

Romantic Tales From



Old Mulvedania

*Secret Stories of Royalty
Never Meant to be Told!*

A Novel by D. N. Sutton

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A Novel by
D.N. Sutton

ISBN: 978-0-940361-23-2

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Sherwood-Spencer Publishing • The SoulSite Press
Box 517, La Jolla, CA 92038, USA www.soulsite.com

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all 90-year-olds
who thought it was the end, when actually
IT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!!!

Thanks be

*To all the wonderful people who have helped make this
book come together.*

*In the language of old Mulvedania:
Tusind Tak! (A Thousand Thanks)*

*Sincere thanks to caregivers
Diana Cunningham
Nicole Heyne , Joan Ignacio
Eriana McGill & Deborah Romero
for typing while I dictated my first novel.*

*My thanks also to Melissa Castro
for ALL she has done for me...So much!!*

*Above all, thanks to Sharon Lloyd White, the first
caregiver to assist me on a regular basis when I arrived
home from the Cloisters Rehabilitation Facility in 2011.
Thank you, Sharon, for your editorial, typing & book
design skills, & for motivating me to finish the novel!*

*Thanks to my beloved family members:
My husband of 66 years, Dr. Paul M. Sutton
Our daughters Pamela M. Sutton M.D.
& Valerie Sutton, the Inventor of SignWriting
And special love to my grandsons, Michael & Andrew
Sutton, who keep me clued into the modern world!*

*A special BIG thank you to my niece
Diane Nichols, for her loving ongoing support
And to*

*Clark Soucy, Spencer Soucy, Trudy Nehls
Claire & Fred Sutton*

Henry & Mary Ann Nichols

James, Beth, Andrew & Amanda Sutton

Kathy & Jeff Olds, Morgan Olds

Richard Sutton, Scott & Ann Sutton

Rena & John O'Malley, Bob & Sunny Ahern

*Susan Ahern, Joslyn Nolasco, Matthew Nolasco
Mary Beth Ahern*

William & Ginny Kemmel, Billy Kemmel

Susan Strodtman, Ken & Joanne Ford

*Thanks to my wonderfully supportive friends...
A loving thank you to the inimitable Adam Frost*

And to

The Alikhan Family

Beth Backer, Richard Barndt

Stacy Brodfuehrer

Lucia, Andrew & Harris Claster

Deanna & Tom Clatworthy

George & Lucille Dobrin

Emily Doucette, Michael Earle

Janette Fennell

Martha and Jose Hernandez

George & Ruth King

Jon & Donna Longo

Vicky & Chancy Lott

Adrienne & Michelle Magnuson

Barbara & Bob Maurer, Phil & Pat Maurer

Frances & Mary Mikolacjak

Geeta Narula & Family

Clay & Susan Seger, James & Kristi Short

Cati & Javier Ortega & Abigail Torres

Jeanne Sutton, Valerie Viglione, Jean Watson

*Thanks to ALL our wonderful neighbors,
Ann Merdinger, Julio & Bárbara Gómez,
& to all of you for your visits and well-wishes.*

*A special thanks to Shadab Zeest Hashmi, a fine poet,
for appreciating my writing which encouraged me,
& thanks also to Jessica Padilla, Jim & Pat Hansen,
& everyone at the Carlsbad Library.*

*Thanks to
John Rudolph & Mrs. Harry Rudolph Sr.
& all our friends at Harry's Coffee Shop*

*Thanks to
Ina Thompson & Rich Wolf
& Paula & Ray Uhlir &
all our friends at the Newcomer's Club*

*A special thanks to Laura Shademan, friend,
assistant and advisor, & her husband Shaw
& children Roxana, Sarah & Ali.*

*A special thanks to Dr. Richard Gundry
& his Nursing Assistant, Einstein Soriano
for visiting us in our home &
taking care of me so I can write my novels!!*

*Thanks to the physicians, therapists & nurses who cared
for me at Scripps Memorial Hospital, at the Cloisters
Rehabilitation Center, and at home, from Nightingale
Home Care & Home Physicians Med Group.*

*A special thanks to Cindy Foote, Shelly Scoma and Kelly
Williamson of Senior Helpers from Solana Beach,
& to all those at the Greater La Jolla Meals On Wheels
for delivering such terrific food!*

*Thanks to Professor Juan Filipe Herrera in the
UCR Creative Writing Department &
to videographers Joe Powers & Cody Powers.*

*And thanks to Antonio Balta for inspiring my long poem
"Florida's Child". Our hearts are with you, Antonio...*

Dear Friends, I love you all!

A Note From The Author

On The 2nd Anniversary of Her Stroke

Writing this novel, about these fictional tales of love, disappointment and glorious fulfillment, has been a miraculous experience for me. Two years ago, on March 8, 2011, I was cut down by a stroke. It turned out not to be the end of life but a new beginning. The stroke hindered my body from standing or walking, but it seemed to enhance my imagination and my creativity. Today, on the second anniversary of my stroke, I am celebrating the birth and success of my first novel, *Romantic Tales of Old Mulvedania*. After a lifetime of writing poems, short stories, and plays, I found with the help of my wonderful caregivers, who typed my novel from my dictation, that there is a new world for me in writing imaginative literature.

Now, as I approach my 93rd birthday on March 25th, I live with my newfound fictional friends and my life is greatly enriched. I love the imagined characters in my first fully realized novel. Now, I am writing a second novel, *The Carolinian Chronicles*, about the French aristocracy in modern day France, and I love the beautiful people who fill the pages of this "next" novel too. All of these imagined people are my dear friends. Not one of these characters is intended to bare any resemblance or connection to real people. They are all the creation of my imagination and they are all very dear to me because they have illuminated my life. And I hope they will illuminate the lives of all who read my novels too!

This is escape literature. The fictional characters play their roles in front of a backdrop of real people and real factual historical events. I have tried very hard to make sure the historic facts are accurate. Each scene is written with love-at-heart. In my fictional pages there is no lasting meanness. Tolerance and forgiveness illuminate even the pages that deal with darkness. Basically these are sun-lit pages refreshing to the human spirit and dedicated to the goodness within all people.

For example, in this novel, there is a fantasy country called Mulvedania, which was founded by Danes hundreds of years ago in central Europe. Mulvedania has its own royal family, albeit a fantasy royal family, that is related to the real royal families of Europe. The fictional Mulvedanian young couple, Prince Charles and Crown Princess Victoria Eugenie, have an intimate visit with the real British King George VI and his lovely Queen Elizabeth. This fictional but memorable meeting brought comfort and closeness to all involved, a few minutes of peace and affection before raw reality closed in, as World War II looms. This is an instance when our fictional young couple met with their Royal cousins in a memorable visit. Another instance was in Denmark when the real great King Christian X visited the fictional Princess Royale of Mulvedania, Sophia Dagmar, on her deathbed.

My imagined heroine Sophia Dagmar was often called the most beautiful Royal in Europe. She was very tall, crowned with a fabulous head of golden hair, and she was a true Viking Princess. But Sophia Dagmar remained a maiden lady until the end of her long life. More important to her than marriage was to be the most renowned financier in Europe, heading up the *Banque de l'Entreprise de Mulvedania*. After the death of her brother, the fictional King Hector VI, she continued her influential role in the affairs of Mulvedania and was considered one of the world's richest women. And so, fictional characters intertwine with historical figures and Mulvedania takes on a reality of its own.

So, while we cope with human inadequacy we also embrace a larger long lasting forgiveness and fulfillment through our own histories, real and imagined. It is my dream that this novel, and all my subsequent novels, bring you joy and fulfillment too.

Lovingly yours,
D.N. Sutton
La Jolla, California, March 8th, 2013

PS. It is my wish that all proceeds of this book are donated to the SignWriting ASL Wikipedia Project: www.SignWriting.org/donate

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About the Author, D. N. Sutton: Inside Back Cover



The
Mulvedanian Crest

*Mulvedania is famous for polo matches,
beautiful watches, the best pastry in
Europe, and RICH mines of gold!*

Margo Mara



Journalist

*I never thought
I could be
surprised by anything!*

THE
DISCOVERY SUPREME

Chapter I

I am Margo Mara, a contributor to the *La Jolla Sentinel*, a newspaper in Southern California. I consider myself pretty well informed about the world and figure that after living 57 years I cannot be taken by surprise. I am pretty sure of myself. Being a successful entrepreneur and creative type, I figure nothing will offend me or plunge me into astonishment. But you never know. Because yesterday I got a call from the East Coast, from a renowned magazine editor named Amanda Sherwood. She said, "I want to track a lady of royal lineage in your La Jolla neighborhood ... someone out there on the West Coast. Maybe you could help me find her?" So, I said, "Sure, Amanda, I would be glad to, why not?" And that is the beginning of my story.

So, I promised I would try to track down this person that Ms. Sherwood hoped to locate. But frankly I didn't know how or where to begin. Where do I find a person of royal lineage? She is very old, probably in her 90's, if she is alive at all; a person who does not want to be found or identified. A person unique and remarkable I am sure, living here amongst us and basically unknown.

My own mother is in her nineties, just a shadow of what she was once so I can sympathize with the lost lady in question, a lost lady whose royal lineage she managed to conceal over a lifetime.

Over far too many cups of coffee, I started my quest phoning residences for elderly people, clubs and businesses, which dealt with the geriatric set. The quest is interesting because many intriguing, cultivated people live near or in San Diego. We just recently mourned the loss of a relative of the Spanish crown, Alfonso de Bourbon. He was one of our community's most remarkable personalities, a lovely gentleman who spoke many languages and made every lady he met feel royal, indeed. I knew there must be others like him in the community but in this case I am looking for a woman who could not be heir to the throne of her own country because she was not the male heir. What ever happened to her? Where did she go? What did she do? Did she move on to an old age or die young, as most of her contemporaries did? I kept putting out my feelers, calling different people I knew. But after one disappointment after another I started feeling like it was a futile quest.

My mother, who lives with me (or did I live with her?), listens to it all with some amusement. "Really?" she said, "Why don't you leave the old gal alone. She knows what she is doing and why she is doing it. She wanted to have a full American life, and if she is still alive, you don't want to mess it up for her, do you?" I said "Of course not, I am all for freedom, self expression, fulfillment, all those good things, but it is still kind of a fun challenge to see if this lady, who may be one of the many descendants of Queen Victoria, is living here in our midst. And leading a normal life so well hidden away no one suspects her". My mother laughed, and

surprisingly, agreed with me. She said, “It is kind of crazy, but let me know if I can help”.

I kind of laughed at that because in some ways I didn’t know a lot about my mother either. My mother is a person of unique talent. Up until about the age of 90, she was a well-known published writer of cookbooks, not surprising when you consider my Dad is still running his restaurant “*The Epicurean*”, which he started 60 years ago. To this day he greets all guests who come to dinner on our beautiful Belvedere Estate as though they were long lost kin. He keeps an apartment above the restaurant so he can go to bed early in order to wake up before dawn to bake his famous breads and pastries, one of the tenets of his success. Then, every morning he comes home with an armful of goodies and my mother’s friends of the gourmet set gather in the garden on the side of the house for coffee and conversation. Our house is never quiet, never lonely, and never dull. It struck me that there are a lot of old people around San Diego whose life stories are incredible and far less confused and configured than people in my generation today who know it all and yet feel so cutoff from the inner realities.

My East Coast contact understood my difficulty and empathized and sympathized. “Don’t get too grim about it”, she cautioned me. “Just find the Crown Princess of Mulvedania.” But Mulvedania is not the same country anymore! Who would care if Mulvedania has royalty or not? I was discouraged because I couldn’t even find the most meager information. My mother found it kind of amusing that I would be knocking myself out in pursuit of

something so distant and lost. But I felt that if the country ever existed and the woman was one of the many descendants of Queen Victoria who populated Western and Northern Europe, I should take it very seriously and respectfully and try to find an answer. I read through some obscure book, which gave a rough description of King Hector VII. He was described as a fanatic, ignoring his daughter and obsessing over his son, the heir to the throne.



Warwick's Bookstore Est. 1921

Inevitably when all seemed nothing but dead-ends, I turned to the two amazing bookstore owners that make La Jolla so memorable, Nancy Warwick and her much known and utterly unique competitor, Dennis Wills. If you lived in La Jolla you would know both these remarkable people. Nancy inherited Warwick's from her family

Her store is an absolute landmark, which pulsates with the community, a lively adjunct to

the rich culture of life so much cherished by us all. Something is always scheduled at Warwick's. Readings by current authors fill up a month's agenda and present in the tightly packed aisles are the liveliest members of La Jolla society. Invariably there is standing room only when Nancy announces a special evening. When my mother brings out a new cookbook, her friends come to share the excitement with her, Ellen Revelle, Lillian Walker, Harle Montgomery and others too numerous to mention, all movers and shakers in a new century.



D.G. Wills Bookstore, La Jolla

When Dennis Wills of D.G. Wills Books decides to offer one of his unique evenings, the event overflows out into the street. The excitement of having a national celebrity coming to our town brings out the literati in all of us, one more memorable evening for us all to celebrate. But hidden away in Wills' bookstore are items rare and forgotten, items obscure and timeless, items none of us could find anywhere else no matter how hard we tried. Talking to Dennis gave me hope and sure enough he found the lost link to an obscure footnote of history, the birth and death of the Mulvedanian royalty.

Tucked away in the archives I found a description of the Crown Princess and marveled that she could be overlooked and forgotten so easily. The royal registry described the princess as tall and slender, very artistic and sensitive, that she had a long slender neck and long beautiful fingers. She was a princess and looked like a princess. One would think she was a presence hard to be overlooked, but overlooked she was. The last mention was at the bottom of an old notebook, which described how during the night she fled the North Castle with her lover, and disappeared from European society.

My mother found this very funny. She said, “Where do you think she went? What did you think she did?” But apparently nobody cared much and nobody bothered to talk about it. And in a very short time not only was she forgotten but even the country she was born into seemed to have vanished from everybody’s awareness.

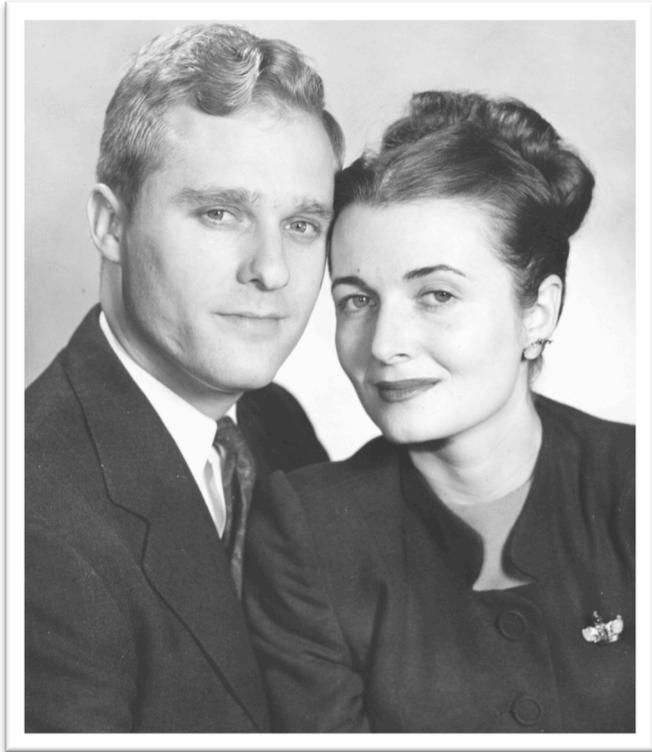
Obviously I had my work cut out for me. My mother was a very good cook, and when I told her about this she was stirring one of her gourmet recipes with a deft hand. She said, “So be it, she got out, bravo for her”. I said, “You’re always on the side of freedom for the ladies, aren’t you Mom?” and she said, “Yes, yes, yes!” Then, another phone call from the East Coast jolted the even tenor of the day. It was another call from Amanda Sherwood asking me what have I uncovered. I said, “Well, the country disappeared and no one cared much about the Crown Princess and presumably life has gone on for her wherever she went and whatever she did.” Amanda said, “Oh, but that’s not good enough. I want something more specific than

that.” So I said, “Well, I will keep trying. I will let you know if I come across anything.”

Then several of us sat down to another of my mother’s famous dinners. As old as my mother is, she is still a fantastic cook. So, as we were eating our golden roast and root vegetables (thinking about the missing lady and the society she came from, only to vanish into nowhere here) the conversation lagged.

Then somebody at the table asked me if my Dad was still around. I answered, “You bet he is! At dinnertime he is always at his Restaurant, *The Epicurean*. And he is a born host. One of the things that is still fun about my parents is that they glow when they are around each other. I think I am very blessed to have such gifted and elegant parents who are so obviously so much in love.” Everyone at the table agreed.

Then I told them that just this morning I had run across a description of the crown princess... She has a long slender neck, hair piled high on her head, long fingernails, and beautiful clothes she had designed and were made just for her.” And while we were sitting there, reflecting, someone said, “You know what, that almost sounds like you, Victoria! Can you be this vanished lady?” And without hesitation my mother said, “Yes!” So the mystery was solved. Amanda Sherwood was amazed and delighted and wrote a series of articles that intrigued women all over the world and I, the only child of Prince Charles and the Crown Princess Victoria of Mulvedania, went to bed knowing that I had made a discovery supreme!



*Prince Charles and the Crown Princess Victoria of
Mulvedania, 1946*

VICTORIA, HER OWN

LADY IN WAITING

Chapter II

I had no idea when 2010 rolled around, that it would be the most dramatic time of my life. I had absolutely no notion of what lay ahead. But I found out, with cataclysmic speed, that life was about to change drastically and I'd better be ready for a tumultuous ride. The first thing that happened was that because of the economic dip and near depression in years 2008 to 2010, the newspaper I worked for, *The La Jolla Sentinel*, was about to be sold. It was going to get bolder and less local and more commercial. In other words no longer the hometown newspaper I loved and lived with for the past 15 years. But I decided this was a fortuitous change because my parents were old and they needed my attention and much more important to them, they needed to have their fabulous life story told. And who would tell it more warm-heartedly and more genuinely than I could? And I would! So I faced that change with good feelings. But the next one was a shock.

It was 9 o'clock in the morning and who should be standing in the kitchen of our house but Dad. He always stayed in his apartment at the restaurant overnight to arise at dawn to bake his famous breads and desserts. Dad, who never came back from the restaurant until 11 AM, was here at 9 AM. And I looked at him sharply, suddenly aware of how thin he had gotten and how frail he seemed. I felt a shiver of fear that indeed something was very wrong. And it was, it was wrong and not good at all. He just stood

there leaning on the counter and acting like he wanted to say something but couldn't quite say it. It was obvious he was unwell.

"Here Dad, sit down." I said and I brought a couple of chairs into the kitchen area so we could sit down side by side. "Tell me what is happening to you. Are you not feeling well?" "No," he said, "I am not well. I am not well at all." I said, "Let me get you a cup of water or coffee, perhaps a bite to eat?" "No no," he said, "water would be just fine." Then I tried to muster my courage. "Have you been ill and haven't told us?" "Yes", he said, "I had so much to do to close up the restaurant." And after saying that he laughed and said "I closed up a country once. Victoria and I closed down Mulvedania. I certainly can close up a restaurant without undo fuss. But it is hard, Margo," and the tears welled up in his eyes. "It's not easy to say goodbye to the good life we have here. But I have an appointment at the hospital for diagnosis this morning at 11 o'clock. Will you come with me?" And I said, "Of course, of course we will go. And what about Mom?" and he said, "Don't tell her. She has been worrying about me. We will find out what it is first and then tell her. At 10 o'clock we will leave." The idea that I could keep it from Mom was ludicrous but I agreed we would leave at 10. And then he went into his bedroom and sprawled out on his bed.

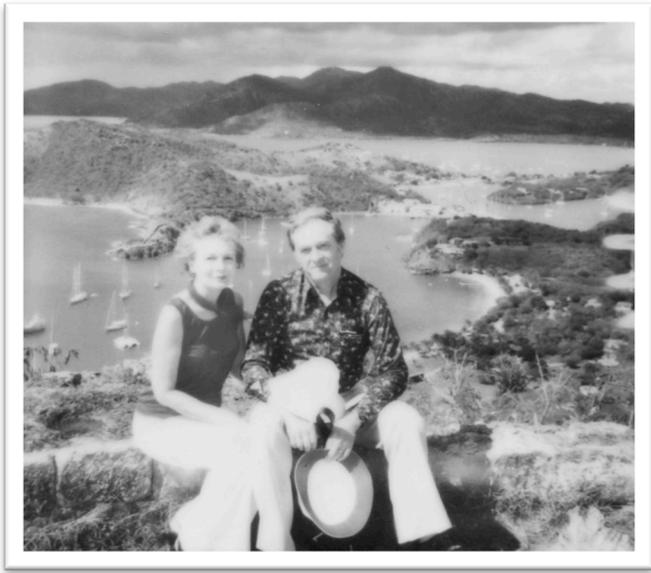
So that was the week and the way we found out Dad had, of all things, pernicious anemia. Not cancer, not heart disease, but pernicious anemia. And that is a curable condition in 2010. In 1933 it was a fatal disease and I knew about

that because my mother Victoria told me how her friends' father died of it because they didn't know what to do in those days. But nowadays, with vitamin B12 shots and other medicines, life continues well for those who have pernicious anemia. Dad came back from the hospital several days later clearly on the road back to health. We were overcome with joy and thanksgiving that he would be all right. Imagining life without my father Charles was impossibly difficult. There is not another man on earth more patient than my dad. He is a sweetheart from the word go. And we were all delighted at the good verdict that had come in.

So what happened next? We sat around, lolled around, hung around. We hung out together and watched him get stronger every day and every week and every month. Meanwhile, my empty notebooks filled up with their stories about their lives as Prince and Princess of a European country called Mulvedania. So when I sat down to put my parents' life story together, I knew what to write about.

At the same time other changes were happening. My father Charles' 60 year old restaurant, *The Epicurean*, was no more. None of Charles' loyal compatriots were alive to take it over, to Charles' sorrow. But, he had made elaborate plans for the continuation of the Epicurean name and now he was talking to people who manage food trucks. He would choose one now which would carry the Epicurean food lines. This was immensely important to Charles because he felt that this way, the Restaurant, the legendary Restaurant,

would continue. And be in the lives of the people he knew, and honor the town he loved. And it would mean an income for the family even though he could no longer run the restaurant. And so, after the business arrangements were concluded and everything seemed to me to be clean and plain as day and encouraging for the future, he then told me to join him and Victoria in the garden to hear the latest news.



*Victoria and Charles on the
Caribbean Island of Antigua*

Dad had written to his cousins, the Alfreds, who amazingly still lived in the South Castle in Mulvedania. Mulvedania is no longer a kingdom, but became a democratic European republic, and is a thriving country. My father asked the Alfreds if they were going to use

Sophia's house on the Caribbean Island of Antigua. Charles and Victoria wanted to go there briefly or at length, depending on what was convenient for the family.

The Alfreds wrote back stating they had no intentions of going to Antigua so Charles and Victoria should make their plans. The Alfreds were glad to say that everyone was doing well and didn't need a vacation in Antigua! (Victoria felt like reminding Charles that the house in Antigua and every other possession of Sophia's belonged to her, but she said nothing. Actually she thought it was very gracious of Charles to even think of the Alfreds after all these years.)

When the conversation in the garden seemed to lapse, I gingerly approached the subject of how Charles Mara was related to the Alfreds, who had lived in the South Castle for almost 300 years. And he smiled and said, "Well, my grandmother was an Alfredian. One day she caught sight of my grandfather who ran the kitchens for the King of Mulvedania in Belvedere (the country's one big city) and something magical happened. My Grandfather Mara had big mustaches and I always thought he was a scary looking fellow. But not my grandmother... she thought he was worth giving up her place in Alfredian society. So she married him. As an Alfredian, she was always welcome to come across the moat to enter the grounds of the South Castle, but not her husband nor her children. For most of the time she lived happily in Belvedere and I can tell you I remember sitting on her lap and her feeding me milk toast, and singing Alfredian songs to me, and making my very young life a paradise.

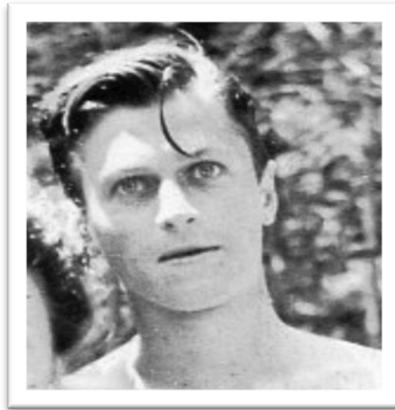
She was soft and pillowy and I loved my grandmother. She didn't seem to be the least bit intimidated by my grizzly grandfather. She was a very loving lady and he obviously adored her and she really seemed to dote on him and on me."



*Grandmother Sonia and Grandfather
Lars Sven Mara*

My father continued, "My mother was kind of round and pillowy too, so I was a very fortunate, much loved, child. My mother was the Danish soprano, Marguerite Nielsen, and my dad, Leo Mara, sang in the same Opera Company with her. She was 42 years old when I was born and she gave up grand Opera after that to do more light opera and musical comedy sort of stuff. And the interesting thing was that when my mother sat in the same room as my grandmother everyone assumed that my grandmother was her mother. My dad Leo had

dark hair like his dad.” I asked my dad how he fell in love with Victoria, because she is a very slender person. And he is quick to answer, “Victoria is special. She is the light of my life.” That was not a very illuminating comment but it was clear that that settled that and there was nothing else to say. The pillowy ladies were his past and his slender bride is the present. It didn’t tell me much except that Charles Mara had been a much loved child and no wonder he turned out to be such a sweetheart of a man.



Leo Mara

We were all quiet for a minute or two because the sad fact was that in 1937 all four of them were gone. My Dad continued, “Marnie, the Bubble Lady was the first to leave in a tragic accident. But it was true that in those days not everyone lived to be old and my grandfather Mara was the last one to die. He ran the kitchens for the Kingdom of Mulvedania and taught me everything I knew about cooking and baking for very large groups. By the time I was 18 years old, the King of Mulvedania was calling me,

Charles Mara, the best pastry chef in Europe. I did my best to live up to that and all the while watching how the affairs of the Kingdom were going down hill and the Germans were getting ready to invade Poland.”



Margo Mara

But back to the present... I could see how a trip to Antigua made Victoria so happy because she had always loved the family house in Antigua. And it was a joy to think of having Charles all to herself after all the clutter and confusing events of their lives. So they packed themselves up. I managed to pick up some attractive remnants and Victoria got a lovely wardrobe together. She had a little dressmaker, and she had a new sewing lady besides, and together the three of them designed several snazzy looking casual outfits. We all matched up Victoria's skirts to Charles's shirts so they could be a sensational pair frisking around the beaches and the restaurants at their favorite Caribbean resort.

And the next thing I, Margo, knew was that

they were gone. They had packed up and gone! And now I was on my own with this new life as a descendent of Queen Victoria. And now I had to begin writing this story of my parents, Prince Charles and Princess Victoria Eugenie. It was not going to be easy for me.

I could hardly conceive of myself as an actual descendent of Queen Victoria of England. I asked myself, “ Am I really number 461 of this crowd? What kind of nonsense is this to be royalty in a modern age?” I was really annoyed that I had to be included in this exclusive group in an era when royalty should be a nonexistent form of society. It was hard to absorb because I had been Maggie, the blue jeaned kid for most of my life. But okay, it had to be looked at squarely and tucked away as neatly as possible.

