

*Soap Opera Inspired Story Collection*  
**Presents**

# Desperate Lives

**A Serialized Novel by  
Wesley Adams and Daphne McGee**

**Series Created by Gary Brin**

**Episodes 1-4**

The lives of several of people with little in common come together aboard a luxurious yacht headed to South America from the United States Virgin Islands, but when a tragedy occurs on board, it results in a desperate struggle for survival on an isolated island between survivors and two sadistic murderers with a dark legacy bent on killing their prey.

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*Standish Press*

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An original variation of this idea (as *The Most Dangerous Game* by Richard Connell) was first published by *Collier's National Weekly* magazine on January 19, 1924. A 1932 and 1945 film version (both by RKO Pictures) had a slightly different storyline.

**Names of real people mentioned in this book are in bold letters.**

The serialized story in this novel is fiction. Real persons, geographical locations, books, television shows, films, music, and specific events mentioned or which appears as part of the multi-character ensemble in this story were dramatized for entertainment purposes only and have no actual connection to fictional characters and created storylines in this book or reflects upon actual reality of things that may have happened previously or of which seems somewhat similar to real-life situations.

Select comments by fictional characters in this novel about historical figures, true crime cases, and, or pop culture icons are based on fact and additional information can be found online in reputable sites as well as numerous published books.

Characters from *Glass Owl* appear in this story. *Glass Owl* is an original publication from Standish Press and part of the Soap Opera Inspired Story Collection Series.

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In memory of Richard Connell who wrote the classic masterpiece  
*The Most Dangerous Game* which inspired this story.

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Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.





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## Intro

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This is an episodic reimagining of the classic story by Richard Connell which was first published in 1924. Nevertheless this version is not meant to be considered an official sequel. It is its own story with its own unique style that doesn't necessarily conform to previous versions—whether the 1924 print edition or the classic 1932 (*The Most Dangerous Game*) and 1945 (*A Game of Death*) film versions from RKO Pictures. Though the storyline in this edition isn't a completely original endeavor—this version spins an entirely new serialized plot incorporating present-day events and existence of modern technology that was worked into its script-like episodic storylines—blending fact and fiction into possible reality as the original story previously did in 1924.

This book, using some of the storylines from Richard Connell's 1924 masterpiece was written as a serialized inspired episodic novel written specifically to continue similarly formatted themes from long-ago daytime dramas as well as still-beloved prime-time soap classics—but with mature adult storylines added. Nevertheless despite the connections to Connell's novel, *Desperate Lives* was specifically written to resemble a filmed YouTube web series and though it occasionally imitates

traditional classic soap operas to a certain extent—it was written with the intention that it's playing to a visual audience and therefore will emulate a script format (without camera angle directions) rather than the usual storytelling methods displayed in popular full-length novels such as *Peyton Place* by Grace Metalious and *Celebrity* by Thomas Thompson. Each episode of the novels in this series were written in a brief span of 6-12 days or less and shouldn't be confused with being great literature by any means whatsoever. The goal of this series is simply to mimic episodes of modern-day daytime soap operas or entertaining YouTube web series dramas—by creating visual entertainment on a printed page—and not to create a literary masterpiece.

The storyline in *Desperate Lives* takes place approximately one year after the events in *Glass Owl* wrapped up and nearly a century after an incident involving a big game hunter and a Russian madman ended abruptly. Several characters from *Glass Owl* are featured in this book as part of the present story.

Gary Brin  
Series Creator

In an effort to have an accurate portrayal of the dialogue used for the *Soap Opera Inspired Story Collection Series* people were anonymously observed in shopping malls, schools, places of employment, and on public streets in order to capture a definitive portrayal of how people of various ages and cultures interacted and talked to each other when they thought no one was listening. While some select dialogue was exaggerated for dramatic purposes when needed—the manner and tone of which people were observed speaking to each other in casual and private conversations is accurate. Exact wording was not copied verbatim for the most part, but the way certain types of topics and conversations are addressed by characters in this serialized series is based on actual situations that were observed over a period of several dozen years.



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# Prologue

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1  
1924

The man fought his way through the jungle for several hours. His mind is clear as he feels his way along the path leading away from the mansion perched above jagged cliffs. He knows that he's going in the right direction but still he feels nervous knowing he's the prey and not the hunter. His main goal is simple—put plenty of distance between himself and the crazed hunter who has been stalking him. But as he plunges along the thick wooded area, panic begins to gnaw at him as he thinks of what lays before him—knowing that it will ultimately bring him face to face again with the sea of which he just came after an error in bad judgment suddenly changed his life forever.

2

He looks at his hands and touches his face lightly, fully aware of the welts caused by the branches along the path. He knows it's insanity to blunder through the dense woods at night, but he has no choice in the matter after the threat from the

unstable man who calls himself Zaroff was made clear when he refused to hunt one of the unfortunate shipwreck victims being held against their will until they are needed to play the sick game Zaroff had devised in order to keep himself amused. He wants to take a break and rest but knows he has to be vigilant. He notices a huge tree with a wide trunk and extended branches. He climbs up, careful not to leave any evidence that could be noticed later. Rest comes easily but his mind continues to work feverishly. Toward morning, the cry of a startled bird focuses his attention immediately, and through a mass of thick leaves he notices someone approaching cautiously from a hundred yards away.

