

The **ROCK STAR**
& the **LIFEGUARD**

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"THE ROCK STAR AND THE LIFEGUARD"

A Short Story

by

JACKIE COLLINS

Everybody wanted to go to bed with Tony Guiseppi, it had been that way since seventh grade. And not only females, males felt that way too – they were always coming onto him, eyeing him appreciatively, inviting him to a ball game, lunch or a night on the town. Anything he wanted in fact.

In fact, he wanted nothing.

Tony Guiseppi had learned at an early age that looks were only the package. He knew he was exceptionally good looking. It did not impress him.

Tony Guiseppi was half Italian (his father, Roberto, was a crotch-stroking, drunken native of Naples, who came to America in 1972 for a vacation and stayed), and half American (his mother, Ruth, would have been a Jewish princess if only her family had possessed money). As it was she was a waitress when his father came upon her -- literally. They were married exactly one month before Tony entered the world.

Tony was twenty-two years old. Black of hair, green of eye. With dark olive skin, perfect white teeth, long sweeping lashes, a straight Roman nose, and full lips. He was six feet tall, with a body that

made grown women turn in the street.

In short, he was a very handsome specimen indeed. He could have, if he'd so desired, made a fortune as a male model or a discreet stud. And surely show business would have welcomed him with open arms -- if only as window dressing.

Could he act? He had never tried. Never wanted to. Never had that burning drive to make it on the big screen.

No. Tony Guiseppi had only one ambition. He wanted to write.

"Are you shittin me?" his father had exclaimed when he was foolish enough to mention his dream one day shortly after graduating high school. "What kinda crap you talkin'? You think I got money blowin' out my ass? You're finished with school, now you're gonna come work for me. You owe it to the family, so don't go givin' me no writin' shit."

The family, apart from Tony and his parents, consisted of two exceptionally plain sisters both younger than he; a tubercular uncle; and his Italian grandmother who spoke not one word of English, and had no plans to learn. They all lived together in a run-down comfortable house in Queens.

The family business was making ice-cream, not hugely profitable, but as Roberto was fond of saying, it put a roof over their heads, food on the table and coats on their backs.

Roberto Guiseppi screwed around. A fact Tony became aware of when he joined the family business. No woman was safe in his father's company -- Roberto had a roving eye, uncontrollable hands and an exceedingly active Italian cock. On more than one occasion Tony stumbled upon Roberto engaged in various sexual activities with different giggling females. He tried to ignore these unfortunate discoveries, and he certainly never mentioned them to his long-suffering and trusting mother. However, it disturbed him that his father displayed such a total lack of respect toward women, his mother in particular.

Tony's sexual experience was limited. Certainly not for lack of opportunity, but because he'd never felt the need to get laid simply for the sake of it. Tony was after a relationship. He wanted a girl who felt the same way about life as he did. Naturally he had his heart set on finding a virgin.

One summer Tony decided he needed to get out of New York. He'd been working in the family business for

several years without a break. His demanding father was driving him crazy. His sisters were always pestering him to fix them up with dates. His grandmother was becoming senile. His uncle was crusty and bad-tempered.

Only his beloved mother, Ruth, remained calm and in control. "Take a vacation," she urged. "Get away, do something different. Maybe you should try some of that writing you're always talkin' about."

Ruth, alone, encouraged him.

As it happened, one of his friends from high school, Benno Vincenzo, had obtained a summer job as a lifeguard at a new hotel in Miami.

"Why doncha come with, Tony?" Benno asked, tapping the tip of his long, thin nose with his index finger. "The money's not bad, an' Miami's the freakin' place right now. Think of the broads all hot an' creamy -- *beggin'* for a piece of prime New York action!"

Benno was no fool. He was also no beauty. He was the same height as Tony, only his features were hawk-like and angry, and his long hair an unappetizing brown color. In New York he drove a cab. However, with Tony around, Benno knew he'd be fighting off the girls, because Tony was a girl magnet.

"Maybe," Tony answered thoughtfully.

A summer out of New York was an appealing idea. No dusty sidewalks, stinking car fumes, sweat and dust. Just clear blue skies, a swimming pool (Olympic sized, Benno said) and a tempting ocean. Plus money in his pocket, and evenings free to do whatever he wished.

It was tempting. He could start writing the book he'd been thinking about for five years.

"Okay," he decided, "I'm gonna do it."

"Hey, cool, man," responded Benno, full of enthusiasm, "You an' me, dude -- we're gonna have ourselves a freakin' wild time!"

* * *

Goldie Christie stumbled aboard the American Airlines plane at Los Angeles airport and allowed a helpful flight attendant to guide her to her seat in first class.

"Welcome aboard, Miss Christie," the flight attendant said, taking her Louis Vuitton shoulder bag and stowing it in an overhead compartment.