For Victoria, the events of the month of March 2010 were the most exciting of her prolonged old age. Think of it, she would have Charles all to herself. The pleasure of his company at one of her favorite places on earth was an unexpected bonanza to add to her very long life. No one had to remind her that Charles still had a shock of white hair and his blue eyes were still blue. She was as much in love with him now as she had ever been. This was worth waiting for, this honeymoon in one of her favorite places on earth. Victoria was waiting, content to be her own lady-in-waiting.

MULVEDANIA, THE KINGDOM
IN THE CLOUDS

Chapter III

The story of Europe, its diverse countries and tiny duchies, paints a fascinating picture of many tribes fighting for a foothold and a permanent place to call their home. Mulvedania is one of these, a tiny dot of land that time forgot. Two families stumbled on this mountain hideaway, claiming it for their own, the Alfreds and the Hectors. Until this day, Mulvedania can only be entered from the West. The East is so mountainous it is almost impassible. The South belongs to the Alfred clan. They have occupied the South Castle for almost 300 years. Their Castle is a true stronghold, with slits for archers, surrounded by a moat and guarded by a drawbridge.



*The South Castle has been occupied by the
Alfred Clan for almost 300 years.*

The Alfred's may have been a fearsome opponent to invaders, but mostly they are a merry lot, a land of blondes and redheads, full of good cheer, sturdy, and pleasant to everyone.

Rumor has it they live on top of a gold mine but no one has ever seen this mine because no one has ever crossed the bridge into their territory. The Alfreds feel free to travel widely but no one, other than their own kin, enters their enclave.

The other family is the Hectors. At the turn of the twentieth century King Hector VI and his sister, Sophia Dagmar, the Princess Royale, were very popular monarchs. It was said that Sophia was the most powerful woman in Europe. She did not have a gold mine to support her but she ran the Banque de l'Entreprise de Mulvedania. The Alfreds supplied the Hectors with gold and Sophia provided the Alfreds with securities. Sophia seemed to have a sixth sense as to when the financial markets would boom and when they would fall. She kept her royal relatives all across Europe sheltered in her investments. Mulvedania was a unique place to be from.

Even today, Mulvedania is entered only through the western gates, the one flat area in the center of steep mountains. Mulvedania is famous for three things: its Polo Field, its Watchworks and its pastries. Hector VII was almost insanely proud of all three. He spent fortunes on his polo ponies. The royal kitchens under the direction of the Mara family provided the international polo crowd with extraordinary food. The fame of the Watchworks brought steady revenue into Mulvedania and its coffers. Belvedere was the capital city, the Kingdom's only city.

Entering through the city gates, one was struck by the gleaming beauty of the Royal

Palace and all its magnificent facilities for entertaining visitors. It included the Polo Field, the Royal Kitchens, and the Belvedere Luxury Hotel with its spectacular dining facilities to honor its distinguished guests. The Maras lived close by, in a large sprawling enclave near other distinguished Mulvedanians including, the head of the Watchman's League, Philippe Palmentier. Further down the road was a part of town where the working people lived, the people who sustained the charming little shops that visitors so much enjoyed.

The Maras were first cousins of the Hectors. In 1918, the First World War, which was a terribly bloody war, ended. This war, like many other wars, completely bypassed Mulvedania, but it, nevertheless, had its impact on everyone. 1918 was the year that Charles Mara was born. His mother, the famous Danish soprano Marguerite Nielsen married fellow opera singer Leo Mara at the age of 42. She came to Mulvedania to give birth to her only child, Charles.

There was much rejoicing. Marguerite looked very much like Sonia, her Alfredian mother-in-law, round, soft and blonde. Leo Mara, the baby's dad, was tall and dark like his father and cut a romantic figure on stage. Marguerite and Leo stayed in Belvedere until eventually the return to peace made it possible for them both to rejoin the concert circuit. Charles' mother and father were frequently away performing, while Charles Mara grew up contentedly in Belvedere, the capital of Mulvedania much loved by his grandparents. Charles looked more like an Alfred, a very

good-natured sturdy little fellow with ruddy complexion and a calm pleasant attitude. Europe's wars seemed always to bypass Mulvedania, which was too small and much too inaccessible to be worthy of that much notice.

But that did not mean that time bypassed the country. It had its full share of drama and heartache. In 1920, the Crown Princess Victoria Eugenie, was born, the first child of King Hector VII. The baby's mother was the young Queen Helena Victoria of Schleswig, whose marriage to Hector VII had been arranged the year before. The attending doctor was the Royal Physician and Surgeon, Hector's drinking pal, Rupert Jonas. Hector VII did not welcome the news that young Helena had not produced a male heir. In fact, he was furious. Hector and his drinking buddies reacted to the news of the new princess with total indifference, ignoring the Queen and the new baby and everything connected to the birth. Much too soon, only several months later, the ailing Queen Helena suffered a miscarriage. But two years after the birth of Victoria Eugenie, the young Queen Helena gave birth to the much desired Crown Prince Hector VIII. The news of the royal heir was greeted with great excitement. Not only fireworks were set off but also the newspapers of the Western World produced tremendous outpourings of photos in their rotogravure sections. Hector loved the Western Press. Pictures of him with the new baby were spread around the world and Hector was in his glory. If anyone noticed there were no pictures of Queen Helena, it was not part of Hector's concern. While he and his polo buddies were celebrating,

the young Queen Helena Victoria lay in the infirmary near death from the ravages of childbirth. Three pregnancies in less than two years, under the questionable care of the Royal Physician, Rupert Jonas, left Helena's survival doubtful. When word got back to Sophia Dagmar that this beautiful young Queen of Mulvedania was in dire straits she came down from the North Castle and demanded that King Hector and Doctor Jonas meet her in the infirmary.

Hector came reluctantly to meet with her. It was a fateful meeting. Until now Sophia had been the sole financial support of the Kingdom but when Sophia saw the condition of the Queen she was beyond fury. She demanded an answer, saying to him, "This beautiful young woman is dying before our eyes and what are you going to do about it?" Hector replied, "Look, it's the Queen's duty to deliver an heir and if she's not up to the job, so be it." To his credit Doctor Jonas stayed calm, but pointed out that the last baby was very large and the Queen is a very small woman. He said, "It's just one of those things." "Yes", said Sophia, "It is one of those things. She's hemorrhaging and what are you doing to save her life?" "Well", he said, "I gave the nurse instructions on packing her up and nothing more can be done." "Oh, yes there is", said Sophia, "We must call in other medical opinions." "Oh, no you don't", replied an angry King Hector, "It's not the world's business to know that the Queen of Mulvedania is such a poor specimen that she could not even produce the Crown Prince without making a fuss."

Sophia persisted “I demand calling in help for this dying girl”. Hector replied with no hesitation, “No, you won’t, you old witch”.

That was the last day that the Kingdom of Mulvedania received any monies from the Princess Royale. Hector ordered the two-month old infant removed from the Queen’s quarters and so it was slated that Hector VIII would grow up in the male enclave in the Royal Palace without ever seeing his mother again. What happened next was, that without funds from Sophia, Hector had to turn to the head of the Watchmaker’s Guild, Philippe Palmetier, for money. And to this fateful decision, years later, can be traced the downfall of the Monarchy and the rise of the Republic.

Sophia sent an urgent S.O.S to the wise old Alfred Doctor Tomass and he moved in a surgical team to try to save Helena’s life. The Alfred’s barricaded the entrance to the Queen’s apartments, a move hardly necessary since now that Hector had his heir, he would not impregnate Helena again. The Alfred medical team moved in with the latest equipment and their best surgeon operated to repair the grave damage to her internal organs, the result of a botched delivery. He succeeded in making Helena more comfortable and brought her out of the danger zone, but the prognosis was not good. It is rumored that Sophia was so furious that she called the Royal Physician *The Butcher of Belvedere*. How this rumor got out, no one was quite sure, but some months later when Queen Helena died, there was no question that Sophia had called Rupert the name that she did. Sophia saw to it that Helena was buried in the

Royal Crypt in the Belvedere Cathedral. And she never spoke to Hector VII again.



Young Queen Helena Victoria

That is how it happened that the little Princess Victoria Eugenie came to live in the North Castle with the Princess Royale. Gussie, the fourteen-year-old daughter of Matilda, Sophia's Lady-in-Waiting, became Victoria's Nanny. Growing up in the North Castle was a wonderful experience because Sophia was so international and so powerful. A figure in the finances of Europe, everyone shared in the excitement of her success. Victoria grew up speaking Danish and English, of course, the languages of Mulvedania. And then there was also French and Russian and through the operas, Italian. Sophia may not have cared much for traveling, but she welcomed all comers to her castle. Many of Europe's most interesting

people came to call on Sophia, and Victoria Eugenie enjoyed this interaction and grew up to be a poised and lovely young lady.



Princess Victoria Eugenie of Mulvedania

In an era when about half of Europe's population did not live to be more than 50 years old, Sophia was aware she was very old, indeed. She was greatly concerned that her own health was deteriorating and aware she needed to make some kind of provision for a suitable marriage for Victoria Eugenie. She forced herself to become acquainted with the young sons of her relatives but was unimpressed. At the same time she was becoming increasingly aware of Victoria's interest in Charles Mara. The Maras were first cousins of the Hectors. Sophia was very impressed with Charles and now considered him her heir. At the age of 16, all

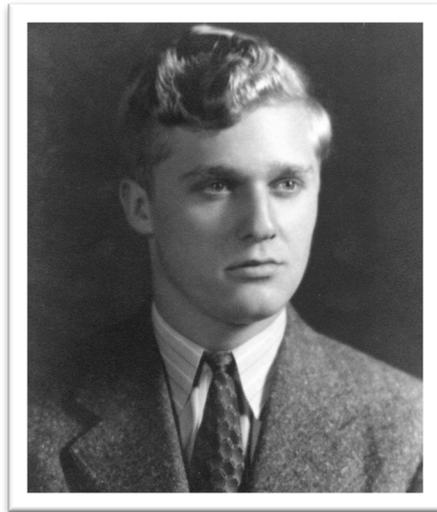
alone in the world except for his relationship with Sophia and Princess Victoria, he officially became Prince Charles of Mulvedania.

Sophia watched with very careful attention the interaction between Victoria and Charles. In all the years since Sophia's break with King Hector, she had observed how Charles, the ever calm and pleasant, continued to run the Royal Kitchens and delivered cakes and pastries to everyone every week. It was a tribute to Charles' skill in dealing with people that Hector did not prevent him from going to the North Castle. Every time he came, Charles brought a special cake for Victoria. He was very innovative and the cakes were very pretty. It was clear to Sophia that the little princess really liked Charles Mara and Sophia was convinced that he cared for her deeply.

On Charles sixteenth birthday Sophia invited him and his grandfather Sven Lars Mara to the North Castle to meet with her right-hand man, an American of Mulvedanian descent, Armand Webber. The meeting was very hush-hush, as Sophia did not want to rouse the ire of the ruling monarch, Hector VII who was becoming increasingly unpredictable in his actions. Even the Crown Princess Victoria was not invited to this meeting. Sophia greeted Sven Lars with much affection as she had not seen him for several years and he was her first cousin. But then the foursome got down to the very serious and significant purpose of the day. Sophia wished to adopt Charles Mara, name him as her son and official heir and pronounce him Prince Charles of Mulvedania.

This satisfied her deepest needs for the future of the Kingdom and the protection of Princess Victoria. She truly loved Charles and admired and respected him and this day made her very happy, but she did not include Victoria in this meeting because Victoria was fourteen years old at this time and Sophia had serious doubts about the attitude of her nanny, Gussie.

Charles had essentially been on his own since the age of sixteen. His parents and grandmother were all gone. Under the supervision of his grandfather Sven Lars Mara, despite his youth, he was put in charge of the Royal kitchens. Charles was a very solid and serious young person. King Hector told everyone he had the best pastry chef in Europe and everyone who came to Mulvedania agreed. The Royal Kitchens under Charles' control were spectacular.



Prince Charles Mara of Mulvedania

Particularly reassuring to Sophia was the interaction between young Prince Charles and her faithful minion, Armand Webber. Armand came to Mulvedania twice a year, and Victoria and Charles were very devoted to him. He was something of a father figure for them, and his warmth and affection was very spontaneous and genuine. Now, at this meeting, with the newly dubbed Prince Charles, Armand pledged his fealty to him and his total dedication and loyalty. It was a touching moment when Charles jumped up and embraced Armand.

This reassuring event exceeded Sophia's fondest hope and she was filled with thanksgiving for this gift of Fate. She knew she no longer had to be concerned about her children. Under Armand's protection they would be safe and saved, more than any loving parent could ask for. She did not make a public announcement of any kind knowing how paranoid King Hector had become, but that did not make any difference because Prince Charles was now her son and heir and her entire fortune was vested in him. She believed it was only wise to keep Prince Charles in the good graces of the King who indeed appreciated his culinary expertise.

Two years went by and Sophia Dagmar was becoming increasingly aware she was perilously ill. She called Prince Charles in to discuss with him the fact that she had to go to Copenhagen to receive advanced medical treatment for what she was convinced was tuberculosis. The problem was that over the years, King Hector had become more and more paranoid. A recent census had revealed to him that many

Mulvedanians were emigrating out of the country to Denmark, England, and the United States. The Alfreds, always content in their castle and with their gold mine, remained in the country. The Hectorians, his own people, were leaving every chance they could get. It was a shocking revelation to him, a terrible affirmation that his reign was not popular with his people. In his view this was an acute warning flag and he decided that no Mulvedanian citizen be allowed to leave the country. He was particularly fearsome of any finger being pointed at him suggesting that Mulvedanian medicine was less than ideal. But the main reason that Sophia put off getting medical care for herself for so long was because of the financial demands of her international banking activities. But now she knew time was closing in.

It was decided that the old touring car, which had been such a source of pleasure to them in their early years, would now be the means of escape from Mulvedania. The Alfreds, bless their hearts, completely lined the car with heavy gold leaf and then put the old leather lining back on to cover it up. They arranged for Sophia to lie across the backseats with Gussie and Matilda sitting in the jump seats to take care of her, the best they could, en route. In the front, driving the car was Charles Mara and his new bride, Victoria. The Lutheran Bishop, sworn to secrecy, officiated in a hasty marriage for the two young people. Fortunately, there was plenty of gold. There was plenty of gold to cross the palms of the people guarding the gates, and other functionaries. The little group made its

way out of Mulvedania, across Germany, and safely north into Denmark.



*Prince Charles of Mulvedania married
Princess Victoria Eugenie*

In Charlottenlund, cousin Lars Josef was waiting for them and Sophia was bundled out of the car and into a hot bath, and all welcomed a hearty hot meal. Two mornings later at 11 o'clock the entire family assembled in the Lutheran Cathedral, Holmens Kirke, in downtown Copenhagen, where the marriage of Prince Charles Mara and Princess Victoria Eugenie was officially sanctified. Then Sophia was taken to a small private hospital in Charlottenlund where the best possible medical care was made available to her. Matilda stayed

with her there and Gussie remained with Victoria.

It was a time of acute distress to all of them because it was abundantly clear that Sophia Dagmar was not going to survive. Sophia had made ample arrangements for every relative, every friend, and every servant who ever helped her. She now was turning over to Prince Charles and Princess Victoria her entire fortune. She had put Prince Charles in charge of all her remaining holdings, knowing that all of Europe was going to go down to the might of the German war machine. She was reassured that Charles was in touch with her New York representative Armand Webber, the ever resilient, reliable Armand Webber who could deal with all circumstances good and bad. She had thought of almost every contingency and worn herself out to the last degree. Now it was just a matter of time and she would be gone. Prince Charles and Princess Victoria would soon be on their own.

Copenhagen is very far north of most of Europe. It juts out into the Kattegat, which connects the North Sea to the Baltic Sea. Charlottenlund is the next to the last stop on the train out of Copenhagen.

Because Denmark is so far north it has very long, late summer evenings. Charles and Victoria walked for miles every evening after they visited Sophia. This was an exciting and frightening time for them both. They realized they were really blessed with amazing amounts of money and huge responsibilities to use it wisely and well. The days and the nights stretched out before them. The sadness they felt hearing Poland was invaded on the first of

September struck terror in their hearts. They spoke to Lars Joseph about coming with them to America and bringing his family but he declined. “No”, he said, “I am an old Dane and I will die here in this house where I was born”.

Sophia also recognized there was no changing his mind and she said, “Very well, I respect your choice. But now before I die I want to see Christian X. Will you bring Christian to my bedside”. And that is how it happened that the great King Christian X, the one who was to stand up to the Nazis in 1940 on his horse flaunting the Star of David, defying the Nazis and defending the liberty of his people, this brave and wonderful cousin Christian X came to see Sophia. Victoria and Charles knew it was a very touching moment in both their lives because all knew it was a moment in time that could never be repeated.

Sophia is not surprised that none of her family will leave with Charles and Victoria. She knew there was still a little time before Denmark would fall to the Nazis and she also knew that while her death was soon and inevitable it would not occur for some weeks to come. When they were sitting beside her bed she said to them “I want you two to see Denmark. Victoria has been here before with me, but Charles, you should know the home country. Just north of Charlottenlund is the famous Deer Forest, with towering old trees and deer running around for everyone to see. It is a very beautiful park, a royal park, where royalty could hunt and nowadays the public can visit”. Charles promised he would take Victoria there to see the beautiful deer park Dyrhaven.

They were also very appreciative of the bountiful bakeries and the open face sandwiches, the Danish smørrebrød that Denmark was famous for. Sophia suggested they get a good guide to take them to the Royal Theater, see Amalienborg Castle and the different Embassies on Østerbrogade. And of course, there was the glorious Tivoli Gardens, the elegant amusement park in the heart of Copenhagen that also offered ballet and theater programs unparalleled in Europe.

The other amusement park, Bakken goes back into history to the 16th century and is the world's oldest amusement park. No one seeing Denmark wants to miss the Little Mermaid statue in Copenhagen Harbor and so many other places to include, like the walking street GaaGade and the king's new plaza Kongens Nytor and the townhall square Raadhusplads. Kronborg Castle in the northern town of Helsingør is another famous landmark. They saw it all and enjoyed it enormously.

And so, time dragged on, and eventually the inevitable occurred. On November 4th, 1938 Sophia died. The days had grown dark with only a few hours of daylight and winter began to set in. It was time to leave Europe for England. Before Sophia died they asked her if they should drive the old touring car to the ferry to cross over into England. She turned to Lars Josef and asked him if he would like to have the car. "There is gold leaf under the lining and it might be very lifesaving in case the Germans take Denmark. What do you think, Lars Josef?" and he replied "Leave the car". Charles then hired a limousine to take them to the ferry.

The decision had to be made where Sophia was to be buried. It was decided upon that a ceremony would be held at the historic Roskilde Cathedral in Denmark at the burial plot for the Royal Family, where twenty Danish Kings and seventeen Danish Queens have been buried. But Sophia's remains were then to be sent to Mulvedania. There was an enormous turnout to honor Sophia. There was not a family that Sophia knew that hadn't benefited from her generous spirit and her financial gifts. And finally the day came when her body was sent back to Mulvedania for burial in the Royal Crypt next to young Queen Helena. As big as the reception was in Denmark, the response in Mulvedania was even more overwhelming. Sophia was truly beloved. The kindness and warmth that she extended continued on after her death. There truly was no one like Sophia.

DEATH AND TRANSITION

Chapter IV

When the final goodbyes were said to Sophia Dagmar, concluding one of the oldest ceremonies in Denmark, her body then was sent to Mulvedania for an even more extravagant show of love and appreciation. But Charles and Victoria did not go back with the body. It was Sophia's expressed wish that they go on to England, and she had written to her relatives there and made arrangements for them to stay at the famous Claridge's Hotel, which many said, was really an extension of Buckingham Palace.



The Dining Hall at Claridge's Hotel

Sophia had apartments and arrangements with the best hotels in the world besides Claridge's, including the famous Waldorf Astoria in New York City. She instructed Charles and Victoria to use them freely and live

comfortably as they should with the vast amount of money they had inherited. “You are royalty in your own right,” she reminded them, “Never forget that.” And so when all the details were attended to, the day finally came when the Mara family, which included Matilda and Gussie, embarked for England. Until the decision was made that the touring car lined with heavy gold leaf and covered with its original leather lining, until it was decided that the touring car would stay with Lars Josef, Charles was not sure what would occur. But once the touring car was covered over with a tarp in the back of the garage of Lars Josef’s palatial house, Charles made immediate arrangements for a limousine to pick up the Mara family and take them to the ferry for the crossing into England.

Victoria was terrified of boats. But she said nothing because, until the last minute, they thought they had to transport the touring car. Now that it was decided that the car would remain with Lars Josef, it was really too late to change their plans. And we all know what happened on that ghastly crossing.

The weather seemed nice enough when they boarded the ferry at Esbjerg but very shortly thereafter the weather changed sharply. And the next thing they knew the storm of the century was tossing the ferry about like a toy in a bathtub.

Victoria had been terrified of boats ever since the famous steamship Titanic went down on April 15th 1912, taking with it some of her relatives. She boarded the ferry tight-lipped and trembling with Charles, Matilda and Gussie.

The details of their passage were too awful

to try to remember. It was a nightmare crossing. And each member of the Mara family group had bad memories to add to the current horror story. Everyone knew of some storm or other, everyone remembered horrible tales. The most famous one, of course was the loss of the Spanish Armada in 1588, which ruined the future of Spain and changed Europe's history forever. They all knew that just last year, in September 1938, just a year before, a terrible hurricane had created chaos.

Somehow or other that miserable crossing of 1939 ended and they landed at Harwich, England with a car waiting to transport them to Claridge's where Sophia -- bless her heart -- had maintained apartments for herself and her staff and where the Mara party was welcomed to comfort and elegance. Claridge's was the place where visiting kings and their minions resided, where the world's celebrities made their presence in Britain known.

The exhausted foursome were almost too tired to breathe or eat, but all felt better soon excepting Matilda. Matilda was 76 years old. She had been born a noble woman, the Grand Duchess of the tiny principality of Remini. When she was deposed by her nephew who seized control of the assets of her country, she found herself cast out with her young daughter, penniless and alone. When Sophia Dagmar heard of her plight she welcomed Matilda to her court where Matilda remained for the rest of her adult life. The death of Sophia and the events of the last few months had been very hard on Matilda. With Sophia being gone, she was at a loss and unsure of her life and strength. She

stayed in bed at the hotel and felt that she could not take a tourist look at England. It was just too strenuous.

Sophia had set up a date for them with the Royal family and had suggested that they tour England first because the date at Buckingham Palace was two weeks hence. But Gussie declared she was going to stay behind with her mother, Matilda, so Charles and Victoria decided to see England on their own.

Victoria imagined it would be more fun to take a regular tour bus and see England as just another tourist. She thought it would be fun to be with British people who were on holiday and all the while be on her honeymoon trip with Charles. So they took off on a tour of Wales and Scotland, a trip that would bring them back to London in time for their visit with the Royal Family.

For Victoria it was the most wonderful ten days of her life. She and Charles enjoyed every aspect of the trip. At night they stopped at historic inns. With no Gussie around, they slept wrapped in each other's arms. It was one of the happiest times in their lives. Everyone aboard the bus knew they were on their honeymoon. Every morning they came down to breakfast glowing with happiness, and good health. Everyone aboard enjoyed having them touring with them. They explored many interesting castles and appreciated the lovely countryside. Victoria was intrigued with the remarkable woolens and loved purchasing them. They found a fabulous wool jacket with matching hat for Charles in Scotland. In Wales, Victoria bought a cape made of a marvelous blue and

green woven fabric. On this trip they were introduced to clotted cream, and they visited the castle that belonged to the Prince of Wales. They particularly liked Chester and its Roman walls. In fact they liked all the historic places that had been occupied by the Romans.

When they returned to London to Claridge's Hotel, they realized they had a few days to spare and decided to go to Bath. Bath was the historic watering hole for the Romans which now, hundreds of years later, had become a fashionable place for titled Brits to frolic. Bath had many impressive brick houses and many, many marvelous relics of Roman occupation from earlier history.



King George VI

The time now had come to go to Buckingham Palace for tea with King George and his lovely Queen, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. The Queen had been a close friend and admirer

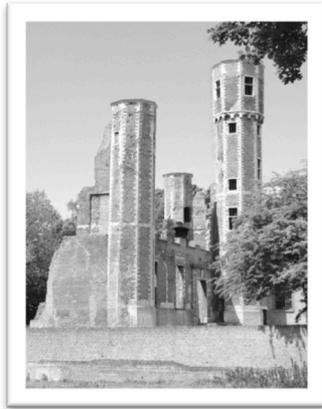
of Charles' mother, the singer Marguerite Nielsen.



Queen Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon

From the moment they arrived they felt at ease and happy to be sitting down together as relatives of each other. For Victoria, King George VI was a kindred spirit. Two shy people recognized each other. The King was tall, slender, and handsome and Victoria was immediately drawn to him. There had been few men in her life because from the age of two she had been taken to the North Castle to live at the court of Sophia Dagmar who was a maiden lady. Although her brother and father lived in Mulvedania she had never spoken to either of them. The rift that had occurred when she was two years old had never been healed or amended and she had never been acquainted with any men besides Charles Mara as she grew up. She thought King George VI was charming and enjoyed sitting with him in conversation. Charles, meanwhile, was talking with Queen

Elizabeth, so warm and friendly and welcoming she reminded him of the wonderful women who had been in his life, his Alfred Grandmother Sonia and his famous mother, the singer, Marnie Nielsen who in her later career was called the “Bubble Girl”. She was everybody’s darling, onstage and off, and Queen Elizabeth knew her well and was one of her most ardent fans.



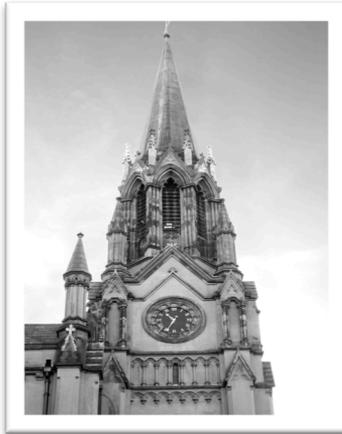
The North Castle in Belvedere, Mulvedania

So when Charles was seated next to her, the first thing she said was “Tell me what happened to your mother”. And he replied “Sad to tell you that when she was performing in Monaco, a drunken cabbie mowed her down on the sidewalk in front of her hotel. It was a terrible shock to everyone. She lingered for two days but never regained consciousness. My father Leo was performing with her in Monaco and they called him down to the sidewalk to see her lying there in a heap.” Queen Elizabeth said over and over, “What a loss, what a loss”.

So Charles went on. “The next thing that happened. Leo brought her body back to

Mulvedania and Marnie was buried in the family crypt in the Cathedral of Mulvedania.

