold chain, somewhat in the fashion of those Botecelli maidens one sees in his mythological subjects.

"Do you like Raspberries, my dear?" Lou Lou's voice was echoing about the room. "I love them," Marguerite spoke softly. Lou Lou arose, and extending her hands downward to Marguerite, who took them unquestioningly, pulled her upwards and led her to the boudoir.

The room was white, awash with a rosy glow. Sumptuously decorated in the style of the last century, except for the painting by Foujita, and the two enormous Rosewood fu-dogs which guarded each side of the bed. Huge vases of Calla

Lilies, drooped from the mantle, and the bed was swathed in white fox comforters. Marguerite, said not a word, but slipped from her clothing as quickly as a fish from human hands, and falling backwards into this lap of luxury she laughed with delight and abandon. Lou Lou excused herself briefly, and was back in no time with a silver tray, two small liquor glasses, a bottle of Foutin Noir, a clear glass bowl of raspberries, and an oriental pipe heavy with hashish the color of turmeric. When the curtain of her gown fell to the floor, exposing her nudity to Marguerite, Lou Lou lost her earthy self altogether. Suddenly without name, or fixed identity, she was transformed into an Olympian. Her breasts bounced away from each other, one pointing east, the other west and were the perfect ornamentation for the constellations of her beauty-marked chest. Her nipples were wide discs of rosy flesh that looked like hammered copper reflecting soft candlelight. The pouch of her belly, covered in minuscule white hairs, was supported by hips that were like river smoothed rocks, bounded by thighs that where as silky as an antique kimono. The delta of Venus, though completely shaved was rubbed with fawny kohl to offer shading without bristle, and so punctuating her nudity with an all too individualistic finale.

As they lay like a Sultan's cats on the rich bed, they drank and smoked, saying so much with so few words. Soon achieving another level of awareness they felt far removed in some remote part of an Ivory Tower. Lou Lou carefully balanced raspberries on her nipples and Marguerite as carefully nibbled them off with lips slightly parted. Now Lou Lou placed a raspberry in her navel and Marguerite lifted it with a curled tongue. "Lou Lou Framboise ... Lou Lou Framboise" Marguerite chanted softly again and again. Like a mantra the syllables began to sound senseless, but developed a life of their own, streaming out of Marguerite's mouth like an unfurled ribbon in a breeze. Now the two lay side by side and the rosy warmth of the room enveloped them. They felt like angelic beings adrift on pink clouds in the highest region of Heaven, and that is how they stayed until morning.

Three years! Yes, that is how long the affaire lasted. Lou Lou Framboise and Marguerite did not stray far from one another after that fateful night. They made no secret of the affaire, and many women and men despised their love, some out of jealousy and others disgust. They were seen together at balls, and parties, dances, nightclubs, and art-galleries; anywhere social they chose to frequent. Often they would dress as men. Marguerite designed suits, *comme de garçon*, with exaggerated lines that accented their respective shapes. These suits which were fashioned out of masculine fabrics were actually tailored by Hilditch and Key on the Rue de Rivoli. Later such suits were copied by Chanel and other designers and became a rage among smart women. Sometimes the two women would visit the Mannequin-Piss Bar; after hours Lesbian Bar in the Latin Quarter, where women of refinement dressed in Tuxedos would swish and sway with some of the city's most desirable beauties. There, they would meet with friends and help create a world that nourished itself without the interference of men.

Marguerite was much in the studio as well. Many paintings of Lou Lou were executed in the cubist mode. Her one-woman show at Gallerie Zak, on Rue de l'Abbaye, was heralded as both sensitive and brilliant.

Of course, Gerald O'Hara had not forgotten about Marguerite. In fact he had seen her on three separate occasions. Once at a party at Meret Oppenheim's, where she did not recognize him. It was a fancy dress event and Gerald, painted red, with huge rubber claws, posed as a lobster. Marguerite had come as an American Indian, bronzed, and bare breasted. He spoke to her that night but she did not know him, although his voice was familiar. Another time he saw her walking with Lou Lou past the window of Delion's Hats on the Boulevard St. Germain. He was with a friend from Ireland that day and resisted the temptation to run after them. The third time had been at her opening at Gallerie Zak. It was on this occasion, a winter night in 1925, when he finally caught up with her and dared again to speak. Gerald wore a brown and grey cravat, with a clever pattern of printed Doric columns. He was utterly smart, though slightly conservative. He stood out among the patrons of friends of Marguerite, yet was not put off. Self-contained he examined the painting. The hot lush oils that fused cubist images sometimes familiar, sometimes curiously unrecognizable, captured his imagination. He wondered that such immense strength could be seen in these paintings and that such a petite woman could transfer such incredible energy from brush to canvas. Marguerite had seen him too, and broke away from a conversation to come and say hello. She was elegant in a silk frock which was at once green and black. Her eyes, slightly slanting, were sparkling from their deep sockets. She walked as though she had no weight. Rather swanlike she curved her pattern of steps through the crowd.

