

Love at the Everleigh



by Cynthia Jordan

Cynthia Jordan

Love at the Everleigh

A Historical Novella
BY CYNTHIA JORDAN

www.pearlthebook.com

This Novella is PART ONE of three parts
of the historical novel Pearl
by Cynthia Jordan

Published by
Emerald Eagle Publishing
5622 Woodbine Ln
San Angelo, TX 76904

©2015 by Cynthia Jordan All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

This is a work of fiction. While, in all fiction the literary perceptions and insights are based on experience, the Lady Pearl's names are products of the author's imagination. No reference to any real person is intended or should be inferred.

This story is based on historical facts. References include, "Come Into My Parlor," by Charles Washborn, Wikipedia and the Bible.

Everleigh was edited by Kay Holland and Kathryn Louie. Butterflies photo by Alfred Cheney Johnston. Special thanks to Lee Pflueger for the beautiful photos of his Clear Creek Ranch in Menard County, Texas. Miss Victoria Pearl's photographs are of the great Edwardian actress, Lily Elsie.

Cynthia Jordan



*To my mother Margaret Jordan
who once told me,
“It’s like walking into a field of flowers
that all open up at once.”*

CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	6
VICTORIA PEARL	10
TEA WITH ADA AND MINNA	19
A NEW LIFE.....	28
OPENING NIGHT	39
A TEXAS GENTLEMAN	48
BUTTERFLIES	60
GOODBYE CHICAGO	83
HELLO TEXAS	86
GOODBYE MY BELOVED	98
NEW BEGINNINGS.....	106
1923	118
HELLO MY BELOVED	129
THANK YOU FROM CYNTHIA	132

Cynthia Jordan



PREFACE

“The God of Love lives in a state of need.”

~ Plato

From 1900 to 1911, the Everleigh Club was the most elegant place in Chicago for a man to find female companionship. Like the *Geishas of Japan* and the *Courtesans of Venice*, the girls were elegant, smart, gorgeous, and extremely masterful in giving sexual pleasure. It was an exclusive badge of honor to even be admitted. An elite club with a select clientele, the Everleigh Club was only available to men who were formally introduced, possessed an engraved card or presented a formal letter of introduction. Men of wealth and status bragged to their colleagues, “I am going to get Everleighed this evening,” thus; the term “going to get laid” was born. It was here that, in three short years, Victoria Pearl learned her life lessons that would prepare her for a most adventurous life.

The intention of the Everleigh women was never to steal husbands or entrap men with pregnancy. That would be deceitful and dishonest. The Everleigh girls made an honest living with all parties knowing exactly what to expect. They were there to provide a service, and they did it better than any of the other 500 businesses of its kind in Chicago. The Everleigh girls were playful and skilled in the art of sexual satisfaction. For this reason, the ladies made an excellent living which in today’s market could be compared to \$400,000 a year. This included expensive gifts as well as bonus gratuities for services rendered.

When they were little girls, the women at who worked at the Everleigh Club never had the dream, “*One day I want to be a prostitute.*” They all preferred the “*One day my prince will come and take me away to his castle*” story. It is important to understand that sometimes on life’s journey circumstances can cause people to lose hope.

There was one memorable butterfly who was exceptionally beautiful. Her name was Victoria Pearl. “All women are like beautiful pearls, Victoria,” her mother had told her one day. “A pearl is formed when a grain of sand has entered the tightness of the fresh water shell and then irritates the mussel inside. The longer the process the more beautiful and lustrous the pearl becomes with layers and layers of iridescent radiance. Finally when it is opened, a beautiful treasure is discovered inside.”

Women are capable of taking a man into uncharted realms of exciting adventures of mystery and universal understanding. Like the discovery of a lustrous pearl, when a woman is appreciated and adored she will open herself up to reveal the sacred treasures and gifts she holds deep within her heart. Her soul is love, and her true beauty is the generous light radiating within her heart. In her story, Victoria Pearl teaches us that the human experience is fascinating and nothing on earth can compare to the deep love we are all capable of giving.

At the foundation of the Everleigh Club was the understanding that sexuality is a natural instinct. Females can get pregnant and have a baby only once a year whereas males are capable of procreating hundreds of times a year. Females look for strong providers and protectors in a mate, whereas males are simply looking. Pearl often said, “Men have a physical need to get their pipes cleaned. My girls simply provide a service.”

Sex can be like a sporting event, and in fact, women who worked in brothels many times were referred to as *sporting women*. As one girl put it, “A good romp in the hay can be fun and physically satisfying like a good tennis match.” In a world where any kind of expressed sexuality was considered unacceptable behavior, the

young women who worked at the Everleigh Club had permission to be sexy.

For two people in love, sex is a beautiful gift from our Creator to express affection, thus the term “making love.” This kind of sexuality enables the participants to experience the universal feeling of oneness. Making love can be a spiritual experience that satisfies the soul with a sense of complete satisfaction and peace.

Ada and Minna Everleigh became millionaires because they understood human nature. *“To be in denial of our human sexual desires is simply unnatural!”*

The historical facts in this book are true and the stories are real. The names have been changed to protect the innocent and the guilty.



VICTORIA PEARL

The fiddler performed cheerfully as Brian McDougal watched his fellow passengers dance and sing on the deck of the massive sailing ship headed to America. Every evening at dusk the

musician would begin playing traditional songs from the homeland. He was devoted to keeping up the spirits of his fellow Irishmen on their long journey to the unknown. At night the people sang folk songs and danced to Irish reels. One evening, when the old man finally laid down his fiddle, Brian asked him, “Why do you think a violin is shaped like a woman?”

The fiddler looked at Brian, pointed his finger in the air and grinned. “Aye me boy, it might be on account of the fact a violin is just like a woman. When a violin is tuned well, and you play it with respect, passion and grace, she can make your soul sing and produce the most beautiful music in the world,” he answered with a wink.

The year was 1876. Dreams of prosperity and the courage to explore new opportunities found Brian McDougal and Molly O’Connor with hundreds of other Irish immigrants boarding a ship headed to the untamed lands of America. Brian first saw Molly the day the ship set sail for the New World and her smile instantly captured his heart. Day after day they spent their time on the deck of the ship talking about days to come as they watched the vast waters of the deep blue Atlantic Ocean and listened to the music of her ancient song. Several weeks passed, and by the time they finally saw land again, Molly and Brian were in love, and engaged to be married. Within a week after setting ashore, the happy Irish couple became man and wife.

In 1878 Victoria was Queen of England, the first telephones were being installed, and Thomas Edison presented a new invention he named the “phonograph” that could record sound. That same year little Victoria Pearl was born to Brian and Molly McDougal in Aurora, Illinois. Victoria was a beautiful baby, and when her father

first laid eyes on her, he was smitten. “Oh, Molly, me love. What a lovely wee one we have. She looks just like a little peach.”

Aurora, Illinois, was an up and coming community on the Fox River near Chicago. Brian’s cousin, Michael Kelly, had arranged a job for Brian as a foreman for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad in the roundhouse and locomotive shop. Molly found a position teaching English literature at the new high school for girls. From the time she was a baby, Victoria learned Irish folk songs from Molly, and by the time she was 2, the little girl was singing along with her mother. As she grew older, Victoria learned dances and how to make Irish lace.

Her mother told tales of Irish folklore including stories of fairies and leprechauns with pots of gold at the end of the rainbow. Molly taught Victoria to read before she was six years old. “A woman who can read can travel through time and visit faraway places anytime she wants,” her mother would often say. Victoria especially loved Hans Christian Andersen, and her favorite story was, *The Ugly Duckling*.

Molly was well educated and taught Victoria the etiquette of being a lady. “Pretty is as pretty does” was a common phrase she used. Going to Chicago on the train with her mother was always a special event. Because of her father’s work, the family was able to obtain free passes to travel for the day to the big city 40 miles away. They visited libraries, churches, and wonderful parks. When Victoria was 14 years old, Chicago held the World’s Columbian Exposition to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s arrival to the New World in 1492. The family visited the expo several times and together they rode the first Ferris wheel ever made. Standing at 264 feet, it took twenty minutes to complete

a revolution and was built especially for the event. “So this is what the birds see,” Brian McDougal said to his girls when they stopped at the top. It was a memory Victoria would hold dear in her heart all of her life.

Victoria grew up to be a stunning young lady, tall and shapely with long, reddish, dark blonde hair and expressive blue-green eyes that twinkled when she laughed. Victoria’s laugh alone sometimes made even perfect strangers smile. One afternoon Molly, gazing at her daughter, thought of how exceptionally lovely her daughter had become. “All women are like beautiful pearls, Victoria. A pearl is formed when a grain of sand has entered the tightness of the fresh water shell and then irritates the mussel inside. The longer the process the more beautiful and lustrous the pearl becomes with layers and layers of iridescent radiance. Finally when it is opened a beautiful treasure is discovered inside. True beauty comes from within, Victoria. Kindness is the light that illuminates from the soul.”

When Victoria was 19, Molly McDougal caught a fever and died of pneumonia. Victoria was devastated at the loss of her mother. A year later, Molly’s beloved husband, Brian, died of a broken heart. Alone and depressed, Victoria fell in love with Ian O’Donnell, a handsome young man from “the old country.” He was fun and charming, but his favorite pastime was to drink too much ale and sing silly songs and limericks in the pub. He made Victoria laugh, and for a short time, she forgot about her sadness.

One evening, under a starry, moonlit night, Ian told Victoria he loved her and wanted to marry her. Victoria said “Yes” and was overjoyed with happiness. Ian had brought some spirits and convinced Victoria to drink with him to celebrate their future. Ian

kissed her deeply in a way he had never kissed her before, and when he did, it sent a thrill throughout her body. Between the ale and the kiss, Victoria was carried away into the fantasy of becoming Ian's wife. She had only known the love her parents had for each other and believed in that moment that she was now going to have Ian forever, loving and adoring her just as her father had loved her mother. All the passions of youth and virility swept through Ian and Victoria, and in the heat of physical desire, Ian was insistent that Victoria give him her precious virginity. "I love you with all of my heart, Victoria. We can begin forever right now. I want you so desperately, and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. In my soul I'm already married to you."

Victoria's body was feeling new sensations she had never known. She believed Ian's convincing words of love and devotion. Victoria was in a state of complete surrender and did not protest when Ian lifted her skirt and entered her womanhood. In that moment, she felt alive with a new awareness of giving herself completely. As Ian released his seed, he made a moaning sound so loud she thought he was in pain. Victoria, on the other hand, was full of different feelings and emotions. Although she felt a subtle physical pain, in a strange way, Victoria felt fulfilled as a woman and content in knowing she had satisfied the desires of the man she loved. After that evening, everything changed. Ian's words were different, and although he was polite, his demeanor was also different. He became less available to her, and she noticed he was becoming friendlier with other women. Ian had ceased talking about marriage all together, and it was not too long before Victoria realized she was with child. When she told Ian about the baby, he

promised to marry her in a secret ceremony. Within a week, Ian left town.

Victoria was brokenhearted and completely lost her will to live. She was sick every morning and had no appetite at all. Victoria went into deep depression and slept through most of the day. When she was awake, she cried. Two months after Ian left, the baby miscarried. No one was with her as she cleaned herself up and retrieved the small, lifeless tissue that had been living inside her. Victoria wrapped the tiny fetus in a lacey doily her mother had made and put it in a wooden box. Quietly she prayed as she buried her baby in the rose garden. “Go to the angels, my little one. Your grandparents are there waiting for you.” After losing her child, Victoria became even more depressed. She was left alone and felt ashamed.

Aurora ceased to be the joyful home Victoria had known as a child. After her experiences with Ian, she harbored too many painful memories, and missed her family enormously. Many times her mother told her, “Victoria means Victory! Follow your dreams, my dear. There is nothing you cannot do!” With that, Victoria got on a train to Chicago and never looked back. She found a job as a librarian and a room to call *home* in a modest but clean boarding house with several other young women. She preferred her privacy and kept to herself most of the time. She liked working at the library because she loved books. Molly McDougal often told her daughter, “Reading can take you to another world, Victoria. God made human beings because God loves a good story.” Reading romantic novels took Victoria away to exciting places full of fantasy and love. Victoria was in love with love, the kind she saw between her parents, Brian and Molly McDougal. She, on the other hand, felt soiled and

used. By now, Victoria had surrendered herself to the idea that true love only happens to other people.

Victoria was stunning, and men looked at her with lustful eyes. One time, while checking out some books on philosophy, an older gentleman winked at her, smiled, and said, "If I looked like you, I would certainly be a wealthy man. You are sitting on a million dollars, young lady." Victoria blushed and wondered, "What in the world was he talking about?" Somehow it made her feel uncomfortable. Twenty-one years old and beautiful, Victoria had grown bored with young men and felt like none of them could be trusted. Her bitterness and obvious disinterest only enticed men more. Victoria's indifference intrigued a lot of men. There was always some young stud coming around to the library trying to court her. It was in times like these that she really missed her mother. She felt she had no one to talk to or to give her the advice young women so desperately need. Victoria wondered how differently her life would be if her parents were still alive.

It was September of 1899. The first days of autumn brought crisp cool weather and colorful foliage to Chicago's Grant Park by the shores of Lake Michigan. Victoria was sitting on a bench reading Emily Bronte's, *Wuthering Heights*. For a moment, she glanced up from her book and saw two attractive young women walking along the path in front of her. One was redheaded, and the other had dark blonde hair. Both were wearing elegant clothes and expensive jewelry. They stopped for a moment and looked at her. After a brief conversation between them, the two women walked toward the bench where Victoria was sitting. They smiled a friendly smile and said, "Hello." Victoria smiled back.

“You are reading one of my favorite books,” one of them said. “Catherine and Heathcliff are two of my favorite characters.”

“Alas, a story of unrequited love,” Victoria sighed. “I have read it before.”

“Unfortunately, sometimes love just does not work out,” the other woman quipped in a songful Southern accent.

“I have had my own disappointments when it comes to love,” Victoria said. “My parents were in love, but sometimes I think they were just a fairy tale. Both of them are gone now. I have not had much luck with men.”

The two women looked at each other. The blonde haired woman raised her eyebrows, and the other eagerly pulled out a calling card. “My name is Minna, and this is my sister Ada. We would like to invite you to tea next Saturday. Ada and I are opening a new business in a few months, you might be interested in. We shall serve at 4 o’clock. What is your name, dear?”

“My name is Victoria Pearl,” she answered politely as she took the card. Pink roses framed a cream colored background and the lettering was done with gold engraving. It read:

Minna and Ada Everleigh
2131 South Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois

“Where do you work, if I may ask?” Minna inquired.

“I am a librarian,” Victoria answered. “My mother taught me to read when I was six years old, and I have been in love with books ever since.”

“Victoria Pearl, a refined, intelligent woman with beauty like yours can become quite wealthy. Come see us,” Minna said with a

warm yet businesslike tone. With that, the two sisters bid Victoria a good day and walked away.

That was the same remark the man made at the library. Somehow it sounded different when a woman said it. Victoria was full of curiosity. She was not sure what the women had in mind. Losing herself in books and romantic literature had brought her comfort and offered an escape, but she was not well educated in the ways of the world. Victoria opened her book and read for another hour. It seemed she was often drawn to the theme of unrequited love, and *Wuthering Heights* was one of her favorites. In the story, Catherine is passionately in love with a young man named Heathcliff who is sent away. Heathcliff returns three years later successful, and very rich. Because of her desire for social advancement, Catherine marries a wealthy man, shortly before his return. Tragically Catherine dies from a broken heart. “What a waste,” Victoria thought.

When Victoria was a little girl, Molly McDougal sometimes raced her to the front porch. “Victorious Victoria wins again!” her mother exclaimed, and they both clapped their hands, laughing. As she contemplated the invitation, she felt a surging sense of adventure just as her parents did when they climbed aboard that ship to explore their dreams of living in America.

“I wonder what it would be like to be wealthy,” Victoria thought. Her journey was about to begin.



TEA WITH ADA AND MINNA

Victoria was more than a little surprised that her invitation for tea was in the Levee, a neighborhood known as the center of prostitution in Chicago. Her first instinct was to ignore the invitation completely. However, she could not get over the fact that the Everleigh sisters had such impeccable etiquette and seemed so prim and proper. Their Southern accent was most charming, and for days, she heard Minna's words repeat over and over in her head, "Victoria Pearl, a refined, intelligent woman with beauty like yours can

become quite wealthy.” Curiosity and a sense of adventure got the best of her, and now she found herself in a place she had never been before, the Levee District of Chicago.

The cab left Victoria standing in front of the two mansions at 2131 Dearborn Street. She was smartly dressed and her hair was pinned up neatly beneath a modest sized hat decorated with dark purple and green flowers. It was a glorious autumn day, and the trees were beginning to lose their leaves after weeks of displaying their brilliant colors. Victoria was 15 minutes early for her appointment and decided to wait outside until it was appropriate to approach the door. Her mother always told her it was rude to arrive early to a lady’s invitation. “You never know what last minute preparations might be made,” she had said. The Everleigh sisters said 4 o’clock, so 4 o’clock it would be.

Just then Victoria saw a woman in one of the windows, the curtain moved to the side. It looked like Minna. A minute later, a friendly black woman wearing domestic clothes and a crisp white apron appeared at the top of the steps of the mansion. “Miss Minna said for you to come in, Miss Victoria.”

“Thank you. How did you know my name?”

“The ladies are expecting you Ma’am,” she answered with a big smile. “Looking forward to it.”

“What is your name?”

“My name is Mozella, Ma’am. Just follow me, and I will show you where to go.”

Victoria slowly strolled down the most exquisite hallway she had ever seen. On her left, she saw a small brick fireplace with Italian ceramic vases on each side. There were two colorful oriental rugs on the floor, and the paneling on the walls was made of dark

mahogany. On her right was a large mirror. Victoria looked at her reflection and stopped for a moment to straighten her hat. “What have you gotten yourself into, young lady?” she asked the young woman in the mirror. These were the same words her mother had said when Victoria did anything out of character.

Mozella led Victoria into a beautiful room where an elegant table with fine china was set for tea. “Miss Minna and Miss Ada will be with you shortly, Miss Victoria. May I take your jacket?”

“Yes, thank you Mozella. This is a lovely room.”

“Make yourself comfortable. You can sit over here,” Mozella said as she laid her hands on the back of a cherry wood chair with a gold and powder blue brocade covering.

At exactly 4 o’clock Minna and Ada, well dressed wearing an excess of diamonds and pearls presented themselves. Both women were proudly displaying an exquisite diamond brooch shaped like a butterfly. They seemed sincerely happy to see Victoria again. Victoria stood up from her chair.

Minna had a genuine, big smile, and although her sister was also smiling, Ada seemed a little more reserved. “Welcome, Victoria. Thank you for coming; Ada and I are delighted you are here,” Minna declared in her sweet Southern drawl. “Please sit down, dear.”

Mozella walked into the room with a tray of tea biscuits, dainty cakes, and a china teapot filled with hot tea. “That will be all for now, Mozella. Thank you so much,” Ada said in a kindly voice.

“Tell us about yourself, Victoria,” Minna inquired as she poured the tea.