"Thanks," she sniffed.

The Vuitton bag was the most respectable thing about her. She wore purple thigh-high suede boots, a black leather mini skirt, a white T-shirt with EAT IT

emblazoned on the front, and a Hell's Angels leather jacket. Her hair was a wild mass of blonde pre-Raphaelite frizz, and her crystal green eyes were hidden behind giant black shades.

"Are we going to take off now that *Miss Christie* has joined us?" inquired an annoyed woman passenger sitting across the aisle.

"Right away, ma'am," the flight attendant assured her.

"I should think so!" the woman replied, quite put out by the delay.

Goldie took no notice of this exchange. She was used to planes waiting for her, it was no big deal. Screw it. It wasn't her fault she was always late. If they didn't want to wait they didn't have to.

She fished in her large black purse and extracted a jeweled, pink iPod, a pack of Gauloises, a book of matches from The Ivy restaurant, a stick of gum, a *Rolling Stone* magazine, and a dog-eared copy of Luke Rhinehart's *The Dice Man*.

She clamped her Bose headphones on top of her curls, lit up a cigarette, and stared at the cover of *Rolling Stone*.

There she was. In glorious color. Goldie Christie sitting on the floor in cut-off Levi's, a skimpy bra, and not much else.

"The boobs look good," she thought objectively, studying the way her nipples jutted through the thin cotton knit of the bra.

Drawing deeply on her cigarette she wondered if they had looked that good last night. With Flick Lane. *The Flick Lane*. Rock God of her childhood fantasies. He'd come onto her across a crowded club, and oh shit, she couldn't believe it, because he was the hottest stud this side of the fucking *moon!!*

It was a done deal that they'd ended up together. In bed. Doing all the dirty things she had only ever dreamed about.

Unfortunately Flick was not the greatest cocksman in the world. And why would he be? Because after all he was the greatest *singer* in the world, the greatest *lead guitarist*. So why should he be the greatest fuck too?

No reason...

Except...

She had hoped...

One day...

The flight attendant was hovering. "So sorry, Miss Christie," he said apologetically. "No smoking. It's a Federal rule."

"Shit!" she mumbled, as he plucked the cigarette out of her fingers.

She wished she had a joint. Felt grateful that she had snorted two lines of coke before breakfast, and thought once again of Flick.

Flick was not handsome, not even pretty. And somewhat old. Fifty at least. But he was -- corny as it sounded -- a legend in his own lifetime. A Rock Legend who had already achieved immortality.

She shivered. She always shivered when she came up with a dynamite title. *ROCK LEGEND* by Goldie Christie. Another hit single. Another fucking smash.

Oh yeah, she could churn 'em out with the best of them.

Abruptly she removed her headphones, and slowly but surely *ROCK LEGEND* began to take shape in her head.

* * *

Tony Guiseppi had never been to Miami before. The truth of the matter was he had never been much of anywhere, although his father was always threatening a family vacation in Italy.

"Ah, *bellissima* Napoli!" Roberto would sigh when the New York winter was at its coldest and nobody was buying ice-cream. "We all go. Family trip. Very soon." But they never did.

Tony had gotten used to the promise, early on he'd learned never to depend on anything Roberto said. When the time came he would go to Italy without his philandering father, and he would take his long suffering sweet mother with him. Ruth deserved a vacation more than anyone else.

Of course, he would have to write his book first, and it would have to be a bestseller.

He was confident that it would happen in time. All he had to do was write it.

Tony and Benno arrived in Miami along with a third friend, Mike, who had a waiter's job lined up at the *Fontainbleau*. Mike drove an old Chevrolet, so to save money they'd split the cost of the gas and driven down from New York. Tony had no license, but Mike and Benno made him take his turn driving anyway, and laughed at the idea of being stopped by the cops.

Tony was unhappy being trapped in such a situation, however, he didn't care to be regarded as chicken, so to save face he went along with it.

Mike dropped them off at the *Gloriana*, a magnificent modern hotel built right in the center of the famed Collins Avenue.

"Holy shit!" exclaimed Benno, staring in awe.
"This is one numero uno joint. I sure as shit picked us a winner!"

They entered the palatial lobby, Benno's sharp eyes swiveling this way and that, taking in every unaccompanied female with raw lust in his gaze.

"I gotta hunch this could be the start of some kinda insane wet dream!" he exclaimed, clicking his teeth at a blond with obvious fake tits, wearing a short white tennis dress.

They sought out the assistant manager, an austere fortyish woman, who told them off for entering through the front entrance of the hotel. She couldn't take her eyes off Tony as she escorted them to meet Swedish Liam, the head honcho of the pool and beach.

Swedish Liam was a thirty-eight year old hunk of a man with rippling muscles, a sun-streaked crew-cut, deep suntan, and the smallest mankini either Tony or Benno had ever seen. It barely covered his somewhat impressive package.