"Mr. O'Hara, is it not?" "Why yes," Gerald's voice gushed.

"I am Marguerite. We met at Lou Lou Montpellier's sometime ago..."

He broke off her sentence. "How could I forget?" "Why thank you. Do you like the paintings?" She asked without really caring, but eager to talk with Gerald.

"I was just admiring their strength," Gerald coughed, a little nervous about his critical faculties.

"Thank you again. I try to be a good painter."

At that moment a slovenly and drunken Hubert Galle, put a grimy hand on Gerald's shoulder. Hubert looked sadly dejected, a man without direction or substance. His eyes rolled back into their lids, and his mouth bore a sneer of superiority on the right and a frown of fear on the left, forming words that could only be partially understood. "You're drunk," scolded Marguerite.

Gerald removed the grimy hand, and turned to face the unwelcome Hubert. The air was thick with fumes of drink. Hubert crassly said, "So, the charming couple re-united." One eye opened, the other winking, he went on, pointing to Gerald's chest with a yellow stained finger. "Don't waste any time my good fellow. Your spell can easily be broken by Lou Lou Montpellier." Hubert hated the relationship of the two women. He had not the stamina to overcome his petty jealousy, or the rejection they had both thrust upon him. Gerald, without hesitation, took Hubert's arm, and firmly escorted him out of the gallery. When they had reached the end of the street, he flung Hubert away from himself. "Stay away Galle. Find another woman to pester, and find another man to fight with. I warn you if I ever hear of you bothering Mlle. Du Maupassant again, I shall personally throw you in the river!"

Hubert, heard his words, and though intoxicated knew better than to fight with a man like O'Hara. A dark shadow crept into his soul. He would find a way to make

O'Hara pay for his humiliation He spat on the ground, and staggered away into the fog.

When Gerald returned he begged Marguerite's pardon for making a scene. He asked her if they might not meet, the following day for lunch. She agreed. Upon departure from the Gallery. He was stopped by Lou Lou. "What was all that about with Hubert?" Lou Lou asked amused. "He was tipsy; I helped him outside for some fresh air."

"Oh, I see." Lou Lou laughed. Gerald smiled his broad gap toothed smile. Lou Lou observed him turn and give a small salute of departure to Marguerite, who stood talking to friends across the room.

Unexpectedly, a pang arose from Lou Lou's breast and caught in her throat. She sensed that her private field of spring flowers was in danger of a psychic intrusion, and feared for the loss of her joy.

III.

Marguerite on her way to meet Gerald O'Hara saw Lucy Krog near the Palais du Luxembourg. Lucy sat on a park bench weeping. Marguerite knew that Lucy was having an affair with the artist Pascin, and that she still maintained a home for her son Guy and husband, Per Krog. There was always gossip of their stormy relations, and Marguerite sensed that Lucy's tears were born of these troubled hearts. Marguerite pacified Lucy somewhat, without interfering in the grief of charged emotions, and continued on her walk toward the Cafe Rotonde.

Marguerite hoped that her accidental meeting with Lucy Krog was not foreshadowing of some greater darkness, and though she re-entered the sunny streets, and resumed her former jaunty air, there was still a small dark space in the back of her mind where deepening shadows muffled happier experiences and stilled hope into a numbing sleep.

The agreed upon luncheon date was finally a reality.

It was mid-day as the two sat on the terrace of Cafe Rotonde. No sooner had they spoken their salutations when ions filled the air, mammoth clouds appearing from no-where and the basso vibration of thunder echoed through town. That a downpour was inevitable did not matter, for Marguerite and Gerald were already hypnotized by each other's presence. They sat in the stimulating downpour, amid the clamor of cafe goers and talked of everything from Modigliani to the Ballet Russes. Before the afternoon had finished, Gerald had invited Marguerite to come to his House in Southern France, to spend a few days away from it all. He assured her that it was a comfortable place, where she could paint if she wished, or just relax. Before parting they walked down the Rue Emile Richard, which runs between sides of the Cemitiere Montparnasse. It was not raining quite so hard now, and the graves looked washed clean, almost comforting. Marguerite and Gerald stood for a moment under a shared umbrella. They did not speak, nor did they look at one another. It was one of those moments when the world speaks loud enough for us all.