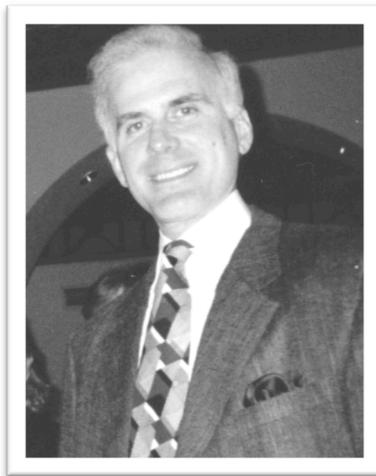
Leo never left Mulvedania again. He stayed on to help Grandmother Sonia with her vegetable garden and with her rose garden. He helped Grandfather Mara organize his records, which were so troublesome to him. And he helped me with my homework. Having my father around when I was growing up was a wonderful bonus for me. Leo took me on long hikes to secret waterfalls he knew when he was growing up. In fact, he knew all about the birds and the butterflies and even snakes and bugs, enough to delight a little boy's heart. So you see" Charles said, "Despite the loss of my mother, I was a very loved and blessed child".



The Cathedral in Belvedere, Mulvedania

Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon listened with a heart full of sympathy and understanding. Charles went on to say how fortunate his childhood was compared to Victoria's and now Elizabeth asked, "All in your family have passed away?"

Charles replied, “Yes, Grandma Sonia died and after that my dad, Leo, caught cold and died of pneumonia. That left only Grandpa Mara. He was a remarkable old man and he taught me how to run the kitchens of Mulvedania so the country could accommodate vast numbers of visitors at any one time. But he too passed away. So if it had not been for Victoria and Sophia Dagmar, I would have been all alone in the world.” Then he said “ Victoria and I are on our honeymoon now. We are having a wonderful time in England”. So they sat there in pleasant talk for some time. Princess Elizabeth, later to become Queen of England, was then thirteen and Princess Margaret was nine years old and Victoria was nineteen, still a young princess herself. While they were sitting there talking about the impending war in Europe in came the equerry to the King, Victoria’s cousin, Lord Clydesdale, who handed King George a document.



Lord Clydesdale

Then he came over to Victoria and kissed her, “Happy to see you again, little Princess, now grown up” he said to her, and then everyone looked at King George whose face had clouded over. He had in his hand the message, which he now was about to read, the message that said “Sorry to report that the Crown Prince of Mulvedania has driven his Bugatti off a cliff. King Hector, with the help of Doctor Tomass, is being taken to the floor of the valley to the site of the Prince’s death”.



1938 Bugatti

The pall was palpable. No one said a word. All of them sat in chilling silence as they absorbed the horror of this message. Finally, Lord Clydesdale turned to Charles and asked, “What can I do for you, Sir. How can I assist you?” And Charles said, “Put me in touch with Juan Trippe of Pan Am” and then Charles turned to Victoria and said, “We have to go back as soon as possible, Sweetheart” And she nodded, “Yes, yes”. So Charles stood up and

followed Lord Clydesdale to his office and arrangements were made with Juan Trippe that the Mara family would fly together into Mulvedania. Juan Trippe would supply the plane and pilot and he would bring with him nurse Adell, whom Victoria knew and liked. So they said goodbye to the King and Queen and the two little princesses and let Lord Clydesdale assist them in getting to the plane and the takeoff the next day.

The plane landed on the Polo field in the center of Belvedere and Doctor Tomass met them there to tell them that the King was sitting by the shore of the rushing river in the canyon, an almost impenetrable canyon, and that he had not moved, nor eaten nor rested for one instant since the terrible news had reached them. Victoria said, impulsively, "Lets go there at once" but Doctor Tomass said, "No, no child, lets have a bite to eat first and then lets face the day's terrible events." So they all went to the dining room in the hotel overlooking the Polo field and Charles ordered several lunch boxes for anyone at the river who might need them. The good Doctor arranged for two cars and they drove down the dusty canyon road to the river's edge, and there on a rock, sat Hector VII, the ruling King of Mulvedania.

Sprawled over the rock was the body of the Crown Prince, sheltered in his father's arms. It was a modern day Pieta. The picture, so unforgettable, had made big news in the Western press especially in the rotogravure sections of the newspapers, the kind of world attention that Hector had always wanted. But now he was barely alive in a catatonic state

unable or unwilling to respond. When Victoria stood next to them on the shore of the raging mountain stream, she told them both that she loved them and was very sorry for their loss but, as expected, there was no response.



Dr. Alfred Tomass

The terrible disappointment that she felt that no reconciliation had ever seemed possible broke her heart. But she accepted this tragedy as part of circumstances always beyond her control and she rejoined Charles and Doctor Tomass and went back to the North Castle with them, to her own bedroom where she had grown up and she waited there for the news about the death of her father. His death occurred the next day.

Within two hours of the announcement of the demise of King Hector VII, Philippe Palmentier seized the reigns of government and pronounced the Kingdom of Mulvedania no more. Mulvedania, from now on was to be known as the Republic of Mulvedania and Palmentier declared himself Prime Minister.

But Charles Mara stepped in immediately and saw to it that no further erosion could take place. He and the Alfreds made Phillippe an offer that in good sense he could not refuse. His Watchworks would be embellished and glorified so that it would become the most dazzling in Europe and he would never fear poverty again. The Republic would not only have a new and vastly improved Watchworks, but also new roads, new museums, and increased fame. The Alfreds were already building a new museum on the bank of the river. The Alfred artist, Regnier was creating a sculpture on the spot where the King had sat holding his son. Everywhere in the Republic was new growth and new hope. Phillippe Palmentier and his son Gilberto were enormously excited about the splendid turn of events and they were content with the growth and prosperity that surrounded them.

Meanwhile Victoria had to deal with the volumes of mail that poured in from all over the world. She, Charles, and the Alfred clan felt they had to immediately invite their royal relatives and their worldwide friends to mourn and rejoice with them and that is what occurred. They had never worked harder in their lives. They were inundated with requests for their attention and their affection. Every bed in the Republic was spoken for, occupied by visitors, and outside the gates of Mulvedania many places were coping with the overflow of mourners who came to pay their respects to the King and the Crown Prince. Juan Trippe was glad he came to help his friend Charles Mara but even more so because he had the chance to meet many of the most well connected people in

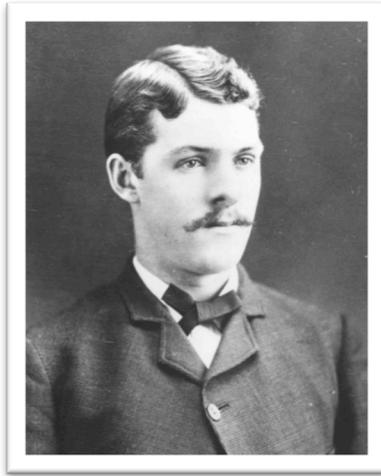
Europe and abroad, a boost to his emerging airline, Pan Am.

The name of the country Mulvedania remained, but the Kingdom was no more. The Republic of Mulvedania was now the name of the territory. This tumultuous time kept Victoria and Charles on their toes, as they assumed responsibility for the transition of the old Monarchy into the new Republic. Charles was absolutely fascinated with Victoria. He saw a true Princess alive to the needs of a new country, and he marveled at the sight of her taking command and coming through with true royal colors.

It was a very sad time for all of them. The tragedy of Hector's life was all too evident. This poor accident-prone King who was Victoria's father was a person pitiable and sad. He was a lonely man. He had failed in his position as a husband and as a father. And while he had had much joy and success with his Kingdom in the early days, later as difficulties compounded, he became a torn-apart person, painfully alone and confused.

Victoria coming through with her royal role brought much healing to everyone. And on the day of the funeral, in front of the Cathedral, she found herself facing none other than Doctor Rupert Jonas, the man whom her Aunt Sophie had called *the Butcher of Belvedere*. He was standing with a lady whom Victoria presumed must be his wife. She said, "Doctor Jonas?" And he replied, "Yes, Ma'am. I am Doctor Jonas," and she said, "I want you to know that I'm sorry my Aunt Sophia was so adamant in regard to you. I want you to know that I understand how

difficult it must have been to have delivered a large baby to my small mother. And I'm sorry for any grief that my aunt's anger caused you”.



Doctor Rupert Jonas

She looked up into his face, the face of a 45-year-old man with hair graying and eyes full of sadness, and he said, "Ma'am, I thank you for those words." And then Victoria turned to the lady by his side, "Is this your wife?" And he said, "Yes, this is Genevieve." And she replied, "Hello, Genevieve. My good thoughts go with you." And Genevieve curtsied and said, "Thank you, Princess Victoria. Thank you." Then Victoria turned to Doctor Jonas and embraced him. It was a teary moment for all of them.

The overflow of grief from around the world was spontaneous and genuine. Everyone took pity on the heartbroken King and the equally tragic Crown Prince dead before his time in a most dreadful accident. The Bugatti, the beautiful black and red sports car that was the

pride of the 17-year-old Crown Prince, was to be restored. The museum that the Alfreds built behind the statue of the king with the prince on his lap, the modern day Pieta, was to be preserved by the Alfred artist, Reignier. The museum would turn out to be a tremendous tourist attraction, which filled the coffers of the Republic of Mulvedania much to the pleasure of Philippe Palmentier and his son Gilberto.



Sophia Dagmar, Princess Royale of Mulvedania

The Cathedral remained the same, a handsome building holding the remains of the Mulvedanian Kings and Princes and its most distinguished citizens. The young Queen, Helena Victoria, mother of Princess Victoria, now lay next to the remains of the famous Sophia Dagmar, Europe's most exalted financier.

Some of the royal visitors stayed on for a few days to embrace the royal young couple. And then the final goodbyes were said and Victoria and Charles with Matilda and Gussie climbed into the plane with Juan Trippe, and

they flew safely back to England and once again came into their apartments at the Claridge's Hotel.

Once again they had to recover from the ravages of travel and the emotional ups and downs of their lives. But somehow this time was easier. Charles was greatly encouraged by the turn of events. Mulvedania would survive and do well under the presidency of Philippe Palmentier with the help of the Alfreds. The wonderful Alfreds would continue mining their gold and living off Sophia's securities.

Charles felt everyone was provided for and above all his bride, wonderful beautiful Victoria was now his wife and this filled him with joy. They lingered in England for a few days but realized they must leave because events in Europe were becoming more and more ominous and it was Sophia's explicit wish that they get to the New World as promptly as was feasible.

EVENTS UNPREDICTABLE

Chapter V

Pan Am had started its service between England and the U.S.A. Despite the fears of Matilda, who was terrified at the idea of flying, despite all emotions and notions that members of the foursome expressed, they got on the plane to New York and settled down comfortably to enjoy the flight.

But several hours later it became obvious to Charles that Victoria was acutely ill. The stewardess, who was a trained nurse, told Charles that she would move Victoria into the infirmary. And then soon after, he was informed that Victoria was having a miscarriage. The Captain consulted with him, and they decided that New York was the closest destination for landing, and that they would have an ambulance waiting at the plane to transport her to the closest hospital.

And that was the beginning of their life in America. Mrs. Charles Mara lost her first baby. Not an unusual thing for a teenage mother-to-be, but nonetheless shocking and sad. But now that was over with, everyone was hoping that soon Victoria would be back at their apartments in the Waldorf.

But meanwhile, Matilda and Gussie decided they did not like to be on Park Avenue in New York, in the heart of the city. They longed for something more country and more homey. And so while Victoria was in the hospital, Charles and the ladies went to Greenwich Village, went to that famous Washington Square Park that artists knew and loved at the foot of 5th Avenue.

Then he took them to Gramercy Park at 23rd street. It had a locked gate and they could enjoy the park without worrying about the general public, beggars, and other unknown and undesirable types.

So it was decided that the furnished brownstone house facing Gramercy Park, which was four stories tall with its own elevator (many brownstones were six stories tall), would more than fill the requirements of Matilda and Gussie. And Armand Webber, Sophia's man in New York, quickly arranged the lease. When Victoria came home to the Waldorf from the hospital, Matilda and Gussie were settling into their new home, seemingly very pleased with the turn of events.

So Charles hoped that he had Victoria all to himself, at long last he had this beautiful girl all to himself, his life-long dream come true. To him she was the most beautiful woman on earth. He was the luckiest husband on earth. But this pause in the frightening condition of Victoria's health did not last long. To everyone's horror Victoria had started to hemorrhage again. Charles sent an urgent SOS to Armand Webber who called an ambulance and alerted the surgeon who had operated on her before. There was no doubting now that Victoria was indeed a very frail girl and she was quite ill. But in a few days with good medical care and much-needed blood transfusions Victoria came home to the Waldorf hopeful that she would be as good as new. Gussie was waiting anxiously for her return to the apartment and Armand ordered coffee and cake for everyone. It seemed like a heartwarming welcoming party. Charles had

arranged for the stewardess on Pan Am, Adell, whom Victoria liked so much, to come and be her nurse while she was recovering and so hopefully all would go well.

But this little scene of domestic happiness didn't last very long. Charles felt that they shouldn't tire Victoria unduly and suggested that perhaps everyone could go home. Then the unexpected happened. Gussie announced that she wasn't going anywhere, "I am going to stay here and guard Victoria". Armand and Charles looked at each other in surprise, hardly comprehending what was happening.

But there was no stopping Gussie. Her emotional dam had burst. She stood there in defiance. "Victoria is too ill to be left without me. No one is going to molest her while I am here". Victoria went even paler than she was, "Maria Gustava don't you say another word. That's quite enough, quite enough". Victoria was visibly trembling in her anger but there was no stopping Gussie.

Charles recalled that Sophia Dagmar had warned him that Gussie was insanely jealous and protective of Victoria but neither he nor Armand were aware of how deeply affected Gussie was. Gussie had played the role of mother to Victoria for seventeen of her nineteen years. She knew all too well the tragic story of Victoria's mother, the young Queen Helena Victoria. And her pent up fury at all men and Charles Mara in particular for taking away her Princess Victoria knew no bounds. "Please, Gussie", Victoria said, "Please no more. It's not fair to Charles". And Gussie snarled at him and

said, “Yes, it is fair. He has no right to touch you when you’re in such a condition”.

It was Gussies’ meltdown. As they stood there in horror, Armand, the wonderful, warmhearted teddy bear of a man gathered up Gussies’ coat and putting it on her he enveloped her in his arms but she could not restrain the flow of vicious words. “You think Charles Mara loves you, but he only used you to get control of Sophia’s money. He never loved you, Victoria”. Victoria sagged in her chair with her hands over her ears, desperate to get away from this onslaught. And Charles rushed to her side.

The next thing that happened was, Armand slapped his hand hard over Gussie’s mouth and as he dragged her to the elevator he called out loud “Don’t listen to her, Victoria, she is out of her mind with jealousy”. And the next thing Gussie knew she was alone with Armand on a side street south of the Waldorf Astoria just a few doors east of Park Avenue. She found herself standing bewildered and agitated at the entrance of a brownstone house, Mulvedania House. Armand was putting keys into the door and he looked up at Gussie with icy coldness. “Maria Gustava, make up your mind right this instant whether you want to stay here with me and face the consequences of what you have just done, or I will call a cab and send you back to your mother at Gramercy Park. But if you go there, there is no coming back here, so make up your mind, the old shriveled up life that you had or a new life here with me, but I warn you it isn’t going to be easy”.

She stood there too numb to answer. He put the key in the door, a heavy door, and the door

swung open. “What is it going to be, Maria?” And she said, “I will stay with you” And that was the beginning of the story of Armand and Maria Gustava.



Armand Webber in Uniform

From then on Armand took Maria Gustava under his wing. They were the perfect match for each other. They were close in age she 31, he 35 and he was divorced and needing a hostess for many of the social events that fell to his lot.

Gussie from then on was known as Maria Gustava. She seemed to be a perfect match for Armand. She had grown up in the court of Sophia Dagmar. She knew a great deal about protocol and the inner workings of the Kingdom of Mulvedania. In fact no one knew more about Sophia Dagmar than Maria Gustava. Her mother Matilda was very old now, had her own

companion and no longer needed the company of her daughter, so fate arranged the perfect answer for Maria Gustava. She would now be hostess for Armand Webber and the two of them became a pair and eventually married.



Maria Gustava

This made Victoria and Charles feel greatly relieved. They felt like the sword of Damocles had been removed from their lives. Both of them were deeply devoted to Armand and if Armand felt threatened by Maria Gustava it certainly wasn't evident. He was more than her match. She was at first reluctant to give up her independence and consider him or any other man as a possible suitor, but he was so likeable and lovable that eventually she found herself much in love. This happy denouement was a blessing for all. Victoria and Charles felt that at last they could claim their own lives and forget the no longer needed baggage of other times.

But the fallout from Maria Gustava's outrageous outburst continued to exact its toll. Victoria was so shaken and upset she could not stop weeping. She said "Charles, please forgive Maria Gustava. She can't help her anger. She feels displaced. But she was good to me all my life and I hope we can be good to her now." Charles sat down next to her and marveled out loud that Victoria could think of Maria Gustava's feelings after what had just occurred. "It's all right, Victoria, this break had to come and she will be much better off going on to a life of her own and so will we." He felt so tender toward Victoria. She was so sweet and ill and so vulnerable and so perturbed. "My Darling, all we have to think about now is us, our own happiness, our own future".

But these words of his upset her further instead of being comforting. She was greatly distressed and she blurted out, "All these miscarriages mean the end of our life together. The doctors told me I must not get pregnant again for the next 5 years." And Charles tried to reassure her that in these modern times that's not a problem. "In fact, the gynecologist and the surgeon are coming tomorrow afternoon to check on you and they are going to give me instruction on the latest birth control measures so this is not the end of our honeymoon, it's the beginning." Victoria was quiet for a moment and finally she asked timidly, "Can that really happen? This isn't the end of our life together?" Holding her in his arms, he tried to reassure her that nothing could ever come between them, nothing. All she needed was a little time now to recover and then they would resume the fun life

that they had been enjoying before.

In a few weeks Victoria seemed to be well enough to enjoy going out to dinner. The war was raging in Europe, but in New York, one would hardly know there was trouble anywhere. They sampled the restaurants from the bottom of Manhattan Island all the way to the end. They considered every restaurant a dining experience to remember and considered it an education for the restaurant that Charles knew he wanted to open someday, somewhere in the United States. As Victoria became stronger it became a time of great joy for them both and tremendous fun.

Time was on their side. As the war continued in Europe, they did what they could with their funds to ease life for their relatives caught up in that holocaust. As usual Mulvedania was untouched by war but not so Denmark and not so Britain.

In Denmark, the great and noble King, Christian X donned the yellow marker that Danish Jews were ordered to wear by the occupying Nazis. He went up and down the streets on his horse, flaunting the yellow Star of David, defying the Germans.

Germany attacked Denmark on April 9th 1940, just as Sophia had predicted. It was the first time in its thousand-year history that Denmark was completely conquered by invaders. At first Germany pronounced Denmark under "German Protection" but the Danes worked secretly against this takeover and in August 1943, King Christian X was placed under military guard. Parliament was no more and the army was also disbanded. Remarkably, Danish naval officers sank their fleet in

Copenhagen Harbor right under the noses of the Germans. The Germans tried to arrest the 6000 Jews living in Denmark but this roused the ire of the Danish underground. Lars Joseph, his family and many others worked secretly with other Danes to get at least 5000 of the Jewish Community to safety in Sweden. The last year of occupation was very difficult for the Danish people but Denmark was liberated by allied troops on May 5, 1945. The world recognized the valor of the Danish people and Denmark resumed its usual welcoming stance of generosity and tolerance for all.

The war was not easy for Britain either. The blitzkrieg flattened British cities and terrified the populace. Little children were sent out of London to the country to stay with families they did not know. They were taught to put a stone in their pocket and squeeze it when they felt afraid.

Charles and Victoria feared for the British King and Queen, and royal cousins, but all of them managed to withstand the Blitz and emerged the victors. Everyone survived except Victoria's favorite cousin, her darling Derek, Lord Clydesdale. While out on patrol he perished with his rescue unit when a brick wall collapsed on him and others. Till this day Victoria's eyes fill with tears when she thinks of him, that terrible loss. Meanwhile, Hitler, the crazy demon of Europe, the insane demon, the insane devil, was finally getting his comeuppance and the terrible time when Hitler finally came face to face with his defeat was a harrowing time for Europe.

Everyone knew that he had waged his ghastly war on the Jews, but the gypsies, blacks,

communists and the mentally ill were also in the camps. Nobody realized the extent of the gas chambers and the terrible evil that an unbridled Germany in the hands of a madman could evoke. The world lived in horror as concentration camps were emptied of their dying occupants.

But finally peace did come. Europe lay like a broken and bleeding entity, suffering beyond belief in its hope to restore sanity to the world and some beauty and blessing to everyone.

A DREAM FULFILLED

Chapter VI

The events of 1939 were dramatic enough but now in 1940, it seemed that there was a new reality. For Charles, that meant bringing Victoria back to her previous health and state of happiness before her miscarriage. He felt the first thing was to move out of the Waldorf Astoria. And so, he transferred Victoria and their belongings to the Plaza Hotel at 59th and 5th Ave. It was very convenient. Everyday he and Victoria had lunch in the famous Oak Room. And almost everyday Armand Webber joined him and brought guests. At these lunches Victoria said almost nothing. She sat quietly, smiled, and listened carefully but made no comment. They never knew who would come for lunch. The British Consul Lord Sulgrave came often to plan with Charles supplements to help with Britain's war effort. Others who came were theater people like Gertrude Lawrence, Beatrice Lilly and actor, Peter O'Toole, who was to become famous for his role as Lawrence of Arabia. Charles went out of his way to invite clothes designers because he remembered how much Victoria loved fashion in the days when she was well. But it was very slow, Victoria's recovery. He was alarmed that she continued to weigh only 92 pounds for many weeks and it seemed there was no easy way for her to regain her weight. But she seemed well enough and happy, but very quiet.

Charles had instructed Armand Webber to find him a building to buy on Central Park South. The Plaza Hotel was very interesting as a

place to live but it had its drawbacks. He wanted to have a building with its own garden for Victoria and was waiting as patiently as he could until Armand could negotiate a purchase of a building on Central Park South. Nothing was readily available and it was becoming increasingly clear that they'd have to make a substantial offer to some reluctant seller in order to get such a property.

Charles was hopeful that Victoria had recovered from the shock of Gussie's meltdown. The terrible words that spilled out of Gussie's mouth could have taken a tremendous toll on anyone's self esteem and peace of mind. Her accusation that Charles had never loved Victoria and had used her only as a means of getting control of Sophia's fortune was too painful to contemplate. It had sent a shiver of fear through Charles that Victoria might actually have believed that hateful accusation and he was ever watchful of any sign that Victoria believed those awful words. From the moment of their final break with Gussie, Charles vowed he would never leave Victoria alone again with anybody. There was nothing, no one, and no possible circumstance that could interfere with him putting Victoria first in his schedule.

At the Plaza Hotel, every day Charles and Victoria received guests at their table in the Oak Room. The Plaza was located on Central Park South at the very heart of New York's most elegant area, 59th and 5th Ave, a very convenient location for almost everyone. Lunchtime was a very special interlude for them because almost every day Armand Webber would join them and bring with him whatever celebrities he had in

tow. Armand was a teddy bear of a man, big and lovable and when he was present every meal seemed festive. Charles was ever grateful to him for removing Gussie (Maria) from their lives. It was a great relief for all of them.

Charles felt particularly relieved because he realized that if anybody on this earth could control Maria Gustava it was Armand. Armand for all his charms was not a person to be trifled with. In Armand, Maria Gustava had met her match.

Charles was also pleased that the waiters at the Oak Room fussed over Victoria and brought her little irresistible tidbits to eat. Charles was ever hopeful that somehow she could get back to her previous self, gain a few pounds again, and have some of that sparkle and spunk that had vanished with two hospitalizations. Gussie's incredible attack, which had reduced her to a state of hysteria that took days to get over, did not help her health either. Bless Armand; he understood that there would not be any future contact with this unseemly jealous Gussie. In fact, Gussie was no more. Now she was Maria Gustava the partner of Armand Webber, hostess for numerous events that would further the business interests of the estate of Sophia Dagmar.

This was an ideal solution for all of them. Maria Gustava had grown up at the court of Sophia Dagmar. Despite her personal difficulties, it was likely that no one knew more about people and policies in Mulvedania than she did and Armand Webber was delighted to have her as his official hostess in New York. Besides which, he thought she was extremely

attractive and he suspected that loneliness and pain were at the bottom of her terrible attack on the very fragile Victoria. He was sympathetic and understanding but coldly accusing of her for her unforgivable behavior and he saw to it that she would never again be in Victoria's presence and would never come to the Oak Room for lunch.

Charles and Victoria were very fond of Armand and they would have been concerned for him, except for the fact that he had more than demonstrated that no one would ever take advantage of him. He was a fabulous friend but could be a formidable foe. Nonetheless, where Maria Gustava was concerned, they were uneasy about her relationship with Armand.

In all of her years as Victoria's nanny, Maria Gustava had never had a boyfriend. Now unexpectedly, totally beyond her wildest imagination, there was this impressive man in her life, Armand Webber, who was the Lord Chancellor of the former Kingdom of Mulvedania. She was astonished and perplexed and unsure what her role was to be. Despite her seeming sophistication, she was in affairs of the heart an inexperienced schoolgirl. And now to her horror, just when life had opened new possibilities for her, she had gone off the deep end in her hatred of Charles Mara. She had revealed the jealousy that his presence sparked in her. Here she was on the eve of a new adventurous part of life and she had ruined it by her vicious outburst. She knew she had made a tremendous mistake in the eyes of Armand Webber and she didn't know whether there was any way that she could redeem herself.

Until a few hours earlier she was totally consumed with her all embracing hatred of Charles Mara. Until just almost to this moment, she hadn't gotten a picture that Armand Webber was actually considering her in the role of his official hostess. The horror of what she had done to discourage and dissuade him of his plans with her was slowly dawning on her, and she could not stop weeping.

He had said nothing to her en route to his apartment but now he expected answers. "I think", he said "You and I have a few things to say to each other if we are going to proceed in a partnership. Is there anything you want to say to me?" he asked her, and she just stood there trembling, weeping softly. She did not reply. "Until a few hours ago, I had the highest regard for you, now I have the lowest. You revealed yourself at your very worst today and you have convinced me that I cannot trust you". She said nothing, unable to speak, filled with confusion and chagrin. She could not come to her own defense and the tears kept flowing.

Not many men can withstand a woman's tears and the next thing Armand knew he was holding her in his arms, wanting to comfort her. "If we do get together now" he found himself saying to her "There is going to be a strong code of behavior, and your separation from Victoria and Charles is final. You will not participate in any part of their lives, is that agreed?" He spoke to her sternly and she replied through her tears "Yes, I promise I will never interfere again". "Point number two, if you take on the job of being my hostess it does not require that you put up with me personally. You are perfectly free to

tell me to get lost or if you want something more personal that too is possible, so think it over, and decide on what basis you want this relationship to be”. She could not reply and started to weep more than ever and he responded by holding her tight and kissing her forehead. “You know Maria, I always admired you for the important role you played in Mulvedania and I would be proud to have you play an important role in New York, but you have to promise me, no malicious power plays or word games”. “Oh, I promise” she said hastily, “I promise”. “I’m glad you promised, now tell me where do you want to spend the night in a guest room on the third floor, or do you want to stay here with me?” and she said “I want to stay here with you”.