“There is really not much to tell. I grew up about 40 miles from here in Aurora. My parents were Irish immigrants who met on

the boat that brought them to America. They fell in love and were married within a week after they set shore. Mother died of pneumonia a few years ago, and my father passed away soon afterward. When my father died I became depressed, and decided to come to Chicago. Mother brought me here often, and I fell in love with the city. Now I am a librarian and live in a boarding house full of women.”

“Why did you choose to be a librarian?” Ada asked.

“I love to read. I love the way books can take me to places and times I have never been before. Sometimes when I read I feel like I am experiencing another life.”

Ada seemed especially impressed. “What kinds of books do you like, Victoria?”

“I mostly enjoy historic adventure and some romantic novels, but as far as authors, I love to read Charles Dickens. He can make my senses come alive with his descriptions and make a story so real I forget it is only just a book. There are some books I wish would never end.”

“You sound like a passionate woman,” Ada commented.

Minna decided it was time to address the purpose of the meeting. “Victoria, I am sure that by now you understand the nature of our business. It is our intention to open and operate the finest parlor in America! To do this, we are looking for poised, intelligent lovely ladies like you.”

“I am flattered. If you do not mind my saying so, I would never guess you and your sister are involved in this kind of profession. May I ask what made you decide to start a business of this kind?”

“Quite simply, my dear; we like nice things,” Ada answered.

“Our father made sure we attended the finest finishing schools in Kentucky. My sister, Ada, and I were married to brothers from a good family, at least we thought, with the last name Lester,” Minna explained. “Just about every evening, including our wedding night, my husband put his hands around my throat and said, ‘This is to remind you who is in charge,’ and then he forced me to agree that women are a pain in the neck.” Grimacing, Minna delicately touched her throat. Ada gently patted her sister’s hand.

“When I heard Minna had left her husband, I joined her. I too had become discouraged with love and did not adhere to the philosophy, ‘You’ve made your bed now lie in it.’ We joined a theatre company and went to Omaha, Nebraska. It was the last year the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition was being held in the city. We were snubbed by the socialites there. One night one of the girls made the comment, ‘Please don’t tell my mother I work in the theatre. She thinks I work in a brothel.’ It was meant as a joke, but from that one statement, Minna came up with the idea that we should start a business to entertain the wealthy men visiting town. We thought if the wives won’t accept us, their husbands certainly would. Minna and I learned quickly that there is a very high profit when sexual services are presented with high class and style. We started with an investment of \$35,000 from personal assets we had acquired. Within a few months, we doubled our money. When the Exposition was over, my sister and I went on a quest to find an appropriate location to execute what we had learned in Nebraska.”

“After visiting several cities, we went to Washington D.C. where we met a madam by the name of Cleo Maitland,” Minna continued. “Cleo told us she had heard Effie Hankins was considering retirement and had a place known as *The House of*

Mirrors in the Levee District of Chicago. We came to Chicago and bought her business. Our standards are quite high; therefore, we are basically starting over with new girls and staff.”

“Mozella was with us in Nebraska. She was working as our housekeeper, and Minna and I fell in love with her. We insisted she come to Chicago and work for us here. Mozella had moved to Omaha from New Orleans. She has some great stories about that place!”

Victoria was completely captivated. She was being introduced to a new world she knew absolutely nothing about. It was Minna’s turn again. “My instincts are quite good, Victoria, and when I saw you reading *Wuthering Heights*, I took it as a sign. Although I usually prefer books on philosophy, *Wuthering Heights* happens to be one of my favorite stories. You are quite lovely, in fact, strikingly so. Ada and I are looking for girls with certain qualities to work for us. They must be beautiful as well as intelligent and have superior communication skills. We called our girls *butterflies* in Nebraska. Just like a butterfly, we see our girls as delicate creatures that dance from flower to flower.”

Victoria’s head was spinning. She could feel many kinds of different emotions running up and down her spine. She had always thought that *ladies of the evening* were the dregs of society, but the Everleigh sisters were painting quite a different picture.

“We will be paying our girls \$100 a week,” Ada expressed in a business like tone. “You will live at the Everleigh Club, and we will provide healthy meals for you. Our clientele will be only wealthy gentlemen; therefore, our standards are very high. The men will be paying a high price, but in return, they will have the classiest, most beautiful women in Chicago. Your job will be to be a lady and

become a *love goddess*, a kind of fantasy girl. We will take care of everything else.” Watching for a reaction, both sisters stopped talking.

Victoria looked around the room. Never in her life had she been surrounded with such elegance. It was a lifestyle she had never known before. Victoria liked Minna and Ada. Somehow she knew she would never have an opportunity quite like this again.

For a few moments Victoria did not know what to say. Finally she spoke. “It all seems interesting, but honestly, I have never considered this type of employment before.”

Minna’s tone was gentle but firm. “We plan to open the first of February. Right now we are renovating, painting, and interviewing musicians, domestics, chefs, and, of course, lovely young ladies. We would like to invite you to move into the mansion close to Christmas. It will be a good time for us to bond and an opportunity for our *butterflies* to become friends. Every day we will be holding lessons on charm and etiquette. It is mandatory that our girls have impeccable manners.”

“The money and elaborate lifestyle sound wonderful. If you do not mind, I would like a few days to think about it.”

Minna was very direct. “Are you a virgin, my dear?”

Victoria’s eyes welled up with tears. “No! No, no I am not.” Tears flooded down her face.

Ada quickly handed her a handkerchief and patted her hand. “There, there, dear. It will be all right. We will look after you.”

Victoria had never shared her secret before. She had told Father Anthony in confession, and he told her to pray for forgiveness. Besides him, only Ian knew the truth, and Lord knows whatever happened to him.

“Normally we insist our butterflies have experience. However, when we saw you reading at the park Minna and I both agreed you are a good candidate for the job. Call it instinct. You are quite lovely, Victoria. Minna and I have been interviewing girls for weeks and already we have quite a waiting list. We are extremely selective with our young women.”

It was a quarter-to-5. Darkness was quickly falling onto the Levee. “We have called you a cab, my dear,” Ada said tenderly. Victoria was still wiping her eyes. “A lady like you is not safe on the Levee after dark. Please get back to us as soon as you can one way or the other.”

Mozella was at the doorway holding Victoria’s jacket. “Your cab is here, Miss Victoria.”

Victoria stood up and hugged both sisters. “Goodbye, dear ladies. Somehow I feel better than I did before I walked into the Everleigh Club.”

“Goodbye, Victoria,” Minna said.

“Goodbye, dear,” Ada echoed and kissed her on the cheek.

Mozella helped Victoria with her jacket. “Thank you, kindly Mozella.”

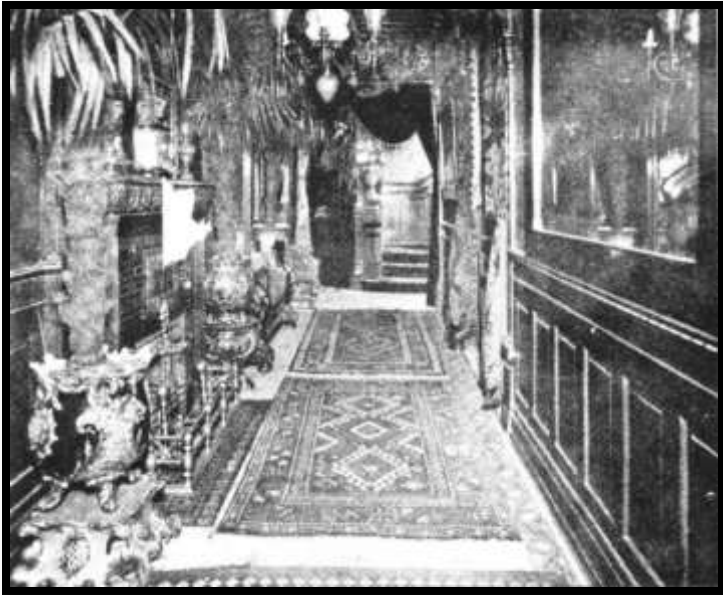
As she walked down the hallway toward the door, again Victoria looked at her reflection in the mirror. Sharing the burden of her past had eased the painful guilt from her heart. Victoria’s secret was out and spoken in an environment where there was no judgment for what she had done. For this she felt free and even empowered.

Victoria straightened her hat and smiled at the familiar, yet somehow different woman looking back at her. “You can do anything you want. You are Victorious Victoria! Thank you, Mama.

I am going to be wealthy. I am going to be a fine lady!” she thought to herself.

“Goodbye, Mozella! I will be seeing you soon.”

Mozella smiled. “Goodbye, Miss Victoria. I will be happy to see you again.” Mozella watched from the top of the porch until she saw Victoria safely ride away.





A NEW LIFE

Until now, Victoria had never had a high opinion of women who made a living selling their sexuality and had even equated it to selling their souls to the devil. However, she could not help but think about the beautiful décor of the Everleigh mansions and the formal elegance the sisters had demonstrated in attitude, speech, and appearance. Chicago was unfriendly toward Irish Catholics. That, coupled with the fact she was a soiled woman, also made the

invitation to work in the Levee more attractive. She already had two strikes against her. Why not? \$100 a week compared to the \$4 she was making now was an appealing offer. Living in a fancy mansion and wearing beautiful gowns were things she had only read about. Fate had challenged her to participate in a new world she had never known before.

Victoria responded in favor of the Everleigh sisters' business proposition a few days after the meeting. The sisters were actually pleased that she had not responded too eagerly. This quality impressed the women, and they saw Victoria as having sound judgment and contemplation of matters at hand. They knew this type of characteristic would suit their clientele nicely. After all, many of them were self-made men who knew the importance of contemplation and investigation but, at the same time, knew all about taking risks.

The day before Victoria accepted the Everleigh sisters' invitation to work for them, she decided to take a walk on the north side of town where there were stately mansions that displayed wealth and opulence to anyone who dared to be in their presence.

She remembered a day she took the same walk with her mother. "Are rich people happy, Mother?"

At that Molly McDougal put her arm around Victoria and gave her a squeeze. "Every human being on this great earth has a story, Victoria. Some are happy like your father and I, and some are so very sad. Remember love is the only thing that brings true happiness."

Minna and Ada invited Victoria to make the Everleigh Club her permanent residence in December. There were other girls who were invited to do the same. Victoria spent the month of November

working for the library, settling business affairs, and saying goodbye to what soon would be a past life. The most difficult was saying goodbye to the children. Victoria always encouraged children to read and praised them when they returned a book. She would ask her young friends questions about the story and have them describe their favorite character. Sometimes they made her wonder what her life would be like if her child had lived.

It was December 20th, 1899 when Victoria moved into the Everleigh mansion. Chicago was hustling and bustling with the sounds and smells of Christmas. Groups of harmonious carolers filled the winter air with holiday songs and joy. Her room was simple and elegantly decorated in a mauve, gold, and white motif. The curtains were made of white lace, and the large four poster bed was filled with lovely brocade pillows.

On Christmas Eve, the Everleigh sisters bought four Christmas trees for the girls to decorate. There were angels, white doves, and golden ribbons on the tree in the Everleigh library. Beautiful ornaments and red and green ribbons decorated the trees in two of the parlors. The main room had a spectacular ten foot tree decorated with china ornaments, silver bells, and sparkling white ribbons draped with perfect symmetry.

Mozella and her staff filled the house with the aroma of warm baked goods and plum puddings. The girls drank hot cider flavored with cinnamon and nutmeg. Christmas was lovely. Ada and Minna gave each of the girls an elegant new gown, shoes, and a string of pearls to wear on opening night.

A part of Victoria felt she was in some kind of dream where she had walked through the looking glass into a world filled with elegance and style. The new lifestyle was in direct conflict with her

Irish Catholic upbringing. It seemed that there was another small voice trying to reason with her fantasy, trying to remind her, "Everything comes with a price." She chose to ignore her conscience for now.

Ada and Minna intentionally wanted the girls to bond in a kind of sisterhood. This appealed to Victoria since she had no family at all in America. Any kind of competitive undermining would not be tolerated and was grounds for termination. The sisters understood the importance of evoking a harmonious atmosphere and had strict rules and high standards of behavior. The more pleasant the experience of attending the Everleigh Club, the better the chance men would spend money and keep coming back for more. Victoria had a passion for life and until now vicariously enjoyed love and drama through the characters in the books she read. Now her interest in stories had changed. Victoria had found a book of poetry written by Veronica Franco, a courtesan who lived in Venice in the 16th century. Veronica offered a kind of perspective that suited Victoria's understanding of the type of profession she was about to enter.

The Everleigh sisters had recommended that Victoria read about Geisha girls. She also discovered a book on the Kama Sutra. Because Victoria loved to read, she found the material fascinating and much different from the attitudes of Queen Victoria, whose influence had blanketed women in the Western world in the last several decades.

On New Year's Eve, the "butterflies" as the sisters called them, entered the twentieth century with chilled champagne, courtesy of Ada and Minna Everleigh. As Victoria felt the bubbles float down, she smiled. In just a few weeks, the Club would be open for business. The other girls were more experienced than Victoria,

and some had already been engaged in the business for quite some time. All of them were beautiful.

Victoria's heartbreaking experience with the handsome and charming Ian had scarred her for life. She believed him when he told her he loved her, and in that one evening, she had surrendered her body and soul completely. She was now soiled, and the thought of sharing that truth with any potential suitor was painful, indeed. Victoria felt it would be unfair to lie about her tainted virtue to any possible marriage proposal, especially someone whom she loved and knew loved her completely. It was easier to not think about a relationship with a man and instead get lost in her books where she could vicariously live a life of fantasy.

Victoria Pearl had come to the conclusion that she would probably never find a love like her parents had. To her, men were not to be trusted. Because Victoria did not come from an affluent family, working as a "lady of the evening" seemed like her only option to acquire any kind of wealth. Although Victoria loved the luxury of her new life style at the Everleigh mansion, the thought of having sex with a stranger was wearing on her deeply. Her journey to the unknown made for sleepless nights, and there were many mornings she wanted to leave. That is until the day she made friends with Madeline. Everyone called her "Maddie," and it was rare anyone ever saw Maddie without a smile on her face. Maddie was from England, and her accent was charming. She could really pour on the "la dee dah."

It was a cold January afternoon. The two women were sitting by a fire when Victoria confided in Madeline that she had almost no experience and had major concerns for opening night. "Maddie, I have only been with a man one time. I must admit, I do not know

what to do. I do not even know what a, a man's... a man's, well, you know, what a man's thing looks like. All I know is Ian was suddenly inside of me, and I became pregnant. When he found out, he left town, and I lost the baby."

"Oh, my dear, that is terrible," Maddie said. "I am so very sorry for you. You might as well be a virgin."

"I am nervous, Maddie, and even a little afraid."

Maddie reached over and patted Victoria's hand. "There's nothing to be afraid of, dear! Men are wonderful creatures! In fact, sex can be enjoyable anytime if you have a good attitude. Think of yourself as a sex goddess much like Venus herself: beautiful, sensuous, and powerful. We are the sacred feminine, Victoria, full of mystery and magic. This is because it is within women that life begins and is then nurtured and sustained." Victoria was fascinated. "The Celts saw sex as sacred and performed various acts in religious ceremonies. In olden times, the tribe would form a circle in a sacred oak grove and place a young man and woman in the center. They believed that the orgasm was strong, powerful energy. The woman would perform the sacred sexual rite on the young man, and when he finally released that powerful, sexual energy, the tribe would use it as a prayer for better crops or, in times of war, a victory on the battle field." Victoria had read many a book, but this was the first time she had ever heard sex explained in such a fashion.

"I had a wonderful friend and teacher in England," Maddie continued. "She knew of the old ways and taught me to look at what we do as what she called, *the erotic ritual honoring the bearer of the seed*. The Greeks called it, *the divine gift*. When the woman puts herself in charge, the experience can last much longer and be much more interesting and even more enjoyable to the man. There are so

many different ways to satisfy a man's sexual needs without lying on a bed and letting him have his way with you. In fact, that can only bring you problems worrying about pregnancy or some kind of disease. Not only that, but many times after a man has had his way, he quickly loses interest. Over the years I have studied the ways of the Venetian courtesans and their secrets of sexual pleasure, and it has brought me quite a good living, if I should say so myself. Much more than I could ever hope for trying to find a job working 80 hours a week in a factory or even as a clerk."

"Do tell, Maddie." Victoria was piqued with interest.

"Technically, Victoria, a man's, oh, let's just call it a 'thingamajig,' is not what I would call a pretty thing, and they vary in shape and size just like the nose on someone's face. However, if you see it as the seed bearer, the staff of life, the rod of creation, it can look quite different and even glorious. It is all about perspective. Most men are extremely proud of their thingamajigs; some will even give them a name! I certainly have heard some doozies! Brutus, the Gladiator and even Oliver, quickly come to mind," Maddie laughed.

"Satisfying a man can be quite fun if you make it like a game. Let him see your lovely feminine curves. Tell him you are there to serve, and let him know that your pleasure is his pleasure. Whatever happens, do not let him inside of you. If you do, the mystery will disappear, and you will relinquish all control. Men always love a good hunt. Your goal is to create a fountain of pleasure. In other words, your job is to simply clean out his pipes!" Maddie sang in her funny English accent.

Victoria had never heard talk like this before. She was completely captivated with Maddie and her attitude about sex.

“When you enter the room, the first thing you should do is make sure he is comfortable. Let him know all he needs to do is to lay back and enjoy himself. Then slowly allow your gown to fall loose, and tell your client you want to do all of the work. Do not get completely naked, or the mystery is gone. Make him ask for the privilege of viewing your womanly gifts, and then reveal your body slowly and sensuously as you look straight into his eyes. Ask the gentleman’s permission to simply look at his manhood. No matter what it looks like hold it gently in your hands, and for several minutes, lightly stroke it, and tell him it is the most gorgeous thing you have ever laid your eyes on! Then as it becomes firm, stroke the underside very lightly with your fingers. In some cases, that is all you will ever have to do!”

Victoria was surprised. “Really?”

“Yes really! Some men require more. You can skillfully use your hands with oil or lotions. Remember the longer he can sustain the more powerful his orgasm. The more experience you have, the more you will know when to stroke it slowly, stop for a few seconds, and then stroke it a little more quickly, each time bringing him higher and higher into his ecstasy. Be playful and encouraging and most of all, remember to be sensuous.” Maddie’s eyes were gleaming with delight.

“There is another technique to pleasure a man much like enjoying a delicious stick of peppermint. We can talk about that another time. You are going to be fine Victoria. The Everleigh sisters are brilliant women. The men who come here will be paying an exorbitant price for a beautiful woman to act as their sexual goddess and pleasurable fantasy. Many of our clients will be married. When a courtesan performs sexual rituals like I described

on a married man, somehow he can justify it in his mind and honestly say, 'I never had sex with that woman!' Of course, if he were to finish the sentence, he would probably say, 'she had sex with me.' Men are funny that way," she laughed.

"Some men simply want to please a woman and explore her secret chambers with skill and sensuous sensitivity. Although they are rare, these men are indeed the most delightful of all."