Beside the huge pool -- Olympic sized as Benno had promised -- were rows of luxurious loungers. On quite a few of them lolled bikini and thong clad females, dripping with oils and regarding the world through designer sunglasses.

"I think I died an' went straight to pussy heaven!" Benno muttered, so only Tony could hear.

"You're early," said Swedish Liam. "I told you to arrive at seven this evening. How do you expect me to instruct you when we're in the middle of the day?"

Benno shrugged, "Beats me."

Tony remained silent, then ventured, "Maybe we should come back at seven?"

"I'll show you to your quarters," Swedish Liam decided. "Then you meet me by the pool at six thirty. Be ready to show me what you can do." He stared at Tony for a moment, went to say something, changed his mind and shook his head. There would be time enough to spell out the rules for this matinee idol. When the women got a glimpse of this one they would be creaming all the way to the ocean and back.

* * *

The forbidden cigarette smoldering between Goldie's fingers smoldered all the way down and burnt her fingers. She awoke with a start, a dry throat, and a monster hangover. Flick Lane drank Jack Daniels and Coca Cola, a disgustingly sweet combination. Naturally, the previous night, she had matched him drink for drink. She downed enough to make a dog sick. And she was no dog.

She was drop dead gorgeous. *Newsweek* had called her the sexiest girl in Rock. *Eat your heart out, Britney.*

She buzzed for the flight attendant and he appeared instantly.

"I need a Bloody Mary," she said, her voice husky. "And fetch me a lime to suck on, my mouth feels like the floor of a Mexican jail!"

"Please, Miss Christie," the flight attendant pleaded. "There is absolutely no smoking. It's a -- "

"Federal rule," she interrupted, handing him her pack of cigarettes. "A damn stupid rule, too."

He laughed politely, and wondered if now was a good time to ask her to sign his autograph book. Flying between LAX and Miami International he often got celebrities aboard -- hence the presence of his precious book. But asking someone like Goldie Christie to sign might not be the brightest of ideas. She had a reputation for being unconventional to say the least. Maybe she would tell him to shove it.

Oh God! He couldn't stand it if she insulted him. He adored her. She was the most exciting thing to happen to music in years. Goldie Christie and Taylor Swift. His two idols.

He fetched Goldie a Bloody Mary, two slices of lime, and his autograph book. "Do you mind?" he asked in a low voice. "It's for -- "

"My mother, brother, father, sister, lover, daughter, son, aunt!" Goldie sing-songed, scrawling an illegible signature that he would treasure for life.

"Actually, it's for me," he said primly. "I'm a big fan."

She pulled her shades up into her hair and favored him with her crystal green bloodshot eyes. "What's your name?"

"Stuart."

She wrote - "To Stuart -- keep it rockin'."

He was thrilled, then he retreated, sensing she had no need for further company.

Goldie sipped her drink, picked up *The Dice Man*, read a few pages, before abandoning it. She had an extremely low level of concentration unless she was writing songs, performing them, or actually screwing someone.

Flick Lane had no idea how to give a woman a fun time in bed. He was what she had heard some of the English groups describe as a "leg over merchant". No clue how to pleasure a woman.

She almost laughed aloud. *A leg over merchant.*
How descriptive! How quaint! How true!

The American equivalent was probably *Wham Bam Thank you Ma'am*.

This time she did laugh aloud, a hearty, slightly wild cackle.

The woman across the aisle glared. Fortunately Goldie had no one seated next to her. When she traveled alone she always bought two seats to ensure her own private space.

Face it, kid, Flick Lane is a lousy lay.

I've had worse.

And better.

Which of course immediately made her think of Chuck Cannon. And thinking of Chuck immediately made her feel guilty.

While she had been indulging her fantasy and having unsatisfactory sex with Flick Lane, Chuck was in New York taking care of business. *Her* business.

Chuck was her manager. He was also her lover, best friend and confidante. Somehow she didn't think she would be confiding much about Flick Lane.

Chuck was dynamite in bed. He was thirty-two years old and looked like Al Pacino when Al had starred in *Scarface*.

Goldie was twenty-two. Chuck had discovered her when she was fifteen hanging around rock groups. She

was a privileged Beverly Hills groupie, pretty and full of sass. He had taken her to New York with him (her parents were divorced and "cool" as they put it) and straightened her out.

He had wanted to marry her. She'd said no – she was too young. She was *still* saying she was too young. Chuck did not give up.

One memorable day Chuck had discovered she could sing, and later he'd discovered she could write her own material. By the time she was twenty she had six hit singles, two gold albums, and a few choice movie offers.

Chuck had put the wheels in motion, he'd made it happen. If not for him she might have graduated Beverly Hills High School and married a plastic surgeon or a movie star.