### 3

General Zaroff makes his way through the dense jungle as his eyes focus on the ground before him. He stops suddenly at a tree and drops to his knees to study the ground with determined precision. The hunter shakes his head several times slightly puzzled at the intelligence of his newest prey. His eyes leave the ground and travel inch by inch up the tree—but then suddenly without warning he turns and carelessly walks away, back along the trail he had come as if someone has called him suddenly. A few birds can be heard over the noise of wind blowing loudly.

### 4

The man slides down from the tree, and takes off again into the jungle, only to realize too late he's being followed by General Zaroff once more. So intent is the hunter on his stalker that he instantly notices a trap set earlier in the morning by his prey and stops cold. As the skilled hunter stands there pondering his next move, the prey silently takes off again through the thick underbrush of the interior of the island and into a swamp nearby. His foot sticks to the thick muck as he comes upon the area but with a violent effort the prey tears his foot loose and looks around as if not sure of his next move. Then an idea comes to him and he

began to dig furiously. With his fingers rapidly moving, he weaves a crude carpet of weeds and a few branches—and with it he covers the mouth of the hole he just dug. A perfect trap for one of the dogs if they so choose to dare. Then, with sweat, and aching with extreme weariness, the prey begins his sly gameplay. Except now the prey is the hunter and the hunter becomes the prey.

## 5

On a ridge nearby the man climbs a tree and watches as a moving figure can be seen followed by a group of dogs. The hounds stop abruptly as the man uses the opportunity to double back on the trail in order to confuse the dogs. Up ahead he sees the shore of the raging sea about ten yards away—and across the cove he notices the outline of the mansion. He leaps into the sea seconds later. The man swims furiously and finally reaches the jagged cliffs. Several minutes later he stands at the entrance.

## 6

### **Game Over**

The man silently looks at his prey and grins. He was once the hunter but a mistake has changed events and now the man who had been hunted was set to hunt himself. The gun lay between them in the darkened room and it took a split second to grab for it. There is a struggle and then a single gunshot rings out in the damp night. As the shot rings out, the silence that had permeated the late evening comes to an end. There is a loud cry and then one of them lies dying before the other. From outside the loud barking of dogs can be heard over the sound of waves crashing against the side of the cliff beneath the mansion.

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## **A Brief Look at the First Episode**

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A seemingly peaceful excursion to the Amazon for a diverse group of people suddenly turns into a tragedy as events unfold concerning the sordid personal life of an unfaithful wife and her much-older husband in the middle of the Caribbean Sea.



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Episode 1

# Ship of Fools

This serialized variation of the classic 1924 novella *The Most Dangerous Game* by Richard Connell picks up a century after the original concluded with a surprise ending. Certain events and characters mentioned previously in the original story will figure into the present storyline.

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1  
Reynolds Estate  
St. Thomas  
United States Virgin Islands

"I'm going—deal with it already."

Armand Bell slams the kitchen door shut and heads to the driveway as his mother Nancy Reynolds follows in a panic.

"It's dangerous—your father *is* dangerous."

Armand stops and turns to look at his mother. They share an uneasy moment of silence. He looks back at the house.

"Dad isn't dangerous—he just takes lots of risks. Lives on the edge—he's that kind of guy, OK—so quit freaking."

"It wasn't my fault—I had to leave."

Nancy grabs her son's arm.

"I divorced your father because he didn't know how to stop getting into trouble. He's been in jail more times than I care to count—and now this *bizarre* trip to South America."

Armand mockingly rolls his eyes.

"I'm nineteen—I can think for myself."

He unlocks the car door.

"Besides, this will be a good time to get to know dad better—after what happened with—of which you know."

Nancy seems stung by the comment from her son.

"I *had* to leave your father—the incident in Tasmania was the last straw. You almost died—such dangerous animals."

Armand gets into his car as his mother suddenly reaches out to grab the door before he can shut it. She sighs loudly.

"This will only be a distraction from your classes."

"Nice try mother—but classes don't start for six weeks."

He smirks broadly.

"I'll be fine—like quit worrying—I'm not a little boy—so stop treating me like I'm ten—quite annoying actually."

"Please be careful—remember what I said about your father Armand—think before you act—just be safe—*please*."

"See you in four weeks."

He pulls out of the driveway and waves. As he drives away Nancy seems worried and quickly pulls out her cell phone.

## 2

### New York City

"Uh-huh—got it—like bring back a story worth printing for your crummy tabloid no matter what the hell I have to do."

Scott Malone glances at his cell phone.

"Bet you didn't think I'd take the job—but I will."

He looks out at the city below.

"And I'll hold you to the promised payout."

Roland Parker suddenly sits up and leans forward from his desk looking annoyed. He watches Scott's reaction and sighs.