From that day on, Maddie and Victoria became trusted friends. They went on outings together, and it seemed like every day Maddie, a great teacher, had a new story about the clients she had known in the past. Her carefree approach to sex and educational demonstrations on how to please a man put Victoria more at ease. Maddie had succeeded in awakening Victoria's curiosity. She was actually looking forward to opening night.

Being a librarian had been predictable and manageable. Those days were gone. Victoria was on the threshold of a new life she knew nothing about. The next few weeks were like a rollercoaster of emotions feeling excited, and at the same time having a fear of the unknown. Victoria felt like the main character of a novel, and she was writing the story. "Once upon a time, there was a lovely librarian who loved to read. She found that stories helped to satisfy a passionate hunger she so longed for. One day while reading *Wuthering Heights* at the park, she was approached by two sisters who invited her to tea..."

By the middle of January, over 25 girls had been employed by Ada and Minna Everleigh. Finishing touches were being made in what was formerly known as "The House of Mirrors." The double brownstone mansion had been built in 1890 by a black woman named Lizzie Allen for \$125,000, cash! Only recently it had been

leased to Madam Effie Hawkins. The sisters knew there were wealthy men who lived or did business in Chicago. It seemed like the perfect place for the madams to open shop. There were 50 rooms in all in the Everleigh mansions, and no expenses were spared. The \$15,000 gold leaf piano (equivalent to \$370,000 today) was placed in the Music Room. Some of the rooms, including the Library still had mirrors on the ceilings. The different rooms were themed and decorated to correspond with the name of the room. Victoria especially loved the quaintness of the Rose Parlor.

The Everleigh sisters provided the girls their meals because they insisted the girls eat a healthy diet to maintain their shapely figures. Daily reading was required, and every afternoon the girls were updated on current events. This made them more interesting to talk to. Minna and Ada insisted the girls conduct themselves in a lady-like fashion. Drugs or excess intoxication were strictly prohibited and subject to instant termination. The girls all knew there were plenty of other young women on a waiting list ready to take their places. According to Ada and Minna, the Everleigh House was going to be known as the most famous, luxurious house of its kind in America. They were competing with over 500 other businesses like theirs in Chicago. For this to happen the sisters knew the young women needed to be classy and beautiful.

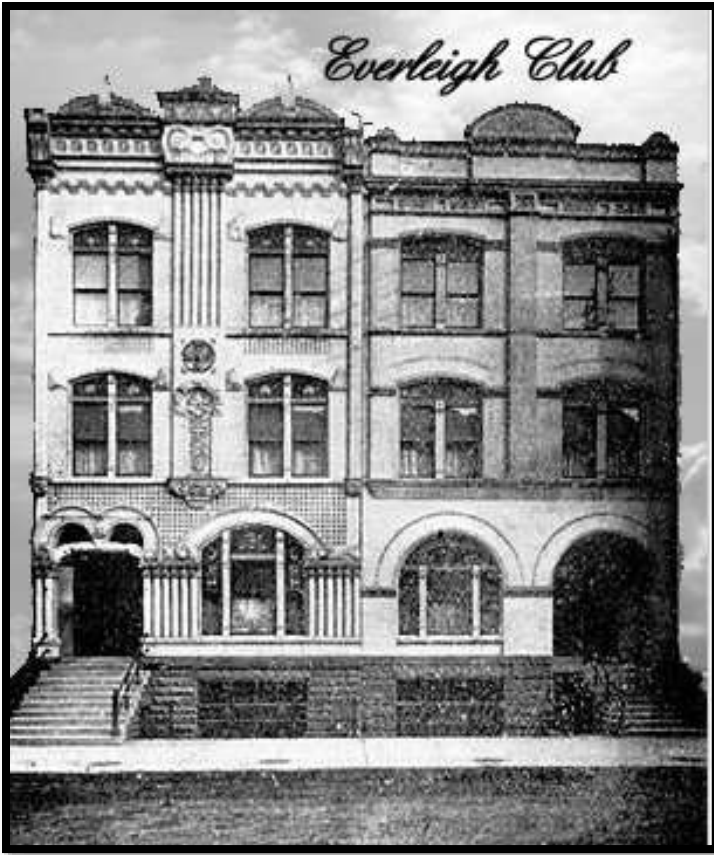
Minna and Ada Everleigh were extremely wise women. “The first thing you must always remember,” Ada said, “is to forget why you are here! Be charming, and have a good time. Men are wired differently than women. They have physical needs as well as a longing for female companionship. Here at the Everleigh House, we have a service to fulfill both with grace and elegance. This is how we will compete with any other brothels in Chicago. If a man

just wants sex, he can go down the street and pay less for it. Here, we give them much more.”

Minna was much more outspoken than her sister. “You will *not* be lined up like cattle. You will position yourselves in different locations throughout the house. Gentlemen only act as gentlemen when properly introduced to a lady, and remember you are all ladies! You will receive regular examinations by a doctor. All of you are healthy now, and we expect you to stay that way. Men like women to be clean and smelling nicely. Do not be hasty to take anyone upstairs. We require that you spend at least an hour in conversation with any potential clients. This fulfills the male need for companionship.”

“We want our girls to be masterful and creative with their talents. There are several ways to satisfy a man’s needs with no fear of pregnancy or disease. Again, your attitude will provide the excitement he longs for. After a man has reached his climax, your power is gone, and typically his adoring nature will change. The longer he is experiencing your charms, the more erotic his experience will be. This increases the potential that he will return,” Ada expressed in a factual tone.

“You will all be paid \$100 a week, and you are allowed to receive tips and gifts. You have a beautiful place to live and delicious food to eat. We will be sure you are dressed well. The entry fee for every client is \$10 (\$300 today). We will charge \$50 for dinner, \$12 for a bottle of wine, and \$50 to spend time with you,” Minna told the girls. “Make no mistake, we will soon be known as the finest in Chicago!”



OPENING NIGHT

It was the morning of February 1, 1900. After months of planning and teaching the young women lessons on etiquette and grace, tonight the Everleigh Club would be open for business. Victoria was full of butterflies. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the sisters sometimes referred to their young women as the “butterfly girls.” Outside, the Chicago streets were covered with crispy white,

new winter snow. The brownstone mansions were heated with steam, and every room with a fireplace had a warm cozy fire lighting the room with a golden glow, much unlike the boarding house where Victoria had resided for the last few years. Tonight she would pay the price for her new life.

Ada and Minna wanted to disassociate from their married name, Lester, and chose to be called, *Everleigh*, instead. They chose the name because the sisters' grandmother, whom they dearly loved, always signed her letters, "*Everly Yours.*" In the 1600s, Queen Elizabeth had assigned Sir Walter Raleigh to oversee the colony of Virginia. Legend has it that he gallantly spread his cloak over a puddle to prevent the queen from getting mud on her shoes. Because of this story Minna and Ada saw "leigh" as meaning aristocracy, thus the name "Everleigh" was created.

The two adjoining three-story stone mansions at 2131 South Dearborn Street provided 50-rooms and had been renovated and richly furnished. The Everleigh Club had 30 bedrooms, a library, an art gallery, a dining room, and a Turkish ballroom complete with a huge fountain and parquet floor. The sisters created 12 opulent parlors all exquisitely decorated and named with different themes. The parlors were private and sound-proofed. Minna and Ada spared no expense in constructing a sensuous ambience, with the sole purpose of providing an exotic, sexual fantasy for their clients. Three orchestras entertained their guests and rich oil paintings of nude women displaying their sexuality and feminine curves were hung on the wall.

The most famous parlor was the Gold Room which featured gold-rimmed fishbowls and an exquisite miniature piano made of gold. The elegant Rose Room smelled like roses. There was also the

Japanese Throne Room, the Silver Room, the Copper Room, the Blue Room, the Red Room and the Green Rooms, the Turkish Room and the Mirror Room. The Egyptian Room had a full-size effigy of Cleopatra; the Moorish Room had overstuffed couches and sweeping draperies. The Chinese Room was a place where gentlemen could set off tiny firecrackers in a huge brass beaker. Each of the rooms had a solid gold spittoon.



Upstairs in the boudoirs the gentlemen found marble-inlaid brass beds, mirrored ceilings, gold bathtubs, fresh cut roses, and push-buttons to ring for champagne. One room had an automatic perfume spray over the bed. Another room had a silver-white spotlight that focused on a divan. For the gentleman with a fantasy of having several wives, the ambience of a Turkish harem was created with rich furnishings.

Minna and Ada had hired all “colored” help. Colored employees with a Southern mistress were a safe bet, a concept

Minna had known all along. Mozella, along with the others, knew she belonged to the *front of the house*; the sisters saw them as members of the family. Although the sisters had done so much to prepare for opening night, there was not much fanfare. “That would be tacky,” Minna told the girls. “We will build our reputation through word of mouth and, believe me, they will come!”

That day the girls read, ate well, were educated on current events, and took long naps. It was dark when they began getting ready. The butterflies had baths and spent time fixing themselves to look even more beautiful. The hair went up, rose oil perfume was applied, corsets were tied and each girl was adorned with a beautiful evening gown. All last minute details were addressed, and everyone was ready to go to work.

The Everleigh butterflies were excited about opening night at the Everleigh Club. They looked stunning in their new gowns, and Victoria Pearl looked especially exquisite. Her hair was pinned up in an elegant sweep revealing her long slender neck and perfectly shaped ears. The lavish beaded gown she wore had a heart shaped neckline, accentuating her luscious ivory skin. Victoria felt and looked like Cinderella going to the ball.

For weeks, every afternoon, Minna and Ada Everleigh had taught the girls lessons on etiquette and social graces as if they were attending a highly respected finishing school for ladies. Most of the women who worked at the Everleigh Club came from simple backgrounds. However, because they were pretty, charming and intelligent, they qualified as good candidates for the sisters to work with. In some cases it was a major task to transform a woman who had been brought up with much lower standards into a lady with high esteem. The girls learned that the scent of roses was the scent

of the elite. They studied the ways of the Geishas and the infamous courtesans of Venice. Ada assured the girls, “We will be known for having the finest, most elegant ladies in Chicago and, in fact, all of America.”

Opium was a common drug used by the women on the Levee. The sisters knew discipline was important, and they had excessively strict rules. “Remember there are many intelligent, pretty women waiting to take your places. Your actions must be impeccable, and drugs will absolutely not be tolerated!”

So many thoughts were running through Victoria’s mind. She remembered the night with Ian when he stole her virginity. She thought about those Sunday afternoons when she had seen her mother give her father “the look” and then announce they were going to take a nap before dinner. Molly would walk to his chair and smile as she reached for his hand. Victoria’s father would stand up, put his arm around Molly, and together they would walk into their room and close the door.

Minna and Ada were well aware that their beautiful “butterflies” were not girls bred in high society, in fact, quite the opposite. Most of them had come from low income families or some kind of abuse. Some had no family at all. Minna and Ada had their work cut out for them, trying to convince their clients that these women were well-bred ladies.

Minna Everleigh gave her final instructions to the women assembled before her. “Be polite, and forget what you are here for. Remember, gentlemen are only gentlemen when properly introduced. We shall see that each girl is formally presented to each of our guests. No lining up for selection as in other houses. There shall be no cry, ‘In the parlor girls,’ when visitors arrive. Be patient

is all I ask. Remember the Everleigh Club has no time for the rough element, the clerk on a holiday, or a man without a check-book.

“It is going to be difficult at first,” she continued. “I know. It means, briefly, that your language will have to be lady-like and that you will forgo the entreaties you have used in the past. You have the whole night before you, and a \$50 client is more desirable than five \$10 ones. Less wear and tear. You will thank me for this advice in later years. Your youth and beauty are all you have. Preserve it. Stay respectable by all means. We know men better than you do. Do not rush them or roll them. We will permit no monkeyshines, no knockout drops, no robberies, and no crimes of any description. We will supply the clients; you amuse them in a way they have never been amused before. Give, but give interestingly and with mystery. I want you girls to be proud that you are a *butterfly* in the Everleigh Club. That is all. Now spruce up, and look your best.”

“What do we do if a man wants to have intercourse?” Victoria’s question was so innocent it made the sisters and the other girls smile.

“My dear... You simply use the phrase that has worked for thousands of years. ‘I beg your pardon, sir, but I’m afraid I do not know you *well enough* quite yet,’” Minna answered with her sweet Southern accent.

Minna’s comment put Victoria quickly at ease. The other girls thought it was hysterical. Maddie was laughing as she put her arms out and then hugged Victoria. “Do what Minna told you to do, Victoria. She is a wise woman. Remember we are dealing with gentlemen, and a man always loves the hunt.”

Victoria Pearl had chosen her station to be close to the piano. She loved music. Her mother had taught her to play. Many times she

would play the exquisite gold piano at the Everleigh Club late in the evening as everyone was getting ready to retire. The music created a peaceful ambience throughout the mansion, and it always took her to a magical world of her own where she fantasized about what the composers were feeling and attempting to communicate when creating each piece. It reminded her of her teenage years when she played for her parents. Molly would crochet Irish lace, and Brian would read while they quietly enjoyed listening to their daughter play as her parents sat by a warm fire



Everleigh Ballroom

The Everleigh Club was ready for business. The temperature outside was 8 below zero. There had been no publicity, advertising, or press. There were two different groups of musicians playing and the chef had prepared various foods for elegant dining.

At 8'oclock, the doorbell rang. A group of men stood at the door wanting to come in. It was quite clear by their appearance they were not the clientele the sisters would allow inside. "I am sorry," Minna said with charm and grace. "I believe you have the wrong house."

A half-an-hour later, a group of men from the theatre showed up at the door. Minna was quite aware that although the theatre group could be very entertaining in their own right, they did not make the kind of money that could easily afford what the Everleighs had to offer. They were also told that they were mistaken and had the wrong house.

The experienced girls had never seen clients actually be turned away before and began expressing their concerns. One of the girls was pouting. "It's opening night. We have been waiting for this for weeks! I feel like a princess, all dressed up for the ball, but there's no ball."

"No one is going to want to pay these prices! It is all just a bluff!" another girl responded.

"We will be out of a job before we even get started!"

Victoria stayed quiet. Each time the doorbell to the Everleigh Club rang butterflies would flutter in her stomach. She was not sure if it was fear or excitement. It even slightly took her breath away.

Minna decided to pick up the paper. The headlines read, *Rites for Philip Danforth Armour Jr.* will be held at 3700 Michigan Ave. The Armours owned a meat packing company which was a huge enterprise in Chicago and Michigan Avenue was in the elite neighborhood. They were among one of the wealthiest families in Chicago. One of the young women who had been complaining walked over and slyly looked over Minna's shoulder to see what she

was reading. She quickly ran back to the other girls. “We have her all wrong; Minna knows the swells all right. I caught her reading about Armour Jr.’s funeral, and she acted as if she had known him!”

Ten minutes later, Mozella came to Minna and reported the *backstairs conversation*. “The girls are talking as if you are friends with the Armour family! You are a clever one, Miss Minna!”

Minna laughed good-naturedly. “It worked, Mozella. I have never heard of Armour until today,” she whispered. “Do not tell anyone I told you!” Both women laughed.

Finally there was another knock at the door. When Minna Everleigh opened it, to her delight, she saw several Texas cattlemen standing there with hats in hand. “Welcome to the Everleigh House, Gentlemen!” she said with a big smile. “The ladies are anxious to make your acquaintance!”

Cynthia Jordan



A TEXAS GENTLEMAN

When Victoria saw those Texas cattlemen walk through the door, she was amazed. They were different from any of the men in Chicago she had ever known. They even walked differently. The

Texas men certainly had a presence of strength and vitality. All of them were smiling, and they reminded her of children in a candy store. The men were wearing suits and ties and collectively they were exceptionally handsome. The Everleigh sisters were making introductions to the girls. "As Victoria watched, she remembered the ladies always said, "Gentlemen are only gentlemen when properly introduced."

My hands are cold," Victoria heard Ada say to a ranch king. With that the Texan quickly called over a waiter. "Two bottles of champagne for the lady!" Then he turned to Ada. "The champagne will warm those pretty patties," he said sympathetically. Victoria was impressed.

Music was playing, and the money started to flow. Victoria was not forthcoming whereas many of the more experienced ladies knew how to flirt with their eyes and get a man's attention. She decided to keep her eyes on the piano player and focus on the music. She did not notice the tall handsome gentleman who had been standing back watching her from across the room. Sensing that someone was approaching her, Victoria looked up and saw Minna leading the gentleman who had been watching her by the arm. "Victoria dear, this is Robert McKnight. Robert, I would like to introduce you to our most gracious Victoria Pearl."

"Very pleased to make your acquaintance, my dear," he said as he kissed her hand. "Miss Minna, I believe I would love to have dinner and share a bottle of champagne with this lovely lady." All of a sudden, the fluttering feeling in her stomach doubled, and for a few moments, Victoria could not speak. She was completely mesmerized with the bluest eyes and the kindest smile she had ever seen. Victoria was especially impressed by the way he spoke. She

had never heard anyone pronounce words so musically and speak so slowly. Robert crooked his arm, and Victoria smiled as she slowly reached through the opening he provided for her.



Making contact, she could feel his strength and his warmth all at the same time. It was like holding on to a warm steel bar. Victoria was forgetting what her role was at the Everleigh Club and what function she played. This was a good thing. “Be polite and forget what you are here for” was a mantra the sisters ingrained into the girls. “Remember you are a butterfly, a beautiful fantasy.” Robert and Victoria sat at an elegantly set table with a linen

tablecloth and napkins, fine silver and gold rimmed china dishes. A bottle of chilled Pol Roger 1892 was formally presented to the table. The waiter opened the champagne as if he were performing a sacred ritual. Victoria watched as Robert gallantly took a sip. She felt like she was in a fairytale, and she certainly looked the part.

“Magnifico! Thank you. This will be fine,” Robert said. He motioned his hand to Victoria’s glass, “For the beautiful lady.” The waiter elegantly poured a glass of champagne for Victoria. After the waiter topped off Robert’s glass, he lifted it and proclaimed, “To the good life, my dear!”

Victoria repeated, “To the good life!” She smiled as she felt the cool, tiny bubbles tingle and slide down her throat and then settle into her stomach.

“So, who is the very beautiful Victoria Pearl?” Robert asked with curiosity.

Victoria felt her cheeks flush, shyly looked down and grinned. She could feel her heart was racing. Upon gaining her composure, she charmingly asked, “Actually, Mr. McKnight, I would like to hear about you. What is Texas like? I have only read about it. Texas absolutely fascinates me.”

“Texas is God’s country, Victoria. She is wide open spaces with beautiful rolling hills in the center, grassy plains in the north, lush green forests in the east, and majestic mountains in the south. The West Texas deserts have the most colorful sunsets you have ever seen and there are white beaches with sugar fine sand that border the deep blue waters along the Gulf of Mexico. Texas has rivers and streams, cactus, wild flowers and old oak trees that could tell you quite a story if they could speak. At night the stars are so bright you feel like you can pluck them right out of the sky. Texas

is where a man is only as good as his word, and a deal can be made on a handshake alone.”

“It sounds like a wonderful place!”