She laughed aloud again, and once more the woman across the aisle glared.

There was no doubt that Chuck would find out about Flick. She had not been exactly discreet, waltzing out of the club like a trophy on Flick's arm, flipping off the waiting paparazzi and T.M.Z.

It was not the first time she had been unfaithful.

Unfaithful!

Shit!

She was thinking like a true country western dirge!

Anyway, how could you be unfaithful to someone you weren't even married to?

* * *

Tony and Benno deposited their personal belongings in their quarters, which turned out to be a series of staff rooms in a run-down building near the beach. Next they took a walk, exploring the possibilities.

They walked all the way to the *Fontainbleau*, mingled in the lobby, only they couldn't gain access to the pool without producing room keys. So then they walked to the other end of Collins Avenue, where the *Bal Harbour Sheraton* Hotel was located, and stopped for a drink in an open cafe located in the expensive shopping mall opposite the hotel.

"This freakin' place is crawlin' with money," Benno exclaimed, gazing around. "I mean M-O-N-E-Y, man. The real thing."

"So what?" replied Tony. "It's theirs, not ours."

"So what?" shrieked Benno. "Jeez! Like I'll never understand you. If I looked like you I'd be ass deep in money by now. You'd better believe it, dude. My cock would make the trip into dollar lined pussy an' stay there forever!"

"Yeah, well, that's you," Tony replied, not unkindly.

"Sure that's me, man. I wish it was you, then I could take a ride with you. All the friggin' way."

"I never want to take a ride with anyone," Tony said solemnly. "I have plans to make it on my own. Some day I will."

"Yeah, sure. Doin' what?" Benno sneered. "Handin' out ice-cream cones?"

Tony had never confided his dream of being a writer. He knew he would get laughed at. It was bad enough being put down by one's family, he didn't need it from his friends too. "I do have a plan," he said mysteriously. "You'll see."

Benno winked lewdly at a sleek brunette clad in a tight orange sun-dress.

Embarrassed at being caught because she'd been checking out Tony, she turned away abruptly.

"So what's the plan?" Benno asked. "Whyn't you tell me, an' we'll do it together."

Tony quickly changed the subject.

* * *

Landings always made Goldie reach for a mirror and a comb. There were usually paparazzi lurking at airports, and although they weren't expecting her in Miami, it was best to be prepared.

Miami had been Chuck's brilliant idea. He thought there was too much pressure on her in L.A. Too many friends and acquaintances and hangers-on and drug dealers. He did not approve of her doing drugs. Christ! There was nothing worse than a reformed junkie. All she did was a little pot, a little coke, nothing serious. It wasn't like she was sticking needles into her arms and blowing her mind with acid. Long before she ever met him, Chuck had been strung out on Speed. He had taken a long and painful cure and now any type of drugs spelt Bad News as far as he was concerned.

So Miami it was. A few days for her to rest up, get a tan and visit with her mother, whose latest husband owned a new hotel -- *the Gloriana*. Then Chuck would be arriving with a film crew, ready to shoot her latest video, *Rampage*.

She wished she hadn't listened to Chuck. Who needed Miami? Who needed to see mummy dearest? She had christened her mother that after reading Christina Crawford's sour grapes attack on her adopted mom, Joan Crawford. Lydia, Goldie's mother, had hardly beat her

with wire hangers, although she *had* ignored her. In Goldie's mind the torture was just as cruel.

Goldie bit on a hang-nail and scowled. Damn Chuck! Why wasn't he around when she needed him?

* * *

Swedish Liam appraised his two new lifeguards, his slate-gray eyes were guarded as he put them through their paces in the pool. The dark haired kid couldn't save a water-rat in two inches of sewage swamp. But the Matinee Idol, as Liam had christened Tony, would have them drowning in the aisles simply so they could find themselves in his arms.

Swedish Liam knew the score. At twenty-one he too had been unbearably handsome. It was no asset. Women used you for your looks, then treated you like garbage. Rich women in particular.

Swedish Liam knew all about rich women.

"You!" he said to Benno. "I want you to get plenty of swimming practice. In the meantime I'm putting you in charge of mats and towels."

"I didn't come all this way to work with no friggin' mats and towels," growled Benno indignantly.

"Why don't you quit then?" demanded Swedish Liam, a steely glint in his eyes.

"Hey -- I didn't say I wanted to quit," objected Benno.

"Then shut up. Do as you're told. And cut out the cursing. That way we'll get along fine."

Swedish Liam turned away as they climbed out of the pool. Two New York assholes out for some summer fun, he thought. Well he'd soon show them that being a lifeguard was not like it looked in the movies.

"Friggin' Kraut!" mumbled Benno.

Later that night Tony sat in his room alone. He removed a pristine yellow legal pad from the bottom of his duffle bag.