"This is your last chance Malone. Had enough of your failures to last a lifetime—and after what happened last month with that actor—I'm about ready to wash my hands of you."

Scott rolls his eyes and sighs loudly.

"Hey—how was I supposed to know Jared Isling was gay?"

Roland leans back in his chair.

"Like how hard could it be? The man always seemed to have a "best buddy" around all the time—even when he was supposed to be dating that actress from that crappy Netflix show that just got axed last year—and then they split and rumors started to fly—suddenly the "best buddy" got deep-sixed."

Roland picks up his cell phone.

"Like I said—last try Malone—this time I mean it."

Roland watches as Scott turns to leave.

"I'm not kidding. I want you to take the next flight out to the Virgin Islands—be on that goddamned boat when Bell pulls out of port—no more excuses—not even one—zero. Got it?"

Scott turns to look at Roland again with a smirk.

"Yeah—I got the message loud and clear."

He leaves seconds later.

### 3

#### Marlowe Driveway

#### St. Thomas

#### United States Virgin Islands

Myles Stephenson throws two pieces of luggage into the backseat of his car and slams the door shut. From the corner of his eye he sees Jennifer Marlowe coming toward him.

"Do you know when you'll be back from your trip?"

Myles sighs and looks at Jennifer with a knowing grin.

"Four weeks—I think?"

Jennifer slides her arms around his waist.

"I'll miss you."

Myles grins broadly.

"I take what happened earlier left an impact?"

Jennifer laughs.

“What do you think?”

They kiss passionately.

“Call me OK?”

“I will—promise I will.”

They kiss briefly and then again more passionately.

#### 4

### **New York City**

Scott slams the door shut behind him and begins making reservations for a flight as he walks down the hallway. He seems slightly stressed as he slowly steps into the elevator.

“I swear—Parker needs to get laid.”

He smirks and rolls his eyes knowingly.

“Speaking of which—could use a quickie myself.”

He licks his lips sensuously.

“I think Marisa Boynton is due one last visit from her main guy—she and I need to get reacquainted—like seriously.”

Scott begins dialing as he whistles loudly.

“Hope she’s over what happened with Julie Carrington last week—like it wasn’t really much of a big deal anyways.”

The elevator opens.

#### 5

### **Havensight Mall**

### **St. Thomas**

### **United States Virgin Islands**

Armand grins broadly as he looks at the huge yacht up ahead. He shoves his hands into the front pockets of his Levi’s and sighs as he causally walks through Havensight Mall and heads toward the docks. He stops suddenly at a pair of iron gates.

“Hope you like surprises dad.”

He heads toward the entrance with a grin.



**6**  
**Bell Yacht**  
**West Indian Company Dock**  
**St. Thomas**  
**United States Virgin Islands**

Tristan Montgomery Bell sighs loudly.

“This time will be different.”

He stands up and slowly walks to the window.

“No wicked distractions this time.”

He turns to look at a wrinkled magazine lying on the desk nearby with a torn photo of a handsome man on the cover.

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**One Day Later**

**7**  
**Bell Yacht**  
**Somewhere in the Caribbean Sea**

Loud sounds of intense lovemaking can be heard outside a door leading to a private cabin aboard a large luxury yacht.

“And you said.”

The man laughs and pulls away from the woman. He smirks as he lies back in bed and sighs in satisfaction.

“Uh-huh—and you said you wouldn’t give it up to me.”

The woman glances at the man.

“What happens now?”

“What do you think?”

He winks at her.

“By the way my name is Myles Stephenson.”

The woman seems nervous and sighs.

“Daphne—Daphne—no last name necessary.”

She grabs her blouse.

“If my husband finds out—he’d never understand.”

Myles laughs loudly.

“I won’t tell.”

He looks at his exposed penis.  
“Hope you’re on the pill.”  
Daphne Wade Bell rolls her eyes.  
“What if I wasn’t?”  
Myles looks at his exposed penis again and laughs.  
“Hope your husband is ready to be a *daddy*.”  
She seems upset.  
“Am I just another notch on your bedpost Myles?”  
Myles grins slyly.

## 8

Two men are sitting at the top of a stairwell glancing at a door to a closed suite several feet away. One of them sighs.

“Can you believe that guy?”

Jason Carson shakes his head disapprovingly as he looks over at his friend Kyle Bennett. He clenches his fist.

“Frigging creep—son of a fucking bitch—of all the people he could fuck on this yacht today—he had to target *her*.”

He sighs loudly.

“She’s a married woman for Christ sakes.”

“When did you become such a prude—especially with your mouth being so quick to spout filthy four-letter words?”

Jason shoots Kyle a nasty look.

“Hey—the old man may not be much to look at—but that doesn’t mean he should be played by the likes—of *him*.”

Kyle rolls his eyes.

“Stephenson didn’t have to twist her arm too hard if I recall—they hooked-up just ten minutes after they met.”

Jason shrugs and hesitantly nods his head.