“I raise cattle, and I have a ranch at the edge of the Hill Country. My great-grandparents came to America from Scotland and were able to acquire a land grant for settlers brave enough to take on the new Western Frontier. The McKnights have been ranching and farming ever since. Mother and Dad both passed a while ago, and my little brother, Neil, was killed last September falling off his horse at a round up. He was a real character. He loved to ride and whoop and holler, rounding up the herd. I remember it was a Tuesday morning, just another working day. His horse got spooked and bucked him off. His foot was caught in the stirrup, and he was dragged quite a ways. By the time I got to him, he was in a bad way. He looked at me and said, ‘Love you, brother.’ Then he died.”

Robert paused as sadness fell over him like a room losing its light when the sun goes down. “I really miss him. My brother was my best friend,” he sighed. “Wish I knew what spooked that horse. I guess it was just Neil’s time to meet his Maker.”

Then as quickly as the sadness came, it left, and Robert perked up. Victoria was fascinated. She loved hearing his stories about Texas, and she kept wishing the night could go on forever.

Robert was a handsome man, tall and lean with slightly weathered brown skin that crinkled when he smiled. His teeth were white, and when he laughed, it made Victoria’s heart feel light. Victoria was enamored; Robert was intrigued. She listened to every word as he explained the cattle business and what his life was like in Texas.

Robert told her of the fresh water springs that flowed on his ranch and the way the wild flowers brought in the spring with a rainbow of colors. He was like a little child when he told her about his prize bull and how he had raised it from a calf. Robert smiled when he talked about watching it frolic with his mother. “We call him Big Jake.”

“Do you live on the ranch alone?” Victoria asked.

“There are two families who work and live on the ranch. Jose’s father worked for my dad. He and Maria Rosa live in one house, and John and Angela live with their children in the other. Maria Rosa is a great cook and keeps the ranch house clean. Angela tends to the garden and makes the best tortillas in the world. She is also quite a rider. The men take care of the livestock and work for a percentage of the profits.”

Robert could not take his eyes off Victoria. He found himself lost in her eyes, and the warm glow from the candle enhanced her beauty even more. It was a perfect evening, and both Victoria and Robert laughed as he shared his ranching stories and how so many times animals seemed to make more sense than people. One time after telling a story about his brother, his eyes were full of tears when he had finished.

“I am so sorry.” Victoria gently reached across the table and held his hand.

Robert put his hand over hers. “I know this sounds crazy, but somehow I feel like I have known you all my life,” Robert whispered.

A warm smile arose from Victoria’s heart. “I know what you mean. I feel the same.”

Cynthia Jordan

“You are quite lovely, Victoria Pearl. You are unique in your beauty just like our Concho pearl in West Texas.”

“Concho pearl?”

“The pearls are an iridescent pink color. Some are almost lavender. Nowhere else on the earth can you find a pink pearl. They are hidden treasures found only in the Concho River. Like our Concho pearls, you are a unique beautiful treasure, Victoria.”

Robert had already paid his bill. He rose from the table and reached out his hand to Victoria. With style and grace, she took his hand and stood up. He walked beside her and again crooked his arm. This time she snuggled into his warmth. She could feel his strong muscles, and again, it felt like butterflies were dancing in her stomach.



The elegant Rose Room at the Everleigh Club

Victoria led Robert up the mahogany stairs to the Rose Room. He had made arrangements to have the room until morning. Victoria opened the door and walked inside. The room was beautiful. The golden light from the fireplace created a romantic ambience across the room. Against the wall was a brass canopy bed with white linens. In front of the bed were two beautiful red and gold brocade curtains tied on each side of the curtain rod. A table with a crystal pitcher and glasses stood between two elegant chairs with colorful ottomans. Exquisite oriental rugs woven with deep rich colors decorated the floor. The subtle fragrance of rose oil created a pleasant ambience as if those in the room were standing in the middle of a rose garden.

Victoria became extremely nervous. She had only done this one time before, and realized she had no idea what she was doing. Although she had read every book she could get her hands on about Venetian courtesans and Kama Sutra techniques, Victoria suddenly forgot all she had ever read on how to please a man. Maddie was the only person she had told about Ian. The other girls had assumed Victoria was as experienced as they were. She started to question herself, “What if I am a huge disappointment? I really do not know what to do!”

Victoria opened the door. “Make yourself comfortable, Robert. I will be back in a few minutes.”

“Where are you going?” Robert asked.

“Oh, I will be right back. I am going down the hall to have the maid help me undo the buttons on my dress,” she answered. Victoria had lost any sense of composure.

“Ma’am, I would like to undress you if you don’t mind,” Robert said with his smooth Texas drawl.

Robert reached over Victoria's shoulder and gently pushed the door behind her. With his hand still on the door, he reached down and softly kissed her mouth. Passionately his warm strong arms wrapped around her as he kissed her deeply. Robert put his hands on her shoulders and tenderly turned her around. One by one, he undid the hooks on her dress. Victoria's heart was racing. She felt her dress loosen around her shoulders and then fall to the floor. Victoria slowly stepped out of the dress and put on a champagne colored satin dressing gown the chamber maid had laid on the bed.

Robert took off his jacket, vest, and tie and neatly laid them on the back of one of the chairs. Victoria playfully took off his boots just like she used to do for her father. Robert watched as she seemed to glide across the room. He could not speak; he could only stare. Robert had never seen a woman so lovely. She took the pins from her hair and picked up a hair brush. He walked over and took the brush from her hand and began slowly brushing the long, thick auburn hair opening night her back. His touch was soft, and his voice was husky and low. "You are a real beauty, my dear."

"Thank you," she said. The champagne had completely worn off by now, and Victoria wondered if Robert could see how nervous she was.

Apparently he was reading her mind. "Would you like a glass of port?" he asked in an attempt to lighten the mood.

Victoria could see there was a bottle of Ferreira Vintage Port Wine on the small table. "That would be lovely." she smiled, slightly embarrassed.

Robert poured two glasses of port and gave one to Victoria. "Here's to good times and the great state of Texas!" he announced as he raised his glass.

“To good times and Texas!” she repeated. Both of them took a drink.

For a long moment, their eyes met with a sense of familiarity of two souls reuniting in a space of timeless understanding. Robert looked at her with desire, and Victoria completely surrendered herself to the moment at hand. It was as if they were bonded with a golden light. Robert slipped the robe down Victoria’s shoulders and pushed her hair to the side. Victoria was watching him in the mirror. He bent down and kissed the back of her neck, and when he did, every nerve in her body began to tingle.

“You are quite exquisite, Victoria Pearl.”

Robert took Victoria’s hand and gently led her to the bed. She sat on the edge and looked up. He was so handsome, and his blue eyes seemed to know every thought or feeling she ever had. Robert slowly laid Victoria down and untied her gown.

His speech was slow and deliberate. “Lay on the pillow, my dear. You are absolutely gorgeous, Victoria.”

Victoria was feeling the depth of Robert’s desire for her. Her body was trembling in a way she had never known before. Robert’s breathing became deep and husky. Victoria unbuttoned his shirt and was in awe of his muscular chest. Robert’s hair was soft, and as she ran her hand over it, Victoria thought of how it felt like new spring grass bending beneath her hand. Robert ran his fingertips ever so lightly across Victoria’s entire body. She could feel an electric current shooting chill bumps up and down her spine. Victoria took Robert’s hand and placed it over her heart. “Feel me, Robert. Feel me... feel my heart!”

“I want to savor this time with you, Victoria. It has been quite a long time since I have been with a woman.”

Robert softly touched every part of Victoria with his hands and made soft gentle kisses all over her body. Victoria felt adored. She closed her eyes and responded to every move he made. It was like doing a dance, and she felt alive and free. Robert lightly stroked both sides of Victoria's waistline with the back of his hand and then across the middle of her stomach. "Your body is shaped like a violin, Victoria."

As Robert worked his way below Victoria's naval, Victoria's heart began beating so hard she thought it might burst from her chest. These were feelings she had never known before. Robert stood up from the bed and finished taking off his clothes. He looked like the pictures she had seen of Michelangelo's, *David*. "What do you want, Victoria. Tell me what you want me to do. What will make you tremble and want me, Victoria?"

Robert then gently put his hand on her womanhood and slowly massaged her with small gentle circles. "Do you like this? What do you want, Victoria?"

"You, Robert, I want you."

Victoria felt like she was in a completely different dimension as if she had walked through the looking glass. Robert explored unknown places waking up erotic senses she never before knew were there. As he continued to gently caress her body, Victoria moaned with pleasure and slowly moved her body back and forth with delight.

"Are you going to enter me?" she asked.

"Only when you invite me, Victoria, you let me know when you are ready."

Robert and Victoria spent the whole night together performing the lovers' dance several times that evening. When she

awoke the next morning, he was still holding her. Never before had she felt like a complete woman. Her experience with Robert was beyond her dreams. Now she knew what it was to be made love to by a real man, a Texas gentleman.

Victoria's sexual encounter with Robert McKnight was like a beautifully, orchestrated dance. The next evening Robert returned to the Everleigh Club and requested Victoria Pearl again; in fact, they spent three consecutive nights together, and each time Robert reserved the Rose Room for the evening. Every evening of sexual playing and seduction left Victoria with Robert's essence lingering over her entire body.

When it was finally time to say goodbye Victoria felt both happy and a bit sad. Now she knew what it was like to feel like a complete woman. As she stood before him she could still feel the tingling of the places on her newly explored body.

"I will write to you, Victoria. I promise." It was the last thing Robert said to her before he left. Maybe he would... perhaps not. One thing was true; Victoria had beautiful memories with Robert McKnight to carry with her the rest of her life.



BUTTERFLIES

“Oh no,” Maddie said. She had seen that look on many a girl before. “You let him have his way with you, didn’t you Victoria?”

“It was absolutely divine, Maddie.” Victoria smiled at her friend, still basking in her ecstasy. She crossed her arms and put her hands on her shoulders then began twirling around in circles. “I have never more like a woman!”

Maddie gravely shook her head. “Did you forget all that I told you, Victoria?”

“Please, Maddie. I know you are concerned, and I know I need to be realistic. However, just for right now, I am the heroine in

a beautiful love story, and I am not just reading about it, I actually lived it, and it was divine.”

For the last few nights, Minna Everleigh had seen the interaction with Robert and Victoria and decided it would be a good idea to have a talk with her. At the afternoon meal, Minna asked Victoria to meet her in the library when she was finished eating. Victoria happily agreed. It seemed like nothing could ruin this amazing feeling she had. It was like none she had ever known. Minna had seen this before. She liked Victoria, and she was concerned.

When Victoria walked into the room, Minna was waiting for her. “Hello, Miss Minna.”

“Shut the door, Victoria.” Minna’s tone was kind but stern. “You look happy.”

“I am, Minna. I am beyond happy! I just spent the three best nights of my life with a handsome, charming Texas gentleman, and I feel like a brand new woman.”

Minna smiled. “I know we tell you to forget why you are here, and you did an excellent job at doing just that. Perhaps too good of a job in this case, Victoria. Mr. McKnight is a good-looking, charismatic man. I know the two of you had a wonderful time together. I guess I just want to know what your expectations are. Not all of our clients are like your Texas gentleman; in fact, he is one of the most handsome men I have ever seen. Did you happen to notice the other clients the girls were entertaining?”

“Not really. I mean, certainly I noticed them, but I have to admit I was not paying attention to anyone else other than Robert.”

“Exactly! You did your job well, Victoria. The way you took care of Robert McKnight is precisely what we do here. Our objective

is to make our clientele feel like kings, men who should be worshipped and adored. I am sure Mr. McKnight is feeling like the highest of royalty especially after spending three glorious nights with you,” Minna expressed, raising her eyebrows. “You will learn soon enough not all clients will be like your Texas gentleman. Remember, they pick you; you do not pick them. We are here simply to provide a service, not to find Prince Charming to carry us away to his castle. Although it is not impossible, it is not our reality. Do you understand what I am telling you, Victoria?”

“Yes I do, Minna. I know I am not as experienced as the other ladies, but I am very aware of what it is we do here.”

Minna relaxed. “Men with money like to have nice things, Victoria. They wear fine clothes, ride in fancy carriages, eat at elegant restaurants, and belong to exclusive clubs, many which they can join only with a formal invitation. These men are willing to pay generously to be with a beautiful woman whom they find interesting to talk to, and who will laugh at all of their jokes, feed their egos with charm and grace, and creatively satisfy their fantasies behind closed doors. They are not here shopping for wives; in fact, many of them already have one. They are here to experience the essence of a lovely, elegant woman with no strings attached. I just want to remind you that your Mr. McKnight came here specifically for that purpose. For you it was like one of the Chicago Cubs hitting a grand slam at the bottom of the ninth inning on their first time up to bat. For him it might be just a pleasant experience with a beautiful lady in Chicago.”

“Yes, I know Minna. I like to think of it as a fairytale. This one is called, “*The Lady and the Texas Gentleman*.” It is a wonderful

story. Even if it ends today, and I never see or hear from him again, it is still a beautiful story.”

“This can be a heartbreaking business, Victoria. Protect yourself. Remember the men pay us well to be their fantasy dreams come true. They may even make promises and tell you wonderful things in the heat of the moment that can completely change at the break of dawn. We are exceptionally good at what we do here. Even though you are not experienced with men, you are intelligent and creative. You know there are several satisfying ways to please a man, Victoria.”

“Yes, I am aware of that, Minna. Madeline has been teaching me some of her tricks.”

“May I suggest you develop a method that is unique and exciting? You can apply different techniques to not only obtain your objective but also to stay in control of the fantasy game. Any woman can lie down on a bed. Those women are likely to pick up a disease, become pregnant, or both. That is not what we do here. We want our girls to use creative methods to sexually satisfy the clientele. You are a beautiful woman, Victoria. I am sure someone will want you tonight. It is your job. Remember they pick you; you do not pick them. Are you up for it?”

“Yes, Minna. I know.” Victoria’s happiness was slowly diminishing, and her memory of Robert McKnight was beginning to fade away. “Thank you.”

“You will be fine, Victoria.” Minna stood up, gave Victoria a little hug, and opened the library door. Victoria walked out and looked around the Everleigh Club. The sisters were masters at creating elegant ambience. Every room was exquisite and impeccably decorated. Victoria loved living in opulence and luxury.

The staff waited on the girls as if they were ladies of the queen's court. After a parlor was used for entertaining, the maids were quick to go in with a fresh, clean set of sheets to put on the bed along with a sweeper and a duster to clean the room as if it had never been used. They would also clean and shine the \$650 solid gold spittoons that were in every room.

“How did it go with Minna?” Madeline asked her friend.

“It went well,” Victoria sighed. “Unfortunately, she brought me back to reality.”

“Remember, Victoria, all men love pretty women. Our job is to entertain the wealthy ones. Tonight when you go to work, just think of yourself as an actress playing out a part. Then it will not be so personal.”

Victoria decided to go to her room and read one of her favorite books, *The Arabian Nights*. The story is about a Persian king who learns that his wife has betrayed him. The king becomes extremely bitter and angry and has it in his mind that women cannot be trusted. Every night he marries a new virgin, and has her beheaded the next day. A thousand women have all perished until finally he meets one of his high official's daughters, Scheherazade. Scheherazade loves to read, and she especially likes poetry and has collected over a thousand stories of histories, kings, and departed rulers. She is beautiful, polite, wise, witty, charming, and extremely well-bred.

Against her father's wishes, Scheherazade volunteers to marry the king. She and her sister devise a clever plan. That evening she asks the king, “Please may I bid farewell to my sister, Dinazade?” Dinazade then asks Scheherazade to tell her a story. The king lays awake through the long night and listens in awe as

Scheherazade masterfully tells her sister the first story. Finally at the break of dawn, the story reaches a climax, and Scheherazade stops talking. “What happened?” the king asks anxiously.

“Dear Master, it is dawn and time to stop. I will finish the story tonight.” Scheherazade answered.

Scheherazade’s life is spared. That evening she finishes the story and begins another one. Again Scheherazade’s life is spared. And so it continues for one thousand and one nights. Because of her stories, the king has become a wiser and much kinder man. He marries Scheherazade and has three sons by her.

“Scheherazade,” Victoria thought to herself. “I will be like Scheherazade.”

That evening Victoria chose a coral colored gown to wear. She looked especially radiant, probably because Robert had awakened her long dormant womanhood the night before. Again she took her place by the piano, allowing the music to take her to another world. Unlike the other girls soliciting their charms, Victoria’s eyes were closed, and she smiled with contentment as her head swayed to the rhythm of the music, all this actually making her even more intriguing.

Suddenly, she was awakened from her contentment to Minna’s voice. “Victoria, this is Christopher Baker. Mr. Baker, may I present to you our beautiful, Victoria Pearl.”

Victoria opened her eyes and gracefully stood up. “Very pleased to meet you, Mr. Christopher Baker.” She reached out her hand, and Christopher Baker ceremoniously took it and kissed it without taking his eyes off her.

He was obviously pleased with his new companion. “The pleasure is mine indeed, Miss. Victoria,” he responded.

Victoria could tell by his haircut and outdoor complexion he was an athletic type. “Do you play golf?”

“As a matter of fact, I do,” he answered.

“I have always wanted to learn. Such a fascinating game!” She looked at Minna, “The music is wonderful this evening.” Victoria lightly put her fingers on her throat, “I believe I am a little thirsty.”

“Miss Victoria Pearl, I would be deeply honored if you will allow me to buy you a drink,” Christopher expressed in a most charmed, gentlemanly fashion. “In fact, I would appreciate your company this evening. Will you be so kind as to join me for dinner?”

“Thank you. That would be lovely.”

Minna smiled with satisfaction. Victoria was going to be just fine.

Victoria and Christopher spent the next two hours chatting and dining. Although he was nothing like Robert McKnight, he was nice enough, and Victoria performed her job well. She laughed when he laughed, and she used her eyes to capture his attention. When he told her she was beautiful, Victoria smiled coyly. She was witty, charming, and interesting and indeed her manners were impeccable.

Victoria had made a special request to use the Egyptian Room for the evening. After dinner she led Christopher up the mahogany stairway. The most profound quality of the Everleigh Club was the silence in the hallway that connected all of the parlors. The air was laden with the scent of flowers and sweet perfume as Victoria escorted the eager Christopher to their den of fantasy. The Egyptian Room had thick carpet to muffle any sound and was decorated with gold and white linens. As a special touch, there was the masterfully crafted effigy of Cleopatra herself.

Victoria had planned a fantasy game, and she would perform it skillfully this evening. Her tone was seductive as she gently closed the door. “Won’t you sit down, Christopher. We are going to have an evening together you shall never forget.”

Obediently, Christopher Baker sat on the fully stuffed golden sofa. He was like a school boy waking up on Christmas morning, anxious to open his presents. Christopher Baker was completely mesmerized with Victoria’s seduction and responded to everything she said with genuine excitement. “Do you know the story of Cleopatra and Mark Anthony, Christopher?” Victoria whispered.

Victoria kept her promise and gave Christopher Baker a memorable evening he would take with him throughout his lifetime. She had found her niche. Victoria was Scheherazade and Christopher Baker would certainly be back for more. They would all come back for more. Victoria created stories to go with all of the different rooms, that is, all but the Rose Room. Everyone knew not to give that room to Victoria. Her time with Robert was sacred as far as she was concerned, and sharing the room with anyone else would only destroy the fantasy.

