

The Necklace

The Dusky Club June 1962

FOR Marsha Lynn Thompson-Nolan-Law, my best friend since childhood.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

Copyright @ by Linda S Rice.

All rights reserved.

Volume #1 – The Necklace – The Dusky Club, June 1962

ISBN: 1500671894

ISBN 13: 9781500671891

Library of Congress Control Number: 1-15-90-488671

Volume #2 – The Necklace II – Back to Brighton, November 1962

ISBN: 1500923915

ISBN 13: 9781500923914

Library of Congress Control Number: 1-1682431741

Volume #3 – The Necklace III – London, July 1967

ISBN: 1508886229

ISBN 13: 9781508886228

Library of Congress Control Number: 1-1682431741

Volume #4 – The Necklace VI – Brighton, December 1999

ISBN 1517478804

ISBN 13: 9781517478803

Library of Congress Control Number: 1-2661710045

Volume #5 – The Necklace V – Strawberries & Wine

ISBN: 1533285659

ISBN 13: 9781533285652

Library of Congress Control Number: 1-325-1607301

Volume #6 – The Necklace VI – Snow on the Mountain

ISBN: 9781520732299

ISBN 13: 9781520732299

Library of Congress Control Number: 1-441-3788421

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to friends, acquaintances, co-workers, and relatives who helped edit and critique this writing, and who encouraged me to move forward with publishing it. Special thanks to my sister-in-law, Nancy Flood, for her encouragement and the time she spent editing and re-editing, and my many Facebook friends, all of whom provided suggestions and inspiration for the story. Lastly, I'd like to thank my husband, Michael, for his patience while I wrote, re-wrote, revised and edited over the many months it took me to complete this book and the five sequels in "*The Necklace*" series.

To contact the author, e-mail Linda at LindainMtLaguna@aol.com.

Facebook Author Page: <https://www.facebook.com/TheNecklaceLindaSice/>

Yeah, she was only seventeen; you can guess what that means...

Prologue

The Sleeping Beauty Castle

The year was 1968 and Susan was sixteen years old. She'd come to Disneyland with her family, but as soon as they'd entered the gates, she waved goodbye to her mother, brother, and grandparents, saying she'd meet up with them later at the ice cream parlor on Main Street. She scurried down the street and across the bridge to the Sleeping Beauty Castle before her mother had a chance to protest. She knew she'd later be in trouble for running off, but she didn't care; she wanted to be alone and away from her family for at least part of the day.

The entrance to the Sleeping Beauty attraction was an obscure doorway that wasn't well-marked, and the attraction itself was infrequently visited. Inside the doorway, narrow stone steps led upward past the story scenes hidden behind glass windows. Various tunes from the Sleeping Beauty movie played as the stairway ascended, but it was at the very top of the stairs where Susan wanted to be, where she felt was the very best place in all of Disneyland. The small, shadowy room contained a window to the largest and best scene of all, the forest scene where Briar Rose (Princess Aurora) meets her dream prince, Prince Phillip.

For four years now, Susan had been infatuated with a certain someone in a band, in fact, the most famous band of all time, who she'd seen in concert three times. James, one of the band members, had become her dream prince, saving her from her unstable mother's verbal and physical abuse, and an uncle's inappropriate and repulsive fondling.

James had become her safe haven, wrapping his arms around her in her dreams and telling her he loved her, that everything was going to be okay, that someday he would come and take her away to be with him forever.

Yes, it was just a dream, but it had become very real to her. When things got bad, she'd run to James, and he was always there for her, the one person she could always count on.

When she reached the top of the stairs in the castle, she sighed as she looked upon the idyllic scene laid out behind the glass, imagining that she was the princess and James was the prince. As had been the case every other time she'd been here, she was completely alone. She began singing along with the music to her favorite Sleeping Beauty song, "*Once Upon A Dream.*"

"I love you...

You danced with me once upon a dream...

When I saw you...

The sparks in your eyes were so familiar to me...

She closed her eyes for a moment, thinking of James and savoring the pleasurable and happy feelings coursing through her body and turned in small circles around the room as she sang. She didn't notice that someone else had come into the castle and was standing in the shadows at the top of the stairs watching her as she continued to sing and spin, her long, blonde hair flying around behind her.

"So I'm sure it's true..."

That first love is rarely what it seems

But now I'm with you...

I know what is true...

You'll hold me again...

Just as you did then...

Upon a dream..."

"Lovely," said a voice out of the shadows. It sounded so familiar; it made her come to a sudden halt and freeze in place.

"Will you sing it again for me?"

When she spun her head around and saw who was standing there, her eyes grew as big as the teacup saucers in the *Alice In Wonderland* attraction. She was speechless, and her knees felt as if they might buckle under her.

It was James. The real, live and in person, James.

How or why he was here, she didn't know. Had she conjured him up from her imagination?

All she did know was that the sight of him took her breath away and made her heart feel as if it would pound out of her chest. She licked her lips thinking she would choke if she tried to say something. She blinked and closed her eyes for a moment, thinking he was just a vision, but when she opened them again, he was still there.