Complaining, Benno had gone out to meet Mike. He'd wanted Tony to come too, but Tony had declined, saying he was expecting a call from Susie in New York.

"Who the fuck's Susie?" Benno had demanded.

"A girl I've been seeing for a couple of months," Tony lied, keeping it casual.

"Yeah? How come none of the guys has seen you with her?" Benno questioned suspiciously.

"Hey -- " Tony gestured. "You think I'd bring a girl like Susie to the pool hall on Saturday nights? You think I'm crazy, man?"

Tony had his explanation down pat. He knew he would have to produce a reason for staying in every night, and the invention of Susie was the strongest

excuse he could think of. It stood to reason that if he had a steady girl in New York waiting for him, he would hardly want to go out cruising with the guys every night.

So Benno had departed, and now Tony was alone with his legal pad and a fresh black felt-tipped pen.

He sat at a table near the window and stared out at a sewage pipe embedded in the sandy lane which ran along the back of the building they were housed in. Somewhere a dog howled, sending out a message to another dog who responded with a short sharp series of barks.

Tony picked up the pen and gazed at the empty pad.

He had not written a word since high school, but he knew it was what he wanted to do more than anything else in the world. And by God, he was going to achieve his dream.

* * *

The huge jet touched down gently. Goldie ignored the seatbelt signs and headed for the john. She didn't mind flying, but she wasn't into mid-air peeing.

In the tiny toilet she took off her black shades and studied her perfect oval face. Some people said she had made it on her looks, only some people were

wrong. She had made it on the radio, and in the record stores, and you didn't need straight teeth and a cute ass to do that.

"Miss Christie," the flight attendant's voice penetrated her thoughts. "Miss Christie, please! We're still taxiing down the main runway. Please return to your seat at once."

"This is an emergency, pal," she hollered, with a grin. "When you gotta go, you gotta go."

Flying. She could do without it. Only if she did that she'd never get anywhere, and Goldie loved to travel. She remembered taking a flight from Marbella to London, and Sean Connery was on the same plane. She'd spent the entire flight worrying about who would get top billing if the plane crashed. She'd confided her thoughts to Chuck, who'd stared at her quizzically and said, "You're a trivia freak. You fill your mind with crap. If we *did* happen to crash you wouldn't even know, let alone care."

"Yes I would," she'd replied stubbornly.

Chuck was right. She was a trivia maniac. And when the game "Trivial Pursuit" swept around L.A., she was right there with all the answers. One night, in the Beverly Hills mansion of a snake-eyed studio head, with several important and powerful people present, she

had wiped them all out. I mean who else could have answered, "What was Dillinger gang member George Nelson's nickname?"

"Baby Face," she'd replied, without taking a pause.

Chuck had not thought she was full of crap *that* night. *Au contraire*. He had considered her very hot stuff indeed. They'd made love all night, and then again in the morning. Chuck was a very horny man. *Very* horny. She wondered what he was doing with his nightly erection in New York.

The thought of Chuck with another woman made her laugh. Chuck wouldn't do that to her -- he knew there were all these scummy diseases around like herpes and the clap, not to mention AIDS. He wouldn't cheat on her... would he?

For one brief moment she felt insecure.

Would he?

She wished she hadn't slept with Flick Lane. Flick would now consider her just another fast lay, and she was a star for chrissake, not some pathetic little groupie.

* * *

The sun was so hot it burnt painfully into his

skin. Tony was thankful for the peaked white cap with *The Gloriana* printed on it, however, the brief white shorts did not offer much protection, nor did the light weekend tan he had acquired in Atlantic City. The Florida sun was relentless.

He sat atop the lifeguard stand overlooking the center of the large pool and considered his failure to write one solitary word the previous evening.

He knew what the problem was. He did not have anything to inspire him to write. Nothing. No subject. No characters. No plot.

In high school the teachers helped you out -- they wrote on the blackboard in sharp white chalk -- "WRITE ABOUT YOUR SUMMER VACATION" or "TELL US WHAT YOU WANT TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE". It was easy. The teacher guided. He complied. He had always gotten excellent grades in composition.

"Hello," said a girl in an orange bikini, the top half hardly confining her perky breasts.

He glanced down from his perch. She gazed up.

He remembered Swedish Liam's explicit instructions. "If the guests talk to you, be brief and polite. And no dates with hotel guests. It's a house rule. Breaking it means getting fired on the spot."

"Can I help you?" he asked politely.

Yes, you can help me, she wanted to reply. You can come to my room later and show me more of that glorious body. Much, much, much more. He was the first really great looking man she had seen since arriving from Chicago a week earlier. The men in Miami were a *big* disappointment.

She batted her eyelashes and smiled. "What sun lotion do you use?"