Victoria enjoyed her new life immensely. Although a part of her understood it was a short-lived lifestyle, she found wealthy men to be charming and especially interesting. For the most part, she also learned they were extremely polite and respectful. Most of the wealthy men had impeccable manners and knew how to appreciate a beautiful, intelligent woman. Victoria had great respect for the self-made man. These were men who seemed to have the most stamina and character. She met high political officials, wealthy

bankers and businessmen, celebrities, and then there were those Texas cattle barons.

It was May 4th 1900, Victoria's twenty-second birthday; Minna walked into her room, holding an envelope. "Looks like you have some mail from Texas, Victoria."

Robert had indeed kept his promise. She always felt in her heart she would get a letter one day. The first night they were together he had told her that Texas gentlemen were true to their words. Her heart was beating so hard she felt it might jump right out of her chest. "Thank you, Minna."

Minna remained standing at the doorway. She didn't want Victoria to be alone if it was some kind of disappointing news.

"He's coming to Chicago, Minna! He'll be here next week!" Victoria was elated.

"We will make sure the Rose Room is reserved for you, Victoria. Just remember what I said. Protect yourself. Let him be your fantasy Texas cowboy for now."

Robert's letter said to expect him Thursday evening. Victoria was on pins and needles all day long. She hadn't been able to eat or sleep well for the last few days, anticipating his arrival. Finally, Thursday evening, Robert walked in with a group of Texas cattlemen. Minna welcomed him with open arms. "How is my boy?" she chimed with her standard greeting. She then took his arm and led him straight to the piano where Victoria was anxiously waiting for him.

"Mr. McKnight, you remember our Victoria Pearl," Minna announced in her most gracious tone.

Robert elegantly bowed and kissed Victoria's hand. He looked even more handsome than she remembered.

“Lovely to see you again, Mr. McKnight,” she said with a song in her voice.

“Would you give me the honor to dine with me this evening, Miss Victoria?”

“I would be delighted, kind sir.”

For the next three nights, Robert and Victoria celebrated their sacred time in the Rose Room. They performed the love dance eye-to-eye, heart-to-heart, and soul-to-soul. Robert was smitten, and Victoria knew he had her heart.

The morning Robert left Chicago, Victoria decided not to be sad. She realized that in any moment for the rest of her life she could bask in the memory of their precious time together. No one could ever take away the vision she played over and over in her mind every day. Now Victoria completely understood the memorable words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson: “*It is better to have loved and lost, than to never have loved at all.*” Victoria decided to write about Robert in her journal. This seemed to satisfy her desire to remember even the tiniest details of their sacred moments of making love. Reading her journal erased any sense of time and kept the memory fresh and new.

Throughout the next few months, Victoria became more experienced and began making important friends. Men admired the fact that she was an avid reader and stayed current with the latest trends and politics. Because Victoria was a good listener, she learned about business and how men think. Although sex seemed to be the attraction of the Everleigh Club, Victoria learned that it was not necessarily always the ultimate goal. The wealthy gentlemen who came were buying companionship with a classy, intelligent, beautiful woman who made them feel important and admired. It was an elegant place where a rich man could enjoy himself with other

men of the same social status. After all, if it were just sex they wanted, Chicago had plenty of other places for that.

Victoria thought about Robert often, and she wondered if he ever thought about her. She wrote about Robert in her journal as if they had an ongoing exciting love affair. Sometimes she would write fantasies about taking trips with him to Europe or exciting cities like New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans.

By now Victoria had made friends with most of the girls, but she was especially fond of Mozella. She had learned that Mozella had worked as a “lady of the evening” in what was now referred to as Storyville, a red light district in the city of New Orleans. Mozella’s grandmother had been a concubine to a sugar plantation owner in Louisiana. His name was John Bradford and was Mozella’s grandfather. Mozella’s mother grew up on the plantation and moved to New Orleans after the Civil War. When Mozella was 17 years old, her mother died, and she and her brother, Duke, went to work for Madame Louise on Basin Street in the red light district. Duke played the piano at the brothel where Mozella worked.

Mozella told Victoria about her life in New Orleans. She also shared stories about living on the plantation with her grandmother. “Mammy was a character! Told me the only real free women were black women with their white lovers on account of white women havin’ to go along with what their husbands want whether they likes it or not.”

When she was 26 years old, Mozella moved to Omaha, Nebraska with a white man who left her after a few months of living there. Omaha is where she met Ada and Minna Everleigh and was hired to take care of the housekeeping staff at the bordello they ran

during the Trans-Mississippi Exposition. When the sisters moved to Chicago, they asked Mozella to join them.

Victoria trusted Mozella and confided in her about her feelings for Robert. “Of all the men I have come to know, this one has my heart, Mozella.”

Within the first year at the Everleigh Club, Victoria had two marriage proposals, both from wealthy men capable of giving her a life of luxury. Victoria politely declined. “I am your pleasure girl,” she told them. “Making me your wife might change your fantasies about me.” The truth was she would rather be independent than spend the rest of her life with a man she did not love.

Working as an “Everleigh butterfly” had been quite an adventure for Victoria. She had come to love the lifestyle and socializing with important men and pillars of society. Victoria made the effort to stay busy and continued her love of reading. On Sundays, when the sisters allowed visitation from the girls’ special *beaus*, Victoria found her joy in reading a good book. She only wanted Robert in that way. Although she attempted to keep her heart in a safe place, his memory sometimes came crashing through like a tidal wave on a beach of shifting sand.

The Christmas holiday season at the Everleigh Club was an extravaganza. Ada and Minna spared no expense in decorating the club; it was a festive time for all. One of their favorite clients, “Uncle Ned,” as the Everleigh *butterflies* affectionately called him, was especially fond of Christmas. All through December he enjoyed sitting in a chair in the middle of the room with his feet planted in a bucket of ice. He then insisted the ladies circle around him and sing, “*Jingle Bells*.” Uncle Ned joyfully played a tambourine and drank

sarsaparilla while the girls danced around him and sang the familiar Christmas carol.

Regular clients showered the girls with gifts, and Ada and Minna received bonus checks from the gentlemen who appreciated their efforts in maintaining such a regal and exquisite establishment in the heart of the Levee. One man in particular gave the sisters each \$5,000. The next year the same man married a woman he met at the Everleigh Club after being with her just one night. Her name was Suzy Poon Tang.

A week before Christmas, Minna Everleigh came to Victoria's room. "A package from Texas," she smiled as she handed it to Victoria.

The name on the return postage read, "Robert McKnight." Inside the brown parcel was a small box wrapped with golden paper and white ribbon with a card that read:

To my beautiful Pearl. Merry Christmas to the woman who has my heart. Love, Robert McKnight

Mozella had come to stand next to Minna, and the two women watched as Victoria opened her gift. "Oh my!" she declared, holding up a stunning 3 carat diamond necklace. Also in the box were two iridescent lavender pink Concho pearl earrings.

"Oh, Victoria, they are absolutely exquisite!" Minna exclaimed.

Mozella smiled. "Looks like your cowboy has been thinking about you too, Miss Victoria."

The next few years Robert came to see Victoria several times. Each time he brought her exquisite gifts of glittering diamonds, emeralds because she was born in May and lovely jewelry made with pink Concho pearls. He never talked about his

personal life, and Victoria never asked. It was always an unsaid rule at the Everleigh Club. Minna often said, “What the men do outside these walls is none of our business.”

The gentlemen in Chicago knew it was an honor and privilege to be allowed into the exclusive Everleigh Club. Money was only one requirement. Minna and Ada did not tolerate rudeness, obesity, or anyone with an unpleasant stench that might take away from the lovely perfumed scent in the parlors. There were those who came just to drink and dine and saw the beautiful butterflies as a side attraction.

In just a short time, the Everleigh Club’s reputation had spread all over the world. In just a short time, the Everleigh Club’s reputation had spread all over the world. Behind those thick wooden doors were secrets protected in a world of sexual fantasy and make believe. Like carolers at Christmas, groups of reformers dressed in dark clothes wearing sour looks on their faces would sometimes gather on Dearborn Street singing hymns in an attempt to save the *butterflies*’ souls. Ada and Minna protected their girls from the outside world. As far as they were concerned they lived in a world of their own.

In March 1902, Prince Henry of Prussia visited the famous club on a trip to America to pick up a ship built for his brother, German Kaiser Wilhelm II. Although Chicago had planned many fine events in his honor, King Heinrich’s only real interest was to have the Everleigh experience. Ada and Minna planned a bacchanalia for the visiting prince. It was an extravagant party as only the sisters could do. As one of the “Butterflies” performed a can-can, her shoe flew off, causing a bottle of champagne to spill into it. One of the prince’s men gallantly picked up the shoe. “A

beautiful woman must not get her dainty foot wet,” he stated with a chivalrous flare before drinking the bubbly champagne from her shoe, thus initiating a new tradition at the Everleigh Club.



Although the Everleigh sisters appeared to be lovely, delicate ladies gushing with Southern charm, they were also brilliant business women who understood the concept of superior marketing tactics. Several times a week, Minna and Ada called for their fancy carriage to carry them to the bank to deposit large sums of money. Led by two magnificent dappled gray horses, the sisters always brought a “beautiful butterfly” to accompany them. Like the Venetian courtesans who floated on gondolas throughout the canals of Venice, the richly clothed coachman paraded the ladies through the great open spaces of Chicago. They did not need a band to attract attention. With great success, the dramatic scene flamboyantly

advertised the quality of woman available at the now famous Everleigh Club. People went out of their way for the privilege of catching a glimpse of the elegant Everleigh sisters as they rode by with a “beautiful butterfly” in their fancy carriage. “There they go. Aren’t they grand!” said the onlookers. “I am saving up for the day I can call on them.”



The men who frequented 2131 Dearborn Street completely trusted the Everleigh sisters because their integrity was absolutely impeccable. They knew their privacy was always secured. One evening one of their wealthy clients spent \$1400 dollars (\$40,000 in today’s money) on a lavish party with champagne, women and gourmet food. The next day he sent an agent to pay his bill. When

the man came to the door, because the sisters did not know him, they politely informed the agent that the gentleman who sent the money had never set foot in their establishment before and turned the money away. Several days later, the patron happily paid the bill himself. Needless to say, he was incredibly impressed.

It was not easy keeping trouble away from the Everleigh Club. The sisters continually donated thousands of dollars to the First Ward Aldermen, "Bathhouse" John Coughlin and Michael "Hinky-Dink" Kenna, to ensure their freedom of enterprise. Ada and Minna allowed press and legislators in for free. They were all familiar with the popular phone number Calumet 412. This came in handy one year when evidence showed that one of the girls had accidentally shot Marshall Field Jr. The Chicago tribune reported he had died from an accidental shooting in his own home.

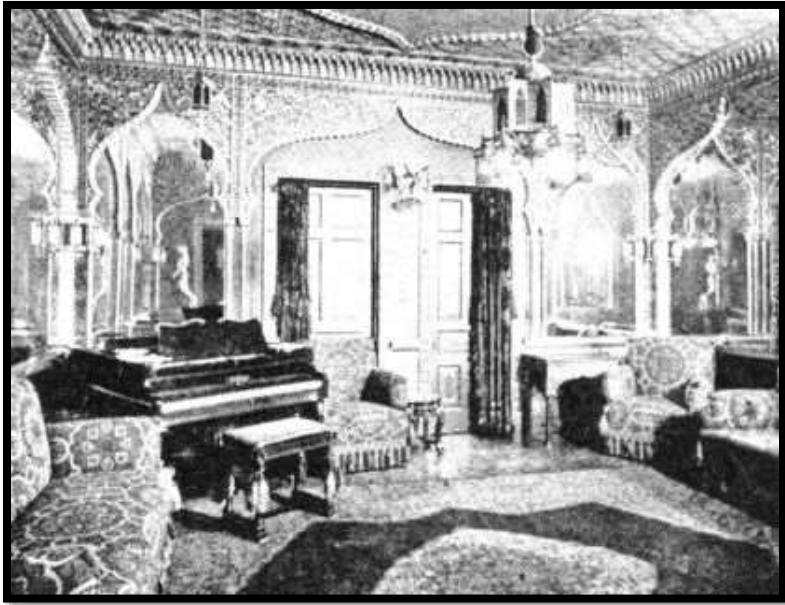
Victoria was always amazed at the variety of women who came to work at the Everleigh Club. One day a gorgeous, voluptuous woman named Phyllis showed up. "I hope you like me," she said to the sisters, adding simplicity and humility to her other virtues. "The man to whom I was engaged died suddenly of heart failure. I just had to get away from unpleasant surroundings. I have no parents, and here I am. It is a strange adventure for me, but I am sure I can learn. From what I overheard on the train, a life of shame in this adorable house must be the most glorious existence imaginable. May I stay?"



Understanding the stimulating excitement of mysterious anticipation, Phyllis liked to blindfold her clients before leading them up the mahogany stairs into one of the boudoirs she had personally prepared herself. When unmasked, the patron would feast his eyes on an impeccably decorated room with deep rich colors designed to visually take him into sensual fantasy. The parlors had subtle lighting on curtains made of royal blue, dark red, purples, or green silk that cast inviting, amorous hues. Several vases of fresh cut flowers filled the room with beauty and a natural, pleasant fragrance. Within a week, men were fighting over Phyllis.

Cynthia Jordan

Another girl named Valerie had a rich, beautiful voice and sang like a bird. Because she loved to attach herself to anything white, she called herself, “Little Miss Purity.” The Everleigh sisters made arrangements for Valerie to join a vaudeville act, and the main performer instantly fell in love and married her. They made it big and became highly successful in the theatre world. Alas, her husband fell for another woman who had joined the theatre group, and when they divorced, she came back to the Everleigh Club. “I don’t understand!” she sobbed. “I did everything you taught me. I was clean and attentive. Then she came along. What did I do wrong?” Again the sisters made connections for Valerie, and she went back to the theatre. This time she became an even more famous star than before.



Then there was Myrtle, a naturally born actress but a girl too lazy to follow that kind of career. She came from a farming town in Illinois, and although Minna and Ada clearly disapproved of it, Myrtle loved to chew tobacco. One night, when a party had become dull, Myrtle summoned Edmund, a black servant adorned in red and gold braid. “The tray, Edmund!” The servant disappeared, and when he returned, he was carrying a shiny, sterling silver tray on which was placed a huge plug of chewing tobacco.

As previously rehearsed, Edmund presented the tray, and Myrtle eloquently accepted the tobacco with style and flare and then bit off a big chaw. When she returned the plug to the tray, Edmund dramatically bowed, and everyone in the room laughed hysterically. From then on, Myrtle regularly honored requests to repeat the performance. The seriousness and eloquent display made it funny.

“We do not approve of anyone spitting on our Oriental rugs,” Ada commented. Although the sisters thought it crass, they went along with it to please the customers. Eventually Myrtle married a nice, overweight young man in the oil business who built her a beautiful home and made her switch to cigars. They had 2 children and lived happily ever after.

From the first evening they were together, Robert McKnight possessed Victoria’s heart and soul and was constantly in her thoughts. Robert had been her “fantasy cowboy.” Through the years, Victoria read everything she could get her hands on about Texas. She read about the Alamo, the Battle of San Jacinto, and the Texas War for Independence. She knew the stories of men like Davey Crockett, Stephen F. Austin, Sam Houston, and Jim Bowie. Robert’s family had been among the early settlers who had acquired land grants in the spring-fed land near the San Saba River, and on his

visits to Chicago, he told her about the cattle business. Chicago played a huge role in selling and trading Texas cattle, and Victoria made a point to learn all she could about pricing and making deals.

Three and a half years had passed since the afternoon Victoria had first walked into 2131 Dearborn Street. Before that day, she had been a librarian from a small town 40 miles outside the Chicago city limits. All she had ever known about the world was what she had read about in her books. Now Victoria had entertained and dined with politicians, wealthy businessmen, and dignitaries. At 26 years old she was becoming more aware that her time at the Everleigh Club was only temporary. She had enjoyed being surrounded by elegance and luxury, but it was only where she lived; none of it belonged to her.

Victoria had great insights to the way men think and knew intimate secrets about powerful men the rest of the world would never know. Learning from Ada and Minna had served her well. She became knowledgeable about politics and basic human nature and had acquired a strong, sound business sense. Through the years, men had bought her expensive jewelry and had given her money. Some took delight in buying elegant gowns for her to wear “just for them.” Victoria liked the feeling of both making money and saving money. One of her regular clients was an investor in the stock market. She had done well with her personal investments, listening to his knowledge and strategies over dinner and wine.

It was the spring of 1904. The World’s Fair known as “The Louisiana Purchase Exposition,” was being held in St. Louis, Missouri. A new invention called the “automobile” was introduced. The fair had a 340 foot Ferris wheel called the Observation Wheel that inspired a new song, “*Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis, Meet Me at*

the Fair.” Robert McKnight did just that. He invited Victoria to meet him in St. Louis to attend the World’s Fair.

Robert was waiting for her at the train station when Victoria arrived. They spent five days together in St. Louis where they ate a new popular food called the *hamburger*, drank iced tea, and enjoyed a new dessert invented at the fair called, *the ice cream cone*. It was different making love away from the Everleigh Club, and Victoria felt she had truly gone to heaven.



Finally on their last evening, they rode the St. Louis Ferris wheel which had been built with parts from the same Ferris wheel Victoria had ridden with her parents eleven years before. When the wheel had circled around and reached the top, under a crescent moon, Robert McKnight,

Cynthia Jordan

the handsome gentleman from Texas, asked Victoria Pearl to marry him.

“Miss Victoria Pearl, would you consider making me the happiest man on earth and do me the honor of becoming my wife?” Victoria’s dream had finally come true!

“Yes, Robert! Yes!” she declared with no hesitation. As he placed the sparkling diamond on her finger, Victoria truly felt she could reach up and touch the stars.



GOODBYE CHICAGO

Before Victoria went to St. Louis to meet Robert she had never been out of the state of Illinois, and now she was going to Texas. Somewhere she had read the word itself means “friend” in the language of its indigenous people. Minna and Ada were genuinely happy for her and gave Victoria a going away party. Most of the women in their line of work did not end up with stories that had fairytale endings. Many of the girls who worked on the Levee

died in their thirties from a drug overdose or taking a fatal swim in the Chicago River or Lake Michigan. When their youth was gone, so was their value. The Everleigh Club, on the other hand, had a high rate of marriages. Minna liked to share her philosophy, “Gentlemen appreciate a woman who can be a lady in the parlor and a seductress in the bedroom,”

“They are going to pay for it either way,” Ada would add with a grin.

Of all the people and friends Victoria had come to know, Mozella was the most difficult to say “Goodbye” to. “I shore am gonna’ miss you, Miss Victoria,” she said with a tearful hug. “You are smart and ever so kind. I know you will be happy with that handsome man. I’ve seen the way he looks at you. The way you look at each other. I do not believe in love at first sight, Miss Victoria; it’s much deeper than that. You and Mr. McKnight were lovers before in other lifetimes. People don’t meet their soul mates, Victoria; they just remember each other. That is what love at first sight truly is. The Bible says, *‘The eyes are the mirror to the soul.’* From that first moment you looked into each other’s eyes and your souls reconnected, he became a part of you once again. Soul mates are forever part of your heart and spiritual existence. I love you, Miss Victoria. You call me if you ever need a friend.”

