

## Chapter One

Summer 1955

*The elder Clarisse held the treasured pendant in her aging hands. She reflected upon that special night and the details that surrounded the beautiful pendant that Guy had given to her*

*The night belonged to them. He had chosen the famous Kipling's Restaurant, the ultimate setting for this occasion -- her nineteenth birthday.*

*It was Kipling, Clarisse recalled, who wrote, "If you can wait and not be tired by waiting..."*

The night was one into which only the young and stouthearted ventured following the destructive force of Hurricane Diane during the week. There were no waiting lines at Kipling's as diners often encountered if they failed to make reservations.

The rains had stopped but it would be days before the waters receded. Several roads remained passable although covered with water. However, driving through puddles presented a risk, at least for *Ole Jizzie*, Clarisse's 1941 Pontiac. *Jezebel* sputtered these last days in protest.

The host, Dana, led them to their table near the rear of the restaurant. Guy thanked him for his choice of seating. He shared with Dana that this was a birthday celebration for his special lady that Hurricane Diane jealously tried her best to deny them.

Dana returned with two glasses of white wine on his tray, "Compliments of the house," he said. "If you would care to follow, I will take you to a private dining room reserved for such intimate occasions."

They looked at one another and without a word followed Dana. He placed the wine on the small table for two and lit the candle contained in a clear chunky diamond cut crystal holder. The shimmering glow through the holder's prisms reflected dancing shadows upon the grass papered wall, adding to the ambience of the dimly lit room.

"Enjoy your evening. Your waitress will be with you shortly."

Dana returned and handed a deep red rose to Clarisse saying, "Kipling's wishes you a happy birthday."

"We are delighted," Guy said, "many thanks for this wonderful accommodation. I wanted this to be a birthday she would never forget. You have certainly contributed an important piece. Kipling's will live in our memory."

The waitress handed menus to them. She placed empty ruby red prism-cut water glasses on the table and returned with a pitcher of iced water to fill them and take their orders.

"Shrimp cocktails and lobster casseroles for us," Guy said.

Within minutes, she returned with Kipling's legendary shrimp cocktail topped with the sauce that accredited its fame.

Guy lifted his wine glass. "Clarisse, Happy Birthday with all my love."

She touched her glass to his and they sipped the chardonnay.

"What a wonderful evening you have planned for us. Thank you, Guy."

They dined on superb lobster casserole, savoring its delicate flavor while casting a glance at one another, sharing a wink, a smile.

“Happy, my love?” Guy asked.

Without waiting for her answer, he laughed and said, “Me too!”

“Guy, I am happier than I have ever been in my entire life.”

“Our magical summer is fast ending, my dear. We have only two weekends together before you return to school. Let’s recap some of the fun things we’ve enjoyed and do them again.”

She laughed as she listed a few activities they might repeat.

“We have to *go People Watching* and buy one of Cassidy’s hot dogs from his cart. Let’s see, oh yes, and may we dance on the bridge again under the stars? Do you have other ideas?”

“I want to return one more time to Gougen’s Gorge with you.”

The waitress placed their coffee and a small birthday cake on the table.

“It is gift time, sweetheart.” He handed her one of the gold foil wrapped boxes he had carried into the restaurant.

She carefully removed the wrapping from the box, folded it and laid it aside. She opened the lid of the box, lifted a triangular silver engraved pendant, and placed it upon the palm of her hand. The attached sterling chain hung loosely between her fingers, its movement’s reflection added to the shimmering shadows on the wall. “How beautiful,” she said, “how absolutely beautiful.”

“Siamese silver,” he said. “The figure etched in silver is Mekkala, the Thai Goddess of Lightning. One day I will share the legend of Mekkala with you.”

“It’s beautiful, truly beautiful,” she said looking up to meet his eyes. Her eyes glistened with tears of joy and love, a love unmatched in her lifetime. “Yes, I would like to hear the legend of Mekkala.”

He handed her a second box that she unwrapped. Again, she folded the gold foil paper and laid it aside.

She removed the lid of the box. It contained the earrings complementing the pendant but engraved with a different figure. She was in awe of the delicate workmanship, the artistic etching of silver upon a hematite-like, dark charcoal background surrounded by filigreed silver. She gently moved her hand over the smooth surface.

“Lord Vishnu, the Hindu God known as *The Preserver*. His immortality symbolizes our love. May it live forever, my darling.”

Guy stood and took the pendant into his hand. “May I put this on you?”

She stood with her back to him while he encircled her neck with the chain. She could feel his large hands shaking as he fastened the resistant spring clasp. She turned to face him and he surrounded her with his powerful arms in a loving embrace and kissed her tenderly.

He stepped back, smiled, and with his hands resting on her shoulders, whispered, “Perfect, both you and the pendant.”

She reached for the pendant upon her chest and stroked its smooth surface. He lifted the pendant from her hands, placed a loving kiss upon it and lifted it to her lips for her kiss.

“Forever, Clarisse, my love forever.”

Still holding the pendant upon which their kiss had sealed their love, he looked deeply into her moist eyes.

“Mrs. Guy Lakeland, how does that sound to you?”

“Oh Guy, nothing would make me happier than to be your wife.”

He encircled her in his embrace, gleefully lifted her from the floor, and swung her in a circle.

“I can see us now with twelve little Lakelands running about.”

His deep contagious laughter ignited hers.

“Guy Lakeland, you put me down this minute. A dozen little Lakelands you say? We’ll have to rethink my agreement on this one. Would you settle for six?”

He lowered her to the floor. “OK, six it is. Now, about names! Oh, I guess that can wait.”

“Guy you are nuts and I love you with all my heart.”

Clarisse dropped into her chair, the two of them still laughing.

“Do you think the band at Hampden Pavilion is waiting for us?”

“Let’s dance”

He pulled her chair from the table and they walked from Kipling’s into the night.