“OK—*Daphne Bell is a whore*—but that still doesn’t mean Stephenson is a prince—he uses women like tissue paper.”

Kyle nods in agreement and rolls his eyes.

“No one cares.”

Jason reaches over to shove Kyle.

“Think you’re really funny—don’t you?”

Kyle gestures with his hand and sighs loudly.

"Nope—but let's get real for a change—when was the last time you had a date with a chick—a real one—not one of those freaky online things where she turns out to be 75 years old."

At that moment they hear the suite door open and see Myles tucking his T-shirt into his faded Levi's. He grins.

"Hey Guys."

He notices their harsh glares and shrugs. Behind him Daphne emerges from the cabin and she realizes they have an audience. She looks away as if more scared than ashamed.

"Nice day—isn't it?"

Myles watches for a reaction. But there's none. They walk away without saying another word. Jason turns to look at Kyle.

"I should say something—seriously I should."

Kyle grabs Jason by the arm. He seems angry.

"Not one word—do you hear me? If old man Bell finds out his sweet young wife has been playing house with the hired help—sampling his wares—he might just take up one of his guns and kill the slimy bastard—want a murder on your watch?"

"Bell should be told his wife is a cheap slut."

"No way—really bad idea—he'll snap for sure."

Kyle looks at Jason cautiously.

"You and I are just here to guide that old man through the South American jungle—we didn't sign on to keep tabs on his wife—especially when it comes to a creep like Stephenson."

Jason angrily clenches his fists.

"That damned slug has no class whatsoever—he deserves to suffer for how he treats women. He needs to be outed."

He wipes sweat from his brow.

"That man has no shame when it comes to women—heard he bedded over 1000—broke up countless marriages without a second thought—one of which was that movie star and her jock husband—the one who was chased by dinosaurs in that really bad movie that came out about ten years ago—heard the dude walked in on his wife and Stephenson doing the deed—freaked out royally and lost his mind right after—shot up the place."

A look of disgust comes across his face.

"Uh-huh—Bell should have been told beforehand about Stephenson. Yeah—he may have globe-trotted all over Africa with that damned camera of his—but his rep—so shameful."

"Didn't he kill himself?"

"No—his wife called the cops when things got out of control and they carted the poor sucker away to the booby hatch—I think the sad sap is still there in a padded room."

"Tough break—guess his brilliant sports career is over?"

"You think?"

He wipes sweat from his brow again and sighs.

"Fine—whatever—I won't say a word."

Kyle nods in agreement.

## 9

"Do you think they know?"

Myles grins and looks back at the two men.

"Is the Pope Catholic?"

He kisses her on the cheek. She pulls away. He seems confused by her cold behavior. He smirks and tries to sneak another quick kiss. She pushes him away immediately.

"What's the matter?"

He laughs.

"What's with the cold shoulder?"

"This was a mistake—if Tristan found out—oh God."

"Why would Tristan Montgomery Bell give a damn if you and I hooked-up in my cabin for an hour? Is he your dad?"

"Tristan is not my father—he's my *husband*. I married him just over a year ago—he and I met in Sydney, Australia."

Myles reacts with a look of panic on his face.

## 10

Tristan looks closely at the map in front of him again and then turns to look at his assistant Cooper Johnston curiously.

"So, according to this old map, there's supposed to be an island somewhere out there—uncharted and uninhabited?"

Cooper nods.

"Uh-huh—from what I heard."

Tristan sighs.

"I know these waters like the back of my hand—and I've never seen an island this far out from the Virgin Islands."

Cooper points to the map.

"This map is from National Geographic."

Tristan shrugs.

"So?"

Cooper rolls his eyes noticing Tristan's expression.

"There should be an island out there."

They look at each other.

"You're not making any sense."

Cooper sighs.

"According to the stories I've heard from a few of my friends on St. Thomas—there *is* an island southeast of the Virgin Islands but all records of its existence have been mysteriously erased from modern maps—even from Google Earth from what I heard—no trace anywhere to find whatsoever—none."

Tristan shrugs and looks at the map again.

"How can you erase an island from Google Earth?"

Cooper runs his fingers through his hair.

"They didn't say."

Tristan looks at his watch.

"I've heard enough of this drivel."

He slams his fist against the steering wheel.

"Make yourself useful Cooper—go find Wesley Mayfield right now—he and I need to talk seriously—like ASAP."

Cooper nods again.

"Going to ask him about Google Earth?"

Tristan pushes Cooper.

"Yeah—that's right—I'm going to ask questions about something that sounds like nonsense—uh-huh—for sure."

Cooper backs away.

"I was just telling you what I heard?"

They look at each other.

"An island can't just disappear from a map—especially from Google Earth—and most certainly not from those maps National Geographic puts out every couple of years. Got it?"

Cooper shrugs and nervously turns to leave.

**11**

Armand leans against the railing and looks out to sea. He seems bored as he turns around and looks at his watch.

"Not quite what I expected—not at all."

"And me?"