"Coppertone," he replied. "Protection number eight. They sell it over there." He indicated the booth where Benno was situated. As it turned out he would rather be where Benno was than exposed to the relentless midday sun.

"Thanks," the girl said. "My name's Debbie." She hesitated for a moment, then added – "Maybe I can buy you a drink later?"

Tony blinked. It embarrassed him when women came on to him, even though he should be used to it by now.

"Uh, no thanks," he mumbled.

She smiled provocatively and hitched ineffectually at her bikini top. "Just like that?" she said coyly. "A plain no? Is that all I get?"

He wished someone would begin to drown so he could make a clean getaway, but noontime lethargy seemed to have struck, the azure pool was empty.

By three o'clock, when he got his first break, seven women had approached him, and one man in a Kahala Hilton T-shirt, shorts, and Nike running shoes. Peaceful it was not.

He grabbed a can of Seven-Up, and walked along the beach, distancing himself from the hotel. The ocean was throwing up tempting waves, and when he felt he was far enough away he plunged in, reveling in the refreshing salty spray.

He swam out to a floating raft and lay spread-eagled. The sun felt good now, and his body tingled.

"Hi, I'm Jennifer," said a female voice, as a pretty girl hauled herself aboard the raft. "I saw you swim out here, and thought you might like some company... "

* * *

Fortunately there was no one to meet her at the airport. Just a sleek white limousine, and a burly chauffeur. She didn't know why, but the limo reminded her of Prince. When she was nineteen and immature, she'd fantasized about sleeping with the famous singer. Then she'd met him and changed her mind. Not that there was anything wrong with him, but the moment had come and gone. She was no longer interested.

A penthouse suite at the *Gloriana* awaited her. Two bedrooms, a pearl grey living room, a marble bathroom, and a large terrace filled with potted palms, plus a magnificent view of the ocean.

She was so used to luxury that it failed to impress her.

She wondered if Lydia, her mother, would put in an appearance. After all, stepfather number four owned the fucking hotel, surely Lydia would make *some* sort of gesture to a daughter she hadn't seen in over a year?

There was a gesture all right. It came gift wrapped in the shape of a monster basket of fruit, and a short note informing her that Mummy was currently in the Bahamas, but that she should relax and have fun.

Screw Mummy.

And Daddy. Wherever *he* was. Lydia was a retiring rose compared to him. Daddy had gone through six wives, and was now on wife number seven, a Polynesian dancing girl -- or something like that.

Have fun indeed. What was there to do in Miami except get stoned?

She unpacked her twelve suitcases (female rock stars never traveled light). Jacuzzi'd in the king size bath. Ordered too much food from room service.

Drank half a bottle of Jack Daniels. Turned on every Plasma TV (there were three). And finally fell asleep in the middle of a soothing waterbed.

It wasn't until she awoke at noon the next day that she realized Chuck had not called her. Nor had Flick Lane.

It didn't matter. Nothing much mattered anymore.

* * *

Two nights had passed and Tony had not written a word. When he awoke on Saturday morning there was the blank yellow legal pad, and there was the new black pen. Both un-used.

He felt ashamed.

He felt like a failure.

What if he couldn't do it?

The thought alarmed him so much that he ran from his room like a thief, and presented himself half an hour early for pool duties.

"I want you to take the ocean spot today," Swedish Liam said.

The new location suited him fine. Less people to bother him.

He sat on a wooden platform staring out to sea,

his handsome features clouded with discontent at not being able to accomplish what he had set out to do.

* * *

After awaking at noon on Friday and realizing she had not heard from Chuck, Goldie spent an unpleasant day. She was not used to rejection. Certainly not Chuck's rejection. They had been together seven years. Shit, they were like an old married couple.

Anxiously she awaited his call.

It did not come.

Of course she could have phoned him. Could have. Did not.

Why not?

Because that was not the order of things. In their seven year relationship he had *always* called her. Always. When they were apart he called her three times a day without fail. She refused to break the pattern.

So she sulked. She raged. She ordered more room service and downed another half of Jack Daniels.

Then she felt sad, for it was surely over between her and Chuck. He must have found out about Flick Lane, and Chuck might overlook her sleeping with a mere mortal, but never a Rock Legend.

She went to bed with tears in her eyes and a new

song spinning crazily in her head.

* * *

Saturday morning was uneventful. At Tony's break Benno appeared, and they jogged down the beach together, although Tony would have really preferred to be alone.

Benno talked of nothing but girls. "I've gotten laid three times in two days!" he confessed excitedly. "The girl's are askin' for it here. Beggin' for it!" Benno had happily discovered that Tony did not have to be by his side for him to attract women. Females were ripe for the picking, and he was picking.

"That's nice," said Tony, trying to show some enthusiasm. Benno thought he was weird enough as it was.