That is how the tenuous relationship between Armand Webber and Maria Gustava began, but there were still many issues that had to be resolved. One of the most baffling to Armand was Maria Gustava’s continuing tearfulness. Finally he said to her. “Why are you weeping? What is it you have to tell me that you haven’t told me? What is it?” she said, “I have to tell you, I guess”. She could hardly speak. Obviously what she had to tell him was very painful to her. Finally she blurted out, “But if you are looking ahead to a relationship with me I guess I have to tell you, she repeated. I have never been in a relationship before”. His mind tried to grasp this truth and it sunk in with some difficulty. Was this stunning looking woman saying to him that she was totally inexperienced, totally? When he confronted her with this truth she said through her tears, “Yes, I never had a

boyfriend". He laughed, "Well I think it's high time don't you? May I ask you? May I be your boyfriend?" And still weeping, she threw herself into his arms. "So no more tears" he told her "No more tears, okay? So we'll go to see the doctor tomorrow, and then we'll go on with our lives okay?" And she agreed happily.

The next day, the doctor confirmed what Maria Gustava had told him. He came out to Armand in the waiting room and said, "This lady is indeed a virgin. You can never be sure, but in this case there is no doubt, so now is a question of what is to be done? Leave things alone or make it easier and open her up?" So they asked her what she wanted done and she said, "Lets make life easier". She went back into the doctor's office, he gave her a few whiffs of anesthesia and he broke the membrane. Maria Gustava was on her way to becoming a woman, no longer a maiden lady.

They thanked the doctor and tumbled out of his office exhilarated by the turn of events. "Now what do you want to do, my Darling" Armand asked her, and she looked at him and smiled happily. "Should we go out to dinner and celebrate? Do you want to rest after what you went through? What do you wish? Do you want to go dancing?" She smiled and said, "Tomorrow night, okay? Not tonight".

All the while, while their personal lives unfolded, Charles continued to look around New York for properties to purchase. He was more and more aware that for his office and his home with Victoria he wanted a building on Central Park South, ideally between 5th and 6th avenues. He and Armand poured over real estate

maps and finally identified the building that would be most ideal. And once they decided that, Armand ascertained that a financial amount well above the current market would get the building for Charles.



The Plaza Hotel

It was a very happy luncheon at the Oak Room when Charles told Victoria that he had bought a building a few doors from the Plaza Hotel. “That means we still come to the Oak Room for lunch every day, Sweetie, and it means I can have my office on the bottom two floors and we’ll have the top two floors for our residence. And then you will have a very big project to make the top two floors we live on just what you want, room for a garden and a pool and anything else that you might fancy”. He reached over and kissed her. “It’s going to be a fun project for all of us”. Charles liked the idea of having the ground floor and the floor above it as a place where he and Armand could take care of the business that Sophia Dagmar had entrusted to them. Floors three and four

would be guest rooms and floors five and six would be their residential quarters.

Victoria was happy and excited about the opportunity of decorating their new living quarters. She could hardly wait until the new building was made available to them so she could begin with their decorating plans. She was thrilled that now she and Charles would have their first home together.

The day finally came that they were given the keys to the building. Victoria decided that the decorating firm of Gordon and Jones would be the group she would use. Millicent was the chief decorator and Victoria felt she could work with her very comfortably. Now she wanted to talk to Charles about his color preferences and already Millicent was bringing in sketches of architectural changes that could be made. During these many weeks neither Charles nor Victoria had any contact with Maria Gustava.

The men were already working on their plans for the bottom 2 floors, which were their offices where they could take care of the business that Sophia Dagmar entrusted to them. The 3rd floor would be guest rooms. And already they had on the door the names Armand Webber Charles Mara and Associates.

The ground floor was now open to the public, easily entered from the street, and welcoming to all comers. The second floor would offer plush conference rooms and a refreshment center. The third floor would offer guest rooms to important clients. On the ground floor, a small lobby featured an elevator for the use of the occupants of the residential floors for four, five and six. Much of this was already

taking place because Gordon and Jones were offered a bonus for their exclusive attention and as a result progress was being made very quickly. When Armand was finally able to pay a visit, the downstairs floors were attractive and functioning. Floor two was handsomely furnished and glamorous.

When Charles and Victoria saw how much room there was for their residence, they decided that floor four in their section would be guest rooms also, floors three and four will be for very special guests. Victoria had not made such swift progress with her plans but Charles reassured her that there was no pressing need for her to hurry as they could continue to stay at the Plaza Hotel indefinitely if she desired. She was not to feel any pressure or concern. She should take all the time she needed in creating the dream house she had imagined.

One thing they had decided on was that the sixth floor would have a cabana, a small pool, a vegetable garden and flowers. The fifth floor would be their living quarters. And of course the fourth floor would be the guest rooms. The rest of the year was spent in the perfecting of the house.

Meanwhile, Armand had no illusions that Maria Gustava was going to be happy without multiple commitments to activities outside of herself. He was hoping she would get involved with the work of Eleanor Roosevelt who was wife of the President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Armand encouraged Maria to become a member of Freedom House, which Eleanor Roosevelt was supporting. Freedom House was designed to launch the founding of

The United Nations.

But unknown to Armand, Maria had another involvement, which would come to him as a wonderful surprise. Three days a week, she walked uptown to the Art Students League on West 57th street (followed by the security officers assigned by Mr. Ogilvie, whom she had sworn to secrecy). She was working on two large canvases, both portraits of Armand, one in full regalia as the Lord Chancellor of Mulvedania and the other as Armand Webber, head of the Mulvedanian Community Center in New York City. These were life size portraits of Armand. Every brushstroke was a pleasure to her.

Maria Gustava was still a spitfire. She had enormous energy but under Armand's guiding hand she had learned a great deal of tact and felt genuine concern for the feelings of other people. He really had come to love Maria Gustava, but there never was a boring moment with her in his life. Her presence was a welcome relief to the dull repetitions of everyday living.

Meanwhile, Victoria had put on a few pounds to her husband's great relief. His fear for Victoria's survival was ever with him. To see her regaining some of her previous strength and joie de vivre was enormously encouraging to him. He gave credit to the fun job of creating their dream house, which was so fulfilling for Victoria and because they shared every decision she made. It brought them closer. So the year 1940 found Charles and Victoria, and Armand and Maria in good health and emotionally in a good place. The future looked brighter.

WHO IS ARMAND WEBBER?

Chapter VII

For twenty years, Armand Webber has been considered one of the most eligible bachelors in New York City. Ever since his divorce from Leola Leandreau, the Spanish dancer, many women have pursued Armand. He is very well known because he is the leader of the very small, but influential, Mulvedanian Community in America. In these same years there was a saying in international circles that a person is *As rich as an Argentine*. But in New York and New England, this saying was almost superseded by the descriptive statement *As rich as a Mulvedanian*.

Mulvedania House is Armand's lavish gift to Mulvedanian society. It offers its members a remarkable canopy of protections. From the cradle to the grave, any Mulvedanian anywhere knows that he or she can turn to the Mulvedanian Community for any or all needed services. Armand is the architect of this remarkable cloak of security provided without question to every Mulvedanian. He was the Chief Operating Officer of the Kingdom of Mulvedania until 1939 when the Kingdom ceased to exist. Muldania became the Republic that succeeded the Kingdom. But even though the Kingdom is no more, the ever-expanding wealth and influence of the Mulvedanian Community has continued to build each year since with its dynamic center in New York City.

Armand was born in the city of Belvedere, the capital city of Mulvedania, in 1904. He was the only child of the world famous philosopher,

Thomas Hobbes Webber. His mother, Juliana Webber, was a theoretical mathematician when in the 1930s she joined the group working with Neils Bohr on quantum mechanics in Copenhagen, Denmark. Armand was immensely proud of her, excited for her working at the very frontier of breakthrough science, the exploration of the universe.

Armand grew up in academic circles. When he was sixteen years old, both his parents joined the faculty of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Armand found Yale a great place to go to college and graduate school. He was enthusiastic about all sports and participated in several activities including Track & Field and Gymnastics. He joined the Yale Rowing Team and was honored to represent Yale at the 1924 Olympic Summer Games in Paris, France. When he came back from Europe he became more active in music, sang with a choir and enjoyed being in a barbershop quartet.

At Yale, he majored in Economics and became a specialist in Public Planning and the Financial Management of Municipalities, to the delight of his mentor, the Princess Royale, Sophia Dagmar of Mulvedania. He wrote two well-known books on the management of cities, considered classics to this day. When Armand graduated in 1930 with his PhD, Sophia appointed him not only Lord Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer of the Kingdom of Mulvedania, but also Director of her enormous security investment firm, Banque L' Enterprise.

The only down event of his stay at Yale University was his brief encounter of marriage and divorce from Leola Leandreau. When

Armand looked back, he understood better what led to this disastrous experience. He recalled how over a period of two years Leola trapped him in circumstances he had never imagined. At first Armand and his roommate Philip Johnston were very pleased to escort this young good looking girl around the campus each time she came to town. But on the third or fourth visit she started to give her exclusive attention to Armand. Looking back on it, Armand was convinced that Leola and her so called father Leon had figured out that Armand was one of those rich Mulvedanians and he became their target. So on the next two or three times that Leola came to New Haven she concentrated her charms on him. Instinctively, he felt uneasy about Leola but as she became increasingly warm and receptive to him, he tried to quell his feelings of doubt. Then, almost to his surprise, she was pressuring him to get married. A date was set and the local hotel was selected by Leola to be the place of their marriage ceremony and reception.

As the event took place Leola, Leon, and Josh the photographer were very enthusiastic about taking one photograph after another. Leola, who had earned in Armand's quiet thinking the title of "Ice Queen", was at this point so warm and delightful that Armand swallowed his doubts about her and went on with the reassuring events of the occasion. Armand's mother, Juliana, impulsively took her mother's ring off her own hand and gave it to Armand so that he could give it to Leola.

Leola was visibly taken aback, but she allowed Armand to put the ring on her finger.

Philip Johnston, who had been Armand's roommate for all his years at Yale, was his best man. All seemed to be well, in fact better than Armand thought possible and then, suddenly it was all over. Leon and the photographer left the room to pack the car and Leola disappeared in the ladies room. After what seemed like a long lapse of time, Philip went out to see if he could assist the men in packing the car. And Juliana sent one of the guests to look in the ladies room to check on Leola. But Leola was long since gone. Philip saw her jump into the front seat of the photographer's truck and she drove away with the men.

The one redeeming thing that Leola did was to leave a note in the ladies room with the ring that Armand had just given her. The note said, "Under the circumstances I am returning your Grandmother's ring". Philip was so incensed at them that he wanted to pin down the facts and he discovered that they had absconded without paying their hotel bills. Armand was too numb to care but Philip insisted that they drive around the campus to see if they saw any sign of the truck. It seemed like a long night but after a workout in their home gym, Armand had calmed down enough to pronounce this adventure in matrimony null and void.

This episode put him in close contact with the feisty Mulvedanian lawyer, Peder Halversen, who recognized that there would be a few days before the next shoe would drop in this nasty little drama. Peder was more than ready for the miscreants and he negotiated the end of what he called that "fraudulent experience". Peder negotiated a settlement that

did not cost the Mulvedanian Community nearly as much as it could have if in the hands of a less skilled lawyer. In the previous year, Leola had entrapped a young man at Princeton and it cost his father, the owner of a famous brewery, a half million dollars. Armand's involvement with Leola was an unnecessary episode but one that taught Armand how to live in New York as a highly sought-after bachelor, dodging the amorous overtures of many of New York's most desirable women. Never again would he be involved in affairs of the heart with anyone outside the Mulvedanian Community.

But as valuable as this painful lesson was in itself, it also revealed to Armand the depths of his parent's humanity. Both his father and mother were very much into philanthropy and they both liked Leola so when they discovered, because of Peder's relentless pursuit of the truth, that Leola was in a hazardous situation without funds, both his parents decided to provide for Leola's future. It turned out that her real name was Sally Nix and she was born in Brooklyn, NY. She was in a dancing school when this man who posed as her father decided to transform this attractive young person into his ticket for financial security. After Peder's pursuit of what he described as "an outrageous attempt at larceny", both Armand's parents felt that Leola could quite possibly be without support in the future. No more could she and Leon pursue their treacherous designs on gullible young men in the Ivy League colleges. After Peder's exposure, their nefarious schemes could no longer work.

So, Armand's parents told him that they hoped to provide financial security for this

young woman and would set up a bequest in the name of Sally Nix. This would provide her with a monthly income for life that only she could access. They wanted to be sure that she could go on living on her own without the domination of her conniving manager. They told Armand they would not reveal to her who they were so he would not feel obliged to deal with Leola in the future on any basis whatsoever. They knew this had been a harrowing experience for Armand, one he could have done without. But they also knew that poverty could be a bitter thing to deal with and they felt this poor girl was an innocent victim of a deceitful man. Besides, they had gotten used to the idea of Leola as a daughter-in-law and had a soft spot in their heart for her.

Like all Mulvedanians, Armand's parents were very well situated financially. They knew how well Armand had been endowed by Sophia Dagmar, so they were pleased to be able to help Leola.

Even though Armand had no desire to ever enter into any connection with Leola again, he was nonetheless pleased with his parents for their generous thoughts about her. He was aware that as well off as all Mulvedanians were, his parents were far more endowed financially than others. The honors and awards that had come to them over a long career had made them very rich. Armand was an only child and his parents knew he was not in need of their largess.

This had been an intensely painful episode for Armand. But he decided his father and mother were wonderful people who bore no grudges toward anyone and had a heart full of love for everyone.

After Armand received his PhD in 1930, he moved to New York City and his parents continued to live on happily in New Haven, both at the top of their careers. The colonial house they had bought turned out to be a wonderful place for them to live. They were both musicians and their charming house became a happy venue for them and their friends to indulge in their love of chamber music. The Chamber Music Society of Mulvedania was a continuing satisfaction to them. It brought much pleasure to them and their many friends.

This went on for several years. This drama with Leola made them aware of their obligation to society and they set up a number of endowments to benefit both Mulvedanians and society at large.

And in the middle of the 1930s, before the demise of the Kingdom, both his parents passed away. If ever they had a hint that the Kingdom of Mulvedania would disappear, they did not voice it. But they did have the joy of witnessing Armand's success and that was heartwarming for them.

There was lots of glamor and charm that went along with Armand's high position. He was very personable. Everyone liked Armand and it seemed that Armand liked everyone in return. But now at the age of 35, Armand was involved with Maria Gustava.

Many wondered how a relatively unknown person like Maria, could capture the attention and love of this powerful and very attractive man. But not many realized that Armand and Maria had met years earlier when Maria

(Gussie) was the dutiful young nanny of the Crown Princess of Mulvedania, little Victoria Eugenie. Twice a year, Armand came to Mulvedania to confer with the Princess Royale, Sophia Dagmar, and on each trip he took the time to visit the little Princess and to talk briefly with Maria. But Maria was single minded in her devotion to Victoria and paid no attention to him whatsoever. If anyone were a patient man it was Armand and he hoped that eventually circumstances would bring Maria Gustava into closer contact with him. She was now thirty-one years old, in his eyes more beautiful than ever, a really striking looking woman, in fact unforgettable. But Maria was emotionally insecure and upset, understandably, because no one in the Mulvedanian Community had stepped in soon enough to rescue her from her restrictive circumstances.

To Armand fell the responsibility for her well-being, an obligation he did not want to shirk. The truth was that she had been at the center of his dreams for many years. Leola was the original Ice Queen, not surprising because she was playing a deceitful role. She was the very opposite of the impassioned Maria who was for real. Armand was very happy to be involved with Maria, whatever the difficulties that lay in store for them.

Even though totally committed to Maria, he was aware that she was thirty-one years old going on thirteen. Her drastic isolation, living under the dubious control of Matilda, had distorted her life. The recent renovation of Matilda's living quarters in the North Castle excited much condemnation of Matilda as a

mother by almost everyone. The Mulvedanians are a gentle people and they are unified in their condemnation of Matilda as a parent. Communal guilt has translated into sincere concern and affection for Maria. Everyone, it seems, is relieved that Maria had been rescued and is now the center of Armand's life and hopes run high for her future.

Mulvedanians were asking themselves, where did this Matilda come from anyway? Some of the older people recalled that the Grand Duchess Matilda was banished from the principality of Remini when her nephew seized control. Sophia Dagmar was horrified at the plight of Matilda and her young child and invited her to the North Castle to be her lady-in-waiting. Matilda did an adequate job for Sophia but there were grave doubts about her as a mother. Doctor Tomass continued to monitor her activities closely because he was deeply concerned for the well being of her child, who was an exceptionally pretty little girl. He felt Maria was too tightly controlled.

For all these years Armand waited patiently on the sidelines expecting that now that Matilda was out of the picture and Princess Victoria was certainly not in need of a nanny that his turn had come. But he realized while Maria (Gussie) was on his mind for all these years, she hardly knew that he existed.

He just had enormous regret that he was a day late in separating Maria from Victoria. If he had stepped in before Maria's meltdown, life would have been easier for all of them. But now he was confronted with an agitated Maria. Her plight reminded him of the story of Eliza

crossing the ice, in the book Uncle Tom's Cabin, unsure of her footing. Armand felt almost as perturbed as she did.

But one thing that no one had foreseen was that this calamitous transition in their lives was to occur all in one day. Maria, herself, could almost not fathom the swiftly changing dramatic events that transported her from her lonely world, into the unexpected role of being a roommate to Armand Webber. No one was more astonished than she was to find herself in such intimate proximity to this prominent man, the head of the country of Mulvedania. Armand had only been a nodding acquaintance in the years she took care of the baby princess.

The instant the door closed on Armand's apartment, he was on the phone to Dr. McDonald and Nurse Gillespie telling them that Princess Victoria was highly overwrought from the verbal attack of Maria Gustava. He asked if they would please assist Charles in taking care of Victoria as she was sobbing uncontrollably. With that urgent detail taken care of, he then turned his attention to Maria.

She was still standing near the doorway, frozen in grief and confusion. He went over to the bar and made them both a lemonade. "Let's sit down Maria and catch our breath", he said to her. "You've had a very upsetting day. I would guess now it's evening we can relax. Is there anything you want to say to me?" She said bitterly, "Well, that Charles Mara took Victoria away from me" He replied sternly, "Are you speaking of Prince Charles, the Prince of Mulvedania? I hope you realize he is our Sovereign. You don't want to sound treasonous,

do you?” “Oh, no” she said, flustered, “Don’t listen to my words, I don’t know what I’m saying”. The tears started to flow again. “What scenario would you like for yourself now that all connection with Prince Charles and Princess Victoria is cut off? Would you like to work for the Mulvedanian government here in New York? “Oh yes, yes. That would be wonderful! I have nothing, as it is, nothing”, she said bitterly. He commented pointedly, but not unkindly, that she happened to be one of the richest women in New York. He happened to know because he signed her check each month. Her look of bewilderment revealed to him even more that she was totally unaware of her financial circumstances. In fact, with each minute with Maria, he was becoming more concerned of how out of reality she was.

He was somewhat disconcerted, “Why don’t you come over here to the sink Maria. I want to make sure that you’re not bleeding.” He had a flashlight and he looked over the skin, around her mouth, and inside her mouth and was relieved that she was not hurt. “Well, I’m really glad, Sweetie, that you are all right. I am not in the habit of hitting anyone across the mouth. And certainly not a beautiful girl like you.” And he kissed her. To his surprise she pulled back.

Her involuntary reaction distressed him. “What’s the matter, Maria? You don’t like to be kissed?” She said, “Oh no, no. It’s not that, it’s just that no man has ever kissed me before.” “Well, I guess a kiss could be quite a shock to you in that case. But tell me, do you like to be kissed or not?” The tears welled up in her eyes again. She was too flustered to reply then she

managed to whisper, "I like it." "Well" he said, "In that case come over here and let me kiss you again." She obediently came close to him and he said to her, "I have to tell you, Sweetheart, that you can not live here with me in my quarters unless you like to be kissed because I can guarantee you that there are going to be kisses everyday. Think about it. If you don't want to live here with me, you can live in one of the guest rooms downstairs in Mulvedania House." "Oh no." she said, "I don't want that." He said, "What do you want then, can you stand to be kissed? Come and kiss me now and prove it." She came over, put her face close to his, and she said shyly, "I'm afraid to kiss you again. If you send me away I will be heartbroken." And he said to her, "I'll let you in on a little secret. If you went away my heart would break, too". She looked at him incredulously, though her tears, "What are you saying to me?" she said. He replied, "I guess it's my little secret but I'm telling you that I want you to stay." That was almost more than she could process. It didn't make sense to her, but he seemed to mean it, "Look Sweetheart, let's sit down and you keep kissing me and I'll tell you how it is with me." They sat down in a big, cozy chair and he insisted that she keep kissing him and he kept telling her that even though she didn't realize that he was alive, he had been in love with her for all these years, and now that she was in his arms, he had no intention of sending her away.

It really had been a big day for Maria. She had lived through agonies of anguish and readjustment. But the outcome was worth it for the both of them. For Armand, he was overcome

with thanksgiving and joy, but he was very fearful of overplaying his hand because he realized more and more with each moment, how unsure this girl was. She was young and inexperienced, despite being thirty-one years old. He did not want to frighten or overwhelm her in anyway and wanted to give her a chance to move into a new awareness with confidence in herself. Even while he was rehearsing this dialogue with himself, Maria was being carried away with her newfound freedom. Armand learned fast that Maria was unlike any other woman he had ever dealt with. From that moment on, not one day ever passed that she didn't seem to be waiting for him. Her fuse was always lighted and that delighted him.

He didn't know what she knew about married life. He didn't know what kind of conceptions she had in her mind, but what he did know was that her version ruled. It kept him happy.

But what no one knew, not even Armand or Maria, were the depths of Maria's emotional difficulties. Whenever they surfaced both Armand and Maria were plunged into confusion. The first time Maria spun out of control, Armand had gone into the shower room with her after their morning exercise. She panicked, turning into a wild cat, spitting and scratching. Her reaction was so unexpected that Armand suffered a long scratch on his arm that drew blood. He carried her into the bedroom and tied her arms to the bedpost while she continued to carry on in almost wild intensity. Obviously, she was terrified. Some inner fear brought on this reaction. Clearly, she was still in

the throes of her previous bad experiences in her young years with Matilda. He was dismayed and shocked that there was still such a wide abyss between them that they had so far to go before becoming loving companions. After a while the wildness went out of her eyes and tears started to flow. "Armand, I am so sorry. I don't know why I got so upset. I am so sorry I hurt you. I hope you will forgive me." She kept weeping. But all he did was untie her and after notifying Wanda he left the apartment.

He did not come back until the evening of the next day. Maria was standing in the doorway to greet Armand. She looked so beautiful to him. He hadn't realized how tall she was, the perfect height for him. She looked more beautiful than ever. The next thing he knew she was in his arms and was asking him to forgive her and he found that easy to do.

One reason that Armand felt so tender toward her was the continuing evidence that she had been a severely damaged child and in these nights when they embraced each other she would cry out in her sleep, reliving forgotten episodes of her early life. When that happened he would wake her up, hold her tight, and say to her, "There is no reason to be afraid, Sweetheart, no one will harm you here". She would talk to him with eyes full of terror and tears, speaking garbled English, until she woke up in his arms. They had a little ritual of words. Armand would say to her, "Tell me Sweetheart, I am not Matilda's little girl anymore. I am Armand's big girl." And when Armand was sure she was awake and smiling through her tears he picked her up and carried her to the kitchen.

They poked around in the refrigerator and laughed at how silly it was to be scared of something that happened so many years ago and could never happen again. When she would giggle with him and laugh about how silly it was, they would go back to bed and fall asleep in each other's arms. This happened a number of times when Maria was learning to let go of old reactions, learning to live in a new, much better world.

The tenderness that these nighttime episodes evoked in Armand could hardly be put into words. The sadness he felt that she had gone through so much in her early life, accompanied by the gladness he felt that he could be the instrument that could free her of this odious past evoked profound emotion in him. In the morning, Maria seemed almost not to remember her nighttime anguish and gradually these episodes ceased.

Armand was pleased that so much progress was unfolding and he expressed his pleasure with her in many big and little ways. He could see the growing confidence she had in herself and he was very articulate with his approval and affection. Maria did not talk much but she began to reflect happiness. He realized he was very much in love with Maria, tremendously gratified that the relationship was developing in the ways he hoped it would go.

Then they were notified of the death of Maria's mother, Matilda. She had not been feeling well ever since they came back from Mulvedania and her health went into decline. Armand was then faced with the decision of what to do about Matilda's funeral. A quiet

ceremony was held in the chapel of Mulvedania House and without any further fanfare her body was cremated and sent back in its urn to be installed in the Cathedral in Old Mulvedania. Armand was relieved that Maria seemed unaffected and that this event did not excite any more nightmares for her.

So they set up, what he thought was a sensible schedule. Their plan was that at ten o'clock each morning they would go their separate ways. He would have to make the arrangements for the twelve o'clock luncheon with Prince Charles and Princess Victoria at the Oak Room, then he would attend to other affairs of the Kingdom. He usually would not be home again until after five o'clock. He told Maria he would drop her off with Wanda and Vince on the third floor. She could assist them with any activities on their agenda. He felt that Maria would be safe and provided for. She knew that he would be home with her most evenings.

Now that Maria was seemingly overjoyed at this arrangement, knowing that Armand was in her life, she did not ask for anything more. She was full of energy, seemingly never tired and always moving from one activity to another with apparent joy. Armand found her amazing. When he came home at night, he found that she had made a delicious dinner to his complete surprise since the dining room downstairs would have provided ample food. She was always singing. Armand was impressed with her voice. Most people didn't sound that good when they sang. He asked her if she would consider taking singing lessons and she said, "Yes, if you would take them with me." So, he took a room on the

fifth floor and soundproofed it so they could practice their scales and arpeggios without bothering anyone else in the building.

These seemingly were happy weeks, but then a second crisis arose in their tenuous personal arrangement. After a wonderful celebratory evening, which made Armand enormously happy, Armand left the next morning on the annual visit to Delaware with other board members of the Banque L'Enterprise. He had carefully explained to Maria the intricacies of this annual corporate obligation and he assumed that she understood his responsibility. So, he was totally unprepared and astonished to find her furious with him for leaving her alone all day without even a phone call to help her face her demons. The glorious evening that had been so reassuring to Armand was predictably a source of terror for her, confronted as she still was with the admonitions of her mother, Matilda, who had seemed to hate all men. Maria's passion for Armand was a fearful factor, one that she had not yet adequately processed in her thinking. The long hours of that lonely day consumed her in a frightening fantasy of guilt and anguish.