The Ancient city of Rodez, once a great textile producer, was now little more than a sleepy French village. On the outskirts on a rocky hillside surrounded by gentle woods stood a quaint but spacious Chateau, where Gerald O'Hara took Marguerite for a little escape from Paris.

It was here that, not only did they become lovers, but also began that curious episode they labeled "The Sessions". This was a term for the communion with the spirit world that they had stumbled into first by way of amusement and then later followed upon as an avid pursuit of knowledge. This is how it happened.

The first time Marguerite and Gerald slept together was altogether transporting. They marveled at one another's bodies and swooned to one another's kisses. How complete, how united to the universe Marguerite felt when at last their love was consummated and they lay in each others arms. Outside, the birds singing and the smells of wildflowers on the wind, completed the the picture of harmony. All was right with the world. And as they sat naked in bed, propped against large feather pillows, and wrapped in white sheets, Marguerite heard a far away voice, whose words crashed like waves on the shore of her foremost thoughts, and though distant and mysterious at first, when finally comprehended were clear and revelatory.

These words came from one who called himself "Ulecsus" and were ministrations of guidance delivered to Gerald and herself, whom this Being called "his children". The first delivery was short. Ulecsus, who spoke from a small planet in the constellation of Pegasus, told of his waiting and longing for the time when he again would speak with his children. Of how long the years and even lifetimes they had spent away, and of the approaching time of their return home. When Marguerite had finished the delivery, she fell back into the pillows and seemed to recover from a trance, breathing deeply like one who has held his breath underwater.

"Do you know what you said?" Gerald queried in soft caring tones.

"I remember it all," Marguerite looked at him in amazement. Gerald unruffled took the experience in stride, and that day and evening they continued to discuss the meaning of the event. It was soon discovered that after each sexual bonding, Marguerite would speak as Ulecsus. At the end of a month, the pair believed that everything Ulecsus had said to them was true. He spoke with such urgency, such supplication and Fatherly protectiveness that they often wept after his departure, and marveled at the information that streamed into their hearts and mind from some distant world.

Long ago had the dying planet, Valdavia, been aware of its fate. And on that tiny red dwarf star, number 107946 according to present day star catalogues, the "Great Ones" of the realm, sent explorative emissaries away to distant worlds to seek possible solutions to the inevitable destruction of their civilization.

Many things were learned from these sojourns, and the knowledge of restoring balance was obtained from far flung explorations. Long had the travelers been home, but *three* stayed behind. The sons of Ulecsus. "How often I have watched you from afar, and grown disturbed at your curiosity, though always my love for you induced my tolerance and forgiveness. Your fascinations with the earth and the incarnations you have mastered have been valuable tools, but now you must acknowledge your source and return home. Your earth names are like running sores, hard to forget. You have been snagged by glamour many times. Shed these

skins and return to the world of the Light." So Ulecsus spoke and so Marguerite and Gerald marveled at their present lives and wondered at the possibilities.

By the next year Marguerite and Gerald had married. And though the messages came less frequently, they still on occasion were witness to a "session". Ulecsus had told them most of what they needed to know and that consisted largely of a series of cleansing procedures and an eventual pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain in Tibet. But life as always interfered and the days and months clumped together like dust behind a cabinet. So demanding was the world of modern life that try as they might their spiritual inclinations were often brushed aside by their daily existence in the milieu of their times.

It was not until the announcement by Ulecsus that the third son was soon to be met, and that the three would be united, that life for Gerald and Marguerite assumed unfamiliar and disturbing prospects.

IV.

Lou Lou "Framboise" was crushed when she realized she had no hope of retrieving Marguerite as her paramour. Although she never showed her angst and indeed, went on to conquer other lovers, there was still a part of her heart that would remain eternally true to the "Lunar Lady". At the announcement of the marriage of Marguerite and Gerald, however, Lou Lou's sadness turned to rage and she could never see the two together without having to exert the greatest restraints on her emotions. She invariably wished to lash out, to make plain the depth of her hurt, but she was able to keep her cool exterior having been a master of sleek sophistication and understatement. But one day the wicked beetle of deception entered her thoughts, and she was seized by a desire for revenge. Brooding over the disappointments of her affaires she was gripped with an idea that chilled but satisfied her cravings for rejected love, and to this end she formulated a plan.