"Nice he says!" Benno exploded. "It's friggin' fantastic! I haven't seen this much pussy since Mike and I raided the girls locker room in high school!"

Tony nodded, hoping that he looked like he appreciated the fact that getting laid was a very important subject indeed.

Soon Benno hurried back to work, and Tony mounted his platform. A wind was coming up. Not a pleasant

breeze, more hot, sharp, blasts of air, causing hats to blow off, and beach umbrellas to turn inside out.

Swedish Liam sensed a storm, and instructed Benno and another helper to collect the towels and mats from the beach.

Slowly the clouds began to roll in, rain threatened, and the ocean grew wild.

* * *

Goldie emerged from her suite at four o'clock on Saturday afternoon. She wore a sexy black swimsuit, a sleeveless denim jacket, and large gold hoop earrings. Her hair was wild and loose, and her crystal green eyes were hidden behind the perennial black shades. Her feet were bare. This made her look waif-like.

She took the elevator to the lower lobby. The button she pressed was marked POOL. SHOPS. BEACH. There was nobody else in the elevator.

When she reached the lower lobby she pushed her way through the crowds hurrying in from outside. Large black spots of rain had just started to fall, and the wind was howling.

Two girls almost recognized her.

"Isn't that -- "

"Naw. Can't be."

"You're right."

Outside the wind caught her hair and took it on a crazy dance. She pulled the denim jacket tightly around her and headed down toward the beach.

Benno was busy closing the shutters on the outdoor shop as she hurried by.

"Excuse me, Miss," he yelled above the wind. "I wouldn't go down to the beach if I was you."

She ignored him.

He shrugged. Nutty as a fox. She looked familiar. Maybe he should stop her.

Then he remembered the sparkly-eyed redhead with the over-sized peaches waiting in her room, and he hurried to finish his task.

* * *

The beach was deserted. There was just Tony, the wind, the rain, and the wild sea.

Tony had climbed down from his post, and now he sat hunched on the sand enjoying the raw energy of nature. It soothed his worried mind, allowed him to think clearly. What was he going to write? The question tormented him.

Should he write about his family?

Who would be interested in reading about *them*?

Mario Puzo had written about gangsters and mafia in *The Godfather*. Tony had read the book three times and loved it more with each reading. But what did he know of such subjects? Nothing.

The books of John Grisham intrigued him. Elmore Leonard excited him. And old Norman Mailer novels confused him with their long words and drawn out descriptions of obscenities.

So many writers. All writing.

Was it possible that simply because he *wanted* to write didn't mean that he *could*?

The thought struck him like a blow.

Then he saw the girl. So small and delicate, with clouds of blonde curls and huge black sunglasses.

She was fighting the strong wind. Her body hunched against the impact as she made her way determinedly toward the sea.

He watched her silently as she approached the ocean. It wasn't possible that she was going to swim?

No. Nobody was *that* crazy.

* * *

The ocean was surprisingly cold and the pull of

the waves surprisingly strong.

Goldie had often wondered what it would be like to drown, and now... soon... she would know.

Oh God! Chuck would be so fucking sorry he hadn't called. And her dear mother, Lydia, would be so fucking sorry she hadn't cared. And Flick Lane would be forced to think about her one last time, and wonder -- just a little bit -- if it was *his* fault.

And how about Daddy, in Bali, Tahiti, or wherever the hell it was he had settled with wife number seven. Would *he* care?

Her fans, of course, would mourn for weeks, maybe months. Perhaps she too would become a Rock Legend.

Why did she have to die to do it, instead of merely getting old like Flick Lane? The bastard. The prick. The lousy lay.

She was up to her waist in water when the first wave caught her and hurled her beneath its rough embrace. She tried to cry out but her mouth filled with water while her senses become fogged, and when she realized she had gone too far, fear filled her with ragged intensity and she did not want to die.

It took time for him to move. To run down the beach. To battle the sea. To search for the girl who had vanished beneath the last giant wave.

"Jesus Christ!" he kept on muttering. "Jesus Christ help me! Jesus Christ find her! *Jesus Christ!*"

Then he too was caught up in the power of the ocean, and he too felt the cold hand of imminent death.

* * *

Time passed. Seconds? Minutes? He had no idea. The waves were harsh battering rams throwing him this way and that.

Then somehow, like a miracle, he found her. Got a grip on the gasping, struggling, panic-filled girl, and dragged her choking and heaving, painfully inch by inch, toward the shore-line.

The sea was ferociously angry. The current strong. There were moments when he almost gave up and let her slip from the armlock he had around her shoulders. It was all he could do to save himself, let alone her.

As he staggered and fell in shallower water, help appeared. Swedish Liam, whose burly arms took over. Benno, yelling, "What the frig happened?" And a

milling group of anxious, curious hotel guests.