When Armand came home in the late evening hours, he was dismayed to find Maria furious with him. To him, her attitude seemed unkind and unreasonable and his usual patience was not evident to her. His mind flashed back to the episode when she turned into a wildcat and he had to tie her to the bedpost until she calmed down. This time the situation was different but because he was not attuned to it he managed to say the wrong words in the wrong way, which

only made her anguish more intense. She spoke of wanting to throw herself over the balcony, which angered him even more. "Don't talk like that," he said, "Or I will have you sent to Bellevue!" Then he reached out to touch her and she became hysterical, "Don't you touch me or I will have you charged with rape!" He was so horrified that he made no further effort to engage her. Maria's anger filled Armand with astonishment first and then horror. What had he done to evoke this kind of response from her? Maria was spewing words out nonstop, "You men are all the same, ignorant and arrogant, and here I was loving you so much I thought you walked on water! I never want to see you again" she blurted out, "Tomorrow I am going to move out and this is the end of our relationship!" Maria broke into sobs leaving Armand feeling powerless and mute. He went into the front room and called Vince on the phone, "Listen Vince, I have a crisis here. Maria is very angry with me and is threatening to move out in the morning. I want to ask you if you and Wanda can arrange things so the four of us can go away to that resort in Southampton we talked about." Yes, leaving mid-morning tomorrow. Vince agreed. "Those two young doctors that you have in the office now, surely they can handle things while you and Wanda are away with us for the next two days," Armand suggested. Then Armand hung-up the phone and went back to his distraught Maria. "Don't cry Maria, its really all right. There is nothing wrong between us. I am terribly sorry you felt so alone and deserted today. It was incredibly stupid on my part to not have realized how hard this long day of

separation would be on you." But she did not respond to him. His anger at her was completely dissipated and he was truly remorseful that he had let this day go by with so little thought of her. Even though she did not respond, he sat beside her as she lay in the bed saying all kinds of soothing things, expressing his profound regret for his thoughtlessness and his forever devotion to her. He wasn't sure that she was awake enough to hear him but he tried to reassure her that he would not touch her again and that he would sleep in the big chair and respect her wishes to be left alone.

In the morning he and Wanda gathered Maria up and told her that Vince would join them and the four of them were going out to Southampton for a two-day vacation. Maria did not appear to be upset, but she very carefully did not look at Armand, just went along with the day's plans pleasantly enough. The resort sent a limousine for them mid-morning which brought them to the glamorous campus in time for a bite of lunch and then they played a game of doubles tennis. When Vince and Wanda decided they had enough tennis, they repaired to the sidelines with long cool drinks. But Maria told Armand that she wanted to play singles with him. "Listen, I think that's a poor idea don't you?" Armand said, "There is a good reason why women play with women and men play against men. You won't enjoy it if I beat you, will you?" Maria answered back, "No, I won't enjoy it but I want to try my hardest to beat you at your own game." "Ok," he said, "On one condition, when I beat you, which I will because I weigh a hundred pounds more than you and the odds are

against you, but when it's over I want to jump the net and hold you in my arms. You must promise me that is ok with you." Maria agreed and that is exactly what happened. When Armand embraced her he told her how much he admired her and that he was more than impressed with her athletic expertise, that he hoped she would forgive him for beating her at tennis. Maria seemed to be not resentful which was reassuring to him. After that Maria wanted to swim laps so they changed into their swimsuits back in their room and went to the pool. Armand chose a lane away from her so she could do her swimming without feeling like he was harassing her. After the laps were over she allowed him to enfold her in the towels provided poolside, which encouraged him to no end, then she said, "I'd like to stop into the hairdresser's before we go back to our room. I don't know what they can do with my wet hair, but I'm sure they will be helpful." She made an appointment and then they went back to the room to get ready for their dinner date with the McDonalds. He tried to keep out of her way while she was dressing for the evening. And when she emerged he thought she looked smashing in a beautiful black dress that seemed to him to be casual but elegant. "Lets go down to the shops on the premises," he suggested "and find you a few baubles to go with your pretty dress." She agreed but suggested costume jewelry was the most appropriate, "Because a girl is not supposed to accept anything valuable from a man unless she is serious about their relationship." She flashed him a mischievous smile and he thought she was absolutely

adorable. "Can we change the category from playful to serious?" Armand asked her, but she did not answer back. She just flashed her brilliant smile and said nothing, which he found reassuring. He went back to the room to get into his white evening jacket, and when he came back to the hairdressers, Maria was looking fabulous. Her glamorous up-do was a knockout and the makeup job was just right, not overdone but beautiful. The hairdresser turned to him and said now she just needs the right jewelry. Armand asked her if she could arrange for someone from Van Cleef & Arpel's to bring a selection of stunning onyx and diamond accessories and everyone present joined in on picking out a necklace, rings, and exquisite earrings. And so this eventful evening began! The fact that she did not protest heartened Armand and he was very pleased with this upturn of events. Maria seemed exhilarated and happy and she did not avoid his eyes the way she did in the early part of the day.

Meanwhile, Wanda and Vince had an exciting afternoon riding horses. For them too, the evening turned into a mellow and happy occasion. It really was a banner day. Armand didn't know whether Maria had ever done much social dancing but this was a pointless concern because like everything else she did, she did it superbly. It was clear to him now that educating a princess was actually a superb finishing school for her nanny as well. Holding Maria in his arms to this delectable music was an overwhelming experience for Armand. All he knew was, as wonderful as the day was, he never wanted to have one like it ever again. Being in such close

proximity to Maria with no resolution of their personal difficulties was more than he could stand. When he finally waltzed her off the dance floor and into the privacy of their room he breathed an immense sigh of relief but Maria made it easy for him. He knew without her saying that he was back on her approved list. He knew, even before he asked her to marry him that he had won the day. There was hardly any reason to talk, tomorrow stretched before them but now the night was theirs and words were superfluous. Maria would become Lady Webber and their lives would merge because great love affairs are destined, not planned.

The next day was filled with fun activities, Armand particularly enjoyed taking Maria to the small ice-skating rink located on the resort grounds. Since she had left her own skates at the North Castle in Mulvedania, he suggested to the attendant that he bring out the best quality skates he had. But Maria had already had her eye on the display case, which showed a darling outfit and white skates with fur trim. "Oh, you don't want those skates," said the attendant "they are only for professionals". But Armand could see that Maria really wanted them so he insisted on having them taken out so Maria could try them on. As he laced them up the attendant said, "these fit you beautifully but I don't want you to be disappointed because they cost \$3,000". Maria then stood up in the skates and took Armand's hand. They both walked out onto the ice and immediately began to dance with each other as if they had rehearsed for hours. Armand was too thrilled for words but nothing now surprised him because it was

obvious that Maria was an all-round athlete. He had never even mentioned to her that he belonged to the ice-skating club at Rockefeller Center. He ended up buying the outfit for Maria to go along with the skates. It is hard to say which one of the participants was more surprised in this wonderful denouement.

After an early supper, the four of them piled into the limousine and traveled back to New York. They were all greatly refreshed and pleased with their fun trip. So they settled in to expecting calm days ahead but upon their arrival home they were surprised to find that there was an emergency happening with the South American holdings of the Banque L'Enterprise. The complete legal team of Peder Halversen, all six of them and Armand needed to fly down to the Argentine first thing in the morning. It seemed to Armand that he hardly had time to kiss Maria goodbye and they were off on a six-day journey. Armand arranged with Wanda and Vince to have flowers sent to Maria everyday while he was gone. Armand wanted Maria to know that he was always thinking of her and she was never forgotten.

While the relatively new, young airline, Pan Am, did a remarkable job transporting them around South America, much to his surprise Armand found the trip exhausting.

When their returning plane touched down in New York, he rushed home to Mulvedania House where he was slated to officiate at the funeral of Judge Atkins. He knew time was very tight. He took the elevator to the fifth floor hoping Maria would be dressed and ready for the event and to his shock he found a man in

their apartment. When Maria saw him, she jumped up. He said to her, "Get ready my dear. We have just ten minutes until the funeral service." She turned to him and said, "This is Dr. Abelson. He is a psychologist and wishes to speak with you, Armand." She then ran off to change her clothes.

The two men shook hands. Dr. Abelson seemed somewhat truculent. He said, "I want to talk to you, Webber, about Maria's very unfortunate situation. I feel she is being exploited". Armand replied, "I think Maria's situation is all right. She is a valuable Mulvedanian Council member, you know." Armand spoke pleasantly but Dr. Abelson replied not so pleasantly, "Don't play dense with me, Webber. You know perfectly well what I mean." Armand said, "No, I don't quite know what you mean, but I would love to talk to you about this, but Maria and I have a funeral to go to. Will you call my office tomorrow and we'll make an appointment?" Who knows what have would developed if Armand had not pressed the security button. Almost immediately two security men were at the door and joined them. "Dr. Abelson, this is Mr. Browning and Mr. Larsen. We are all going to Judge Atkin's funeral. Would you care to join us?" At this point, Maria emerged in black clothes, looking very handsome. Armand escorted them all to the door of their apartment.

Armand, ever charming, turned to Dr. Abelson and said, "Be sure to make an appointment with me. I look forward to it very much." Then Armand escorted Maria to the elevator as the two security men suggested to

Dr. Abelson that the three of them walk down the stairs. When the elevator door shut Armand turned to Maria, “How did he get into our place? Did you invite him in?” This question stunned her. “I don’t know, Armand. He was in the elevator with me and jumped to the apartment door and I didn’t know what to do.”

The elevator opened downstairs. People were pouring into the Chapel to go to the service. Their security man, Mr. Ogilvie, was standing there at the alert. Armand went up to him directly and said, “Your men have Dr. Abelson in hand. Be very courteous and be careful. We don’t want any lawsuits. He is a psychotic. Watch over Maria because he’s a threat to her.” After this very brief admonition their security protocol changed drastically protecting Maria with her own set of security officers. Maria would never again be exposed to the general public without her security guards.

Armand then walked down the aisle of the Chapel and opened the memorial service for Judge Atkins. Maria was trembling, and concerned that Armand might have thought that she had encouraged this awful man, but everything seemed to be working out well with the ceremony. Armand was very gracious and warmhearted in his greetings to everybody present, but Maria detected that he was not at all well. Somehow, they lived through that anxious half hour and then she joined Wanda and Vince at the back, in the reception area, and said to them, “I’m terribly afraid Armand is not feeling well. I think he is very ill”. After several minutes Armand then came down the aisle, walking very very slowly, joined them and

collapsed.

What followed was nightmare. This big powerful man, who had never been ill, had suffered a deadly heart stoppage. The doctor sprang into action, pumping his chest while Wanda ran to get the oxygen and needed medical supplies. Maria knelt down on the floor and put her mouth to his ear. She told Armand how much she loved him and how he must fight for his life. Meanwhile, Father Sorensen, out of his mind with anguish, called Prince Charles in California. Both men stayed on the telephone to pray together for Armand's life. The doctor kept pumping Armand's chest while Wanda injected him with substances that could revive his heart. Everyone's prayers and concerns came together and in what seemed like an eternity -- it was an eternity-- miraculously, Armand began to breathe on his own once again.

What followed were six unthinkable weeks for Maria. She was terribly anguished, desperately concerned that Armand might not survive and worried that he might be angry with her for opening the door to Dr. Abelson. But she was also enormously relieved that their wonderful friends Dr. Vince and Nurse Wanda were in control of Armand's care. The awesome scenario of Armand's critical illness found everyone shaken, shaken like nothing else in their lives. When the resuscitation team came from Lenox Hill Hospital, and put Armand on their gurney to transport him to the hospital, no one felt very reassured that Armand would survive. Fears for his life persisted for many days and left everyone profoundly upset. There was no easy explanation for Armand's illness,

other than he had picked up an unknown virus in South America and that his life was still in danger.

There was no easy explanation either for this man who called himself Dr. Abelson, but Mr. Ogilvie pinned down that indeed there was a Dr. Abelson who was a retired dentist. He was subject to psychotic episodes and was hospitalized twice at Bellevue Hospital. Long-range plans for dealing with this case were not made immediately but immediate changes were made in securing Mulvedania House from outside intruders. Never again was Maria to be assigned to assisting in the gift shop and never again should she walk out the door without security officers to guard her. The consort of Armand Webber was to be protected at all costs. What they all learned was that what was safe in Old Mulvedania could be risky in the teeming metropolis of New York City.

NEW YORK CITY & ENVIRONS
DURING WORLD WAR II
Chapter VIII

On December 7th 1941 the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor, with such overwhelming force that everyone was ready for the declaration of war the next day, December 8th. Almost immediately Britain joined the U.S. in declaring war on Japan. On December 11th Germany and Italy declared war on the U.S. so now the rest of the world became a war zone. Although the U.S. was involved throughout the war years, the mainland of our country was never attacked by the Germans. There were, however, two small attempts at invasion by Germany, one a landing in Florida, and another one on Long Island.

There is no doubt that New York City became one of the most exciting places to be in the years 1941 to 1945. Servicemen of many nations were seen on the streets of New York. New York City was very hospitable to all personnel in uniform. And famous nightclubs like the Stork Club, the 21 Club, the beautiful Rainbow Room, and many, many others opened their doors to all in the service, making it a very exciting time in New York City.

On the college campuses large groups of service personnel were training to go overseas and the sight of young men marching and the sounds of Hip 2, 3, 4, were more than common. Stunning awareness of the war may not have come to New York City in the same awful bloody way that it had come to the cities of Europe, but it came, nonetheless, quietly and anonymously. It came into focus with the

terrible losses of the Allies' Merchant Marine. German submarines were very active and the allied losses were heavy.

Everyone felt they needed to contribute to the war. Charles considered that his main job was to provide the supplies needed for the war effort in the most efficient way possible. Lord Sulgrave was very eager for shipments to aid Great Britain and he came to lunch at the Oak Room at the Plaza Hotel at least once a week and sometimes twice. Victoria's cousin, Lord Clydesdale, remained in Britain in frequent touch with Charles, expressing the thoughts and needs of the Royal Family.



Lord Sulgrave

In that first year that Germany declared war on Britain many died under the rain of bombs inflicted on London and other cities in Great Britain. To Victoria's great sorrow, Derek, her darling cousin, Lord Clydesdale, was one of the

many killed, when, on a rescue mission a brick wall collapsed and buried him and others in his unit. He was only 48 years old and his death was a terrible shock to Victoria who had always had a warm spot in her heart for him. It was a personal loss of great magnitude and to this day her eyes fill with tears when she thinks of him.

A year later Germany decided not to bother bombing England any further and turned its attention to the Eastern front. The Blitz began in September of 1940 and ended mid May 1941. Hitler realized that the Russians were ready to make war on Germany and he figured he could always come back and finish the war on Britain when Stalin was disposed of. If Germany had continued to focus its bombings more specifically on Britain's industries it might have won the battle for Britain. But Hitler was hardly a mastermind of war strategies, and at the end of the war he was ordering attacks on fanciful targets with armies and munitions that he did not possess. He was truly a madman.

Life during wartime and the years that followed were not easy for anyone anywhere but the people in New York City were in far better circumstances than the people in Europe. Victoria was pleased to knit hats, gloves and scarves for the servicemen during the war, and joined groups of women who prepared care packages for our soldiers. Victoria loved helping out in these groups and met many fascinating people including the Kennedy family who later on gave the world President John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy. The Kennedy sisters were very civic minded and fun to be with. Victoria also joined the wife of

President Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, to help her in her efforts to launch the UN.

Meanwhile, the Mara house on Central Park South --59th street--turned out to be a gem, really beyond all expectation and the 6th floor cabana and pool was a favorite playground for themselves and their guests. Victoria spent hours cultivating the flower garden and the vegetable patch that to everyone's amusement gave them fresh vegetables to enjoy. Much to Charles relief, Victoria had gained back some of her lost weight and Charles was gratified that the investments he had made with Armand's help were marvelously profitable. Life was, indeed, good.

On April 25th 1945, Charles was honored to be appointed a delegate to the conference in San Francisco attended by 46 countries, which helped to establish the plan for the United Nations. The United Nations formally came into existence on October 24th 1945. To this day, the United Nations strives to promote respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without exclusion as to race, gender, language or religion. Its headquarters is on a 17-acre site overlooking the East River in New York City.

For five wonderful years, Victoria and Charles Mara lived in New York City. But now the time had come that they would be leaving to live in California. They always knew that this day would eventually come. It was very comforting to know that the Mara house on 59th street would never be sold. It would always remain the headquarters for Armand Webber, Charles Mara, and Associates. The lower three

floors were for business use, but the upper floors which were the residence for Victoria and Charles, would ever remain a welcoming hideaway whenever they came to New York City.

The appointed time came for them to board a train for Chicago. Victoria had butterflies in her stomach at the thought of such a drastic change in their life style but she calmed down and enjoyed the trip. The dining car was fun and the food was good. Victoria had never slept on a train before, and she found it interesting but not restful. The train jerked and groaned and stopped and started and it was a great experience but not one to be duplicated too often.

In the morning they got off the train and went to the historic Palmer House to relax, freshen up, and use it as a jumping off point to see Chicago. Charles did not know Chicago very well even though he had gone to conferences there before. For Victoria it was a first time. Because Victoria didn't sleep well on the train they decided to loll around in their sumptuous room at the Palmer House and would try to get an early start in the morning. There were so many places they hoped to see especially the famous Pump Room. It was suggested to them that they would really enjoy this celebrity filled restaurant and that they had a good shot at being able to dine at the coveted Booth One.

One thing that Charles always insisted on was a first rate breakfast, so the following morning the Palmer House provided Victoria and Charles with a gourmet feast. Victoria

looked forward to going to Marshall Fields department store and when she suggested that to Charles he said “Fine, but you have to come with me to Wrigley Field.” So they made a deal. Charles would buy Victoria some luxury item, which he liked and that turned out to be a fox fur jacket. She in turn bought him two cashmere jackets, one navy blue and the other camel color. They really enjoyed looking around the luxurious Marshall Fields, which offered so many varied top of the line departments. They decided before they left town they would ship the fur and jackets to the Hotel Laguna, which was to be their home when they arrived in California for the next year.

It was hard to get enough of Marshall Fields. It was reputed to be the world’s largest department store and it took them most of the morning to walk through it. Each floor had many elegant attractions, making it very hard to see it all in just half a day. They hoped to come back again when they had more time.

The next stop was Wrigley Field, which intrigued Charles to no end. The stadium was the pride of the city and the very special donation of Mr. P. K. Wrigley of chewing gum fame. In 1941 the special lighting that he had intended for the Chicago Cubs was donated to the War Department in response to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. WWII in America was not the bloody mess it was in Europe but life was nonetheless disrupted by America’s war demands. The area surrounding Wrigley Field was very crowded and loud. Fans were excited to see their prized Chicago Cubs in the 1945 World Series. As tempted as Charles was to see

a game, he postponed that pleasure to a future trip.

Victoria was very pleased with Charles' decision because she was not a big baseball fan, but she was very interested in the street food and wanted to try a popular Chicago-style hot dog. This consisted of an all-beef frank on a poppy seed bun. Victoria wanted it dressed just like the Chicagoans so she had it with yellow mustard, bright green sweet relish, chopped white onions, a pickle spear, tomatoes and pickled sport peppers. They laughed at the size of it and concluded that Chicagoans must have extra large mouths.

While enjoying their hot dog lunch in front of Wrigley stadium, Victoria questioned Charles about the famous and infamous Al Capone. Charles told her that he had spent some time in prison for, of all things, tax evasion and had been released a few years earlier and was living down in Florida and no longer hanging around Chicago.

They thought they had covered some of the Chicago scene pretty well but there was a surprise in store. They were to have dinner with a prominent guest, who happened to be Joseph P. Kennedy, who had just purchased Marshall Fields Department Store. Joseph Kennedy had heard that Charles and Victoria had been shopping in his store that day and wanted to dine with them later at the Pump Room at the Ambassador East Hotel, (which later was to become The Public Chicago Hotel). Joseph Kennedy was a multimillion dollar entrepreneur, the father of the future President of the United States, John F. Kennedy and United States

Senator, Robert F. Kennedy. It worked out that they did dine in the famous Booth One at the Pump Room, much to Victoria's delight. It was a memorable evening even though they did not spot any movie stars.

The next day after a busy time sightseeing, Charles and Victoria on their final day in Chicago opted for a romantic dinner for two at the Blackhawk Restaurant. This place was known all over town for its exquisite Prime Rib and spinning salad bowls. While at dinner, Charles asked Victoria, "So what do you think of Chicago, Sweetie?" Victoria replied, "Oh, I think Chicago is intriguing and I can see why Chicagoans are so proud of their city, but it is not New York." Charles agreed with her and said, "I'm sure we'll be back here again on one of our return trips to New York. Meanwhile, I'm excited to be here and experience this lively city". Victoria agreed with him, "But now we can look forward to finishing our trip to California!"

So after their fun filled two days of getting to know Chicago, they boarded the Golden State Limited, the world famous tourist train from Chicago to Los Angeles. It offered a fabulous tableau seeing the Great Plains and the amazingly high and rugged Rocky Mountains. There even was a sightseeing dome car. It was like a Lowell Thomas travelogue at the movies, but for real. It was a memorable journey, one they appreciated when it was happening and after it was over. The memories did not fade fast. Everything about the trip was delightful, including the dining car. The food was excellent and the service superb, not surprisingly since it

was serviced by a cadre of Dining Car and Pullman Car personnel, all experts in their training and all highly regarded in the African American society of the time.

As the trip went on, Victoria was able to relax and really enjoyed every mile of the way. She thought back to the dinner they had at the Pump Room with Joseph P. Kennedy. She had been told that the Pump Room was a common Hollywood celebrity hangout and this had intrigued her and now she wanted to persuade Charles to spend a few days in Hollywood to meet some of these famous movie actors and Charles thought this was a great idea. “Why not spend a week or more if its something you really want to do? I would love to dress-up and show you off on the town”.

They finally arrived in Los Angeles in the early evening. And they checked in to the famous Beverly Hills Hotel. How could someone describe the glamor and worldliness of this famous resort? When they arrived they were greeted by a solicitous doorman who escorted them inside. Meanwhile a battery of bellhops took their luggage to their room. Even the Manager was there to greet Victoria and Charles and gave them a warm welcome to the hotel. They were delighted with the reception they received. Although travel weary and delighted to fall into the lush bed provided, they were too excited to sleep. Somehow they knew they were somewhere special and this was going to be a time long to be remembered. Their stay in the famous Hollywood resort was just the beginning of a magical interlude, the memory of which would brighten their days for months to come.



The Beverly Hills Hotel

They settled into Bungalow #1. There were 20 other bungalows on the hotel grounds that housed the rich and famous. Victoria and Charles felt fortunate to be in one of the 21 bungalows available. Both were anticipating waking up the next morning to explore the hotel grounds. The Manager had suggested a few lounges and cabanas for them to try and arranged that for them for the following day. Charles leaned over to Victoria once they were tucked in to bed and expressed his deep love and happiness to be with her. She was his Elizabeth Taylor (the very young), and being with her at this famous hotel was a dream come true. They both fell asleep that night with not a worry in the world.

In the morning Victoria opened the curtains in the bedroom and looked outside. It was an absolute paradise of glamor and lushness. She saw incredibly tall slender royal palm trees that were planted all in a row and really captured the eye. The scene made her feel like she was on the

set of a movie. The landscape just blew their minds. The hotel was pink, which was Victoria's absolute favorite color. When the fog dissipated the hotel turned out to be a pink and gold world. They had truly arrived at the "Pink Palace". They had read of this semitropical paradise and to actually be on the premises of this famous hotel filled Victoria with excitement and awe. When Charles awoke he was amused at Victoria. She was still a little girl at heart he felt and was delighted to see her enthusiasm.

Victoria wanted to try out the pools but Charles suggested first going down to the gift shop and buying some trendy swimwear. Victoria was delighted and that added to her excitement. Pink, being Victoria's favorite color, she had no hesitation in picking out a hot pink swimsuit with gold trim. Charles went for a subtler swimsuit but it still matched his gorgeous wife. When they arrived poolside they looked like the best-dressed couple there. They found a private cabana set up and brunch was waiting for them. They observed all the action at the pool before building up the courage to join in. Neither of them had been to an outdoor pool with so much going on. Once they took their first initial dive into the water, they were hooked. They spent all day swimming, diving, and chatting with other hotel guests. They knew that the hotel was littered with celebrities but they had not seen anyone they recognized yet.

Victoria and Charles stayed at the pool for most of the day. Once their fingers and toes started to prune they decided to head back to the room for some rest before going to dinner. They were both in a very happy mood. Today was a

fabulous day of excitement and new experiences.

Dinner turned out to be quite wonderful too because the Maitre-D seated them with another young couple, the Russells from Palm Beach Florida, and there was much bright and exhilarating conversation. The Russells were on their honeymoon and since Charles and Victoria felt like they were on a perennial honeymoon themselves, it was a happy feeling they could share. At the dining room in the hotel there was live music and dancing, not unlike that offered at the Breakers Hotel in Palm Beach, a place all four of them knew well, and it turned out to be a very happy evening after all. The two couples were thinking of things they could do together and wanted to continue their newfound friendship. Victoria and Charles called it a night after they enjoyed a bit of dancing and said temporary goodbyes to the Russells.

CRISIS AND CONFUSION

Chapter IX

The next morning the first thing on their itinerary was the Grauman's Chinese Theater. This was the place where the famous of Hollywood left their imprints in the cement. They saw imprints of John Barrymore, Jack Benny, Carmen Miranda, Joan Fontaine, Judy Garland, Bob Hope, Betty Grable, Gary Cooper, and many more too numerous to mention were included in their forever collection of names. After that it was lunchtime and they headed to 3377 Wilshire Boulevard to eat at the iconic Brown Derby Restaurant, which was shaped like a man's hat.



The Brown Derby

The owners of the Brown Derby asked the architect to build the restaurant in the shape of a hat because it was said that a good restaurateur could serve food out of a hat and still make a success of it. Another theory to the eye catching design was that the shape of the hat was worn by New York governor and 1928 Democratic

Party presidential candidate Al Smith, who was a personal friend of the owners and that was their inspiration as well. Their menu was extensive and everything was delicious.

After such a fun packed morning, they all wondered how to exceed their earlier fun. They chose to explore Melrose Boulevard and the intersection of Hollywood and Vine. That was where all the major movie studios and radio stations were such as Paramount Pictures, Universal Studios, NBC, and CBS. The art of movie making was fascinating to people not in the movie business and everyone was excited to see where the magic of the movies was made. Victoria could not contain her excitement and persuaded the others to try to stop in Universal Studios and see what goes on behind the scenes. Whether it was the car they were driving or the clothes they were wearing they felt like they looked like movie stars and succeeded in getting onto the back lot of one of the biggest movie studios in the world. There they saw the gorgeous and magnificent stages of *Great Expectations* and *Hamlet*, which went on to win an Academy Award for best motion picture when it came out in theaters in 1947.

As the day went on, everyone started to get tired, and the unanimous decision was made to head back to the pools of the Beverly Hills Hotel and relax there. When they entered their bungalow, Charles noticed the reflecting light on the phone and when Victoria slipped into the shower before heading into the pool. Charles immediately got on the phone. It was Father Sorensen telling him of Armand's near fatal collapse.

He reached Dr. McDonald right away and was relieved to get hold of him so quickly. "I'm pleased to tell you Armand has regained consciousness and I have some of the best medical people in the city on this case. They are baffled as to what has happened to him but, the fact that he is conscious is a good sign". Charles said, "No theories or clues or thought as to what happened to him?" The doctor hastens to say "We are nowhere near a diagnosis". This fearsome dialogue plunged Charles into a feeling of terror and he was almost unable to speak. From the day his own father had died, to this moment, Armand had been his father figure and his much loved friend. The doctor continued to talk. He was saying, "Maria Gustava is almost out of her mind with grief and is blaming herself for Armand's disaster". "Poor girl" Dr. McDonald was saying, "She is really in a bad way emotionally". This remark left Charles unsympathetic. "You know Doctor, this is a person who is spiteful and vengeful. Has anybody considered the fact that Armand could have been poisoned?" "Well, since you brought that subject up, our Mulvedanian Security have had her on their watch list around the clock and she has come up clean. She doesn't leave the apartment. She doesn't spend her enormous wealth, not even shopping for clothes. She stays in Armand's apartment and now she is spending her days weeping".