Armand turns to see a young woman giving him a curious stare. He grins broadly at the sight of the beautiful woman.

"Am I what you expected?"

He laughs nervously. She notices.

"And you'd be?"

"Serena St. John."

She leans toward him and whispers in his ear.

"Nice body—hope you're straight?"

Armand smirks.

"Like an arrow."

Serena grins and strokes Armand's arm.

"FYI straight guy—I like men with experience."

Armand gives her a sly look.

"I've got plenty of experience with women—a virgin I'm not—been around the block quite a few times and then some."

Serena looks down at his snug-fitting jeans.

"Exactly how big are you?"

Serena traces her finger down the front of his Levi's and begins unzipping the zipper. She glances back at him as she notices his swelling erection straining under the fabric.

"I can hold my own."

"How about we test that theory?"

He laughs as he slyly leers at her. She notices.

“Lead the way—but be warned.”

She kisses Armand.

“You’d better not disappoint me. I take being slighted very seriously. I’m expecting you to rise to the occasion.”

They kiss again.

## 12

“That old coot is your frigging husband? Why didn’t you tell me before I stuck my dick into you—like this is seriously messed up—of all the stupid moves you could make?”

Daphne slaps Myles.

“How dare you blame me for this mess—if you hadn’t insisted on us fucking we wouldn’t have a problem now.”

Myles runs his fingers through his hair.

“OK—OK—we’re still in the clear.”

Myles sighs loudly.

“No one knows anything happened between us.”

Daphne glances over her shoulder.

“Are you sure about that?”

Myles looks where Daphne’s nervous gaze is focused.

## 13

“You fucked a total stranger?”

“I couldn’t help it—we did it in a stairwell.”

Amanda Hardwick rolls her eyes.

“Better check for STDs.”

Marlene Caswell sighs loudly.

“He’s not a man whore—he told me he just broke up with his longtime girlfriend last week—said she hurt him badly.”

She strokes her cheek nervously.

“Said she cheated on him—he and I—he was so sweet.”

Amanda grabs Marlene by the arm.

“Uh-huh—does Prince Charming have a name?”

Marlene shrugs knowingly.

"Myles—just like that Pilgrim guy **Myles Standish**."  
Amanda seems about to explode.

14

"They wouldn't dare."

"You better hope those two clowns keep quiet."

She shakes her head.

"If Tristan even suspects you and I—things could get quite dangerous quickly. My husband has a terrible temper."

Daphne looks out to sea.

"That and he's an excellent shot."

Daphne leans against the railing and glances at Myles.

"It's not too late to head back to St. Thomas?"

He shrugs.

"Can't do it—I need the money."

They look at each other.

"We've just got to make sure those two idiot yoyos keep their traps shut—can't have them blabbing to the old man."

"We could throw them overboard before they spill—dead men can't tell tales. Who'd know any better after the fact?"

He grimaces.

"Yeah—*like* no."

Myles runs his fingers through his hair nervously.

"Let's see what's their deal first—everyone has a price."

"And if your plan doesn't work?"

"I'm not killing anybody."

Daphne grabs Myles by the arm.

"It could be your funeral?"

Myles casually glances at two scantily-clad women on the lower deck. Daphne turns away in disgust. She seems angry.

"*Like really*—our lives are in serious jeopardy of being deep-sixed tonight and you're thinking about your dick?"

Myles grins broadly.

"I'm a single guy, OK—deal."

He smirks and looks back at the two women.



"Got to make friends—would be rude if I didn't mingle."  
Seconds later he sprints down the stairs.

## 15

Wesley Mayfield watches as Tristan slowly closes the door behind him. He seems oddly nervous about something.

"Said you wanted to see me?"

They look at each other.

"If this is about the report you asked for earlier?"

Tristan wipes sweat from his brow.

"I need you to keep an eye on Cooper. Seems he thinks we're on *Amazing Race* or something—I don't need to deal with him having a troubling relapse of what happened in Kenya last year concerning that creepy incident with the park ranger."

"Will do—*anything else?*"

Tristan seems suddenly irritated.

"Find my wife—she and I need to talk—got to set a few ground rules before we reach port—especially after."

Wesley nods again and leaves. Tristan turns to look once more at the open ocean. He wrings his hands several times.

## 16

"Myles Stephenson—oh—*oh my God Marlene*—of all the single men you could've messed around with yesterday."

Marlene shakes her head.

"I met him at a gift shop just before we boarded and one thing led to another in the stairwell—so shoot me already."

Marlene looks at Amanda suspiciously.

"*Wait*—how do you his name? I didn't tell you his name? Did you? OMG—he fucked you too? You and Myles fucked?"

Amanda turns away.

"I couldn't help myself. He was just so handsome and sexy—like a slightly younger version of **Alexander Skarsgard**."

Amanda licks her lips seductively.

"Yesterday morning at my hotel room—I thought he was a decent guy—gentle—but then I saw him making a play for Vicki de Hoya at the hotel bar minutes after he left my room."

Marlene seems shocked at the revelation.