Hubert Galle now lived a tumble-down garret on a backstreet near Rue Alesia. Half crazed with drug addiction and alcoholism, the wretched ghost of his former self, he lived out his days and nights in dejection and poverty. Lou Lou, whose fascination with the underbelly of society had always been evident, often frequented the rundown hovel, where she, out of a perverse sort of kindness, brought food and money, and sometimes even absinthe and morphine to the down and out Hubert. It was on one such visit that Lou Lou first perceived the genesis of her plan. She would take Hubert away from this degradation, make him strong again, but keep him addicted to drugs. She would induce him to murder Gerald. Playing on his weaknesses, his jealousy and rejection, she would devise a scenario in which the dreadful act could be completed. Afterwards she would return Hubert to the streets and lure Marguerite back with arms of consolation in bereavement.

On a freezing morning in January 1927, Ulecsus startled Gerald and Marguerite with the announcement that their brother, missing of late, was soon to be a part of their lives. That the two should procreate and produce a child, and that the said child would be the incarnation of their brother; Ulecsus' own third son! Shocked at the prospect of such an unusual concept, and frightened by the idea of motherhood, Marguerite resisted the idea. Gerald on the other hand was now more and more eager to fulfill the urgings and suggestions of Ulecsus. Gerald, had grown tired of commerce, and bored with wealth, and longed now to devote himself to acts of spiritual consequence. He spoke more often to Marguerite about the purification and the pilgrimage. He spoke of returning to Valdavia and leaving this, their outworn lives, behind. After many discussions and through many a psychological mine-field, Marguerite finally agreed to attempt conception. On a full moon night, some weeks later, the couple prayed for their son to be born healthy and good, and with these thoughts in mind, lay down together to conceive.

There were some troubled days for Marguerite. Something within her, long buried perhaps, possibly even inaccessible to Freudians, clung to the egocentricity of her life. She craved le Vie Boheme of artists, and whenever possible, though pregnant now, she found her way to the Boulevard Montparnasse.

One night as she was overcome with wanderlust, she purposefully picked a fight with Gerald, and in a restless fever, with kohl darkening her upper and lower eyelids, and black lipstick she sped to the "Jockey Club". Long the favorite nightclub of the intelligentsia, she knew she would find there the colorful group of writers and artists she missed so desperately. The dingy walls were decorated with Mexican and cowboy motifs, or vignettes of sombreros, Indian rugs and animal skulls. Marguerite found good company at a table with Spaniard Luis Bunel, Jean Cocteau, and Zinah Pichard. It was like old times, she thought. But too often she would recall Gerald, and the child that was developing inside her, and would fall away, distracted from the brilliant conversation at her table.

Exactly at the moment when Marguerite decided to leave, who else should saunter in but Lou Lou Framboise, accompanied by the enigmatic Princess Belosseksky-Belozersky, attended by her Russian wolf-hounds. Now it really was like old times. Marguerite excused herself, and made way towards the exit, but Lou Lou, having spotted her in the crowd, aimed to have words with her. "Now was her chance," thought Lou Lou. I shall seize this moment.

"No Gerald tonight my darling?" Lou Lou lowered her blue, fishlike eyelids.

"I really must be off now." Marguerite broke her off.

"Marguerite, my dearest, please wait." Lou Lou pleaded. Marguerite turned and faced the tall woman. Her gaunt features seemed to have lost their former glow. Now she was drawn, and her skin made white with powder, was almost transparent. Her lips, that had once been a sensuous curve, now seemed too full, vampire-like...

Marguerite wondered how she ever found this creature attractive.

Still a sense of pity came over her and she consented to a few words with Lou Lou. "I would like to return some of your paintings Marguerite, I no longer feel that I should have them. " Lou Lou moved into the shadows to keep Marguerite from being able to judge her expressions and perhaps discern her deceit. "Please," she went on, "Come next Friday and pick them up."

There was a tone of desperation in Lou Lou's voice. Marguerite attributed this to past sentiments. She assumed Lou Lou wanted to part with the paintings so she would no longer be reminded of their affaire. Her request seemed decent enough, and Marguerite agreed to stop by with Gerald on the coming Friday. This was even better; for Lou Lou had already been scheming possible ways to have Gerald show up as well. "Excellent", smiled Lou Lou. He will need to help you with the canvases."