Charles knew that Victoria would be upset over Maria's plight but he himself felt scant sympathy for her. Finally he said to the doctor, "I wish the Mulvedanian Council would come up with a way to take care of this woman and

leave Armand out of the loop”. Dr. McDonald replied, “ Yes, I can see what you are saying, but there is one thing we must remember, Armand cares for her. There is no question that Armand cares for her”. With this definitive thought, the call ended and the doctor told Charles he would keep him informed if anything developed and Charles should call him late in the day. Around 6 o’clock New York time was a good time for them to keep in touch.

Then Victoria came out of the shower and said, “What! Are you still not ready?” Charles quickly threw on his poolside attire and they left for the pools.

At dinner later that night with the Russells, they thought about the next day when they saw an advertised event at the Hollywood Bowl. This was a place where people could experience a symphony under the Los Angeles stars. The Hollywood Bowl, where the Los Angeles Philharmonic played, was featuring a concert by the newest Music Director, Leonard Bernstein. Charles was deeply grateful for the distractions that the day provided because underneath he was out of his mind with grief over the plight of his beloved Armand.

Armand was the dearest friend of his growing up years, the man who stood next to him in the Cathedral when his father Leo died. No one besides Victoria meant more to Prince Charles than did Armand and now, this sweet-natured always reliable faithful friend was lying in the netherland between life and death. Charles was sick at heart. He called Bishop Sorensen who had originally alerted him of Armand’s collapse. Sorensen was in tears. “Oh

Sire, he is barely alive. Oh Sire, it looks so bad.” The old gentleman started to sob but Charles who had lived through much in his young years stayed ever calm and strong. “No problem, Father Sorensen, you and I will pray for him and with the help of the good medicos he will survive”. And so the two men prayed for the life of Armand Webber. And as they prayed he responded and to everyone’s relief Armand’s heart got back into sinus rhythm and he started to breathe on his own.

Now what faced Armand and all of them was a plan to get him back into health, on his feet and thriving again. The emergency crew from Lennox Hill Hospital showed up while the prayer session was going on and they were able to put Armand on the stretcher and take him out to the ambulance. Dr. Vince and Nurse Wanda went with him in the ambulance while Father Sorensen and Prince Charles were left alone with each other on the telephone. “Thank you Father Sorensen, thank you, thank you” Charles said and Bishop Sorensen said, “It’s thanks to the Lord, my boy, thanks to the Lord”. Then he rejoined Victoria and the Russells, “ I’m sorry, Darling, I was on the phone” and he did not let her know of the near terrible loss that had just faced them but, mercifully, did not occur. In the six weeks that it took for Armand to recover, to finally be dismissed by the doctors, those six weeks were very anxious weeks for all of them.

Charles kept everyone preoccupied with travel plans. It would remain to be seen what travel delights could be found not only in the L.A. area but also on the way down the coast in Long Beach, Huntington Beach, Newport Beach

and finally Laguna Beach their destination for the remaining part of the year. Charles was greatly relieved that Victoria had started to regain a pound or two of her long lost weight. She was still dramatically thin when even three pounds made a difference in her emaciated look, but the weight gain was really becoming encouraging.

Meanwhile the intense drama that occupied everyone in the New York office was overwhelming. Vince McDonald and Wanda were concerned about Maria. The depths of her despair were a real concern to them both. As the days of Armand's recovery stretched out, her grief only grew. Despite the fact that the country's best diagnosticians had been called in on his case, no one knew precisely how to treat Armand's critical illness. And as weeks went by, medical explanations were still not decisive, but everyone knew that now at last he was on the road to recovery.

Wanda kept in close touch with Maria. She was aware that Maria had stopped eating and that she was losing weight rapidly. Wanda knew also that Maria cried herself to sleep at night and she tried to think of ways to help her accept the fact that Armand still cared for her but was unable to communicate.

There was nothing half way about Maria. She lived life intensely. Armand was the centerpiece of her existence. With Armand so long ill she was devastated and were it not for Wanda, who gave her perspective and reassurance, one wonders whether Maria could have survived. Bishop Sorensen was another source of support for Maria. He saw this

beautiful young person utterly bereft and tried in his awkward way to reach out to her with encouragement. Prince Charles called in every evening and even talked with Maria about being brave. He had fierce doubts about her but he had to accept the fact that Armand loved her and that there must be more to her than he understood.

So the days continued on in this uncertain fashion until it was realized that Maria was not eating and was seriously depressed. They insisted she have dinner with them each night at 5 o'clock so they could be sure that she was eating enough to sustain her own life. She told them how much she loved Armand and they conveyed to Armand how profoundly she cared about him, so they became an important link in the relationship between Armand and Maria. Armand was tremendously touched that Maria Gustava really cared about him. He had so few expectations of her. He truly had lost all respect for her after her outrageous outburst with Victoria. Now he felt himself quietly impressed.

While Armand was in the hospital, Maria Gustava tried to keep household matters flowing smoothly so Armand would have the best possible care. She told the doctor that money was no problem, that she would pay for all bills and that no treatment that could help Armand should be spared. The doctor thought that was very good of her and recommended that she employ two male nurses, in the hospital, to try to encourage Armand to walk again. He was a big man and would need male support to help him regain his strength. This worked out well and seeing Armand on his feet again, even

though briefly, was very heartening for her and for him, and for everyone. Puzzling as this virus was, at least he was showing signs of recovery and this was a positive sign.

The doctor – his name was Vincent McDonald – found Armand and Maria an intriguing pair, both such strong personalities and so unconventional. He had known Armand over the years and like everyone else, thought highly of him. He did not know Maria but understood from Armand that she had been a factor in the affairs of Sophia Dagmar and that in itself was impressive. But he also gathered from what Armand had told him that Maria was a spitfire. The doctor knew how late in life she had come into her womanhood, and now he observed a very subdued Maria, deeply concerned over Armand's plight. He had the impression that their tumultuous earlier affair was maturing into something more mellow and meaningful. When the doctor told Armand that Maria was footing the financial bills he was amused and pleased. "No kidding" was his response, and both men laughed. "Doctor" Armand said, "Please get in touch with my secretary, her name is Holly and tell her to begin paying the bills. It was very good of Maria Gustava to take care of expenses, but it is simply not necessary".

This news pleased Armand enormously; it made him feel that Maria was really with him. He knew how generously she had been provided for by Sophia Dagmar, but so had he, even more so, but her quiet act of generosity pleased him deeply. He recognized that Maria had come to mean something to him, not just another affair,

and it gave him a big lift of spirits. So with each day as he gained strength, he integrated her generosity into his thinking. And she was enormously happy that they had grown closer and that he was recognizing her on a more accepting and understanding basis. His illness had been terrifying for her, and the idea of losing him just when she had found him was too chilling to contemplate. She kept turning over in her mind ways to try to strengthen him physically and improve his recovery. And he was aware of this and found it touching. At this point in their relationship they both had a deep-seated need for each other and the tenderness they felt for each other was a new dimension, one that augured well for their future together.

As Armand began regaining his strength and the two male nurses succeeded in getting him to walk a bit more and sit up longer everyone was greatly encouraged.

When Armand heard how Maria had attempted to pay for his medical care he was very touched and hopeful. Maria was one of the richest women in New York. But she had no awareness of this fact. She was like a little child cut off from the sobering realities of the ordinary lives of other people. But Armand recognized her generous heart and he loved her for it. For the first time in their relationship words seemed superfluous. They clung to each other in teary embrace thankful to be back in each others arms with new depth and understanding. It was the dream they both held and now it had come to pass.

But their energy level was very low and Wanda made sure the meals they were served

were high in nutrition. Neither of them were able to eat very much and she monitored both of them carefully. She knew that her intervention was still needed. Maria wasn't the only one twenty pounds lighter. Armand, because of his drastic illness came home more trim and less padded. Armand felt that Maria had never been more beautiful. To him she was breathtaking and she thought he looked very attractive, too. He was tall and broad shouldered but he looked like he had been working out in the gym and she was thrilled to see him in such trim shape.

The calamitous illness of Armand Webber shook the very roots of the Mulvedanian Community, both here and in the old country. Armand was the very center of Mulvedanian life, both in New York and everywhere else. That he would be so stricken was beyond anyone's most fearful nightmares, but the two people most affected were Prince Charles and Maria Gustava.

For Charles, Armand was no casual acquaintance. From the day his father Leo Mara died, when he was eleven years old. Armand Webber loomed larger than life. When he lay under the covers in his bed trying to hide from his overwhelming grief, Charles Mara first came to know Armand Webber. Armand sat by his bed and said, "Charles, your grandfather and I need you to stand with us in the Cathedral for the ceremony to honor your father. We need you to give us the courage to face his special day." Charles Mara grew up with those words and from that day on felt an almost sacred obligation to his grandfather and his new friend Armand. From then on, Charles loved Armand almost as

his father and because of him soldiered on, coping with responsibilities most young people do not have to face. Now in 1941, confronted with Armand's catastrophic illness, Charles felt a terror like the one he remembered when his own father died. The thought of losing Armand was too terrible to consider.

The entire Mulvedanian Community was in a state of disbelief, fearful, and prayerful. For Maria the thought of losing her beloved Armand pushed her into mindless grief. Living without Armand was beyond the realm of possibility for her. He was the love of her life, her only reason for being. Dr. McDonald and Nurse Gillespie insisted that she come down to the third floor every evening and eat dinner with them. Some nights Wanda Gillespie's younger brother, John and his girlfriend Jill, joined them giving Maria a feeling of family and emotional support, but even with all of this generous backup, Maria was utterly devastated. She could barely swallow and her weight had dropped off to a point that had the doctors seriously concerned for her health. As much as they wanted to rescue Maria, they felt they could not impose her desperate, emotional needs on Armand, whose survival was still hanging in the balance.

Prayers, gifts, expressions of love, and certitude poured in from all parts of the world. Armand was not an unknown figure, he was the centerpiece of many people's hopes and dreams and all and all his near death had inspired outpourings of love and loyalty that no one could have foreseen. None of this entered Maria's awareness, she was so overwhelmed with her own grief, but it did penetrate the

awareness of Vince and Wanda. They tried to ease Maria's mind that Armand would be coming home to her soon.

No one in the medical community understood the illness that had come so close to taking Armand's life, but as he started to recover they were hopeful that the recovery would last and that no one else would be exposed to infection. They kept Armand in quarantine for observation. Finally the day came when Armand was discharged from the hospital and he was sent home.

When he arrived at Mulvedania House, he first conferred with Father Sorensen, who was one of Maria's confidants, one of her most loyal supporters. He told Armand of Maria's great concern for him, of her unswerving devotion to him. Armand asked Father Sorensen if he would bless their union for he was hopeful that Maria would marry him now. Father Sorensen was overjoyed to sanctify their union and together the two men looked at the calendar to set the date for the official ceremony in just two weeks if Maria would agree. Then Vince McDonald brought Armand upstairs to the fifth floor where Maria was waiting for him because Father Sorensen had called ahead to make sure she would not be too overwhelmed. When the elevator door opened, Maria was standing there tremulous and overjoyed. "You lucky devil," McDonald said, "to have this beautiful woman waiting to welcome you home." Armand just stood still. Maria had lost so much weight but he was made breathless by her beauty and she was struck by how bone thin he was. They stood still looking at each other and then were in each

other's arms.

So after so much emotion and turmoil, the Mulvedanian world and the world beyond came together in a great rejoicing that Armand, the Lord Chancellor of the Kingdom of Mulvedania, was indeed alive and well. Hope for the future was restored because so much rested on the shoulders of Armand Webber.

Armand had felt that Maria was thirty-one going on thirteen, but now there was no question in his mind that Maria was thirty-one going on thirty-two. This terrible illness had matured both of them and they were thankful for every living moment they had together knowing that a great love had been born. They had only to go forward with the lives they were given together and this brought deep comfort to everyone who ever knew them. Their wedding date, which was set with Father Sorensen, indeed would occur in two weeks time. There were many joyous moments, not the least of which was the magnificent Italian love song which flooded the atmosphere because Father Sorensen had alerted Maria that Armand was on his way up to the fifth floor. The love song was one that they had recorded before Armand's illness. It was as though they were handed a new life, a new reality and they were overjoyed.

The first thing Armand wanted to do when they were ready for going places was to take a cab to Tiffany & Co. All of Sophia's diamonds were available to Armand, but he wanted to purchase for Maria whatever would delight her heart. When they entered Tiffany's he told her that anything she wanted was available to her. She replied, "I just want two simple wedding

rings for you and for me.” He said, “Fine.” The salesman behind the counter is pleased to bring out sets of rings but Maria, who seems to know her own taste, was very quick to make her choice. They had the rings imprinted on the inside with the words *Love Forever* and the salesman assumed that that was that, but Armand suggested to Maria that they should buy a few more pieces. To the clerk’s astonishment, price did not seem to be a deterrent. Out came trays of diamond rings of fun arrangements of precious stones that looked like costume jewelry, but were priceless in value. Maria chose a cute poodle. The main thing Armand wanted Maria to do was to choose a diamond ring that she would consider her engagement ring and so he told Jeff Underwood, the salesman, to bring out modern day settings of diamonds as an engagement ring. Maria looked at Armand with amusement but was willing to go ahead with what he wanted. The engagement rings were dazzling and Maria, told that price was no problem, did indeed find a beautiful diamond that left her trembling with excitement.

When they left Tiffany's, Mr. Underwood was staggered to have acquired such a client. He did not learn until afterward that this was Armand Webber who certainly was *As Rich As A Mulvedanian*. After their excursion to Tiffany's, Armand took Maria into Henri Bendel to see if anything they had to offer appealed to her, but not many women were as tall and pencil thin as she was. Now that their days of mourning and confusion were behind them, both Maria and Armand found themselves

transformed to their most youthful weight. They vowed they would never again go back to their old appearance. As Armand suspected, nothing already made at Bendels was possible for Maria. Instead, they conferred with the Henri Bendel designer to give Maria a wardrobe of beautiful clothes designed just for her.

The wedding dress became a matter of immediate concern and everyone at Mulvedania House was consulted as to what could and should be done. Maria sketched out a design very simple to follow and Wanda obtained the help of several little dressmakers who would produce the creamy white satin gown that would thrill Maria's heart. Over it she would wear a shawl of handmade Mulvedanian lace that was in the Cathedral Museum in old Mulvedania. Maria's mother, Matilda, had succumbed earlier and there were no relatives on Maria's side to be invited to the wedding. But everyone in the old Mulvedanian Community and the Mulvedanian Community Worldwide were invited to the wedding of Armand Webber, the Lord Chancellor of Mulvedania and his cherished bride, Maria Gustava Cristobel. John Gillespie's girlfriend Jill helped Maria organize the little unforeseen details that arose and Maria was brimming with happiness. One thing that Armand discovered about Maria was that she was not very talkative. She just projected happiness and kept singing like a golden bird. Her voice brought astonishment to him that it was so rich and natural. Armand was the one who did the talking and Maria just kept singing.

For all Mulvedanians, the wedding of Lord Chancellor Armand Webber to Maria Gustava

Cristobel was a highlight in their lives. Every Mulvedanian was welcomed to the ceremony and the festivities that followed.

When all of the excitement of the wedding simmered down, Armand and Maria and John and his girlfriend Jill began a program of activity in the Mulvedanian House gymnasium, which was outfitted with all of the pulleys and ropes that Armand loved to work out with, the hangover from his active days at Yale. Armand always loved gymnastics and to his great joy he realized that Maria was a natural athlete. She was very strong physically, full of energy and she did not talk very much. Maria was always singing which Armand found delightful. And he was very happy to be the one in the family to do all the talking.

Being in the same room with Armand and Maria now was like being at the source of sunlight. They were totally absorbed with one another, radiant and thankful, truly on cloud nine. And so it was confirmed that the wedding would take place in the Mulvedanian Chapel on the ground floor of the building that was home to Maria and Armand. The Mulvedanian Community responded with immediate warmth and grace and a blessing came in from Prince Charles and the Crown Princess Victoria Eugenie expressing their joy at their union and wishing them a long future together filled with happiness. It was the most euphoric wedding that anyone in the room had ever attended and when Bishop Sorensen had concluded the ceremony and pronounced them man and wife, Armand scooped Maria up in his arms in joyous celebration and carried her down the aisle to the

ante room where everyone bobbed around them offering out of this world congratulations. At long last Wanda stepped in and she and Doctor McDonald drew them out into the street and into a waiting limousine.

MARRIAGE,
AN AFFAIR OF STATE
Chapter X

The joyous occasion of their marriage in New York transported them out of their self-absorbed joy into recognition of their responsibilities as leaders of the Mulvedanian Community. Their passionate private relationship was only part of the package of being married to Armand. Maria was now confronted with the responsibilities of being the First Lady of Mulvedania. Incumbent on her and on Armand was the full realization of their responsibilities as public figures and leaders of the Mulvedanian people. It was decreed that another ceremony in the Cathedral in Old Mulvedania was necessary.

Maria was now the wife of Armand Webber. That is all she wanted to be, needed to be and was more than content to be. But now she was discovering that their impassioned world together was only the beginning. A public life loomed large in every way and everywhere they turned. Their private relationship as newlyweds was just the surface of their lives together. The public aspects of their union came as a surprise and a shock to Maria. Being the First Lady of Mulvedania was something that had never occurred to her.

Now the Mulvedanian Council set up another wedding ceremony to be held in the Old Mulvedanian Cathedral in the Capital City of Belvedere. The Archbishop there at the Mulvedanian Cathedral selected a date. Maria was expected to wear the Crown Jewels of

Sophia Dagmar and, if possible, she was to wear the wedding dress of Queen Helena Victoria, mother of the Crown Princess Victoria. This called for almost immediate fittings to see if this museum piece dress could be altered to fit her, her Serene Highness, Maria Gustava Cristobel Webber. Every Mulvedanian was to receive a diamond pin with the Mulvedanian crest made of diamonds and rubies. In the Royalist Tradition, every Mulvedanian was to also receive a commemorative gold-embossed wedding scroll. Although the Kingdom was no more, the Cathedral and the Mulvedanian population lived on lively and well. The marriage of The Lord Chancellor Armand Webber to Lady Maria Gustava Cristobel was no small event. It was one that loomed large in the minds and hearts of the Mulvedanian people and was an important date to be celebrated.

Maria received notice that the Mulvedanian Council expected these significant rituals to take place according to the schedule that was already set and it plunged Maria into some concern. Finally she felt it was necessary to write a letter to Princess Victoria and Prince Charles and Armand agreed. He told Maria he would write to Charles and she was glad to be the one to write to Victoria. She didn't know how exactly to begin and hoped it would be received in the spirit in which it was given.

She wrote:

My dearest, dearest Victoria,
It has been five years since I was last in touch with you fulfilling Armand's wishes that I was not in any way to intrude in your

life. I write now with his consent because as you may know the Mulvedanian Council is requiring me, as the wife of Armand Webber, to arrange for a second marriage ceremony in the city of Belvedere, in Old Mulvedania. They are requiring of me to wear the crown jewels of The Princess Royale, Sophia Dagmar. They are also recommending I wear the wedding gown of your mother, Queen Helena. There are going to be five days of festivities following the wedding. Marrying Armand in New York was the highlight of our lives. The idea that we would marry again in Mulvedania and that I was to wear Sophia's diamonds is almost beyond belief. I do want you to know, Victoria, that I had no inkling that any of this was about to happen. I was so overjoyed to be Armand's bride and I never thought beyond it to the public role that is being foisted upon us. Never in my wildest supposition did I understand and believe that I was to become the First Lady of Mulvedania and that I would be wearing your mother's dress and Sophia Dagmar's jewels. I wish there was some way to go back to simpler times when you were my darling baby princess and I was just plain Gussie. But I don't really mean that, I just wish there was a way you and Charles could be in our lives and vice-versa. I want you to know Victoria, that I never had designs on your high position. After I met Armand, he was all that I wanted in this world. I regret very much the long separation we've all endured from each other. Armand, as you

know, loves Charles tremendously and as you know, I never forgot you were my precious baby Victoria whom I always loved so much. I guess I am writing now to try to tell you that I am going to be married again in the Cathedral in Mulvedania, not because I desire this but only because it is a requirement of being Armand's bride. I will of course go ahead with it but it would be a great comfort to have your blessing. I understand that you and Charles have decided to live your lives as plain American citizens and that you do not want the restrictions of royalty to impede your progress and if this is so, I will try not to feel I am usurping your royal role. So wish me luck as I try to fulfill my role as Armand's bride.

PS: We are en route to Mulvedania.

Lovingly Yours,

Maria (Gussie)

This all-important letter to Victoria went into the mail in London en route to Mulvedania. And then Maria and Armand followed with an essential phone call to Dr. Tomass. There was hardly a Mulvedanian alive that didn't know what a valiant friend Mulvedania had in Dr. Tomass. All through the years, Victoria and Charles appreciated this fatherly man and Armand and Maria had come to value him greatly, too. He informed them that workmen converting the North Castle into hotel facilities entered Matilda's quarters and lo and behold, behind a barricade in a closet, underneath the steps, was the evidence that Dr. Tomass had

been searching for when Maria was growing up. He always suspected that Matilda had a few secrets, but until just ten days ago, he had never been able to find any evidence. Now the evidence was at hand and he felt that he should share it with Maria and if she cared to come with him to the North Castle he would disclose what they had discovered. Maria blanched when she heard this message and Armand said to her, “My Darling, you do not have to accept this invitation. It would only be courteous and kind to Dr. Tomass but not at a crushing cost to you”. Armand held her in his arms and reassured her that it was not necessary for her to put herself through this kind of anguish. Especially after the long struggle she had to free herself of old nightmares. As he held Maria he felt her tremble but finally she said, “I will go, I must go. You will come with me Armand, won’t you?” Armand replied, “Of course, my Darling. We will get over this glitch together”.

The next morning they flew into Mulvedania. A new runway had been built along side of the polo field and when they landed they found themselves in a new terminal building that they had heard about, but had never seen before. Expecting to see only Dr. Tomass, to Maria’s discomfort, they were greeted by a group of people they did not know. Among them was a charming young woman named Phyllis who was assigned to aid Maria in the busy events leading up to the wedding. Also greeting them were two emissaries sent from the Archbishop with packets of instructions for Armand and Maria. There was even a reporter from the new Mulvedanian magazine *The*

Belevederian. There was also a charming young man, Erik, Phyllis' counterpart, sent from the Mulvedanian Council. Maria, who was inherently shy, her arms full of flowers, buried her face in them to conceal her unease. "Of course" she told herself, "there had to be a Reception Committee. How could it be otherwise? Armand is the Chief Operating Officer of Mulvedania and this kind of reception is just the beginning!" Of course, Dr. Tomass was there and he suggested that they all go to the New Terrace, a splendid new restaurant at the North Castle for lunch. So all of them repaired to this glamorous addition to the dining scene, adjacent to what was once Sophia Dagmar's throne room. The dining terrace commanded a stunning view of the city of Belvedere sprawled out below, a living map of the expanding city.

Maria seated next to Dr. Tomass on one side and Armand on the other felt comforted despite the fact that she was so apprehensive of what she knew must follow. The next hours passed pleasantly enough and finally the time came when they were alone with Dr. Tomass. They met Dr. Tomass at the door of Matilda's old quarters and he took them to the closet built under the stairs. Lo, and the back wall opened and there was Matilda's secret hideaway.

Dr. Tomass, over the years, had always looked for signs of Matilda's abuse but never could find any. There never was a mark on Maria. Now they knew why. Matilda kept Maria restrained behind this closet wall pinned down to the wall or the floor and the mark she left on Maria was on her mind but not on her body. So

Maria and Armand stared at this unmistakable evidence, the built in restraints on wall and floor and then Armand turned to Dr. Tomass and said “Thank you, thank you Doctor for trying to help Maria in those painful years.” Maria could barely speak. She was frozen in memories best forgotten because she knew they were no longer valid. She just hung on to Armand and could not speak, but she listened carefully to what Dr. Tomass was saying.

“You know how Mulvedanians are. There are no real secrets in Mulvedania. From the first instant that this wall was discovered, about ten days ago, the word spread like wildfire through the whole of the country. I would wager there isn’t a single person at this moment who hasn’t heard about Matilda’s closet. I’m sorry Maria! If I could have prevented the rumor from becoming a known fact, I would have done so. But the word is out”. There was silence for a moment and then Maria found her voice, “Dr. Tomass, I always knew you were my friend all through my childhood and I do not know how to say thank you enough for that”. And she embraced the old man and he hugged her tight. “As you know” he said to Maria, “When your mother died in New York, she was cremated, and her remains came back here to us in a urn and is now in the Cathedral”. “Yes, I found out about that” she said “I feel I ought to write a letter to the Mulvedanian Community in defense of Matilda. I have often thought back on how painful for her to be cast out with a small

child and no place to go. When she came to Mulvedania she hardly knew how to proceed. But meanwhile she had me in tow and I think I must have been a very difficult child. Thinking about it at this moment I could see how she realized that my wild antics could put in jeopardy any chance she had to make a secure place for us at Sophia's Court. She knew that Mulvedanians would never understand severity toward a child. It is so much against the gentle traditions of Mulvedania." She laughed, "Looking back at it I think Matilda was pretty clever to invent the closet, and that way she made sure that I conformed in acting like a well behaved child". Maria giggled, "Actually, I think poor Matilda was heroic in finding the only workable solution she had so she and I could continue to live at Sophia's Court".

Both Dr. Tomass and Armand thought Maria was truly noble in her judgment of Matilda. It was hard for the men to muster kindly feelings about Matilda and that was the judgment, also the reaction of seemingly everyone else in Old Mulvedania. There was scant respect or sympathy for Matilda. There was an enormous gush of love and acceptance for Maria. Maria had become the icon of courage especially to the girls and women of the country, many of whom had a secret crush on Armand and were glad that now at last Maria had some love and happiness in her life. Now with this day behind her, Maria felt relieved and happy to go on to the next day.

The next day Maria had to go to her fittings. The wedding dress that Queen Helena wore in 1919 came out of the museum case and was fitted to Maria. Maria was very slim at this time, but she was taller than Queen Helena and the clever dressmakers were able to add more satin and lace at the bottom of the skirt and a strip to elongate the bodice and the result was beautiful to behold! Then added to all of this finery were the crown jewels of Sophia Dagmar. If the young people of Mulvedania longed for glamor and beauty in the person of Maria Gustava Cristabel Webber, they had it because they had converted dream into reality. Maria felt much better now, having survived her trip to Matilda's closet, and has gotten through her day of fittings without undue stress.

There was another complication, absolutely unforeseen, the problem of the Archbishop. In most of the Lutheran countries, then and now, few people go to church, but in Mulvedania attendance was down even more drastically. Everyone blamed the Archbishop. As Dr. Tomass explained it, the Archbishop was a medievalist. "That guy would be burning witches in the Cathedral Square if he could get away with it" was Dr. Tomass' comment. Then he turned to Armand, "Have you encountered him yet, Armand?" and Armand laughed, "No, Tomass, not in person, but in writing. He has sent me strict instructions on how Maria and I are not to occupy the same bedroom until the service. I know we are going to fall out because he is setting up a ceremony that was out of date 300 years ago. This is going to be interesting." The two men understood each other and the

circumstances that were shaping events.