"*Vicki*—as in Victoria de Hoya—the coffee heiress—how could he think she's—she's like fifty—*and* like so ancient."

Amanda rolls her eyes.

"Obviously he's a dog who will fuck anything."

"I hate men—hate them so much."

"Sign me up for that club."

Marlene looks around at the room.

"OK—maybe I don't hate men—especially cute men. But I hate Myles Stephenson—filthy piece of sleaze—so gross."

Amanda nods in agreement.

## 17

### New York City

Roland leans back in his chair and sighs loudly. He looks at the cell phone in his hand and seems irritated. He shrugs.

"I hear what you're saying Thomas—but I can't come to Portland until next week—got too much on my plate here."

He rolls his eyes.

"I don't know the guy you're talking about—he's not one of my people. I promised you I wouldn't do any stories about the events surrounding your adopted daughter's mental issues."

He gestures with his hand.

"Nevertheless, I recall telling you to get her some help about four years ago—which you ignored. Jennifer Parker needed help long before she went on a killing spree in Marble Hills."

He gestures again and sighs.

"Uh-huh—I'll be in touch shortly."

He shuts off his cell phone and slowly stands up.

"I wonder who's snooping around Portland looking for a story about my brother's late deranged stepdaughter."

He glances at the window.

18

Daphne notices Jason standing at the far end of the yacht looking out to sea. He faces her as she approaches him.

"It's not what it seemed."

Jason rolls his eyes.

"Is that so—seems to me it was exactly what it appeared to be—you and that piece of trash fooling around on the sly."

Daphne sighs loudly.

"Are you going to tell Tristan?"

Jason looks away.

"*Well*, are you?"

Jason turns to face Daphne with a cold stare.

"I don't know yet."

Daphne grabs Jason by the arm.

"You can't tell."

Jason angrily pulls free of Daphne's grip.

19

Myles glances at the two women in his bed. He grins broadly as he begins kissing Laura Wiley passionately.

"Hope you're on the pill."

Laura begins moaning as Myles penetrates her.

"If my mother could see me now—giving it up to a guy I just met a few minutes ago—what was your name again?"

Myles laughs.

"Myles—name's Myles."

He grins.

"Not interested in a commitment."

Myles looks over at the other woman lying on the bed besides them and gives her a sly grin. He smirks knowingly.

"Are you ready for me too?"

Diana Munroe nods as he licks his lips.

Armand pulls on his boxer briefs and turns to look at Serena lying on the bed. He walks over to her and grins.

"Well?"

Serena sits up in bed.

"Not bad."

"That means good—scale of 1 to 10?"

Serena smirks.

"I'm still deciding."

"Hey?"

Armand leans over to kiss Serena.

Daphne stares at the huge expanse of ocean and sighs loudly. Her fingers grip the rail tightly as she shakes her head.

"How could I have been so incredibly stupid?"

"Who are you talking to?"

She spins around to see Tristan looking at her.

"Is everything all right?"

"Why do you ask?"

"You seem tense Daphne—what's wrong?"

Daphne shakes her head.

"If this is about our upcoming trip—rest assured those crazy stories about monsters is fiction—no such things exist."

Daphne seems uneasy.

"I'm not worried about giant lizards."

Tristan nervously pulls Daphne toward him.

"Then what is it?"

He looks into her eyes.

"I know something is wrong—is it us?"

Daphne shrugs.

"No—it's me."

She pulls away from Tristan and looks out at the ocean.

"I have to tell you something."

An awkward moment of silence slips by.

"What is it Daphne? I thought we'd come so far after what happened two months ago—thought that was long over."

"We have—I *have*."

Tristan gives Daphne an odd look. She shrugs.

"I did—but things have happened."

Daphne faces Tristan again.

"I wish."

She hesitates.

"I wish I was the wife you deserve."

Tristan pulls Daphne toward him again.

"What's going on Daphne?"

Daphne pushes Tristan away from her.

"I—I just seem to make things worse no matter how hard I try not to screw up—you deserve so much more Tristan."

Tristan sighs loudly.

"Is it me—did I do something?"

"No—I did. I'm the only one to blame—as always."

Tristan seems confused by the comment.

## 22

A figure walks toward a door and opens it. Enters the room—and places a photograph on top of a desk—then leaves the room seconds later—silently pulling the door shut.

## 23

"What about the other girls I saw you with earlier?"

Myles grins slyly and seems to hide a smirk.

"What about them?"

Sandra King looks at Myles curiously.

"I don't like being second."

Myles laughs.

"You're not second Sandra—OK—I don't do seconds—like never—so just let us enjoy a few possibilities—and positions."

He laughs again.  
“Or do I have to beg?”  
Myles smirks.  
“Might give me a complex—and a visit to a shrink?”  
Sandra reaches out to kiss Myles.  
“You’re just *too* charming for us girls to resist.”  
Myles winks.  
“I’m counting on that.”  
He leads her down the hallway.