Victoria handed Mozella a box. Inside was a perfectly round, shiny iridescent pink Concho pearl on a golden chain. “I want you to have this, Mozella; in fact, we both want you to have it. Now turn around so I can put it on you.” Mozella laughed with delight as she pivoted. “There now, it looks beautiful on you. Do not forget me, Mozella. I surely will never forget you!”

“Thank you, Miss Victoria. It’s so pretty. My goodness... a real Concho pearl from Texas! Give Mr. Robert a big ol’ kiss from Mozella.” With tearful eyes, the two women embraced each other.

“I have never been so happy, Mozella!”

Minna and Ada had called their coachman to take Victoria to the train station.

“Your carriage is here, Cinderella!” Minna announced.

Ada gave Victoria a big hug. “Be good, honey. You were one of our best!”

As Minna hugged her, Victoria’s eyes swelled up again with tears. “Thank you for everything, Minna,” she whispered.

“Your Prince Charming awaits, my dear! Good bye Victoria, take care of your sweet self!”

Victoria Pearl McDougal had walked into the Everleigh Club a young librarian and was walking out a wealthy woman. As she walked down the hallway for the last time, she looked to her left and saw her reflection in the big mirror just as she had on that first day she had met Minna and Ada for tea. This time she saw a happy, wealthy, worldly woman excited about beginning her new life.

Minna, Ada and Mozella stood outside the Everleigh Club and waved until Victoria’s carriage disappeared.

Mozella’s eyes were full of tears. “I’m gonna’ miss that one, Miss Minna. We have been friends from the start. Miss Victoria has been in love with Mr. McKnight for a long time now.”

“Indeed, Mozella. We really do love our butterflies. After all, where would we be without them?” Minna commented. “I have to agree with you, Mozella,” Ada added. “Victoria was one of our best. I must say, I am quite happy for her.

“So nice to see our butterflies find a home.”



HELLO TEXAS

Love has a way of enhancing the world. Victoria had never seen the sky so blue or the trees and land so green. The air was warm, and as the train headed southwest, Victoria felt like the colorful wild flowers swaying in a soft breeze in the fields, were performing a dance exclusively for her.

It was the sixteenth of June when Victoria finally arrived at the Santa Fe Train Depot in San Angelo, Texas. Robert was waiting for her with flowers and a big smile on his face. Victoria looked especially elegant in her mauve travelling suit and brand new hat. Her face was radiant, and anyone at the station could see Robert and Victoria were in love. A carriage took them to the elegant St. Angelus Hotel, where Robert had a room reserved. The hotel had just been rebuilt after having been destroyed by fire two years before and was the premier place in town for elegant dining and overnight comfort.

That evening Robert presented Victoria with a lovely golden ring. “I thought we could go to the Justice of the Peace tomorrow and get married, that is if you’ll still have me. I know I might be rushing things, but I...”

“Of course, Robert. Yes! We will marry tomorrow. This means I will be a June bride. Tomorrow is perfect!”

The next day Robert married Victoria in a simple, quiet ceremony, witnessed by a man and woman they had never met. It all seemed so surreal. Victoria felt like a butterfly, free from her cocoon. Texas was her home now, and everything in her life was new, that is with the exception of the love she had for Sir Robert, her knight in shining armor. Perhaps Mozella was right. Perhaps they had been lovers in previous lifetimes. Whether or not that was true, it was a nice thought. All she knew for sure was for the first time since her father and mother had passed away, Victoria felt loved and safe. Her dreams had come true, and she was determined to make Robert a happy man. Victoria was now Victoria Pearl McKnight, the happiest woman in the world!

After the ceremony, Robert and Victoria walked outside as man and wife. Victoria looked around her and took a closer look at San Angelo. It was so different from Chicago, simple and uncomplicated. She loved that! To her it was paradise. As far as she was concerned, any place was paradise as long as she was with Robert.

“Now for your wedding present,” Robert said with a mischievous little smile. “We are going to the Concho River!” They climbed onto the padded seats of the carriage. Victoria sat beside her new husband with her arm snugly hooked into his. With Robert, Victoria felt complete. She was amazed how they always fit together so well.

The Concho River looked peaceful and serene. Victoria could feel the warm dry West Texas wind blow gently on her face. “Here it is,” Robert said proudly.

“Here is what?” Victoria asked. All she could see was the river and the land around it.

“It’s your wedding gift, Victoria. This is where I am going to build you a house!” he gleamed with his arms stretched wide. “Here!”

“Oh, Robert, it is quite lovely. Peaceful, wonderful and lovely!” Victoria exclaimed with joy.

“I realize you’re a city girl, Victoria, and for a long time you have lived in a pretty fancy place! I want to build a house for us in San Angelo, right here on the Concho River. The ranch is 50 miles southeast from here, way away from the life in the city like what you’re used to. I have good help, and I don’t have to be at the ranch all of the time.” Suddenly his tone changed.

“Victoria, there is something I have not told you. I was married once many years ago but my wife died giving birth to our first child. It was a boy and the poor little guy never even took his first breath. Since then all I’ve been doing is working hard, and then I met you. Hell, I didn’t even want to go with those guys that night in Chicago. We’d come up to do some cattle business, and one of the men heard about y’all. I think he said he heard about the new club opening from a lady friend he knew in the business. They had to talk me into coming. When I saw you in that pretty dress sitting by the piano, I was mighty glad I had gone with them. I felt like I already knew you, like you had something that belonged to me. There hasn’t been one day since that first night, I haven’t thought about you. I love you so much, Victoria Pearl. You are my heart.”

Robert was so sincere. He had never talked to her that way before. “I love you, Victoria, but grandmother wouldn’t have been nice to you at all. She just didn’t like Yankees or Catholics, and God knows what would have happened if she had ever found out about the Everleigh Club! She died last February. Since then, I have been getting things in order to bring you to Texas, hoping, of course, you might agree to come.”

Victoria suddenly realized she had not known about Robert’s grandmother or even that he had lost his wife and a baby. All this time he had been thinking of her the way she had been thinking about him. None of it mattered now. She was with her Robert McKnight, and she loved her new life.

That evening Robert and Victoria ate a lovely dinner and celebrated their marriage alone with a bottle of champagne. They made love as man and wife all night long. It felt different knowing he didn’t have to leave. Now they were married; their union was

sacred and magical. Her name was now Victoria Pearl McKnight, and somehow it seemed as if all time before this moment had been erased. June 17, 1904 was their bright new beginning, and they were full of joy and love for each other.

Victoria gasped as the buggy pulled into the Five Star Ranch. She had never seen anything so lovely in her life. A cascade of fresh spring water fell onto a brimming 3 acre pond full of colorful lily pads. As she listened to the sound of the falls flowing so peacefully, Victoria knew she was hearing a new kind of music. There were oak trees and vast grasslands where cattle were grazing peacefully.

“I love Texas, Robert!” she exclaimed. “I just love Texas, and I love you!”

As they neared the house, two friendly brown and white Brittany spaniels greeted them with wagging tails and happy barks. “Meet Polly and Barkly,” Robert laughed.

Victoria’s new home was a two story farm house with a porch that wrapped around it. Robert helped her from the carriage, and then to Victoria’s surprise, he swept her up and carried her over the threshold.

A woman, perhaps in her mid-30’s, was standing to the side of the great room, smiling at their happiness. “Buenos dias, Senor Robert. Bienvenido a casa!” she greeted Victoria warmly.

“This is Angela,” Robert said. “Her family has been with our family for over 60 years. Wait until you taste her tortillas. You are going to love Angela’s tortillas!”

That evening, wearing a lovely strand of pearls Robert had given her on one of his trips to Chicago, Victoria presented herself to her new husband. “Some women do look good in pearls,” he breathed in a low sexy tone. He repeated his compliment several

times that evening, every time they made love. Throughout their marriage, walking into a room wearing only her favorite pearls would become a tradition on special occasions or sometimes, just to set an amorous mood.

The next week Robert took Victoria to Menardville, a small town on the San Saba River about 15 miles from the ranch. At one time, it had served as an overnight stop and trading post on north and west cattle trails. “There has been a lot of bloodshed in the state of Texas,” Robert told her. “One of the saddest stories happened right here on this river. Back in the 1700’s, the Spanish saw this as an ideal place to build a mission and fort because it was on the route from San Antonio to El Paso. Unfortunately, the fort and the mission were a couple of miles apart. The Comanche saw the settlers as intruders. One day two thousand Comanche Indians and their allies attacked the mission and tortured and killed two of the padres who were here. A third padre managed to live and tell the story of what happened. The details are too awful to tell you, Victoria. It was the start of the war in this land between the settlers and the Comanche Indians.”

“The river song is so peaceful, Robert. It almost seems as if she is singing the sad story of what happened here.”

“Several years ago the Great Western Cattle Trail travelled through Menard County along the San Saba River between Stock Pen Crossing and Peg Leg crossing. Back in the day, over 7 million head of livestock came through this area. The cowboys would pen the herd in the abandoned Presidio Compound, then go into Menardville to do their banking and visit the friendly ladies and saloons.”

Victoria looked at Robert and smiled.

The next few weeks Robert and Victoria were inseparable. She even liked to watch him work. Most days were spent riding horses around the ranch and their evenings making love. To Robert's delight, Victoria didn't miss anything about Chicago. The country air was fresh, and there was something about Texans that was refreshingly honest. "I know it might sound strange, but somehow it feels as if Texas has wrapped her arms around me and welcomed me home, Robert."

"Like any good mother," he grinned. "Texas will rock you like a baby, close to her heart."

Victoria wore simple dresses now, and for the most part, she wore her hair down or in a long braid when the days were hot. Robert loved just looking at Victoria: the way she moved, the way she played with Polly and Barkley, and especially her sly, seductive looks that said, "I want you, now." They laughed often, and made love every day, twice on Sundays. Robert was Victoria's happiness, and she was completely content being his wife.

Victoria had always wanted to go to her mother's village in Ireland. Robert's family was from Scotland. Connecting with the land of their ancestors was soulfully emotional for both of them, and their feelings ran deep. That fall, Robert took his bride to the Misty Isles. Every evening they found a pub where Victoria recognized some of the limericks and songs her parents had sung. The Irish brogue especially warmed Victoria's heart. It was as if a part of her mother and father was still alive. They visited small churches and took long rides throughout the vast green countryside.

As she visited places her mother told her about and ate the same cooking her mother used to prepare, Victoria felt reconnected to both her parents. She remembered those Sunday afternoons her

mother would smile and say, “Your father and I are going to rest a while Victoria,” and then shut the bedroom door. Now she fully understood exactly what that smile meant. It was the look of a woman in love.

The voyage on the ship coming home to America was rough for Victoria. Not once did she get seasick on the trip over. Now she was sick at her stomach every day. Robert was patient and Victoria kept apologizing. “I do not understand. I was fine crossing the ocean.”

When they finally reached America, Victoria continued to be ill on the train ride home to Texas. By the time they returned, it was quite evident that Victoria was pregnant. Robert was gravely concerned. It was painful enough when he lost his first wife and baby in childbirth. He would be devastated if he ever lost Victoria.

“Do not worry, me love,” Victoria said in a strong Irish brogue. “I come from a line of strong Irish women, and in a few short months, I will present you with a strong young laddie to work the ranch and bring the cows home!”

Every day she was pregnant, Robert continued to tell Victoria how beautiful she was. One day as she was reading on the front porch, he marveled at the sunlight glistening in her long, flowing hair.

“You are the most gorgeous creature I have ever seen!”

Victoria laughed. “Robert, me love, I believe you need glasses. Look at me! I am swollen up like a hot air balloon, and my breasts are as big as a cow’s tits! Moooooooooooo!”

“To me, you are the most desirable woman on earth! Besides you only have two tits. Oh, my sweet sexy Lassie! Look at what you’re doing to me!”

“Well, I say, Mr. McKnight! I do believe you are in the want of a woman!”

Robert reached for Victoria’s hand and took her inside. He slowly undressed his bride and laid with her on the bed. After they made love, he kissed the roundness of her belly. Suddenly he felt a slight thump against his cheek. “Just saying hello to his daddy,” she smiled.

“You are absolutely glowing with beauty!”

Victoria tenderly took his hand and laid it on her stomach under hers. “Feel your son moving around! There... I think he wants to play.”

“That is amazing! Oh, Victoria, I love you so much. So very, very much!”

As it turned out, Victoria was wrong about having a son. On June 25th, one year and eight days after they had been married, Victoria gave birth to twin boys, Michael and David McKnight.

Plans for the house being built in San Angelo had been postponed. Victoria was happy and content living on the ranch with her family. She loved watching Robert play with his two young sons, and for the first time in her life, she felt like a complete woman. Now she was a lover, a lady, a mother, and a wife. Victoria enjoyed her life in Texas with all of her men. “I am quite content with my family here on the ranch,” she told Robert one day. “I am not so sure we need to build a house in San Angelo.” Robert sold the land on the river, and the McKnight family continued living happily on the Five Star Ranch in Menard County.

America was growing by the thousands. The automobile was revolutionizing the country. By the time the twins were 10 years old, they knew how to handle a horse and drive a truck. When the train

station was built in Menardville in 1911, the railroad said the name was too long to fit onto the sign. Because of this the town was renamed “Menard.”

The new train station was fewer than 15 miles from the ranch which made it easier for the McKnight family to travel. Victoria was in love with Texas and set out to visit all of the places she had read about. “I want the boys to know music and theatre and to be exposed to the outside world, Robert. There is so much for them to see and learn, and I want them to be educated. It is important.”

Robert and Victoria took David and Michael on trips to Austin. They visited the missions and the Alamo in San Antonio, played on the white beaches in the Gulf of Mexico, and explored the exciting Galveston shipping port. The family always travelled together when Robert went to San Angelo on business trips. Victoria wanted her sons to be exposed to as much as possible. “Knowledge is power,” she told them.

From that first day when Victoria arrived at the Santa Fe Depot on North Chadbourne, the town had dramatically grown. To her, she found San Angelo to be a fascinating place. At one time the town was originally known as, “the place across the river,” with brothels and saloons servicing cattle driving teams and soldiers stationed at Fort Concho. By the early 1900’s, the town had become the largest trading city in West Texas. Word got out that San Angelo was an ideal place for people with tuberculosis because of the high altitude and dry, clean air. As a result, thousands of people settled there in an effort to cure their disease. In 1911 the Orient Railroad established a train that travelled as far south as Chihuahua, Mexico. What once was a small town with old wooden structures and streets

built wide enough for wagons to turn around, was now a growing city full of big sophisticated buildings made of brick and stone.

With the agricultural boom, San Angelo was buzzing with commerce and supported a strong sense of civic pride. It had 6 clothing stores, 8 hat stores, 12 dry good stores, 6 men's clothiers, 11 tailors, 11 shoe stores, 6 boot stores, and 6 "fancy" stores. There were over 40 grocery stores, bakeries, dairies, meat markets, 6 cigar stores, 16 saloons and a successful ice cream company. People could enjoy a stage production at the Crystal and Yale Theatres and the San Angelo Opera House. The Landon, the Angelus, and the Nimitz were 3 first-class hotels, and although there were 14 boarding houses as well, many times it was hard to find a room in town. Whenever the McKnight family went to town, Robert managed to buy Victoria a gift from Holland's Jewelers. Although San Angelo was nothing like Chicago, the town had everything Victoria could ever need or want and more. Most of all, Victoria liked the fact that the people were so friendly.

A stately three story mansion had been built on the land Robert had bought Victoria for their wedding day. Sometimes she went by to look at it with a little regret in her heart, remembering how excited he was presenting it to her as the place he wanted to build her a home. It was a lovely mansion with several porches and balconies, all with a lovely view of the Concho River. By 1913, San Angelo was dramatically different from that first day Victoria and Robert spent those enchanting nights at the St. Angelus Hotel. For her it would always be the magical place where she married the love of her life and for this, San Angelo would always hold a special place deep within her heart. As far as Victoria was concerned, the Concho River would always sing their eternal love song.

As the war in Europe progressed, a grim cloud of depression settled over the nation. From Tom Green County alone, 842 young men were sent overseas to fight in World War I. Victoria and Robert were grateful that their sons were too young to go. In 1917, West Texas experienced a devastating drought. Only 9 inches of rain fell that year, and the economy in San Angelo began to suffer. People started moving away from the city, and the prosperity boom ceased to exist. World War I ravaged the nation, and the boys who returned found it difficult to resume a normal existence. It would be the first time in America's history that the term "Shell-Shocked" was used to describe the condition. The entire country was forced to heal from its wounds after losing so many American lives. Many of the soldiers had died because of illnesses, and in 1918 a world-wide epidemic of the flu claimed the lives of millions. In 1919 the Spanish flu would claim the life of Victoria's beloved Robert.

Cynthia Jordan



GOODBYE MY BELOVED

Robert had just returned from a business trip in San Antonio. Victoria usually went with him, this particular time she had stayed home with her boys. “I’ll only be gone 2 days, Victoria. I’ll be home before you know it.” As Victoria watched the train pull out of the

station, a strange fear overcame her. The next 2 nights Victoria hardly slept. She tried not to let the boys see her worry, but Maria sensed her concern. "I do not know what is wrong with me, Maria. I know he will be home tomorrow."

When Victoria saw Robert at the train station, he could hardly walk. "Take me home, Victoria. I'm sick." He was barely able to speak. For three long days, Victoria never left his side. She read to him, put cold rags on his head, and held his hand, while singing and reminiscing of their times in Chicago. Victoria talked about the Rose Room and how Mozella used to tease her days before she knew Robert was coming for a visit. "Your cowboy is coming, Miss Victoria. The Texas cowboy is coming to see his favorite pearl!" Mozella had sung.

Robert went to heaven on a Sunday afternoon. Victoria could not understand how the beautiful spring waters were still singing their song, the West Texas breeze had not stopped gently blowing through the leaves, and the cattle were peacefully grazing in the pasture. For Victoria, life had completely stopped and had transformed into a strange dark silence. She had lost the love of her life and she felt like her heart was going to burst with pain. Robert was 55 years old when he passed, and Victoria was angry at God. How could this possibly be? A week ago they were making love, laughing, and making plans for the boys. What would she do now that her precious Robert was gone?

As Victoria prepared to bury her beloved Robert in the family plot beside the springs, she thought of the day she had arrived in San Angelo and how happy they had been. Today was the saddest day of her life. The ranch hands prepared a place in the family plot not too far from the springs. David and Michael, both 14 years old,

were sullen and found comfort in each other's company the way they always had when they were upset. Victoria refused to wear black. To her Robert was still alive in her heart. She put on a lovely lavender frock and pulled up her hair the way Robert liked it. "Put it up so I can watch you shake it down," he would say.

Victoria was sitting on her bed putting on her white gloves when Maria knocked on her bedroom door. "Excuse me Señora, but there is someone here to see you."

