

Last Call from the Devil's Lane

By

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BOOK 1

The Players

The Rock

Power: An ability, strength or authority. A subject that has found its way into every aspect of our lives. Power can be someone's physical strength or what makes him a greater man. It has no respect for age and it's a foundation for pedigree and status. No matter how it is looked upon, power is the aspect of life that men desire and rely upon the most. This reliance creates a circle, the circle of power, in which the more power one gains, the more one needs. This power also translates to relationships and is ensnared within this circle. The more power one has, the more people are drawn to him. The more people drawn to a person, the more power that person gains.

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The office was empty except for a taxidermy deer head on the wall. A man in a three-piece suit stared out the window, his hands clenched behind his back. He studiously ignored the three men standing behind him.

"I would like to be alone with Igor," he said without turning around. Two men of the trio nodded at Igor Baronowski and walked out the door. They knew that only very personal situation could make someone in their business refer to an associate by their given name.

The man at the window turned to look at Igor. "Have a seat, my friend?"

Igor sat.

"I know that I've asked you this a hundred times, but I forget. Baronowski isn't Scottish, right?"

"No, it isn't, but I was born and raised in Scotland, which is how it became my home."

"Stupid me, must be my old age. I keep forgetting things. You're a giant among men and I really don't know how to say this."

Igor rose, "Is someone dead, Boss?"

"No," he said, using his left arm to push Igor back into his seat. "The first time that I saw you, I had my doubts. When I think Scottish, I think skirts," he smiled to himself.

"What's going on?"

"That cop that you killed..." he trailed off.

"You mean that the cop that you asked me to kill?" Igor carefully rephrased for him, looking him in the eye as he did.

"The cops are bringing the heat down on all of the bosses. Apparently, word got out that he was banging my wife."

"It was clean. Nobody saw me take him out."

"They aren't stupid, Rock! They know we did it. The only reason that the cops haven't come after us is because they don't want me alive. Instead, they are harassing the other bosses, hoping that one of them gets frustrated enough to whack me."

"Nobody can touch you as long as I'm alive."

"Rock, you aren't bulletproof, and neither am I." The Boss sat down in his chair and looked out the window at the yachts at the dock. "I've thought about this for a while and there isn't any other choice."

"You can't hand me over to the system. I warned you about this. I told you that we don't whack cops."

"You've had your say."

"Damn you!" Igor yelled as he stood up. "You know that I'll spend the rest of my life in jail if I confess. Why don't you just put a bullet in my head?"

"I can't," he said softly.

“You can’t because the cops will only believe it if they hear it from my lips...that I killed him for you without your permission.” Igor lowered his voice, “Or, you can’t because in my desperate attempt to click with your Italian syndicate, you found out that I am your friend.”

“A little of both,” he said.

“I could sing.”

“Sing! You shot him, Rock and....you’re old school. You don’t know how to rat on your family.” The Boss stood and walked over to Igor. “I’ll take care of your family. If you confess, you’ll be out before you turn fifty. You might even be sipping wine with me, celebrating 1980.”

“That’s a lie and you know it. I’ll be there until the day that I die!” Igor sighed. “I could run and send my confession directly to the cops.”

“This is the only way and I promise you that as long as you are in jail, Maria and the kids will get the best in life. However, if you don’t do this, I can’t guarantee their safety.”

“You’d take out your own cousin?”

“I have to do what’s best for the family.”

“Damn you, Louie. I could kill you right now.”

“And still, they’d die along with you. Everyone dies if you do something stupid.” The Boss kissed Igor on both cheeks and said, “I promise you, it’ll be like a vacation down there. We never forget our own.”

Lady Zed

Lady Zed was born Zeta Boussard to the millionaire tycoon Jeremy Boussard. She was born and raised to be the bride of Prince Grimaldi of Monaco, the successor to the throne. She was nine when the purpose of her strict upbringing was revealed to her. From the day she learned to walk, she was taught to walk like a lady. She knew every form of etiquette imaginable and there wasn't a cutlery set created that she didn't know. At the age of 11, she learned to enjoy and, at times, play the sports of the aristocrats: polo, tennis, golf and any other sport requiring her to wear a dress more expensive than a car. She was a master of 13 languages by the age of 12 and had private tutors from all over the world. She took world tours during which she absorbed enough knowledge to be an expert at world affairs. She grew up to be exceptionally beautiful, tall with wavy black hair, a sharp, pointed nose and a tone the pitches of which blended in such a way as to give it a luxurious resonance.