He flopped face-down on the sand as the girl was carried away. His lungs were burning, and yet he felt exhilarated and very much alive.

"She try to ace herself or what?" Benno demanded.

Tony shut his eyes. He had nothing to say.

* * *

By the time she felt like a human being again and was sitting up in bed eating pureed avocado with Paul Newman dressing (a favorite room-service had been only too delighted to supply) Chuck was there.

He looked good. But then the son-of-a-bitch always looked good. He wore lizard skin boots, black jeans, black shirt, and black leather jacket. With his *Serpico* beard and Al Pacino eyes, he had true style.

Goldie experienced the usual thrill. Why had she even looked at Flick Lane? Was she crazy?

She couldn't help grinning.

"Hey, delinquent. What the fuck you go an' do now?" Chuck asked, giving her a warm hug.

He always called her delinquent. She, in turn, called him Balls. Because he had them. In abundance.

"Can't a girl take a swim without the whole world

freakin' out?" she asked innocently.

He stared at her for a long silent moment. Then he said, "You know somethin', separations don't agree with us. They're off the itinerary from now on."

"Suits me," she replied casually.

He gave her another long penetrating look. "No more trips."

Her green eyes were clear and filled with anticipation. "Right on."

"Of any kind."

"Would I fight with you?"

He leaned over and kissed her long and hard, his tongue exploring her mouth.

It was good to feel loved again.

* * *

Tony had been unaware of the fact that the girl he had rescued was a celebrity. A star. It would not have made any difference. He would still have saved her, whoever she was.

"Holy *shit!!*" Benno kept on exclaiming. "Goldie friggin' Christie. She's bigger than any of 'em. Did she talk to you? Did she say anything? I once had Robert de Niro in my cab an' he didn't say a friggin' word!"

"We were not in a conversational situation," Tony explained.

"Huh?" Benno responded blankly.

Swedish Liam was pleased. He told Tony he could expect a bonus when he received his weekly paycheck. He did not say for how much.

Tony did not care. He had his bonus. The entire incident had released his creative juices and he could write! He had already begun what he felt could be an interesting and provocative short story. *The Rock Star and The Lifeguard* was his working title. The words were flowing nicely.

* * *

Tony Guiseppi and Goldie Christie met only once. Briefly. She visited him at his station before departing Miami.

She was accompanied by six photographers, her manager, several executives from the hotel, and assorted P.R. people.

She looked summery and sexy in tight white jeans, canvas boots, and an off-the-shoulder white gypsy blouse. Her blonde hair cascaded loose and free, and her crystal green eyes met his fearlessly.

She was, without a doubt, the most beautiful girl

he had ever seen.

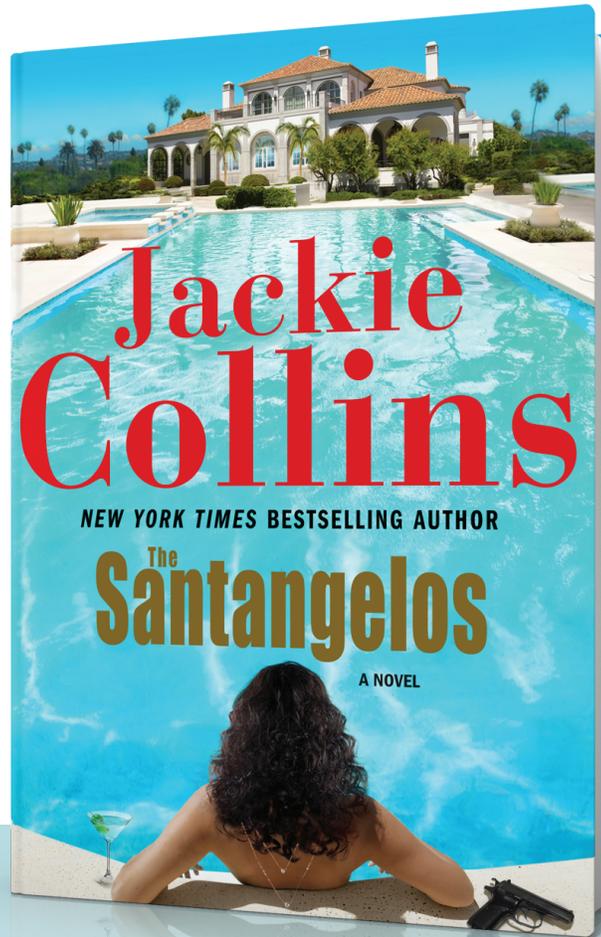
"Thank you," she said, as she gazed into his soul and handed him a check for five thousand dollars while the photographers clicked away.

"Thank you," he replied, his throat dry.

Their eyes locked.

One day he knew they would meet again, and next time it would be on equal footing.

THE END



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