"Oh, Maria, I can't see anyone right now. Please send them away."

Victoria heard a familiar voice begin singing like a rescue ship in the night. It was the only voice that could ever penetrate her darkest moments. "What do you mean send them away? I've come all the way from New Orleans to see my girl, and I ain't goin' nowhere!"

"Mozella? Oh Mozella! He's gone! My cowboy is gone!"

Mozella ran by her side, sat beside her on the bed and put her arm around her. "I know baby girl. Mozella is here. I know." Victoria sobbed a comforting release while Mozella rocked her in her arms. "Mr. Robert will be watching you from heaven now, Missy. He was a good man, and you know he's dancin' with the angels."

"But I want him here with me, Mozella! I want him here with me!" Victoria screamed, pounding her fists on the bed and sobbing uncontrollably.

Victoria buried her head in Mozella's shoulder. "Let it go, honey, let it go." Mozella held her tight with loving tenderness, in an attempt to comfort the pain with love.

When she finally calmed down, Victoria sat up and looked at her friend with curiosity. “How did you find out, Mozella?”

Maria was standing at the door. “I called her, Señora.”

“Thank you, Maria. Thank you so much.”

Victoria had never known this kind of pain. Her heart was broken on the passing of her beloved Robert. Although she loved her boys, when she was at the ranch, everywhere she looked reminded her of her cowboy. With Robert the ranch was heaven on earth. Now it was a picturesque gigantic grave with all of her dreams buried beneath the land.

Victoria invited Mozella to stay on at the ranch. She had been her rock in Chicago, and her loving friendship brought both comfort and peace to Victoria’s immense grief. For the next several months, Victoria spent several hours a day sitting by Robert’s grave. The flow of the cascading fresh spring waters on the ranch brought her peace and cleansed the grief from her soul. Sometimes she burst into tears. Some days she barely said anything at all.

Finally one morning Victoria woke up with an attitude of renewal and strength. She washed up, dressed herself, looked in the mirror, and declared, “Enough!”

Victoria Pearl walked downstairs and into the kitchen where Mozella and Maria were drinking coffee and fixing breakfast. “Get yourself ready, and pack an overnight bag, Mozella! You and I are going to San Angelo!”

Maria prepared a lunch for Mozella and Victoria, and together they went to the Menard train station and embarked on the train to San Angelo. Although the last few years the city had experienced some hard financial times, recently, life had gotten better for the people of San Angelo. West Texas was overcoming

the financial setbacks from the drought, and people throughout America were healing from the pains of war.

The train ride took them through Brady and Brownwood. When they pulled into the Santa Fe Station at 4th Street and Chadbourne in San Angelo, memories of her first day in Texas passed through her mind gently like old friends. She remembered the excitement of her new life with Robert as well as the anticipation of a world she had never known. As the train pulled into the station, she remembered Robert's smile as she waved to him from the train car. The vision was forever etched in her mind, and Victoria felt nostalgic, melancholy, and grateful all at the same time.

As they disembarked, Victoria began telling Mozella the story of her first days in Texas. "This is where Robert picked me up the day I moved here from Chicago. This is where he was standing when I first saw him..."

Mozella nodded her head and smiled with every detail Victoria shared. Finally she stopped and looked at her friend, then started to cry. "We were so happy, Mo, so very happy."

Victoria quickly pulled out a handkerchief and dried her tears. "I want you to know I have decided to focus on the love Mozella. I only want to think of the love and not the loss. I am so thankful for the time Robert and I had together. Not everyone has the opportunity to experience a love like we had in their entire lifetime."

Victoria hired a cab for a couple of hours and took Mozella on a personal tour of the city. From the train station, they drove by Fort Concho. "Mo, I know you have heard of the Buffalo Soldiers - you know, the black soldiers who enlisted in the army after the Civil

War. This was one of their main posts. It was built to protect settlers and travelers from the Comanche,” Victoria told her friend.

From there they went to the St. Angelus Hotel where they walked inside for a moment. Victoria looked at the reception desk where she and Robert checked in many a night when he had business in town. “This is where we spent our first night as man and wife,” she sighed. “We were so in love.”

“I remember the way that man looked at you, Miss Victoria. The way you looked at each other. Never seen anything like it before.”

Next, Victoria told the cab driver to drive them to the Justice of the Peace. “And this is where we were married,” she said as they stepped out of the car. “I do not remember who the witnesses were or even their names,” she laughed.

Mozella patiently watched as her friend reminisced, the way good friends do.

“Let’s go down by the Concho River. I want to show you one more place.”

Upon Victoria’s instructions, the driver took the two ladies to the place on the river where Robert first presented his new bride with her wedding gift. On the lot stood an imposing three story mansion with a stately view of the Concho River. “This is where Robert brought me on our wedding day. Then it was a big open space. He told me he was going to build me a house here because he was afraid I would be bored living as a rancher’s wife,” she said with a tearful laugh. “I could have lived in the middle of the Sahara Desert with that man, and it would have been the most glorious place on earth. He was my happiness, Mozella, and now he’s gone.” Pearl cried again softly.

Mozella looked at the impressive mansion. “It is truly a magnificent house, Miss Victoria!”

“Look, Mozella! The house is for sale,” Victoria exclaimed pointing to a sign in the window. Apparently the family who had built the house had fallen on hard times and was anxious to sell. “What do you think, Mozella? Think we can make some money here?” Victoria asked her friend with a glimmer in her eye.

“It’s as good a place as any! You always did like making money.”

“The boys can take care of the ranch. They have plenty of help, and they learned from the best. That was Robert’s plan all along. He was always telling the boys the ranch would be theirs one day. You are right, Mozella, I do like making money. I will do it with class, just like the Everleigh sisters.”

“Here in San Angelo?” Mozella asked.

“Yes! San Angelo is close enough to the ranch where I can go home when I feel the urge. The economy has been picking up the last few years, and San Angelo is still the wool capital of the world. You know, San Angelo at one time was known as *The Naughty City*. As long as there are men with money who are willing to pay for a woman to be nice to them, I believe we can do well. It is all a matter of supply and demand.”

“You learned from the best!”

“I do like San Angelo. It is an interesting place,” Victoria said changing the subject. “The people are the friendliest I have ever known, much different from Chicago. Are you in, Mo?”

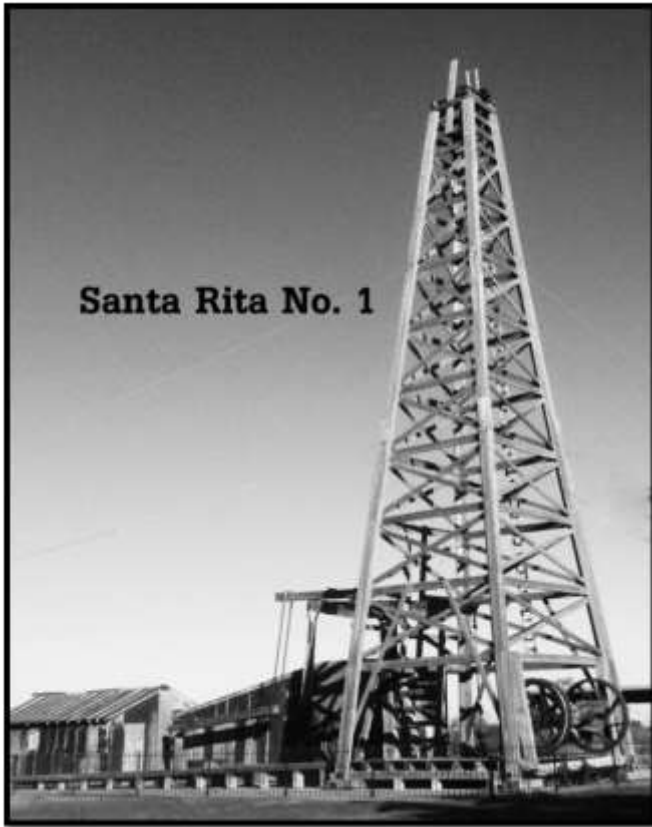
“It is a magnificent house, Miss Victoria,” Mozella smiled. “You learned from the best!”

“The name is Pearl, Mozella. We shall call our new business Miss Pearl’s Parlor! The prettiest girls in West Texas! As the great philosopher Plato once said, ‘The God of Love lives in a state of need.’ If they need it, we will have it!”

“Yes Ma’am,” Mozella said with a hearty laugh. “*Ruth 4: He will bring you a new life and support you in your old age.*”

That afternoon Victoria Pearl bought herself a mansion overlooking the Concho River in San Angelo, Texas, for a ridiculously low price. The FOR SALE sign that was in the window was gone, and once again in her life, Victoria Pearl was on the threshold of a brand new adventure.





NEW BEGINNINGS

Some people say that when we let go of the past we have the chance to be reborn again. Buying the house in San Angelo gave Victoria a sense of renewal. Although she was interested in getting on with her new venture, she was not in a real hurry to move away from her boys. Michael and David still needed their mother and she needed them. Knowing it would only be a few short years before they would go away to college, Victoria made it a point to savor

every precious moment she was with them. Losing Robert made her more aware that time spent with loved ones, should be appreciated and never taken for granted.

The McKnight family had homesteaded the land five generations before. It was Michael and David's birthright and, although the ranch reminded her of how much she missed her beloved husband, Victoria would always honor his dream for their sons. Robert often said, "One day this ranch will belong to Michael and David McKnight."

Robert had taught the twins the ranch operation well, but both he and Victoria agreed that they wanted the boys to have a college education. For now, she decided to see the house in San Angelo as a project to keep her busy until Michael and David were ready for the University in Austin. Operations on the ranch continued to run smoothly. Robert was the first to share a percentage of the profits with the Mexican families who had lived and worked for the McKnights for three generations, and Victoria trusted them implicitly.

A couple of weeks after Victoria bought the mansion on the Concho River, she received a letter from her friend, Madeline. After working at the Everleigh House in Chicago, Madeline had moved to New York City to live with her sister. The two women had casually kept in touch over the years.

"Look Mozella. It's from Maddie! I remember when Robert would leave Chicago, she always tried to cheer me up. 'I do not know why you would ever want to be with a cattleman,' Pearl mimicked, imitating Maddie's English accent. 'They probably smell like cow most of the time! Oh and their boots! There is no telling what they have on those boots! Phew!'" Victoria laughed as she

Cynthia Jordan

remembered her friend's jovial wit. "I wonder if she knows about Robert? I do not know how she could." Full of curiosity, Victoria opened the letter.

Dear Victoria,

I hope this letter finds you well. My sister belongs to a group of Catholic women who have partnered and formed an investment group. They are currently looking to invest in an oil drilling project in West Texas. The women seem to be excited, as the project was presented by a smooth talking Irishman who could sell ice to the Eskimos. I told my sister I know someone who lives in Texas whom I trusted. I would appreciate it if you can look into a small oil company called "Texon" in Fort Worth, Texas. I believe they call them "wildcats" or something like that. I appreciate you helping me in this matter. Please give my regards to Robert.

Sincerely,

Madeline Rose (Maddie)

"Look at this, Mozella."

"Well I'll be...Maddie!" Mozella replied.

"It seems strange how she talks about Robert as if he's alive. I guess I assumed because losing him has been so terribly hard everyone in the world knows he is gone." That afternoon Victoria sent a telegram to New York. WILL CONTACT YOU AS SOON AS I LEARN ANYTHING. VICTORIA PEARL

Victoria rode the train to Fort Worth and met with Frank Pickrell. He and his partner, Haymon Krupp, had formed the Texas Oil and Land Company together. Something about him reminded

her of her father. His aggressive Irish spirit impressed her as well as the fact that he and Krupp had already taken great financial risks themselves to drill this well. Victoria knew all about taking risks. She thought of the risks her parents had taken coming to America with nothing but what they could carry to the boat leaving Ireland. She thought of that first day at the Everleigh Club and how choosing to work there changed her life forever.

“Well, Mrs. McKnight?” Pickrell started. “What would you like to know?”

“Tell me why you think this oil drilling project is a good investment,” Victoria answered. Frank Pickrell was suddenly aware he was not dealing with an ordinary woman.”

“I’ll be honest with you, Ma’am. There is absolutely no doubt you first need to be a gambler and willing to take a risk on this venture. I’ll tell you right up front. This is not a sure thing.”

“I know all about taking risks, Mr. Pickrell. I appreciate your honesty,” Victoria replied in a curt, business like tone.

“Do you believe in fate Mrs. McKnight” he asked.

“As a matter of fact, I do,” Victoria answered.

“I was walking down the street with my business partner, Haymon Krupp, and I ran into Rupert Ricker, an old army buddy of mine. He had come to Fort Worth looking for investors for an oil drilling project in West Texas, but everyone in town had shot him down. Rupert told us he had done extensive research and was convinced that there is oil in West Texas near Big Lake. We went to his hotel where he spreads out maps and charts all over the room. Crazy enough, they seemed to make sense. He told us he got excited when a professor at the University in Austin says his findings were valid. My partner and I had just formed an oil company and we were

looking for some kind of prospect. As it turned out, he needed \$44,000 to rent the land or his permits were going to expire in just a few days. Unfortunately, it was a detail he had overlooked! Can you believe that? My partner bought the entire deal from him for \$2500. It is our first venture in the oil business and we are excited!”

Victoria watched Frank’s eyes as he talked. She had learned much about business from the men she knew at the Everleigh Club. For some reason the Club seemed like a safe place to tell all. She could see that the Irishman was full of passion, and he was not afraid to look straight into her eyes when he spoke. Victoria liked that. “I’d like to invest in your oil well, Mr. Pickrell,” Victoria heard herself say out loud. There was something about Pickrell that made her feel confident. Perhaps it was the fact that he sounded just like her father when he talked.

After the meeting, Pearl sent another telegram to Madeline and told her what she had learned. **THE OIL DEAL LOOKS GOOD. STOP. I AM INVESTING AS WELL. VICTORIA.**

Madeline showed the telegram to her sister, and the Catholic women agreed to invest in what was named the “Group 1” stock. The women included a couple of nuns from affluent families. The thought of drilling oil in West Texas seemed romantically exciting, much different than anything they had ever known in New York. To them drilling for oil in the rugged lands of West Texas was comparable to the spirit of the gold rush in California. Upon signing the contracts, the women threw a big party and celebrated with champagne. Victoria promised Madeline that she would maintain a firsthand account and notify her with updates concerning the well drilling efforts in West Texas.

January 12, 1921

Dear Madeline,

I have been doing some travelling and keeping myself busy decorating the house in San Angelo. I hope you can visit us someday. San Angelo has an interesting history and the economy has been picking up. Mozella is living in the house taking care of my affairs when I am not here. She has been such a good friend since Robert passed away. I thought I would give you a personal update on our oil venture. Enough money has finally been raised to begin the drilling. Apparently, we needed to start on or before midnight January 8, 1921. The geologist selected a site several miles from the Orient Railroad tracks near Big Lake, Texas, but they were not able to get the equipment there in time. Frank Pickrell asked the Texas State Land Office if the actual drilling had to start on January 8th or if land preparation was good enough. The commissioner told him it was the law and to get it done. It didn't matter if it was even a water well. Just some kind of drilling had to begin before midnight of January 8th. Pickrell spent all day of January 6th gathering water well equipment. Two days later, he convinced the Orient Railroad to delay the train 12 hours to allow the drilling equipment to be loaded onto a flatcar. The train reached the location at dusk. The men worked hard, and the equipment was loaded onto horse-drawn wagons as quickly as they could. It was after dark before the crew was able to get it to the well site. With just a few lanterns, Pickerell's men began digging a water well just minutes before midnight.

Cynthia Jordan

At the last minute, someone remembered there needed to be eye witnesses to assure that drilling had indeed begun on time. Just then they saw a set of headlights coming down the road. The men jumped on their horses and flagged down the car. This in itself was a miracle, Madeline. The chances that a car would show up in the middle of nowhere at midnight in Big Lake, Texas, are slim-to-none because it is the most remote place I have ever seen in my life. Frank Pickrell was able to convince the people in the car to sign an affidavit in town that they had indeed witnessed the fact that the well drilling had begun on time. Consider it our first miracle! This will turn into an oil drilling operation as soon as the derrick is built. I have to hand it to Frank Pickrell. He is very persistent!

Sincerely yours,

Victoria Pearl

Late that summer, Victoria updated her friend with good news.

August 20, 1921

Dear Madeline,

I hope these days find you well. Here is a brief update on our well. As you already know, the driller's name is Carl Cromwell, and they say he is one of the best. He commissioned R.S. McDonald of Big Spring, Texas, to build the oil derrick, and despite the July heat, they finally got it done. The man is amazing. He was able to purchase \$50,000 worth of drilling equipment for only \$5,000 in Ranger,

Texas. Apparently the oil boom had died down there. They finally spudded the oil well 3 days ago. The location is just 175 feet from the Orient Railroad tracks. It would have been too expensive to haul the equipment to the first place they wanted to drill. I like this Cromwell fellow. Looks like we're on our way!

*Sincerely yours,
Victoria Pearl*

March 27, 1922

Dear Madeline,

Good news! There has been a small oil show at 950 feet. There have been several setbacks with equipment breaking down. Mr. Cromwell and his assistant, Dee Locklin, have moved their families to the location. They have recruited some cowboys they call "roughnecks" to work on the rig, but it has been difficult to keep workers because the conditions are so hard and the location is in a barren country that is hot, lonely, and dry. Every time the Number One runs out of money, Frank Pickrell finds some creative ways to raise some more. I have visited the location a couple of times, and all I can say is I continue to admire their tenacity. The way I see it, as long as they keep drilling, the dream is still alive. In the meantime, I have been busy with my business in San Angelo, and I have a few girls working for me. Mozella is doing a great job taking care of my affairs when I am not here.

*Sincerely yours,
Victoria Pearl*

Cynthia Jordan

A few months later Madeline received a letter to assure the Catholic women; Frank Pickrell was indeed a man of his word:

May 1, 1922

Dear Madeline,

It's been several months now since they first spudded the well. The crew is using a cable tool and is only able to drill just a little over 4 and a half feet a day. They just pick it up and drop it down over and over again. Frank Pickrell told me about his trip to New York. I loved the story of how the Catholic ladies shared how they were concerned about their investment and had gone to their priest to ask him to pray for the well to come in. Frank told me the priest suggested that if it did come in they should name it after Saint Rita because she is the patron saint of impossible things. He told me how the nuns brought an envelope to the train station containing rose petals blessed by their priest.

As you know, the Irish are famous for believing in blessings. Please tell the ladies that Frank did what the nuns told him to do. Upon their request and to the amazement of the drilling crew, Frank took the rose pedals in the envelope and climbed to the top of the rig. While everyone watched from below, he scattered the red pedals from the top of the derrick and proclaimed, "I hereby christen thee the Santa Rita." I like a man who does what he says he will do. I understand now why they call the oil explorers, "wildcatters."

Last week I invested more money into what is now known as the Santa Rita No, 1. By the way Mozella has also invested in the well. Everleigh sisters had been generous

with her, and she managed to save a sizeable amount of money. Believe in the miracle, Madeline. Frank will not give up!