At the age of 18, she was invited to a ball at the king's palace, in honor of the prince's 25th birthday. Attendees were dressed to impress. Coquettes catwalked around the ballroom, confident that the prince only had eyes for them. When the king and queen made their entrance, the prince was noticeably missing. It was rumored that he did not care that the ball was in his honor and decided to arrive fashionably late. Lady Zed was nervous and excited at the prospect of meeting the man that she had been groomed to marry. As the king gave his birthday speech, she scrutinized the prince. She felt drawn to him and could not figure out why. He didn't fall into the traditional category of handsome, but he had an aura that appealed to her...along with the rest of the women in the room. He stood behind his father watching him talk and suddenly Lady Zed was reminded of the story of Cinderella in which the prince chooses his bride from a bevy of women on display. She told her mother that she wanted to leave, but her mother forcefully told

her to stay. Finally, in an effort to leave, she told her mother that she felt sick and might throw up. Her mother chose to leave instead of creating such a scene.

Lady Zed woke up the next morning to find uniformed men bringing flowers into her room. There were plum bushes of rhododendron, pale peonies, masses of stately foxgloves, daffodils, pansies, primroses and merry tulips. She was watching them arrange the bouquets when the phone rang.

“Hello?”

“Good morning. This is Prince Grimaldi. I hope that my messengers didn’t wake you when they brought you your flowers.”

“Not exactly. However, I’m quickly running out of room. How many flowers did you send? It’s beginning to look like a jungle in here.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know which flower was your favorite.”

She smiled, “My apologies. That must have sounded rude. What I meant to say is that my room is turning into a beautiful jungle.”

“Thank you, Lady Boussard. I was wondering if you would have breakfast with me.”

“I am quite a distance from you, so, unfortunately, breakfast would be out of the question.”

“Thanks for reminding me. I’ll keep it in mind before I come over next time.”

“Next time?” She dropped the phone, ran out of her room, and saw him from the balustrade. He was on the ground floor, holding her father’s other private phone, with a grin on his face. It was then that she became a slave to his love.

Soon, time began to fly and she could not distinguish the days from months and the months from years. They were the talk of Monaco, France, Spain and the outside world. They

went everywhere together, the Place Du Casino, Grand Prix de Monaco and the International Sporting Club d'Hiver. The public loved them, but they loved each other more and they felt a sense of completion when they were together. Eventually, the king and queen began pressuring their son to set a wedding date, but Lady Zed resisted. She wanted to hold off until she was at least 23 as she wanted to get an education before settling down. She felt that an educated queen would be a valuable asset to Monaco.

The Queen took her around town like a handbag, proud of the noble pedigree and charisma that she possessed, showing off to her friends and fellow royalty. Zeta Boussard was now a public figure; her life was no longer her own. As time went on, she was drawn deeper into the prince's web. He worshipped her every move. If he had approached her in a sexual way, she would have yielded, but they had agreed not to give in before they were married, as they wanted their wedding night to be glorious.

One day while the prince was on a tour of Europe without Zeta, the queen sent for her. The queen was like her second mother, always curious about her courtship with her son. When Zeta arrived, the queen was waiting for her, alone, except for her vassal who was covering her with a white parasol.

"Zeta, my dear, you are just in time for tea," she said as she kissed Zeta on the cheek. Zeta curtsied.

"Good day, Your Highness."

"Oh, when we are alone, please call me mother. That is, unless you've changed your mind about marrying my son."

"Even with a knife held to my throat, I would not change my mind about marrying him."

"What if he changes his mind or gets bored with you?"

“Then, I would wish him well. His happiness is my joy.”

“I truly like you. You may sit down,” she pretended to just notice that Zeta was still standing. “But you don’t have to worry about that. A man can be only bored with what he has explored, the world that he has not explored is the greatest attraction that he can imagine.”