Maria, sensitive to every rumor that floated around, was scared that their wedding rehearsal could be a stormy session. She knew Armand and how charming he was and supportive of everyone but also how much he knew his role as the Lord Chancellor of the Kingdom of Mulvedania. He wanted to be kind and supportive of the old gentleman, who had come to Mulvedania from another small duchy in the region, but he also knew that both personally and officially he could not brook excessive petulance and interference. Now Maria was perhaps overly apprehensive, but instinctively she knew that there was a good chance for fireworks at the wedding rehearsal. When they finally met Archbishop Olafsen, Maria's prediction was right on.

Maria knew that Armand would never kiss the Archbishop's ring. She also knew that Armand would never countenance Maria's kneeling to him. She knew that a blowout was inevitable. From almost the first minute of meeting, the two men were locked in a battle of wills, an echo of the universal never ending tension between Church and State. But poor Archbishop Olafsen had no notion of whom he was dealing with. He did not know Armand and not many men were as formidable as Armand when his profound beliefs came under question. The rehearsal ceremony ground to a halt. "Your Eminence" Armand said coolly, "As much as we respect your authority in the Cathedral and are aware of your loving relationship with the people of Mulvedania, I'm sorry that I must insist that this ceremony does not include

Maria's kneeling to me. It is true, she is my mistress, but it is not true that I am her master." Every person in the room gasped. Armand's fame and approval soared. On that very spot Armand turned to Maria and said "You are not to kneel." She just looked at him with enormous pride and love.

With those words every girl and woman in Mulvedania fell madly in love with Armand. They felt he was the role model for their men and they were enormously cheered.

Armand turned to the old gentleman and said, "Sir, we salute you for your wonderful adherence to the old traditions, but now Maria and I ask your blessing for modern day matrimony for the Mulvedanian people, so that tomorrow's wedding ceremony may proceed and we can go on to the merriment that is scheduled for this afternoon and beyond." Poor old Archbishop Olafsen could do nothing but comply. Fresh in his mind was the warning that the Bishop had just given him not to forget that funding for the Cathedral came from Armand and it would be best not to anger him. But as Armand reached out his hand to him and followed it with a hug, poor old Archbishop Olafsen was rendered mute. Then Armand whispered, "Look for a check twice the amount you requested". Armand had completely won over the old man's allegiance and acceptance.

Armand was always a superb diplomat and the next day the wedding ceremony proceeded with all the pomp and circumstance, power and glitter that everyone desired, glamorous proceedings presided over by a more than happy Archbishop, greatly empowered by an overly

generous check from the Chief Operating Officer of Mulvedania, Armand Webber. There was a gush of warm feelings towards Armand because he had scored a quiet triumph and had the scary old Archbishop in his hand. So what followed was party after party after party with Maria and Armand lionized everywhere they went. The trip exceeded their best hopes for a happy interlude and they felt much loved and valued.

And so, events unfolded with their inherent majesty, the wedding ceremony in the great Cathedral. The daylong festivities took up five days of the week, joyous solemnities that meant so much to the older people and brought a sense of wonderment to the younger ones. The wonderful old church bells rang out to honor Lord and Lady Webber and the nonstop parties enlivened the wedding scene. When the event finally played itself out and the polo field filled up with cheering residents, Maria was glad to board the plane for London. Wanting to be back in Armand's arms on the fifth floor of Mulvedania House would have to be postponed another week.

Maria was looking forward to getting home to New York City but that was not to be because they had a very important stopover in London. It's a short flight from Mulvedania to London and when the plane touched down, there were hundreds of people gathered on the tarmac welcoming them. At the gate was Philip Johnston, Armand's longtime college roommate at Yale, who now headed up the Banque L'Enterprise in Great Britain. Philip and Armand fell into a bear hug despite all the

people milling around. Armand then turned to Maria and said, "This is the guy I roomed with all my years at Yale". Philip turned to Maria and said, "You married a good man, the best man". Maria then hugged Philip and said, "Yes, and I'm his wife twice over!" It was a high moment. Philip explained to them that the London Press had fallen in love with the story of the marriage of Armand and Maria and it was hard to hide their fame. Eventually they made their way through the crowds and into the waiting limousine and went charging along the Thames to the Tower Hotel. That was where Sophia had situated her Banque L'Enterprise on the top floors of the hotel with commanding, ultra thrilling views of the city below. Their personal suite was lavish with windows to the East and West, floor to ceiling glass. Philip presented them with attendants Felicia to assist Maria and Horatio to assist Armand. Maria was whisked into a spa area and she was overwhelmed but greatly appreciative of delightful amenities, so relaxing now after many tense but exciting days in Belvedere. Maria was hopeful that Armand could rest but perhaps just as good was the chance for the two men to relax together and talk about all things old and new.

Like so many, Philip was a child of a Mulvedanian mother and a British father.

When he and Armand graduated from Yale in 1930, he was happy that Armand appointed him to this great post in Britain as Director of Banque L'Enterprise. In 1931, he met Cordelia Holmes, they married and moved into the newly renovated quarters adjacent to the offices so that home and work were all facilities provided by

Sophia Dagmar.

The two men settled into an afternoon of personal talk, the soothing warmth of old friendship combined with new anecdotes and warm expectations of the coming week together for both work and play. Philip told Armand of the good press that welcomed him to his post at Banque L'Enterprise and about six months after his arrival he received a phone call from the editor of a new magazine. A feature story was going to be written by the editor herself, Cordelia Holmes. When she arrived, Philip thought she was fabulous. She was the daughter of wealth and position. In these hard times when the world was gripped in the paralysis of depression, it would take money and vision to launch a new publication. They had an instantaneous liking for each other, and an understanding of what wealth and position required of them and they married shortly afterward.

It was a wonderful life and now having Armand back with him, if only for a week, was a great gift. Philip was among the many who feared greatly for Armand's life when he was so stricken and seeing him so strong and vital again and so much like his old self was extremely heartening, an emotional event for Philip. But, the most significant, realization of Armand's overpowering love for Maria made Philip happy for Armand. Remembering his awful letdown with Leola, Maria's charms were immensely appealing in contrast. Maria was not a Mulvedanian by birth but she grew up in Sophia Dagmar's court and was Mulvedanian at heart. But what was so obvious was that Armand was

central to her existence. Philip thought she was adorable, warm and giggly, soft and round and blonde as though she were born into the Alfred clan, which was not the case, but her appeal was undeniable.



Philip Johnston

Armand, on his part, was happy to be with Philip again and thrilled to have him meet Maria, his beautiful adorable Maria. Philip, his friend from earlier days had lived through Armand's so-called wedding to Leola in 1928. Neither one of them had forgotten those awful hours when they realized that Leola was a fake and that she had fled the pseudo wedding scene, which had been staged only so they could pursue their dishonorable claim for money. Armand and Philip never forgot the cold hollow feelings they had when they left the remains of the wedding party frozen in astonishment of this unforeseen ending to what was supposed to be a glorious, happy event. They had spent the rest of

the night looking for any trace of the truck that had driven off with Leola, Leon, and the photographer Josh. That disappointing skirmish with matrimony remained in their memories for years but now in far happier times they could only rejoice and celebrate their good fortune in being married to real women who loved them.

Maria felt quite refreshed after a light massage, getting her hair washed and fluffed, and getting her nails painted a nice bright color. While her nails were drying, in came Cordelia Holmes, full of smiles and welcoming words. The two women liked each other immediately. Shortly thereafter they settled down to a high tea and delicious lobster rolls.

Nothing can compare to the strong bonds that go back in time and go forward into the future. The candor and comfort of sharing affectionate thoughts was very satisfactory to the four of them. The Webbers learned that Cordelia had launched her magazine *The Balustrade*, just before she met Philip. When she called to ask him for an exclusive interview, she had only a vague idea about who he was and didn't know he was a bachelor and still unmarried. He turned out to be a really cute guy and he seemed to reflect that same feeling about her.

He thought she was a very cute gal and it did not hurt that they both were very well situated, Philip, with Mulvedanian money behind him and Cordelia, with the wealth she inherited from her grandfather. Now, they had one son, an eight year old named, Philip Prescott Johnston Jr. He attended a progressive school, started by Cordelia's father.



Cordelia Holmes Johnston and Philip Jr.

(Philip got his Ph. D in History and dabbled in the Fine Arts while at Yale).

The delight the four of them felt in this long overdue reunion spilled over into all the activities of the next week. The men were working on essential business for the Banque L' Enterprise, but Cordelia managed to slip away from the magazine to spend some hours with Maria. They all visited the Tower, which was across the Tower Bridge from the Tower Hotel where they were staying. It was amazing to see the rooms where Sir. Walter Raleigh lived and where one of his children was born. Over the centuries the Tower had served many purposes and was not always the place of imprisonment and torture that most people thought. All the castles in England, including the Tower, were

built by William the Conqueror and other Normans when they invaded England in 1066. The history of the Tower is very varied. It served as a storage area, a granary, a fort, and a prison. One of its finest functions is to house the impressive Crown Jewels of Britain. The Tower is a very popular tourist spot and almost all who visit gets a picture with the Tower Bridge behind them. The moat and the Beefeaters are usually in the picture too, making a memorable photo for all comers.



The English Beefeater at the Tower of London

Taking a boat ride up the Thames was another fun thing to do. A visit to Shakespeare's Theater, The Globe, was an eye opener and Harrods Department Store was a treat and great place for lunch. All these exciting sights and the social life that Cordelia and Philip provided kept all of them lively and interested. And when the time came to say goodbye, it really was hard to part with one another. On the way down to the

airport, when this all too busy week was over, Armand and Maria pressed the Johnstons to come stay with them in New York. It was one of the most meaningful weeks of their lives, renewing deep friendships that seemed to be everlasting. Armand had weathered the demands of the trip and seemed truly recovered. Then they boarded Pan Am to return home to New York, happy for the good turn of events.

Back home in New York, Armand and Maria were only too glad to settle in and catch their breath. But then they realized they had made a commitment to Vince and Wanda who had already reserved places for all four of them on a river cruise. They already had plane tickets to Munich, where they were to meet the ship's people and then would be taken to Passau, where their river ship was docked. So once again Armand and Maria were on the move, but really glad to take this trip because they both realized how much it meant to Vince and Wanda.

When Armand setup a medical service for the Mulvedanian Community in New York, he was more than pleased to have Vince McDonald head up his team. He and Vince had known each other over the years and thought highly of one another. And now it was just a matter of filling in the medical team so it was adequate for taking care of the ever-increasing Mulvedanians in New York and New England.

Vince was a bachelor at this time, as was Armand with no domestic demands on them and they decided to go back to the old country, Mulvedania, to fill in their staff. That was when they met Wanda and her brother John. They

both had come to Mulvedania invited by Mulvedanian relatives and both were working in the clinic in Belvedere. They found the idea of returning to the USA intriguing and that was how Vince and Wanda met. They have been married now for 5 years and the river cruise really was the honeymoon they never had, a much looked forward to event.

Maria was ecstatic that she had Armand back and he was now her husband twice over. It was a dream beyond a dream that this great and good man chose her above all women to be his wife, a realization that left her weak with thanksgiving. She hardly said a word for days, just sat there or stood there in silence, breathing in and breathing out, unbelieving that dreams can come true.

Wanda was also floating on cloud nine, happy at the thought of a romantic river cruise on the Danube. Because she and Vince were both so dedicated to their medical work, they had never taken time out for themselves. Now circumstances had changed enough to make a honeymoon trip possible.

In 1930 when Armand came down from Yale to head up the work of Mulvedania House, he found that Vince McDonald was there before him offering medical services to the Mulvedanian Community. The clinic in Mulvedania House was headed up by nurse Halversen, the sister of the lawyer Peder Halversen, who was the chief counsel for the Kingdom of Mulvedania in New York City. Dr. McDonald knew that nurse Halversen was scheduled to retire and was faced with the job of employing the right medical staff for an

expanding population. He wanted to bring in some young people and he and Armand conversed on how to proceed. They were considering going back to Belvedere in Old Mulvedania again when nurse Wanda Gillespie and her younger brother John came into Mulvedania House ready for employment. Wanda was a nurse with excellent credentials. John had worked in hospitals as an orderly and a general assistant.

Both Armand and Dr. Vince McDonald were pleased to have such an easy solution to their current problem. So now they could proceed in their plans for a first rate facility open to all Mulvedanians at no cost. It was one of the many remarkable benefits that came with Mulvedanian connections. Vince, like many in New York, was a son of a Mulvedanian mother and an American father and the same was true for Wanda and John. They were able to proceed with what Armand called “God speed” in offering first-rate medical care to their community. Wanda was very pleased with this connection to serve the Mulvedanians here and abroad, pleased because no Mulvedanian was ever turned away. She also thought that Vince McDonald was a very good-looking guy and she wondered how come he was still single. Like Armand, he had been engrossed in his career. His father was an Army doctor who had served overseas during WW1. Vince had gone to West Point planning to follow in his father’s footsteps, but medicine had grown in its reliance on chemistry and research. Vince found himself devoted to the scientific procedures that were developing in the medical field.

When Armand came down from New Haven to head up Mulvedania House, the men found themselves united in their desire to build a first-rate medical facility. When Wanda and John joined them, they felt they had the team needed to proceed. Vince found Wanda a very pleasant substitute for old nurse Halversen. It began to dawn on him that life without Wanda around would be pretty drab. She really made a difference every single day in his sense of happiness and fulfillment. Wanda was wondering herself how long it would take him to wake up to the fact that she was there. Some men are not very romantic by nature. She was convinced that Vince was one of them.

One afternoon, after the last patient left, he turned to her and said, "We're all alone in the office, Wanda. Can this be the beginning of a new era in the medical department of Mulvedania House?" She looked up at him and read an unmistakable warmth in his face and they both laughed and hugged each other. It wasn't exactly a young girl's dream of a marriage proposal, but that's exactly what it was. Vince finally realized what a gem she was. She had already decided that he was worthwhile too. But now, after five busy years, there were two young doctors on the staff to relieve some of the press of medical needs and they could go away with Maria and Armand as they had anticipated. The four of them happily took the plane to Munich and the ship's people drove them to Passau where the river long ship was docked. All four of them were intrigued with the idea they had nothing to do except enjoy themselves. They had only to smile, eat

delicious food, enjoy the intriguing scenery and embrace their good fortune.

In all of the excitement of being married again in Mulvedania and having the memorable reunion with Philip and Cordelia, Maria and Armand had almost forgotten that they had made plans to take a river cruise with Wanda and Vince McDonald. Any impulse they had of cancelling this trip that had been set up so lovingly by the McDonald's was out of the question. This river cruise was one that Wanda and Vince looked forward to with great expectation.

The idea of getting on the ship and not having to do anything and having 3 beautiful meals a day served elegantly aboard was a brand new concept for all of them, and they loved every mile of the journey.

As the boat made its trip down the river, everyone was intrigued with the tapestry of towns and villages. In Vienna, which was the last stop, they learned about how the Viennese made apple strudel and saw the place where Mozart was born and they loved seeing the spectacular Vienna Opera House, the St. Stephan's Cathedral, Schoenbrunn Castle, and the famous show horses, the Lippizan breed, for which Vienna is famous.

The Lippizan horses are spectacular athletes who were bred to represent movements of classical dressage and stylized jumps known as *Airs Above The Ground*. They are closely associated with the Spanish Riding School of Vienna, Austria. Nowhere else could one see this spectacular display. Maria was very enthusiastic about the Lippizans. When Princess

Victoria was growing up they had a pony and Maria always had a soft spot in her heart for horses. Another thing that Vienna is famous for is their Waltz dances. The Kings of the Waltz are Johann Strauss and Johann Strauss Jr. They actually managed to schedule a dance lesson that helped them polish their skills in dancing the Waltz.

Then they boarded the bus to Innsbruck, Austria. They had a nice dinner by candlelight in town. The girls were radiant in their beautiful new clothes and Armand and Vince could only sit and look at them. This was indeed a honeymoon to remember. And after a pleasant meal, they drifted off to their palatial quarters.

In the morning, they boarded the bus again en route to Venice, Italy. This day trip took them through the Brenner Pass, which is a mountain pass through the Alps. This is known as the chief road between Austria and Italy. Many hours later they finally arrived in Venice. It was too dark and late to see the city or any of its beauty, so they checked into their hotel and rested until morning.

At 10 o'clock they all woke and headed to the most popular sight in Venice, the Piazza San Marco. It was crowded with people and pigeons and was completely breathtaking. They sat at a small outdoor café on the perimeter of the Piazza and took in everything. They ordered a traditional continental breakfast with a hot cappuccino and piece of cake. There was a woman with a stunning necklace sitting at the next table over and Wanda asked her if she bought that in town. The woman told her it

came from the Island of Murano that is famous for its glass blowing.

When they finished their breakfast they headed to the dock to board the boat to Murano and signed up for a tour. They found Murano exciting and Maria purchased a necklace made of black glass beads with multicolor glass rods at the center. The necklace will forever remind her of the honeymoon with Armand. It was truly a piece of art. Wanda went overboard on buying several beautiful pieces of jewelry for herself and her friends, lifetime keepsakes.

Back in Venice again, they enjoyed the storied canals, the narrow cobblestone streets and the singing gondoliers, which make Venice one of the most romantic cities in all the world to visit. They strolled through the streets hand in hand and encountered a Venetian cottage industry. The women of Venice would knit beautiful sweaters to sell on the bridges around town. The girls found this very exciting. They loved originality and were impressed by the colorful textures employed by these wonderfully talented women who worked at home but then came to Venice to sell their wares. Wanda and Maria loved the rides on the gondolas too and the men were delighted with their enthusiasm.

For Vince, this trip was turning out to be a revelation to him. He had always been so caught up with his concept of total dedication to medicine that he hardly knew how to have fun. This trip was a time of profound self-discovery for him and the most wonderful part of it was that he was seeing another side of Wanda and began to realize more fully what a fascinating person he was married to. He saw facets to

Wanda that he had never noticed before and he was immensely grateful for this belated honeymoon trip with her and the Webbers. As for Wanda, she was delighted to see Vince become more aware of her and the warm and wonderful possibilities that lay ahead for them in their life together.

RESOLUTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Chapter XI

It was four months since Armand had come back from the hospital, and it was the happiest four months of their lives. It was only a short time since they returned from their honeymoon and both were so in love and happy. To find Maria waiting for him, overjoyed to see him, and so utterly irresistible was more than he could have imagined happening. Now she seemed to be in wonderful spirits, full of energy and enthusiasm for everything. She hardly talked at all, but was singing all the time and he had the wonderful feeling that she was really happy and really happy with him. On this fourth month anniversary he sent her bouquet on bouquet of flowers, with a note expressing his great joy and thanksgiving for their wonderful lives together.

But just as it seemed that their cup runneth over, he detected an unexpected concern in Maria's usually happy expression, and when he pressed her for an explanation she just shrugged her shoulders and said, "No, no Armand, everything is all right". Next day he came home early and found her just finishing up the vacuuming. Maria was the most fastidious housekeeper he had ever encountered. He marveled at her single mindedness, but he knew there was no use in trying to convert her to another way of thinking.

When he came in she seemed to be delighted to see him, one of the very heartwarming aspects about their lives together. And she put

away the vacuum and they settled into their favorite chair. "Okay now, Maria" he said "Please tell me what is going on, what is it you have been trying to tell me" And she said "I didn't know for sure until today", and he said "What is it you have been trying to tell me, I take it the news you have for me came from Wanda" and Maria giggled. "Yes" she said "Wanda had news for me and for you", "And I take it that you are okay, you are all right?" and she said "Yes, I am all right" "So, let me guess, if you are not ill and you are happy, and you are not thinking of leaving me" and she said "Oh no, no, no" So he said "What can it be?" And she said "Oh Armand, remember when you came home from the hospital and we were so happy to see each other? Well, guess what? I am having a baby" She said, "Yesterday, Wanda wasn't sure but this morning she was positive. She thinks I am four months pregnant".

This enormous life changing news was at first totally unexpected, and then quite positive and exciting. This was almost earthshaking news to Armand, that he was going to become a father, the thought somehow had never crossed his mind but he was immensely happy. This event was not preplanned, it just happened, it was a gift from destiny. When he realized how much it meant to Maria, how happy she was, he was profoundly happy, too. And one of the nicest things was, that they only had, if Wanda was right, five months to go it alone, and lo there would be a baby in their house.

But Armand wasn't going to let Maria spend the next 5 months cleaning the house. That would be a real waste of her time, and since she

was singing all the time anyway, he insisted on getting her a voice coach. She assented if he too would take singing lessons with her. So now the Mulvedania House was filled with music. Armand took one of the rooms on the top floor and soundproofed it. Their musical adventures were confined to this one soundproofed room, sparing everyone else in the house from their scales and arpeggios. Armand could hardly believe his good fortune. Maria had turned out to be the woman of his dreams and she was amazingly happy and even-tempered, more stable and responsive than he ever dared hope.

Armand got hold of the music of an Italian composer, Stanislao Gastaldon, a tremendously prolific composer of salon songs for solo voice and piano. Today he is remembered for his 1881 song “Musica Prohibita” which means forbidden music. His beautiful songs continue to enliven the music scene of the lush landscape of Italian love songs. Soon they were singing O Sole Mio, the Neapolitan love song, as their daily exercise. Their trip in Italy inspired them to learn Italian, so if they went back they could speak freely with their Italian friends.

As exciting as their travels were, what could be more amazing than having a baby? In the months that they waited for the arrival of Victoria Eugenie Webber, Armand and Maria were filled with the anticipation of the arrival of their first child. Six months after the birth of Tori, Maria became pregnant again and nine months later she gave birth to Charles Mara Webber.

If there were a father anywhere as excited as

Armand or as head over heels in love with his children it would be hard to find. Armand was beside himself with joy. As soon as little Tory began walking well, he had her on skates at the ice rink in Rockefeller Plaza. She and her little brother literally grew-up on ice skates and since their parents were passionate ice skaters themselves, it made for a very solid family happening. As soon as Maria was no longer pregnant their family foursome were back in the gymnasium swinging on some of the equipment and bouncing around for fun with each other. Meanwhile, Maria's voice was coming into its full glory and Armand realized it was time to engage a manager and schedule public appearances for her on the concert stage.

Now that Armand seemed to be back on the road to health, Prince Charles and Princess Victoria felt they could go on with their own lives. In their delightful exploration of Los Angeles there were many happy days. They thought they would like to explore the whole area of Southern California but their target area now was to work their way down the coast to the art colony at Laguna Beach.

Meanwhile, before they left the area, the one thing they wanted to do was to go to the Griffith Observatory to visit the famous Evolution Exhibit and see what they could of the night sky, an opportunity only possible at a world-class observatory. The Russells made their stay in Beverly Hills extra enjoyable, but now after a concert conducted by Leonard Bernstein at the Hollywood Bowl, and their visit to the famous observatory in Griffith Park, they felt they had really covered the Los Angeles area very well.

And so the time came for reluctant goodbyes. Charles and Victoria had enjoyed the company of the Russells so much that they hoped they would have a chance to see them again. The Russells left for the East Coast and Charles and Victoria headed south with their ultimate destination, Laguna Beach.

On their way down south Charles found the Port of Los Angeles a thrilling place to visit. It gave him a vision of the future expansion of Southern California and bolstered his conviction that Southern California is the area in which to live. He found Long Beach very exciting and they lingered there for several days absorbing what they could of its ambiance. Charles debated whether they should go inland to Pasadena to see the Huntington Library but decided they could plan another trip later on and wanted to stay on the coast for now. It gave Charles a great deal of pleasure to see Victoria's enthusiasm and excitement over the pleasures and surprises of the Pike Boardwalk and Amusement Park, located in Long Beach. Charles particularly liked the Long Beach Pier where the primary purpose was trade and commerce, servicing both freight and passengers. Long Beach was the stepping off point to Asia and the promise for future trading was great. He could foresee huge fortunes being made as the world woke up to its hunger for glamorous new items to buy.

They lingered in Long Beach until they felt they had absorbed as much of its excitement and enjoyment as they could. Finally, they decided to push off south, in particular into Huntington Beach, which offered a fascinating landscape of

oilrigs silently working night and day to extract oil from the beach area. It was later to become a tourist attraction but in the 40s and 50s it offered smoked fish to its visitors driving down Main Street and not much else. It offered three bedroom houses for a very low price, housing that would prove to be very good investments as proximity to the beach housing took on more and more value in the 1950s. The local hotel that provided food and drink to visitors was very limited in appeal. But as more and more people discovered Huntington Beach the amenities improved greatly. The Huntington Beach Pavalon was a great place for people to gather and dance the “Surfer’s Stomp”. This was a place where girls could meet cool surfer boys and do a little dancing. The view of Catalina Island from the Huntington Beach Pier is dramatic and provides a place to watch the sun go down.



Victoria and Charles in Newport Beach

The trip down the coast turned out to be more fun than they dared hope. They thought they would miss the company of the Russells, but Long Beach and Huntington Beach turned out to be very diverting, Charles was intrigued with the heavy commerce that went in and out of the port of Long Beach. And Victoria enjoyed the fun zones, the roller coaster rides and the taffy candies.

Huntington Beach was very intriguing, but now they were happy to push on to the Peninsula at Newport Beach. This strip of beach and beach houses was one of the first parts of Newport Beach to be developed. People who live inland are desperate to escape the heat and the peninsula turned out to be a favorite summer escape, particularly because it had a fun zone at the end of it. Also, at the end of the peninsula were very big waves in an area called The Wedge and it attracted the daredevil young men who seemed absolutely fearless in riding their surfboards in the biggest waves they could find. Besides the Fun Zone, there was a cute ferry that went back and forth between the two shores of Newport Harbor and that was always a big hit with tourists.

Charles found an attractive overnight place to stay and they just relaxed in the sun. They went all around the Peninsula and found good restaurants to eat in at night. After the busy schedule they had in Los Angeles, it was good to just relax and see the ferries go back and forth. They had nothing important to do except to enjoy the scene. But Charles was delighted that Victoria was having a happy time and was encouraged that she had gained two or three

pounds and was looking healthier and stronger. He was aware that the five years had passed that the doctors requested she have in the hopes that there would be no more miscarriages. He was hopeful that Laguna Beach would be a pleasant city for them to live in for the next year while he found the place where he hoped to build his restaurant and establish a permanent home. And so, after several very pleasant days in Newport Beach they was glad to get in the car and drive to Laguna Beach, which was the next city south of Newport. There he reserved an ocean front suite at the Hotel Laguna where they planned to live for the next year while they found the ideal location for his restaurant.

Laguna Beach is an art colony unlike any other, featuring the celebrated Pageant of the Masters, which has been offered every summer since 1935! It is a fabulous spectacle with famous artwork put on by faithful adherents to every detail of the original artwork. One wonders how such a spectacle can be put on year, after year, after year, a tribute to the amazing artistry of the people of Laguna Beach.

But Charles liked the idea of being in San Diego County. The weather department decided that San Diego had the most desirable weather of any place in California, but that was not the only reason that Charles thought he would prefer the city of San Diego. Like Laguna Beach it had some history behind it. San Diego was an entity unto itself. It was a city independent of other cities and one of the most promising in California.