Later that evening when Lou Lou was in bed, she mulled over the circumstances. She would stimulate Hubert with reminiscences of Marguerite. She would offer him Absinthe and hashish. She would excite him with Champagne, and suggest that he kill Gerald. That but for Gerald, Marguerite would still be his! She would give him a small revolver when the time comes and make Hubert shoot Gerald while at her apartment next Friday. When the police came, she would back up Hubert's story of self-defense, saying the two men had engaged in a brawl, and that Gerald had tried to push Hubert over the balcony, but that Hubert had escaped him, and ran to her desk for the gun, withdrawing it and firing a bullet into Gerald's heart. She devised other schemes too, but the shooting was the one she liked best; opting for the inevitability of Marguerite being in shock and unable to coherently testify against them.

That same evening, as Marguerite apologized to Gerald for her rash behavior, she also pledged to support more firmly their spiritual quest.

The wind blew fierce through Parisian streets that night, and there was no moon in the inky sky which cloaked the world in obscurity.

How wicked she had become was not measurable, for on the exterior Lou Lou remained a beauty, though an aura of tragedy closed her in an invisible membrane of melancholia. All week she had prodded and primed Hubert for the murder, and he, having little to lose was a willing participant in their crime. Indeed Hubert anticipated that moment, and often in drugged flights of fancy or alcoholic blurs he would relish the imagined moment like savory cakes. It was planned now, and as the day of the dreadful deed came around the two conspirators were rife with expectation and bloodlust.

Lou Lou sat benignly on the divan, mimicking innocence. Hubert, sweating by the window, ran nervous hands through his matted hair. His eyes were blank and pitiless, as he smoked a Bentley gold, one of Gerald's own products. Now looking down disgusted at the vice that held him in its grip, like the hatred of the man whom he was soon to murder. Alarmed and shaken, he threw the cigarette to the floor and stamped on it in trepidation. Lou Lou, arranged the pillows and stared absent-mindedly at the walls waiting the moment of the profane tour-de-force which would be her victory.

Marguerite and Gerald arrived at half past noon. A dull rain fell outside, and the grey mist encircled the neighborhood, muffling all outside sounds. One may well wonder how ordinarily sensitive people, do not, by some psychic sense, anticipate danger. Yet, Gerald and Marguerite were unaware as they rode the lift upstairs. The mundane was all they sensed, a task to be swiftly completed.

Marguerite and Gerald sat down hospitably for a brief visit with Lou Lou.

The aloof and somewhat blasé hostess made sure that Marguerite sat close to her, perhaps as some measure of protection. After a few minutes, Marguerite said, "May we collect the paintings now Lou Lou?"

At that moment, Hubert burst through Lou Lou's bedroom doors, with a face wildly agitated. Gerald instinctively stood, thrusting his body forward. Hubert, whose hand had been in his coat pocket, withdrew a flashing metal object.

Marguerite sank, "Yes, it was a gun," She thought to herself. "What do you do Hubert!?" She cried.

Lou Lou flew to her side and grasped her shoulders. Both women trembled in fear. Marguerite broke free from Lou Lou and with a start, leaped towards Hubert who turned toward her. Raising his gun he screamed, "Stay away Marguerite! I do this for you!"

But this distraction had given the astute Gerald enough time to grab the small bronze figurine from the occasional table near him and fling the marble based object at the villainous Hubert. The statuette hit his forehead and with a cry, Hubert fell backwards. As he stumbled, he pulled the trigger of the revolver, the sound of which resounded in the room. There was a scream, and blood spat from Lou Lou's breast as she collapsed onto the floor. Hubert, bleeding from the forehead, arms stretched out, dropped the gun, and reeled towards the body of the fallen Lou Lou. He stood above her in shocked awareness. Her eyes were clouded in a sphinx-like expression. Blood trickled from her mouth and breast, soaking through her gown and dampening the carpet. He turned toward Gerald, who was now in control of the gun. Horrified, Hubert stuttered, "I ...I killed her. It wasn't supposed to be that way. It wasn't to be her!"

Marguerite ran to Gerald's side, her eyes filling with tears as she turned her gaze away from Lou Lou's corpse. She heard her voice as on that night long ago, mutter, "Lou Lou Framboise"...

Hubert went limp, and like a shadow in a tunnel walked sadly to the balcony. "Stop Hubert, Stop!" commanded Gerald. But Hubert did not stop, and within seconds had simply, without deliberation, thrown himself over the edge. His body disappearing from their sight, leaving only grey mist.

It was over. Marguerite and Gerald embraced in a release of astonishment and charged emotions. There was only the sound of their two heart beats echoing in the uncanny stillness of the room.

V.