“Yes, your highness.”

“What did I tell you?”

“Yes, mother.”

“It feels good to be called mother by a female voice. I only have sons, and their masculine tones drive me crazy,” both women giggled.

“Does my son touch you?”

“Yes,” Zeta replied, initially shy. “We kiss and dance.”

“And sex is not an issue to him?”

“We enjoy every moment that we have together. There are so many places in our minds to explore, so many things that we can experience, thoughts and feelings to explore.”

“But if he isn’t getting pleasure from you, then he must be getting it from someone else.”

“When he is with me, I am all that he sees. That’s what matters to me.”

“Have you ever been with a man?”

“Your Highness, please! Never.”

“But I noticed that you stayed together past midnight before. What do you do on these nights?”

“We talk, we laugh, we hold each other and share our feelings.”

A man with glossy, black hair and thick bifocals approached them and bowed to the queen.

“You may sit, for goodness’ sake,” she said to the man who appeared to be in his mid-50s. “Zeta, this Dr. Schultz, a renowned gynecologist. I would like him to examine you.”

“Why?”

“Relax, Zeta. He just wants to check your womb and do a couple of tests on you.”

“Does he have to touch me?”

“Listen, Zeta. This is what every queen does for her son. The king’s mother did it to me. You will do it for your son.”

“Will it hurt?”

“It will be like a scratch, and I will be with you the whole time,” the queen said as she stood and looked at the doctor. They went into a private chamber in the palace and began the tests.

It was raining on that Tuesday night, a night that she’ll never forget. She was told that Prince Grimaldi was waiting for her downstairs, and she ran to greet him after his long tour. The chambermaid told her that he was standing outside in the rain and refused to come in or be shielded from the downpour. Zeta opened the door to find him soaking wet, a solemn look on his face.

“I think it’s pointless to ask you to come in, because you are not going to come in, are you?” she asked. He shook his head. She kept her composure, although her instincts told her that whatever the problem was, it focused on her. She walked past him to the garden and sat on a brick pillar, the rain trickling down her gown.

“You already know?” he asked as tears fell from his eyes and mixed with the rain.

“I don’t know anything, except that your mother is suddenly avoiding me.”

He tried to speak, but his sobbing canceled out his ability to be coherent. She got up from the pillar and knelt beside him. He placed his hands upon her cheeks.

“You should have never let her do it!”

“Let her do what?” she asked bewildered. Then she stopped and stared at him in shock, “The doctor?!”

He looked at her with sad, tear soaked eyes, “You’re barren. Your womb is poorly positioned to nurture fertile eggs.”

It was like a thunderbolt in her ears. She fell back in shock and disbelief onto her stool. She had thought that maybe they had found him a more lucrative bride, but this was beyond her deepest fear. Why her? Why now?

“You are joking. Tell me that this is a joke!” He sat in front of her, speechless. She grabbed his shirt again. “Tell me that this is a joke! Tell me that you are lying to me!” Her voice was growing louder with each proclamation.

“Zeta, I wish...”

“You wish what!? What do you wish! Get out! Leave me alone,” her voice grew in volume with each word.

“I belong to Monaco.”

Her voice dropped, “I understand,” she said and then kissed him deeply on the lips. “Goodbye, my prince.”

“I will always love you,” he said. “In my dreams, my thoughts, my words, you will haunt my heart until I die.”

Zeta stood and ran back to the house. He watched her disappear, knowing that he would never see her again.

When Prince Grimaldi married three months later, it became public knowledge that Lady Boussard was available and she became a much sought after prize. The men wooing her after Prince Grimaldi's wedding multiplied into dozens of suitors. They were all men of high standing in society who craved to be in her company; she made them laugh, cry and feel free to speak their minds, yet they wanted more from her. She had always loved the company of men. Men traveled from all over the world to Monaco—not to visit the tourist attractions, but to be in the company of the woman whose essence made them hunger for something that they didn't understand. She was infatuated with the men's possessive nature over her and she had the unique ability to recognize the particular quality in each man that made him special. Women, on the other hand, she saw as uniformly vain.