*Sincerely yours,
Victoria Pearl*

Although the next letter showed failing glimmers of hope, the courage to pursue was still very much in play:

February 9, 1923

Dear Madeline,

The money has almost run out on the Santa Rita, and the permit will expire the end of May. Every day the “roughnecks” are still working hard. Tell the ladies to go double time on those prayers. After all, what is it that God cannot do? I cannot get over how much Frank reminds me of my father. He is so tenacious and strong willed. Last week I visited the site again. The land seems so dry; and there are hardly any trees. However, the men are still working every day, and Frank told me he will see it through to the end. My goodness, it has been almost a year and a half now since they started.

The economy in San Angelo has picked up again, and business is good. I have ten lovely young women working with me and have maintained the standards we learned at the Everleigh House. My butterflies call me “Mother Pearl.” Some of our clients talk about the Texon drilling efforts in Big Lake. I heard one man say, “They’re just digging a big hole up there!” Another one said, “They are just a group of

Cynthia Jordan

amateurs throwing their money away!" I said nothing although my Irish blood was boiling inside. It just seemed so flippant. I have to say that even though they do not agree there is oil in Big Lake, they are amazed that the "Texon wildcatters" have not yet quit.

Even though the circumstances look bleak, I refuse to be disheartened. It is not over until it is over, my friend. I wish you well. I would like to think you will be coming to San Angelo soon to celebrate the Santa Rita Number One coming in.

*Sincerely yours,
Victoria Pearl*

Finally Victoria Pearl wrote Madeline her last letter regarding the Santa Rita Number One:

May 12, 1923

Dear Madeline,

The Santa Rita Number One has reached 3,000 feet, and Frank is feeling completely discouraged. From the beginning, the rig has averaged 4.7 feet a day, and lately there seems to be new problems developing with every foot drilled. The permit will expire at the end of May, and they have just about run out of money. This is it. It is time for Santa Rita to start answering our prayers or all of our efforts will soon be over. I am trying my best to stay optimistic. Say hello to the ladies and your sister and tell them to keep praying! We need Santa Rita to step in and do the impossible. I will hold the vision of you and me celebrating

with a bottle of champagne when the Santa Rita Number One finally comes in!

Sincerely yours,

Victoria Pearl

“Mozella,” Pearl sighed as she sealed the envelope. “I think I will go down to the river to do a little fishing. I need to have a talk with Saint Rita.”



1923

Friday, May 25, 1923: Creative sexuality was not the only talent the friendly ladies at Miss Pearl's Parlor possessed. Daily reading was mandatory because Miss Pearl wanted her girls to be interesting conversationalists.

Pearl had exceptionally high standards for intelligence, beauty, and grace. These qualities were appreciated and seemed to attract a more sophisticated clientele with money to spend; after all, she was running a business. Pearl was extremely strict and required her girls to act like ladies. She learned the trade well from Ada and Minna Everleigh in Chicago. The sisters had made a fortune catering to wealthy gentlemen.

Pearl exercised the same standards at Miss Pearl's Parlor. "Pretty is as pretty does," Miss Pearl liked to say. This made for a better product and better profits. "In order to appeal to a gentleman you must first be a lady. Remember girls, this profession is only temporary. You must always demand respect and keep your eyes set on the future. Save your money, and be independent in your thoughts and actions. The world is changing, and each one of you is capable of achieving great things!"

The sun was warm as the clouds cleared to reveal a beautiful bright blue sky. The air smelled clean from the pleasant rainfall that had just quenched the dusty West Texas town of San Angelo. Ten stunning women were sitting on the porch that wrapped around the three story stately mansion known as *Miss Pearl's Parlor*. Their names were Katie, Annabelle, Ginger, Betsy, Maggie, Sarah, Heather, Lucy, Redbird, Harmony and Miss Pearl. Each of the girls was reading a different book with the exception of Harmony, who was strumming her guitar.

Maggie had chosen a book of poetry written by Veronica Franco, a celebrated Venetian poet and courtesan of the 16th century. Accused of casting spells and having too much power over men, Veronica had been tried by the Spanish Inquisition for the fatally

punishable crime of witchcraft. At her trial, she was redeemed by the efforts of the noblemen who knew her.

“Listen to this everyone!” Maggie exclaimed. “*So sweet and delicious do I become, when I am in bed with a man who, I sense, loves and enjoys me, that the pleasure I bring excels all delight, so the knot of love, however tight it seemed before, is tied tighter still.*”

With that Maggie whimsically held the collection of poems to her heart, closed her eyes and smiled. “Isn’t that beautiful?”

“Maggie, sounds like you’re reading fairy tales,” Ginger sighed. “Knot of love is a bit of a stretch, don’t you think?” Ginger had wavy flaxen hair that shimmered in the sun.

“Don’t mind her,” Redbird defended with a sweet smile. “I know what Veronica means. It’s about appreciation. I have not known many, but when you get a man who *really* knows how to make love to a woman, it can be like a beautiful dance and quite delightful indeed,” she sighed.

Miss Pearl had been quietly listening to the conversation among her girls. She slowly took a sip of mint tea, then spoke, “Indeed you are quite correct, Redbird. When a man really knows how to enjoy a woman and appreciate her many gifts, the memory of that experience can live in her heart forever. This is because a woman completely gives with her heart, mind and soul when she is appreciated. Sounds to me like Veronica Franco enjoyed her life as a courtesan.”

“Sounds to me like she had some good lovers,” Heather giggled.

“I agree,” Lucy chimed in. Lucy was known for her fun-loving attitude, and she was especially creative in her work. Men

loved Lucy's wit and charm, and it seemed as if she was always smiling which made her popular, especially with men.

With that, Harmony, the parlor's muse, picked up her guitar that had been leaning on the wall. "*Put your arms around me honey, hold me tight, cuddle up, and cuddle up with all your might...*" she sang.

Ginger looked at Harmony and rolled her eyes. "You're in the same fairytale as Maggie!" she exclaimed with a smirk.

Texas Kate loved to tell stories and spoke up loudly, "I remember my Daddy told me his daddy used to say, 'If you love what makes your living, you will never work a day in your life.' If I could do anything, I would choose to become a Texas Ranger but that will never happen. I think Daddy always wished I'd been a boy. He taught me how to shoot. Sure do miss him."

Betsy suddenly became melancholy. "I miss my Daddy too. He's probably setting tobacco and planting corn right about now."

"I, for one, can say I love working here. I know I won't be here forever, but it seems like the best choice for now. I have to say the money is much better than any kind of job I could find," Heather commented.

Sarah was sitting at the end of the porch totally oblivious to the conversation at hand. She was engrossed in reading poetry by D.H Lawrence. "What do you think of this one, Ginger? *A woman unsatisfied must have luxuries; but a woman who loves a man would sleep on a board.*"

Ginger grinned. "It is true. I do have expensive taste." She stood up and began dancing around the porch. "I admit I do love French perfume and the feeling of silks and satins on my skin. As

far as love... Lord knows I've heard the word plenty of times, but no one I would sleep on a board for!"

Annabelle, the quiet one of the group offered her opinion. "I was in love once, and I would surely sleep on a board if I could be with him now. In fact, I think I would do just about anything if I could be with him again. The smell of rain always takes me to our magical day on the lake together."

"I know how you feel, Annabelle." Pearl smiled. "I believe true love comes once in a lifetime."

"I think I'm going to take Rusty for a walk by the river," Katie announced. "C'mon boy."

From the front porch of Miss Pearl's Parlor, there was a peaceful view of the Concho River gently flowing, with tall Texas pecan trees standing along its banks. Mozella came outside to straighten the chairs and sweep the porch, singing one of her favorite spirituals.

Mozella was Miss Pearl's best friend and Pearl trusted her with her life. It was Mozella's job to make sure life at the parlor ran smoothly. She was in charge of the house cleaning staff, food preparation and keeping the grounds manicured. Mozella also collected the money. She was best known to the girls for her knowledge of Bible scripture.

"Psalm 147: Who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass grow on the mountains," Mozella expressed, admiring her clean porch.

"Why do you always quote the Bible?" Maggie asked.

"My grandmother named me Mozella after Moses himself. Every day she used to quote the Bible to me. I suppose I'm just carrying on the family tradition."

Ginger turned and pointed to the east. “Look, Miss Pearl, someone’s walking toward the house.”

A young woman wearing a simple peach colored cotton dress and carrying a brown suitcase and an overcoat was making her way to the mansion. She was slender and medium in height. Her clear light skin had just a touch of sun, making her look as if she were blushing. The young woman looked up at the women on the porch with soft round greenish-blue eyes, revealing her childlike innocence and lack of worldly knowledge. It was obvious she was a little fearful and unsure of herself.

Miss Pearl stood up from her chair. She always had an eye for a pretty face. It was good for business.

“Excuse me, Ma’am, are you Miss Pearl?” the young woman called from the gate in front of the house.

“Yes, I am, dear,” Miss Pearl answered with a kind smile. She was a graceful woman and treated everyone as if they were important. The young woman pulled a letter from a small leather bag.

“A very nice gentleman, Mr. Swanson, told me to come see you, Miss Pearl. He has written a letter of introduction,” she announced, holding an envelope in the air.

Sarah could see the girl was nervous. She smiled at her and waved. “Hello there... I’m Sarah!”

The young woman nodded her head and smiled. “Hello,” she replied.

Victoria smiled a warm friendly grin. “I see... Ladies, I believe I would like to have a visit with this young lady. It is Friday night, and the weekend is at hand. You know we are expecting our

cowboys to show up tonight! Go into the house now, and start getting ready.”

The young women gathered up their books and returned them to the library inside the house. They were talking and giggling with excitement. The girls loved it when the cowboys came to town. Somehow showing them a good time just didn't seem like work. “There is just something special about those cowboys!” Maggie liked to say.

Mozella looked at the young girl standing by the gate and then at Miss Pearl. “She reminds me of a young lady I met in Chicago a few years back,” she said to her friend with a wink.

“Come up on the porch, dear,” Miss Pearl called from the porch. “Mozella, would you please bring this young lady and me some fresh tea?”

“Yes, Ma'am.” Intuitively, Mozella looked at the girl with innate wisdom and then back at Miss Pearl. “*Psalm 104: Some wandered in the wilderness, lost, and homeless,*” she quoted as she strolled back into the house.

“Sit here, dear. You look tired. What is your name, honey?”

“My name is Emma Grace, Ma'am.”

“You are quite pretty, Emma Grace.”

“Thank you, Ma'am. I've fallen on some hard times, Miss Pearl. I have no place to go, and Mr. Swanson told me I should come and talk to you about a job.”

Emma Grace quickly handed her the letter. Pearl opened the envelope, put on her reading glasses, and began reading the letter aloud.

May 23, 1923

Dear Miss Pearl,

I hope this letter finds you well. My purpose for writing is to introduce you to Emma Grace. Her father was a "lunger," and they came to West Texas when he became ill. Unfortunately, her father died of tuberculosis in Carlsbad last week. He was a good man and strong in character. I recommended that Emma Grace contact you as I personally hold her in good standing.

With kind regards,

Mr. Charles J. Swanson

"Good old Charlie," Miss Pearl commented shaking her head. "He always has had an eye for a pretty girl. Well, Emma Grace, tell me about yourself."

"Mother died when I was born, and Daddy and I came to San Angelo several weeks ago. He had tuberculosis. They called him a 'lunger', and he has been in the Sanatorium in Carlsbad. I guess it was too late for my Daddy. He died last Thursday. There isn't much money left, and I'm afraid I don't know what to do."

Tears filled Emma's eyes, and she quickly looked down at her hands folded tightly on her lap. "I have nowhere to go Miss Pearl," she murmured quietly. "I have an aunt and uncle back in Missouri, but they have seven children already. I certainly don't want to be a burden."

Mozella walked out on the porch and handed Emma Grace a glass of cold mint tea. As she turned to go back into the house, she raised her eyebrows at Pearl and smiled.

“Thank you, Mozella.” Pearl turned to Emma Grace. “You are quite lovely, Emma Grace. Did Charlie, I mean Mr. Swanson, tell you about what we do here?”

“Yes Ma’am. I know,” Emma whispered softly. Then she looked up into Miss Pearl’s face with all the courage she could muster. “Miss Pearl,” she stammered. “I... uhm, well I... Miss Pearl, I have never been with a man before.”

Pearl was taken by Emma’s sweetness and charm. “Somehow I knew that, dear,” she stated with a kindly tone.

“But I’m sure I can learn!” Emma forced the words from her mouth with some hesitation.

Pearl liked her. “I have an idea. Mozella could use some help with some domestic chores. Can you cook?”

“Oh, yes, Ma’am! I have been cooking for my Daddy my whole life,” Emma Grace exclaimed with some relief.

“Well, at least you won’t go hungry and we can put a roof over your head. Another pretty face at the parlor is always advantageous. Emma Grace, I believe you could do well in my business. However, I do not want you doing anything you are not ready to do. We can give it a few weeks and see what happens. Come on in the house, honey. Mozella will be happy to have that extra help right now. It’s Friday night, and the girls are bubbling over with excitement. We are expecting cowboys tonight!”

Miss Pearl walked through the door of the huge mansion on the Concho River she had come to call home. Emma Grace, quickly gathering up her suitcase and overcoat, followed her into the parlor. Never before had she ever been surrounded with such elegance. As they walked from the Spanish tiled foyer into the “Grand Room,” she could smell the soft scent of roses coming from a fountain by

the west wall. The fourteen foot ceilings and crystal chandelier made her feel like a princess walking into a palace. “It was so kind of you, Miss Pearl, to give me a job. I really am a good cook!”

“You are welcome, Emma Grace. As long as you are useful, you may stay until you know what you want to do,” Pearl assured her.

Emma Grace had never seen a house so grand. Fresh spring air gently blew through the open windows, making the lacy white curtains hanging throughout the house look as if they were dancing. The “Great Room” was decorated with Oriental rugs, mahogany tables, plush velvet couches and damask chairs. A ten-foot Steinway stood silently in the corner of the room poised for someone to sit on the bench and bring her to life.

Mozella, wearing a powder blue cotton dress, a white duster hat, and a clean white apron frock, entered the room with a stack of fresh towels in her arms. “This is Emma Grace, Mozella. I have hired her to help you in the kitchen. She says she can cook,” Pearl told her friend.

Mozella looked approvingly at Emma Grace. “I can see why you invited her in, Miss Pearl. There’s no doubt she’s a pretty one! Come on, honey, I’ll show you the kitchen and the room where you’ll stay.” Emma Grace followed Mozella through the kitchen to a small room with three beds. “This is where you’ll sleep. There are some clean aprons in the closet. You can hang your things in there and put your suitcase under the bed. Get your pretty-self ready now, girl. There’s work to be done! The cowboys are coming tonight, and they will surely be hungry when they get here.”

Mozella was friendly but firm. As she walked back into the kitchen, Emma Grace heard her say, “*Proverbs 22, He who is generous will be blessed*, and Miss Pearl is truly generous.”

Emma Grace laid her suitcase down and sat on the bed for a moment, crying grateful tears. “Thank you, God,” she whispered. “I know I am here for a reason, and I also know you will help me figure out what that reason is.” She wiped her face, changed her clothes, and walked into a new life. Emma Grace’s prayers had been answered.

Meanwhile, prayers were also being answered in Big Lake, Texas. Earlier that day at the depth of 3050 feet, the Santa Rita Number One clearly showed the presence of gas and oil in the Permian sands. After years of dreams and a year-and-a-half of drilling for oil, the Santa Rita Number One was finally hitting the pay! The whooping and shouting resounded so loudly in Big Lake, Texas, the man in the moon could hear it. The men stopped the drilling and within 18 hours had secured over 30,000 acres of oil leases from surrounding land owners. San Angelo was on its way to becoming an oil boom town!



HELLO MY BELOVED

It was a lovely spring day of 1960. Fifty-six years ago the handsome rancher Robert McKnight had brought his beautiful Everleigh Butterfly to Texas to be his bride. In 1932 Victoria had built a cottage on the Five Star Ranch where she had spent her years being “Nana” to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was especially fond of Victor, her oldest grandson, probably because of his incredible likeness to his grandfather whom she continued to adore. Victoria had managed to protect her family from the truth of her past. As far as they knew, she had met Robert in Chicago at a park in Chicago where she had worked as a librarian.

Like most days, Victoria went to the springs at the Five Star Ranch and sat on a bench below the live oak. Dark green leaves cascaded down providing her with a comfortable cool shade. The fresh scent of the roses in the garden she had created around Robert's gravesite seemed to be especially fragrant this day. Victoria listened intently to the soft, gentle flow of water and the breeze dancing in the leaves. The sound of happy birds chirping created a soothing orchestrated melody making Victoria's spirit feel light.

As always, Victoria closed her eyes and allowed the memories of her loving days with Robert fill her heart, mind and soul. For a long time, Victoria relished the peacefulness of the springs.

Suddenly everything was quiet and still. Steadily, from a distance, Victoria could hear the galloping trod of a horse approaching her. Opening her eyes she saw a man who looked like Robert coming towards her, riding a magnificent white stallion. Victoria gasped in amazement and her heart jumped with joy. It was Robert!

Handsome and virile as ever, Robert's smile was soft and loving. He was wearing a white hat and suit, and an iridescent glow of light surrounded him like a mystic halo around the moon.

"I knew I would find you here," he grinned.

"Robert?" Victoria asked. "Oh, Robert, my love. How I have missed you, my darling."

"I have never left you, Victoria. Our love is eternal and strong. I have always been close."

"Is this real? Am I dreaming, Robert?"

"Listen," he smiled.

A celestial orchestra began performing *Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis* – the song that was playing when Robert proposed marriage on top of the Ferris wheel at the St. Louis Fair.

“I love you, Victoria Pearl.”

“And I love you, Robert McKnight.”

When Victoria awoke...

Cynthia Jordan



THANK YOU

Love at the Everleigh is actually PART ONE from the historical novel, *Pearl* by Cynthia Jordan. In 1923, thirteen women have come to work at Miss Pearl's Parlor in San Angelo, Texas where oil and money are flowing and friendly ladies are glowing! You will meet Texas Katie, Annabelle, Betsy, Heather with her feather, Maggie, Sarah, Redbird, Lucy, Ginger and Harmony. The book will make you laugh and cry as you read the girls' stories and how life's journey brought them together to work at, Miss Pearl's Parlor, an upscale brothel in West Texas.

Diamond is the sequel to ***Pearl***. In this story Heather goes to Hollywood to become a silent movie star. You will learn fascinating history from the early days of Hollywood as well as facts about familiar personalities that will astound you including Mae West, Charlie Chaplin, Louise Brooks, Florence Zeigfeld, Barbara Stanwyck, Wyatt Earp and John Wayne.

In ***Diamond*** you will meet ***Ruby***, the heroine of the third novel of ***The Gem Series***. Born in 1868, Anna Maria's mother has left her a journal that tells a fascinating story about courage, murder, loyalty real friendship and love.

The Gem Series is written for women about women and men who want to better understand them. ***Sapphire*** will be released in the fall of 2017 and ***Emerald*** in 2018.

Everly yours,
Cynthia

Please visit us at

www.cynthiamusic.com

www.pearlthebook.com