James moved forward out of the shadows, into the small room and smiled at her, the corners of his eyes crinkling in amusement, and she could see the amber highlights in them glinting in the half-light.

"Cat got your tongue?" he asked teasingly.

All she could do was shake her head, but she finally managed to say, "No...you...you just startled me is all..." Her words were merely a whisper.

"So, will you sing me the song again?" he prodded.

“Oh, no! I can’t sing very well...I...I thought I was alone...and...” she stuttered.

“I thought you sang quite nicely. Please, will you sing it again?”

Susan was glad the room was so dark, as she was blushing crimson all the way from the roots of her golden blonde hair down to her toenails. She could feel the heat in her face.

“Really...no...”

He stepped closer until he was only a couple of feet away. “Please?” he said, raising his eyebrows.

She’d been holding her breath and let out a great exhale. For almost a full minute, she couldn’t think or speak as he continued to look at her imploringly.

“Well...I guess...” she finally managed.

She walked up to the glass and looked in at the scene, turning her back to him. She felt him come up behind her and was shaking at the thought that he might actually touch her. She knew that if he did, she would pass out on the floor right then and there. She took a deep breath and began to sing again.

As her trembling and unsteady voice faded on the last notes, he said, “That was very nice, thank you.”

She turned around to face him. “I’m sure you could sing it better...”

“Do you think so?”

“Well, of course, I do!”

“So you know who I am?”

She gulped. “Uh...yeah...how could I not know?”

He laughed. “Well, if I’d left my disguise on, maybe you wouldn’t. That’s why I came here. That mustache and beard thing were getting all itchy. I was told that no one comes here very much.”

She laughed back. “You’re right; not many people know this is even here. That’s one reason I like it.”

“So, are you here alone then?”

“No. I came to Disneyland with my family, but this is my favorite place. I always come here first when we come to Disneyland. I told my mom I’d meet up with everyone later.”

“Do you come to Disneyland often?”

“Once or twice a year...We don’t live very far away.”

“And why is this your favorite place?”

She bit her lip and turned to look at the scene behind the window again. "I've just always loved the Sleeping Beauty story, I guess."

"What do you like most about it?"

"Um...well...the falling in love part when he doesn't know who she is and she doesn't know who he is...and...and the end where he wakes her up with love's first kiss...and when they're dancing at the very end, and two of the fairies keep changing her dress color from pink to blue..."

"Ah...and what color does it end up being? Pink or blue?"

"Why, pink, of course!"

"I see...your favorite color maybe?"

"Maybe." She leaned back into the glass window to brace herself because her legs were shaking so bad.

When he reached forward and took a lock of her hair between his fingers, she was sure she would faint. She inhaled sharply, her eyes flying to his and their eyes locked.

"Perhaps you'd be interested in taking a ride on the Monorail with me?" he asked.

"The Monorail?"

"Yes, it goes all around the park, as you probably know, and it even makes a stop at the Disneyland Hotel. We could have a cup of coffee."

She sucked in her breath. "You mean...leave the park?!"

"Just for a bit. Perhaps I could even sing to you..."

A weak "Oh" was all she could manage.

He let go of her hair, sensing he was making her nervous.

And, he knew full well he was making her nervous; he knew the effect he had on girls. They constantly chased him and just about threw themselves at his feet. Being in a band that was now world-famous had its drawbacks, but having beautiful girls pining to be with him, was one of the bonuses.

He assessed the girl standing in front of him, knowing that his closeness was affecting her. Although it was rather dim in the room, he could still see she was one of the loveliest girls he'd ever encountered. She was just a few inches shorter than him, with a very trim yet shapely body. She wore a pink, sleeveless sundress with a modest neckline, yet there was still a hint of cleavage peeking out at him from the top. Her tanned skin was flawless, and her face and hair looked almost like the Sleeping Beauty character behind the glass window. He wanted to touch her skin as he had her soft and silky hair.

It was her eyes, however, that he found captivating. They were a deep emerald green, unlike any eyes he'd ever seen before. His thoughts shocked him for a moment. He was normally not so quickly captivated by a pretty face. Most of the time they all seemed the same to him.

But, he wanted to find out more about this girl for some reason...her name...her age...what she looked like outside the dimness of the room. It was as if the Sleeping Beauty castle had cast some kind of spell over him.

As if she could read his mind, Susan flinched and moved towards the other set of stairs leading down through the rest of the attraction to a second door that led out of the castle. She was more than nervous; she suddenly and unexpectedly felt panicked. Here was her dream prince right in front of her, asking her to leave Disneyland with him, and she was so unnerved and flustered that she could barely breathe.

The thought of spending more time with him, having him touch more than just her hair, sent terrified shivers down her spine.

She had to leave. She had to get out of the castle and away from him. She didn't know why she was so frightened, but she began to shake uncontrollably before turning on her heel and racing from the room and down the stairs, hair flying behind her, as fast as her unstable legs could carry her.