24

“Can I speak with you?”  
Daphne turns around to see Cooper a few feet away from where she and Tristan are standing. He seems really upset.  
“Can’t it wait?”  
Cooper shakes his head.  
“No.”  
Tristan gives Cooper a curious stare and slowly turns to look at Daphne. He notices her reaction at being interrupted.  
“I’ll only be a minute.”  
“Fine—I’ll wait.”  
Tristan seems confused at Daphne’s reaction and slowly turns to face Cooper as Daphne appears to get more agitated.  
“Well—what is so damned important?”  
Daphne leans against the railing as she watches Tristan talk with Cooper. He seems really upset about something.  
“I wish there was another way.”  
Cooper pulls out something from his jacket pocket. He gives it to Tristan. Daphne strains to hear what they are talking about as Tristan suddenly becomes enraged seconds later.

25

Sandra seems upset as she watches Myles casually tuck his T-shirt into his faded Levi’s and glances at her once more.

"Much thanks for the ride."

Sandra sits up in bed.

"When can I see you again?"

"I'll let you know."

"But I just let you—is that it?"

Myles seems irritated by Sandra's needy behavior.

"I'll call you tomorrow."

He leaves without saying goodbye.

## 26

Jason walks aimlessly along the hallway as he shakes his head several times and sighs loudly. He stops suddenly.

"Maybe I won't have to tell?"

He sighs again.

"Maybe the old man will put two and two together?"

He clenches his fist.

"Or someone else will tell him?"

He hears a noise and turns around in a panic.

"*What the fuck?*"

He seems enraged.

## 27

Myles grins broadly as he scans the horizon. He seems happy. Ahead of his gaze he sees a faint outline of land.

"An island—must be a mirage—I don't recall any islands this far out from St. Thomas—definitely seeing things."

"Seeing what?"

He turns to see Wesley standing a few feet away.

"Thought I saw an island?"

Wesley seems confused at the comment.

"Only open ocean all the way to South America."

Myles looks again at the horizon and sees nothing. He turns back to face Wesley. He rubs his eyes briefly.

"Uh-huh—nothing out there."

Wesley looks at his watch several times.

"Bell will probably want to talk with you before we reach Brazil—he likes to keep close tabs on his crew—be aware."

Myles nods.

"Thanks for the heads up."

Wesley sighs.

"Just don't get into trouble."

Myles gives Wesley an odd stare.

"Wasn't planning to be a dick?"

"Good—keep it that way—certainly wouldn't want what happened with Ralph Fawcett a while back to happen again so soon after—such a mess to clean up—not fun—no way."

Myles grabs Wesley's arm.

"Bell hired Fawcett before he did me?"

Wesley nods.

"He did—fired him after he caught Fawcett and Daphne together in the pool house at his summer estate in Miami."

Myles lets go of Wesley's arm.

"Is that that happened?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Fawcett disappeared two months ago."

"So?"

"And you say this "event" happened a while back?"

Wesley seems annoyed.

"If you're going where I think you're going—don't—right after Fawcett got canned by Bell he got a job with some big travel outfit in northern Alaska—and it was there he disappeared—from what I heard Ralph Fawcett got trapped in a freak blizzard."

"I was just asking—chill OK?"

Wesley gives Myles a cold stare.

"You're a photographer—not one of the *Hardy Boys*. Stick to taking pictures—not minding other people's business."

Myles rolls his eyes.

"*Ouch*—quite harsh don't you think?"

"Don't fuck with me Stephenson—it's not too late to have you replaced—Brazil has plenty of qualified photographers."



“Good to know buddy.”

Myles walks away as Wesley continues to stand there.

28

## Coast Guard Headquarters

### Miami

Brad McFadden slowly opens the door to his office and sighs loudly as he sees his young assistant sitting at his desk.

“I thought we went over the chair issue already?”

Casey Roberts grins broadly.

“Yeah—but when was the last time I listened?”

He stands up.

“I just got another report on that Caribbean issue.”

Brad glances at the folder in Casey’s hand.

“Just tell me the deal already.”

Casey rolls his eyes.

“Four.”

Brad walks toward where Casey is standing.

“How long ago since they were reported missing?”

“Two weeks.”

He sighs.

“Richard and Liza Hamilton from Boston and their two teenage sons—not a single word from any of them since they were reported missing just outside the US Virgin Islands.”

“Book me a flight.”

Casey gestures at a nearby table.

“Done—you leave in one hour—45 minutes flat—should be in Charlotte Amalie by nightfall. Peter Zimmerman from the Virgin Islands Coast Guard is going to meet you at the airport there. He has a crew ready to take this to the next step.”

Brad waves his hand.

“Forget what I said earlier about the chair.”

“You said something earlier Brad? Oops—oh-oh I wasn’t really listening—must have dozed off or something I guess.”

Brad points his finger at Casey.

"We'll resume this topic when I get back."

Brad shakes his fist and leaves. Casey sighs loudly.

"Probably won't end well for the Hamiltons."

He glances nervously at the huge window in front of him.