Victoria immediately liked the Hotel Laguna. She thought it was charming and its

proximity to the surf and to the delightful little town made it the ideal location. She could hardly wait to get into some casual clothing and explore the inside streets of Laguna Beach. Charles was delighted with her enthusiasm. In fact he was delighted with everything about Victoria and he was looking forward to a wonderful life ahead, just with her. They managed to get a brief walk in before they dressed for dinner and Charles was both amused and just a shade dismayed to notice that Victoria commanded a ripple of excitement when she entered the dining room. There was no doubt she was a very lovely looking girl. She was truly a princess and conducted herself that way. There was no mistaking her innate elegance and this excited Charles. This gave him the feeling of enormous pride and joy, but at the same time it made him feel slightly wary. He would have to protect her sufficiently now and ever more. It only made him renew his vow to himself that watching over Victoria was the prime job of his life, and nothing was more important than her well being. So Charles decides that there is only one answer and that is to take Victoria with him as he explores the possibility for their compound and restaurant. So they both climbed into the rented van and went south together with a picnic lunch provided by the Hotel Laguna.

It was a very enjoyable time in their lives and now that Armand was well, there were few worries. They were happy in the knowledge that should Victoria become pregnant again she would have a good chance of retaining her baby, and so they relaxed and enjoyed each others company to the fullest as they drove south

through the orange groves.

One of the first things Charles decided he needed was a realtor for the San Diego area who would introduce them to the different tracts of land along the ocean that were available. That turned out to be the Willis Allen Real Estate Agency, one of the most prominent realtors in the area. This firm put Charles and Victoria in contact with a local architect whom they knew would be up to the demands of the job.

They felt encouraged as they explored the area that there were artists and artisans who were up to the challenge of creating a first class estate. One thing was abundantly clear, it certainly does not hurt to have plenty of cash on hand. Readily available funds opened all kind of doors and Victoria and Charles knew that if anything, money spoke louder than royalty. Charles thought he would like to buy into an area just north of the city of San Diego. He thought that would be an asset to the restaurant. It was immediately exciting for them to start imagining their new compound and to begin the process so indeed they could move within the year.

A FAMILY REUNION

Chapter XII

Charles was secretly delighted that Victoria kept all admirers at bay. He felt that she wore an invisible tiara, one that was evident to everyone who attempted to get too close. He loved the fact that she was with him in all his efforts and discoveries and truly encouraged about the amazing progress they seemed to be making. Perhaps, it would not take a year for their Epicurean project to take place and take hold.

He wanted a compound that would provide them with the much-desired privacy and security but also a haven of beauty and charm. A place to entertain all comers from Europe and around the United States. Charles had a vision that hopefully would carry them into the 21st Century, their own oasis and an oasis for all guests. A place that would encompass their dream and at the same time deliver a wonderful daily reality of comfort and convenience. Victoria loved every minute of their effort and Charles continued to marvel over her certainty and enthusiasm. He often chuckled to himself that the invisible tiara was really quite visible. Victoria was a unique personality and she delighted his heart.

In the near term they looked at a number of parcels of land just at the north edge of La Jolla, and finally zeroed in on the one they thought was most ideal. But then they were up against a reluctant seller and the ready cash component once more came into play. Now that they had made up their minds that they wanted a certain parcel, they could not be diverted from their

desire to own it. Once again, ready cash talked and produced its wonders. The result was that progress got underway much more rapidly and smoothly than either of the Maras expected. This was very positive because Charles was hoping Victoria could become pregnant again soon and they could finally start a family.

They both had a pretty good idea of what they wanted for the property. Charles conceived of a very elegant two-story facade for the Epicurean Restaurant and its guest rooms, luxurious enough to accommodate their royal relatives and the celebrities from Hollywood and elsewhere. They wanted ample facilities to make each guest feel honored and cherished. Charles' long exposure to the kitchens of Mulvedania had taught him how large groups could be accommodated. He was thrilled to get into the planning stage so soon in the game.

Victoria, for her part, had strong feelings about what she would like her home to be like. The garden in particular was of great interest to her, not only for the beauty of flowers and foliage, but for herbs and vegetables, which could amplify their supply of any vegetables and fruits they might need. Both of them were aware that such a compound called for the ministrations of a work force of very skilled and loyal helpers.

The year went by very quickly while trying to make this beautiful estate into the efficient and memorable location that they had envisaged. They were able to leave the Laguna Hotel several months ahead of schedule because the development in San Diego County was coming along so well and so fast. One reason, of

course, for its rapid results was the premium that Charles paid to have the work done promptly and without delay. The premiums they offered to all workmen brought each phase of the work into immediate focus. It made the rapid progress very enjoyable for everyone. Besides the restaurant and their personal dwelling there were other structures, garages and repair facilities for cars, farm equipment, and living quarters for their workers. Charles had experience with country life. They were, after all, the couple that helped the Kingdom of Mulvedania become a republic.

Victoria and Charles both knew how important it was to get it right to start with. They had many interests. Among them was Victoria's interest in design. It was truly essential to have sufficient space and comfort so there wouldn't be too much upheaval through the years. Lots of space was essential to their thinking. And in the end they were quite pleased in the result. The guest rooms connected to the Epicurean Restaurant offered true comfort and effortless elegance. All had a view of the ocean and came with mirrored closets and dressing rooms, sufficient for the distinguished coterie that would be using them. Victoria loved the warmth and charm of her guestrooms, places for the special people she embraced in her heart. The architect came up with a great unifying theme between the restaurant and their residence. The utility buildings were very efficiently conceived and from the outside were as attractive as the restaurant and the residence. The colors were beautifully coordinated, the amber tones of the buildings with accents of

coral pink and blue turned out beautifully. The walkways between the buildings were carefully landscaped. The whole effect was one of park-like elegance and they were quite delighted with the result.

Victoria was very happy with their lives in San Diego County. The weather was mild enough to be enjoyed year round. The people who lived in and around San Diego were cosmopolitan enough to be interesting and fun to know. Charles was very busy with the Epicurean Restaurant. It was the dream of a lifetime of his to create a restaurant of superb quality and it was a thriving success. It did occupy a great deal of his time, so Victoria pursued her own interests with pleasure.

She had always been interested in design and the house they had built for their residence had ample rooms for cutting cloth, storing patterns, sketch pads, and a library of recipes because Victoria also loved cooking. She wanted to create cookbooks, which later made her famous. Beyond that was her avid interest in sign language and the born deaf who were unable to converse with others because they didn't know English. She had known some deaf children when she was young and now that she was something of a civic leader, she was in a position to reach out to them with warmth and understanding. She created a foundation to aid in the education of those who had to use sign language to communicate. It was a source of deep satisfaction to her that they continue to help children who had no other form of communication. All of this was very fulfilling for her.

In her secret heart of hearts and Charles' desire too, was the hope that one day she could indeed get pregnant again and have a baby. In the four years while developing Belvedere and living on the grounds, many nice things occurred. Whenever any of her royal relatives came to San Diego, she and Charles were always in a position to entertain them royally. For that they were very grateful. It is true that no one in San Diego knew about their royal connections but they knew and were happy to see some of their kin when they came to the West Coast.

Meanwhile on the East Coast Armand and Maria were very busy. The transformation in Maria's self-esteem was amazing. Being the love of Armand's life helped her blossom and the joy of having their two children added greatly to her zest for living. Armand noted that she was always singing and humming and marveled at the sound coming out of her throat. They both continued with their voice coach. The room that Armand had soundproofed for their vocal exercises was a priceless gift, a chance to sing their arpeggios without disturbing anyone else in Mulvedania House. It was a world of fun. The next thing that came into their lives was an Italian Professor because most of the songs they were singing were Italian. In four years, Maria's very pretty voice had matured into concert quality performance and Armand obtained the services of a concert manager for her. They decided that she was ready for the concert stage.

In 1946 her manager arranged for her to perform with various orchestras in many states

throughout the country. Armand obtained a bus and outfitted it with every possible amenity and it was decided that John Gillespie, Wanda's brother, would be the bus driver. Wanda herself would take care of the children on the bus while they traveled around the United States. And Dr. Vince McDonald, who was Wanda's husband, flew out to join them at various cities. All in all it was a very happy arrangement. Armand was just delighted at this amazing turn of events. He knew that it could not have come soon enough because Maria was turning 38, an age when some singers had to retire, but not Maria. She was an energy machine, bubbling over with cheerfulness and good health. She was so calm and pleasant and tireless that he marveled.

And so it came about that the Webber traveling company came out to the West Coast and Armand called up Charles happily to tell him when they would be in the San Diego area. The bond between him and Charles had never lessened. The love and affection they felt for each other was one that did not diminish. Armand was so excited to bring his children to see Charles Mara. The children were named for Charles and Victoria. Finally the much looked forward to date occurred and John drove the bus over to Belvedere with Wanda and the two children in tow. Armand and Maria would join them a bit later in the afternoon.

It was an exceptionally fine day and Belvedere had never looked more beautiful. The grounds were breathtakingly maintained, landscaped and lush, and when John rolled the bus into the driveway the children tumbled out of the bus with Wanda in close pursuit. Charles

was out on the terrace and the sight of these two little children just thrilled his heart. They were so cute and interested and eager and he said, "How do you do? I am Charles Mara" and the little boy said, "I am Charles Mara Webber". And the two shook hands, then Charles scooped him up in his arms. His older sister was more reserved and eyed Charles warily. "I'm Victoria Eugenie Webber" she said. Charles replied, "I am happy to meet you, my dear". And the next thing Charles knew, he had an armful of children, the children of Armand and Maria. It was just an overwhelming moment for Charles.

Princess Victoria came out onto the terrace then and saw Charles holding the two children of Armand and Maria. It was an emotional moment for her, too. The four year old, Tory, slipped out of Charles' arms and greeted Victoria. She said, "I have the same name as you but my last name is Webber. My Daddy is Armand Webber". Victoria chuckled because the child was so cute and earnest in her need to explain their relationships. She was a very cute little girl indeed. The little boy, Charles, was more content to stay in Charles Mara's arms. John Gillespie, who was driving the bus, and his sister Wanda shook hands with Charles and Victoria and explained to them that Armand and Maria would come by soon. They were taking care of an errand in town. By the time they arrived at Belvedere, everyone was settled into a nice comfortable visit. When Tory saw her mother and father she ran forward and jumped into Maria's arms and she turned to Victoria and said, "This is my Mommy!" The next thing she did was jump down and run to her Dad. She was

as cute as a button.

Then Armand went over and embraced Princess Victoria. He had always visited her on his semi-annual trips to Mulvedania. He had watched her grow up and was genuinely fond of her. The other part of the story that was not often told was that Maria had been the nanny of Princess Victoria and he had always been attracted to Maria. But Maria had shown no interest in him whatsoever. He had waited patiently over the years hoping that circumstances would change and they did. The past five years he had been married to Maria have been the happiest in his life and Maria had blossomed into this amazing woman. She was now a concert singer with enormous talent and the mother of his two children. It was all too wonderful to believe. It was nonetheless true.

Now they were standing on the terrace in Belvedere in San Diego County in California. It was the first meeting between Victoria and Maria since that fateful day that Maria lost her cool. Armand had kept the two ladies apart for five years and now he had no worries about their meeting. Maria was just another person now. She had really found out who she was and what she could do in life and he was not worried about their reunion.

But little Tory was concerned that all the grown-ups be informed about who was who. She was saying to Princess Victoria, "My Daddy is a good and great man". Armand laughed and picked her up and said, "Oh, thanks, Darling" and Victoria laughed and said, "I agree with you, dear" and little Tory beamed. "My Mommy is a concert singer". "Yes" said

Princess Victoria “I hear she is an amazing singer and we are going to the symphony to listen to her sing in a few days”. This left Tory beaming because she wanted everyone to know about her mother and father. And so the evening went on happily.

This was the summer of 1954 and in 1955 Princess Victoria gave birth to her first and only child, Marguerite Sophia Mara. She was born in June 1955 and Armand and Maria and their two children came out to California to celebrate with the Maras. They were all family now. The baby was called Margo and she grew up at Belvedere. Everyone described her as a very strong personality, lively, and intelligent. Victoria and Charles were delighted with their only child and the two families, the Maras and the Webbers, were in very close communication, making a tight family circle. The Webber children were crazy about their Aunt Victoria and Uncle Charles and all and all it was a happy relationship.

This was the family that I, Margo Mara, grew up with, even though I was completely unaware of my royal lineage. When I discovered, at age 57, that I was a descendent of Queen Victoria of England and related to the royal families of Europe I kept saying to myself, “How dumb I was that I didn’t realize it sooner”. The answer was that my parents, Princess Victoria and Prince Charles, always lived royally and I just took their wonderful lives as the norm, not quite grasping how unique and remarkable it was and certainly not the everyday lives of other people I knew.

In 2012, Alfonso De Bourbon died in La

Jolla. Alfonso was a local legend, a man of immense grace and charm and reputedly a relative of King Alfonso XIII of Spain. The La Jolla Alfonso had brought to the village a fascinating mystique. He was a charming personality, always eager to dine with the ladies provided they pay for the meal. Almost every grown woman in La Jolla knew Alfonso. He had a charm that was undeniable and he made every woman feel like a royal personage, indeed. When he died in a tragic accident, La Jolla went into mourning. Alfonso de Bourbon of La Jolla was a person with a persona not easy to overlook and whether he was royal or not was not entirely clear. It didn't matter because so many enjoyed knowing him so much but I, Margo, read every word written about him in the *La Jolla Light*. I discovered that there was another Victoria Eugenie, the wife of King Alfonso XIII of Spain. She was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria of England. One thing was abundantly clear, some non-royal people often wanted to acquire the royal appellation even when they were not royal. More unusual was the opposite story, that royalty obscured its rightful heritage and sought the anonymity of the non-royal life.

Charles always said of Victoria that she was born with a tiara on. There was something regal about her, instinctively innately elegant about her. No one ever trifled with Victoria. The young men who wanted to dance with her when they stayed at the Hotel Laguna never asked her again. Victoria always kept her regal distance. Her royal persona and reserved charm was impossible to overlook or misconstrue. Victoria

was a born Princess, a fact so obvious that it could not be overlooked. Charles thought she was magical. He looked at this beautiful girl who was his wife with great pride and wonderment and the years didn't change that. Princess Victoria Eugenie was truly a born Princess. But if Victoria were a born Princess, their daughter Margo was a born tomboy. She was the original blue jean kid. She absolutely refused to wear dresses, as girls went she was the opposite. She refused all fanciness and prettiness and fussiness and prissiness. Charles and Victoria found her amusing. There was only one Margo, and Margo is her own person!



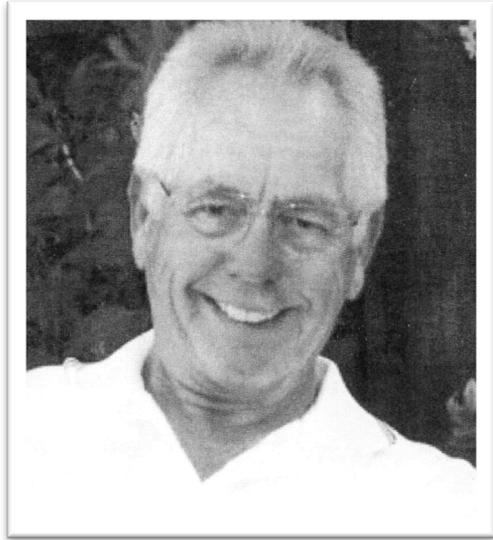
Margo Mara

FULL CIRCLE

Chapter XIII

At the age of 57, I, Margo Mara, am still not married. No one is at all surprised. Imagining me as one man's quiet little bride is stretching the imagination too far. I always have an opinion and always state it with unabridged straight forwardness. However, now that my parents Charles and Victoria are living in Antigua and I, Margo am living alone back in La Jolla, I sometimes wish I had a husband to confide in. I am very close to my cousins Tory and Charles Webber. They are only a few years older than I am and they know all about the family and can fill me in with facts that I feel I do not know. But still, life continues to seem very complicated and confusing and I still feel I cannot sort out fact from fantasy easily. Meanwhile, I am trying to aid my father in settling the affairs of the Epicurean Restaurant.

One day recently, a writer named Jim Weston actually came to La Jolla and met me for lunch. He was interested in some of the background of my family and wanted to write about the Belvedere estate. I found him kind of fun to talk to. He stayed around in La Jolla for several weeks visiting me at the beautiful estate several times and I confided in him about how confused and disturbed I felt in finding myself royalty when such an idea had never crossed my mind. He found that dilemma to be kind of delicious to munch on and likely one that no one under normal circumstances would ever have to confront.



Jim Weston

I enjoyed taking him around Belvedere. The estate was so beautiful, the architecture blended into the landscape in just the right way, every building had its charm as well as its purpose, and it had been a delightful place for my parents to live in. Now it was largely unoccupied except for me and its maintenance staff and I had a feeling of unease.

What if you woke up one day and found out you were royalty? Jim Weston thought that that was a delightful dilemma to be in and found it to be very amusing. The uncertainty of the future of our lives made me tense, but Jim Weston made me laugh. He seemed to have an intuitive feeling for what I was going through and that made me happy. Then one night to my amazement and delight he took me in his arms and the unexpected thrill of that spontaneous

happening opened new dimensions for us both. Until now no man had inspired such a rush of feelings in me. But something about Jim Weston was marvelously different. Something about his interest in me, in us, loosened my tongue and I asked him if he could consider staying out West and living at Belvedere with me. I told him frankly that facing the responsibility for the beautiful Belvedere grounds and buildings was almost more than I could handle and he could see my point of view. He left for a few weeks on assignment to the Caribbean and looked up my parents Prince Charles and Princess Victoria at Antigua. When he came back to La Jolla he proposed marriage to me and I accepted him.

The marriage of Marguerite Helena Victoria Sophia Dagmar Mara to James Stuyvesant Weston is unquestionably to become the big social event in La Jolla in 2013. It seems that everyone knows me and everyone is attracted to Jim Weston, who is a very pleasant fellow, a good golfer, a super conversationalist, and a man of cosmopolitan interests. The large overview of having him take over of the management of Belvedere is a welcome event for the community. For me it is incredible. I had never imagined myself being married to anyone and that this attractive man was going to be my husband was almost more than I could believe. Jim is so laid back, pleasant, and philosophical about everything. He is such incredibly good company that I find myself quite happy and beyond that, enthralled. This guy has brought me into his life seemingly from out of nowhere and it seems to be the just right solution to all of my problems. The best part about Jim is he

makes me laugh. I had been taking things a bit grimly and Jim thinks everything is faintly comical and amusing enough so nothing is a problem. He also finds Belvedere incredibly beautiful and the fact that there is a large family income to support the estate makes it all seem sensible and fun.

Victoria and Charles are very pleased that their daughter has consented to marry Jim Weston. They are happy that now I will not be facing my old age alone. And they are coming back to La Jolla, to Belvedere, to arrange the wedding. Charles, who never lost his knack for entertaining big groups of people, is excited to galvanize the kitchens of the Epicurean Restaurant once more to put on the wedding of the century at Belvedere. Everybody who is royal or who feels royal is to receive an invitation to attend our wedding, the wedding of Margo Mara and Jim Weston. People in the entertainment industry and in politics and in the newspaper field seem to be pleased to receive an invitation to attend our wedding. There seems to be no question that the grounds of Belvedere will be overrun with joyous participants celebrating our union.

One of the many things about Jim Weston that seems so right is the fact that he is from Connecticut. He grew up in Lakeville, Connecticut, graduated from the Hotchkiss school and went on to Yale where my own family has such close connections. My beloved Uncle Armand, who was the Lord Chancellor of the Kingdom of Mulvedania, was a graduate of Yale College and held a PhD from Yale University. His son Charles has followed in his

Grandmother's footsteps and is now a professor of Mathematics and Cosmology at Yale. He lives in the same colonial farmhouse that his grandparents occupied when they were both professors at Yale. The Mulvedanian Chamber Music Society still meets there monthly as it did when Thomas Hobbes Webber and Juliana Webber lived there. Charles is following the research that Juliana Webber began in the 1920s and is a very keen enthusiast of space science. Understanding the universe in its most small and intriguing particles has made life a consistent challenge and continuing joy to him.

That my husband to be has Yale connections has been both exciting and comforting to me. I marvel that so much of our separate lives seem to overlap. Jim had been for many years a foreign correspondent for the New York Times living in many countries, meeting many notable people and he just seems to fit with the international background of my family. Now he is a widower and the father of four grown children, all successful in their own right. One of the joys of my own life has been the proximity of my cousin, Tory Webber, a medical doctor married to a research physician connected with the University of California, both of them living in San Francisco. Tory is the closest thing to my having a sister and I consider myself very blessed that she is not too far away. Tory will be my matron of honor.

In planning my wedding I hope that my dear friend Valerie Sutton will honor me by being my maid of honor. I know this will please Jim immensely because he had spent many an hour talking to Valerie about her breakthrough

invention called Sutton SignWriting, which provides sign language users with a written form. My mother Victoria had always been interested in the deaf community and always has been a sponsor of organizations to help born deaf people. She is one of Valerie Sutton's most staunch supporters, but she does not know Valerie as well as I do.

Valerie is closer to my age and is a forever enthusiast of the concept of giving the world's many sign languages written form. She began serious work on her invention in 1974 and she has never wavered from that time on. Now SignWriting is in use in almost all countries in the world because it is so adaptable. It is an alphabet that provides visual written form for any and all of the world's many sign languages, so deeply needed by everyone who uses sign language. The Roman Alphabet writes what can be heard. SignWriting writes what can be seen.

Adam Frost will come to my wedding. Adam has the glamor of a movie star. He is a star, who has long been in the forefront of the sign language community. Adam is a native ASL user who, although deaf, fits into the hearing world because of his superlative knowledge of English. He lives on Soledad Mountain in La Jolla in the community of Ridgeway with the Sutton family when not at Gallaudet University where he is enrolled in the PhD program. Valerie Sutton and Adam Frost and the brilliant programmer, Stephen Slevinski, are the three amazing people who are introducing SignWriting on Wikipedia at the same time I am setting the details of my wedding in La Jolla.

History has often been made by remarkable people in San Diego, California. How many heads of state or distinguished writers and special friends of Jim's or how many royal relatives of mine decide to make the trip to La Jolla is still an unknown quantity. But all who come know their presence is desired and that the invitation is heartfelt. Now I have only to think about my dress and other small details of color and coordination, which is my mother Victoria's special domain. So I will have to wait until she and Dad fly in from the Caribbean. I doubt that I can wear Victoria's wedding dress, but as I have gotten older, I have skinned down and, who knows, it might even be possible!

Jim is complacent about the details, but seems like a happy camper. I would say that our wedding date will go down as one of La Jolla's big celebrations. The countdown of days is almost more than I can stand. These days excitement makes me jittery. In some ways, I wish our wedding could be tomorrow. As it is, time is very short between now and our wedding date. I should be thankful for everyday between now and then that we have for planning and getting all of the details taken care of.

I think I will be a very contented gal, married to this marvelous man who came out of nowhere to rescue me from my self-imposed isolation.

My darling Jim, has many eminent friends from around the world. How many of them will come to our wedding? We do not know, but many will come we are sure.

My parents, Victoria and Charles Mara, are extremely pleased at this remarkable and totally

unexpected solution to the problems of what to do with Belvedere. Now, it is simply a matter of fact that Belvedere will live on and maintain the traditions that they established in 1950. One thing that really makes me happy is that I have fulfilled my promise to them, that I would write this story of their lives and the lives of Armand and Maria, Cordelia and Philip Johnston, and Wanda and Vince McDonald. And now another chapter will be added when Jim Weston and I marry.

These days, Jim is semi-retired writing only about things that interest him, glad to be free of deadlines and warzones. So I can look forward to traveling a bit with him, living more of a happy-go-lucky life and perhaps--who knows--actually learning to lighten up and laughing more. There is no reason, is there, that one of Queen Victoria's descendants should not see the comedy in it all, is there?

And there is no reason either for Charles and Victoria to continue to hide their connections to royalty, is there? Charles Mara was born in 1918, a cousin of Victoria's. Victoria was the Crown Princess of Mulvedania, the daughter of King Hector VII, and was born in 1920. In 1934, Sophia Dagmar, the Princess Royale, adopted Charles as her son and heir and from then on he was known as Prince Charles of Mulvedania.

Charles and Victoria married in 1939, first hastily in the Cathedral in Old Mulvedania and again a week later in the Holmens Kirke in Copenhagen, Denmark. They were very much in love and still are.

They lived in New York City during WWII

and came to La Jolla in 1950 as simply Charles and Victoria Mara. Now in their 90s, they lived the American dream as entrepreneurs and plain American citizens.

Now, perhaps it's high time that Princess Victoria Eugenie and Prince Charles Mara own up to their royal inheritance because La Jollans LOVE Royalty!!! The greatest gift they can give to La Jolla is the knowledge that Charles and Victoria Mara are indeed royalty, born in the city of Belvedere in the Kingdom of Old Mulvedania. It is an enduring statement, that of all the cities of the world and endowed as they are with extended funds that would permit them to settle anywhere, they chose La Jolla. And they still consider it the best of California. What can be more endearing to their friends and neighbors than to know that Victoria and Charles find La Jolla the Jewel in the Crown and consider all it's occupants Royalty?

About The Author, D.N. Sutton



D.N. SUTTON has been writing poetry and stories since age seven, published first at age eleven in the Miami Herald and in numerous newspapers and magazines. She is the author of poetry books and audio CDs available on iTunes, Amazon.com, CDBaby, CDUniverse and other sites, including “Love Poems for the Romantic Heart”, “Death Poems for the Grieving Heart”, “Psalms For Life Living” and a new collection: “Perceptions, Poems for a Time of Terror” will be available Summer 2013. Excerpts from her poetry books and novels can be read on her web site, SoulSite.com.

As her writings attest, D.N. Sutton is a person who believes that all dreams can in some measure be fulfilled. Trained for the theater, she worked on radio, and was a professional photographer’s model, a poetry editor, a playwright with plays produced, and was active in publicity and public relations. She developed and taught a college course called “Presentation of Self” in the 1940s and 1950s. Her generosity of spirit and concern about fairness in sentencing in the US justice system, lead her to work towards freeing a prisoner, Antonio Balta, whom she felt, and still feels, was unjustly sentenced. This quest lead her to start the blog “Citizens Conscience Calls”.

Now, nearing the age of 93, two years after her stroke, she inspires us all, with the publication of her first novel!



*Victoria and Charles
are enjoying living in
La Jolla and look
forward to every
day they spend
together!*

In 2012, at the age of 91, D.N. Sutton was recovering from a stroke at the same time that a fellow La Jollan, Alfonso de Bourbon, met his death in a tragic accident.

Alfonso told his friends that he was related to European royalty. Later, the La Jolla Light published an article presenting the possibility that Alfonso was living a fantasy. Many had accepted his fantasy as reality. Realizing how much people love royalty, this sparked

D.N. Sutton's novel, "Romantic Tales From Old Mulvedania". Could there be royalty living among us? And do they want to be found? Find out in this romantic novel about a fantasy country and royal heirs...

Sherwood-Spencer
Publishing
The SoulSite Press
Box 517, La Jolla, CA
92038-0517, USA
www.soulsite.com

ISBN 978-0-940361-23-2



9 780940 361232

ROMANTIC TALES MULVEDANIA