When the marriage proposals began to pile up and the suitors became hostile both to her and each other, she decided to tour the world to learn about the one aspect of man's influence that she had yet to experience: sex. She flew from country to country trying to understand the ideology of sex. She lost her virginity to an anonymous man at a masked orgy during the Venice Carnival. She spent months learning the Kama Sutra. She slept with Shin Sect Buddhist monks in Japan while searching for the spiritual nature of sex and she was admitted as an apprentice geisha in Kyoto. She returned home only when the news of her father's death reached her.

Jeremy Boussard, judging his wife and daughter incapable of handling his affairs with their inferior, feminine minds, left everything under his brother's control. His will made it clear that the two women were to receive only \$1 million per year and an expense account. He willed the family's house to his wife and the Hotel De Mirage in Paris to his daughter. As soon as she

took over the hotel and word got out that the Mademoiselle Zeta Boussard was in Paris, men packed into the De Mirage like cattle.

She became a master at keeping the hotel booked solid. First, she made everyone refer to her as Madame. The title suited her, as it was her private belief that she was spiritually married to the Prince because he alone had her heart. She went to every part of the continent picking beautiful women from each race: sisters; twins; ladies who were extremely tall; dark-skinned; light-skinned; fat; skinny; short; women who had been in the limelight, but suddenly became unnecessary to the media; and former models. She never forced anyone to work at her hotel, but she would drown them in luxuries until they were positively dependent upon her. Then, she would ask them to become one of her Interpersonal Marketers. They went into service for her after a period of training in the language and etiquette of love and sex. Different acts were different rates, and the identical twin girls earned Madame Zeta the most. She knew what her clients were worth, and she knew what they wanted; some liked it rough, while some liked to make love. She had someone for everyone. When, on a few occasions some of her clients got a little wild and damaged her goods, then the injured party was given \$100,000 in cash and instructed to retire with their mouths sealed. The assailant was blackmailed a fortune. If he chose not to pay, a videotape of his or her escapades would simply be leaked to the press. As the majority of her clients were in the public eye, they often avoided this choice.

Her business was profitable and she quickly built a small fortune as she took 60% of each of her employees' earnings, after their initial training and dressing fees. Thirty years later, she had 36 branches all over the world. All made generous profits as five star hotels, but made five times that amount with the aid of her Interpersonal Marketers.

M.O.D

“M.O.D., what exactly do you want me to do?” the younger man asked in the seedy motel room.

“I told you before, it can’t be a simple heat. It’s difficult getting his routine, or else I’d have gotten a sniper. It has to be a blood bath. All you have to do is pick them up at JFK and they’ll do a head-in attack.”

“How many?”

“Twelve.”

“Twelve!?”

“Yes, all you have to do is bring them to me at the spot. Pick them up and drop them off at the spot.”

“How are they going to do it?”

“They’ll take him out when he goes to the Blue Restaurant.”

“Don Armando is heavily guarded.”

“That’s why we’re getting 12 outsiders with a lot of firepower. We’re going to create a bloodbath.”

“All of this just to kill Don Armando?”

“What the heck is wrong with you?” M.O.D. asked as he sat next to him. “Armando is milking New York dry with his greed. The Boss, our employer, needs him gone.”

“Okay, I’ll pick up these guys, you’ll give them the firepower and I take them to the Blue Restaurant so that they can do a head-in attack on Armando. Then, the men will kill him. Then, I’ll take them back to the spot, right, Boris?”

“Boris!?”

“I meant M.O.D.”

The taller man laughed to himself. “I brought you to America and have always been there for you, even when you were still a kid in Russia. And why, Nikolai?”

“I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“The life that you live is because of me. Your mother handed you to me. I treat you better than anyone can treat a brother. I’ve given you everything, Nikolai. Why do you think I do that?”

Nikolai put his hands over his face, “It went wrong. My deal went wrong. They caught me with the guns. I’m sorry, Boris, I can’t do 15 years.” He raised his face, tears were streaming down it.

M.O.D. lit a cigarette. “So, what are they waiting for?”

Just then, the door burst open and several cops rushed the room. They surrounded and forcefully handcuffing M.O.D. and then read him his rights.