## 29

Jason looks at his former son-in-law Harley Vanning with obvious hatred. He reaches out to grab the younger man by his shirt collar. Harley aggressively pushes Jason's hand away.

"What the fuck are you doing here?"

"Got to pay the bills don't I?"

Jason clenches his fists.

"Thought I made it clear you were to stay away from me and my family indefinitely—especially my daughter."

Harley rolls his eyes.

"Exactly how long are you going to hold a grudge over what happened between your precious daughter and me?"

Jason pushes Harley against the rail.

"You cheated on my daughter Vanning—and not just once either. Have you no shame? How could you think what you did was okay? She loved you—and you fucked it up royally."

Harley untangles himself from Jason's grip.

"You're a fucking loser—you treated my only daughter without a shred of respect—and then you had the nerve to say after the fact you were unhappy? Like really—what about my daughter? What about her? Goddamn you Vanning—when they found your name in the black book of that trashy madam who got busted for running a brothel out of the cellar at St. Mark's Church—that was the last straw. Fucking whore had four stars by your name—and we both know it wasn't because you were such a good listener. Damn near destroyed my daughter's sanity when she found out you had been screwing around with people like that. Get the frigging hell out of my sight this instant or else."

Harley nervously wrings his hands.

"I'm not going anywhere."

They stare at each for a few seconds.

"Fuck off old man."

"I want you out of here the minute we get to Brazil."

Jason looks out to sea.

"Or I won't be responsible for what happens."

"Is that a threat I hear from you Carson?"

Jason looks out to sea again.

"Very deep waters out there—fatal accidents happen all the time. I'd think seriously about that fact if I were you."

"I'm not afraid."

"Then you're dumber than you look."

He turns to leave and looks back at Harley briefly.

"Have a nice day."

He smirks.

"Or may not—especially when you consider how deep the ocean in this part of the world happens to be—so deep."

Jason whistles as he heads down the hallway gleefully glancing back every now and then. Harley sighs loudly again.

"He wouldn't. He wouldn't dare."

Harley looks at the ocean in a distance.

### 30

Scott leans against the door as he looks at Sandra. She doesn't notice him standing there. He grins broadly.

"Going to the gym does a body good."

Sandra turns around to look at Scott. He smirks.

"Hey—noticed you working out from deck above—really liked what I saw so I came by—came by for a closer look."

Sandra rolls her eyes.

"Got any better lines? Oh-oh—I hear the 1980s calling you right about now—seem they want their cheesy line back."

Scott pretends to be insulted by her comment.

"Is that your way of telling me we aren't going to have dinner later? Such a shame if that's the case—like really."

"Why should I have dinner with you?"

"I'm a fun guy."

He winks slyly at her.

"In bed and on the dance floor—ask my exes if you don't believe me—I'm a seriously popular dude—especially when I'm not wearing pants—definitely could teach you a few things."

She glances at his corduroy jeans and winks.

"Bold talk from a guy with such bad lines initially."

Scott suddenly pulls Sandra towards him.

"So, how about it—dinner in an hour in my cabin—and then maybe some action between the sheets right after?"

Sandra rolls her eyes.

"I don't even know you?"

"One dinner is all it takes."

"What if I say no?"

Scott strokes Sandra's hair with his fingers.

"You won't."

He looks at his watch.

"I'm in cabin 7."

He continues to stroke her hair.

"And no—I don't have a current girlfriend."

Scott laughs.

"At least none I'd admit to."

He smiles slyly.

"But I'm open to the idea."

He laughs.

"A guy has the right to change his mind."

Seconds later Sandra watches as Scott walks away. She sighs several times and grabs a towel from a nearby rack.

### 31

#### Two Hours Later

Tristan enters his office and notices a photo lying on the floor next to his desk. He walks over and picks it up. He begins to shake as he realizes what he's watching. He drops the photo and clenches his fist angrily. He glances at the open door.

"I'm going to kill him. No one disrespects me and lives to brag about it—how dare he play me for a fool. Fuck him."

He clenches his fists again.

"And to think I gave him a frigging job."

He looks at the horizon in a distance.

"Bastard probably thought he'd get away with it—well surprise asshole—the jig's up. Time you learned a lesson."

For a few seconds he remains deathly still.

"Can't let this slight go unpunished—got to even the score and make an impact. I'll make the bastard beg for mercy."

He walks over to the metal cabinet at the far end of his office and hastily begins turning the silver tumbler on the combination lock. He fingers tremble as the door swings open a few seconds later. He looks inside at the handgun lying on top of a thick stack of paperwork and flash drives. He sighs loudly.

"Fawcett disrespected me and ended up dead."

He grabs the handgun and looks at it.

"Uh-huh—got away with it too—quite easy if I do say so myself. Even his family bought that lame blizzard story."

He stops to look at the door.

"Second time around will be much easier."

He slides his fingers across the barrel.

"No one will miss him. It'll easily be believed that he fell overboard in a drunken stupor. Case closed instantly."

He heads to the door leaving the cabinet unlocked.

**TO BE CONTINUED**



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