Marguerite and Gerald went to London after that tragedy. And for several months stayed at Gerald's flat in Chelsea. They kept to themselves, and prepared for the future they were not certain of. Marguerite, now noticeably pregnant, was still full of apprehension about giving birth. Ulecsus had spoken with them on several occasions and had expressed his joy at the impending incarnation of his son. He assured the couple, that this child would be the missing element necessary to

guide them to the Holy Mountain and ultimately back to the stellar home. Yet how this was to be accomplished was not foretold.

Marguerite grew distracted and restless and begged Gerald to return to Paris.

At Christmas they were back at home in France. They now lived in a new and fashionable residence on Rue Borghese, and were a safe distance from the life of Montparnasse. However, Marguerite still yearned for that social arena, and would daydream of the days when Dada and Cubism were rulers of the Art's; and when she dwelt in the court of the elect. Now she moved in different circles, more rarefied strata, where the international rich populated the drama of her days and nights. Marguerite began her journey towards oblivion during this cold wintry week in December and from that day on there was never a hope of turning back.

On the second of January, Gerald left Paris on a business trip. He had tried to cancel, but Marguerite was insistent that he go. She assured him that the baby would not come during the week he was away. When he finally left the house, she leaned against the door of her bedroom and wept bitter tears. The tears that sprang from knowledge of what she was to do.

That afternoon, dressed plainly in black, face covered by a black veil, Marguerite took a taxi to a run-down neighborhood in Place de Fetes. She had been here once before, early on in her pregnancy, when during a seizure of fear, she had called upon a certain Algerian Doctor, who performed abortions. But the doctor, refused to help her, insisting that "Rich ladies" bring misfortune, and he did not want trouble with the French Authorities.

Marguerite was so shaken by the experience that she sought out no further help. Her guilt and fear of Gerald's rage also held her quick, and she even feared the retribution of Ulecsus.

Now, however, she had come back to see if there were anything that could be done, some medicine, some release from the dreadful burden of the child. The doctor was horrified. He could not believe what Marguerite was suggesting. To speak that way about a child who would face life any day now was disgusting to him. Although he had killed many a fetus through his techniques, he held to the belief that these unborn were yet without souls. He ushered Marguerite to the door and forbade her to return to him ever again, slamming the door in her face.

Marguerite walked the crumbling passageway of Rue Pixerecourt, tears streamed from her veiled eyes. What was she thinking? The child lived and breathed, and even then she felt him stir in her womb. Her thoughts of flight were paramount and she was tormented by the inevitability of childbirth. She had brought with her the notebook containing some of the most important details given by Ulecsus, which Gerald had written while Marguerite spoke in trance. As she passed by a lorry parked at the end of the street, she flung the portfolio through its open window, and hurriedly walked on.

The following day, on a frozen morning when icicle's dripped from the bird's beaks, the day of reckoning arrived. Fear, like a dark figure on a black barge, gripped her. Her heart raced in panic, for this she knew was the hour she had dreaded. She rang for her maid and cried spasmodically "It's time, hurry."

The car was brought around, and Marguerite was whisked through nearly empty streets, in a blur of white snow, that obscured recognizable landscapes, to the Clinic Pere Vincente.

She seemed slightly removed from her body, swathed in white sheets. Vague voices of doctors and nurses circled above her as she was pushed through soft green corridors, with lights that blinded her with harsh flashes. She was no longer part of her body; rather she drifted slightly above it, and felt the strange power that comes when time is dislodged.

They were giving her ether, but she needed it not. For already she was floating. Hovering from her vantage point above the maternity table, she saw below, her body, the doctor and his assistants. She observed with curious tenderness, the birth of the baby boy. How his writhing form, trailing its fleshy umbilical cord was placed into a cloth and carried away kicking and screaming, his lungs full of new life. It was done, he had arrived.

The Lunar-Lady however, had been eclipsed. The doctor covered her face with a sheet.

“She has died in childbirth...” his solemn verdict.

It was 1929 Gerald having returned quickly when he heard the news, now stared down with an empty heart at the baby.

"What had she feared most?" He thought, as he touched the child's small sleeping hand.

"Why did she not choose to live?"

His biggest question was about the future, however. Now that the chance of unity had disappeared in this lifetime, would the three of them have to wait for yet another existence to make that blessed pilgrimage? Was their experience valid, or but the product of combined folly? Would this boy who will never know his mother be a reminder of the woman who slipped through his life and his dreams like the moon as she slips behind mysterious purple clouds on those long and lonely nights of summer?



-Jaff Seijas