Right before she reached the bottom, she glanced over through one of the windows and saw the scene with Prince Phillip waking up Princess Aurora with love's first kiss. She choked on a sob and tears began to pour down her face.

As she passed the final window with the dancing scene and the flashing blue and pink lights changing Sleeping Beauty's dress color, she heard footsteps behind her and knew it was James.

"Wait!" she heard him yell. "Where are you going?! What's your name?"

But, by the time he reached the bottom of the stairs and stepped out into the bright sunlight, Susan was gone.

Chapter One

46 Years Later

“Thanks for taking me to the airport, John,” Susan said, hefting one of several suitcases into the back of her Honda Civic. “I really appreciate it! Donald had an important court case this morning and had to be there, otherwise, he would have dropped me off.”

“No problem,” said John, putting the last suitcase in the car and closing the trunk. “You said you’re only going on a seven-day cruise? It looks like you must have packed enough for a month or more!”

“Yeah, well,” said Susan, “I like to have choices, you know. Girls like options.”

“Uh huh,” he responded, opening the door on the passenger side for her.

Susan slid into the seat and fastened her seatbelt while John went around to the driver’s side, got in and started up the car.

“So,” said John, “What made you and Lynn decide to go on a cruise together without Ernest and Donald? Couldn’t they get time off?”

“No. Donald is involved in one of his big court cases, and Ernest is working on some kind of superconductor or secret government project. Plus, we just decided we wanted to take a girl’s cruise. No husbands. Plus, I’m still unsettled after going to that concert last year in Texas. I just felt like I needed a distraction.”

“Oh, the concert where you went to see James you mean?”

“Yeah. Seeing him was like a dormant volcano came alive again. I shouldn’t have gone.”

“Susan, it’s been fifty years, you know...”

“Oh, I know, I know, but you remember how it was with me in junior high and high school...Everybody knew about me and my ‘James thing,’ especially poor Brian. I still pity the guy having to put up with me and my obsession or whatever you’d call it.”

“Oh yeah, I remember your ‘James thing.’ Everybody in school knew about it. Brian and I are still close friends you know; we play Frisbee together a couple of times a week.”

“Really? I didn’t know that. I knew you were still friends, but I didn’t realize you see him that often. Sometimes I think about him and wonder if he remembers the horrible thing he did to me.”

“What horrible thing? I always wondered what broke the two of you up. Even though he was my best friend at the time, he never really said what happened. You guys went steady for

how long? Four years? A lot of people were sure you'd end up getting married after we graduated, and then all of a sudden, you were with Donald and ended up marrying him."

"Well, the 'horrible thing,' as I call it, had to do with James. Brian was picking me up from an after school class I was taking at the university, and when I got in the car, he had this big, giant grin on his face. When I asked him what that was all about, he just turned up the radio and started to laugh. The news was on, and they were saying how James had just gotten married. I was beside myself...I started screaming and crying. And he just kept laughing and laughing."

"Wow...I didn't know that..."

"And then, he rubbed it in that James had married someone named Susan, and that it wasn't me. I remember him saying it was the happiest day of his life. It was the most miserable day of mine. I remember leaping out of the car and running away from him to the bus stop, but he caught up with me; I made him take me home. I never forgave him for laughing at me. I never will... My bubble was burst, and I was devastated. But for Brian to laugh at me and rub it in... Sorry, I know he's still your friend, but..."

"Hey, Susan, he was probably happy just because he was tired of having to compete with James, and he likely thought that would be the end of your infatuation with him. Face it; it wasn't as if you would ever have had a chance to be with James anyway; he was so out of reach for you."

"Maybe, but I still harbored some crazy idea that I really would be with James someday, and I knew there would never be an end to my feelings for him. Obviously, I was right, huh? He's so deeply embedded in my heart that I don't think I'll ever get him pried out of it."

"So, what does Donald think about your 'James thing?' He can't be very excited about it. Especially being married to you for forty-four years now."

"He's man enough not to be threatened by it. He knows he's number one with me, despite my musings over James from time to time. It's not like James has seriously affected my life or the raising of our children or anything. Besides, and this is something I've never told anyone but Lynn..."

John looked over at Susan and raised his eyebrows.

"A couple of months after James got married, I was standing in front of my easel in art class, looking outside at the rain and feeling pretty dismal. As I looked out, I prayed to God, the Universe, or whatever power might be hanging out there. I asked that if I couldn't have James, which I knew deep down inside was an unobtainable dream anyway, then please, could I have

someone just like him. Right then, the clouds parted for just a moment, and a ray of sun came down and lit up the window next to me. And, you'll think this is weird, but Donald passed me a note in the next class asking me for my phone number. I didn't think much of it at the time, but later..."

"That's pretty incredible, Susan. A prayer answered! So, do you think Donald is a lot like James?"

"I have no way of knowing. I've just always had James up on this pedestal, making him near perfect in my mind. He helped me get through my miserable and abusive childhood. When things get bad in my life, he's just someone to run to in my mind...in my dreams..."

"Well, I think Donald is one fantastic guy. Maybe going on this cruise with Lynn will take your mind off James. And, maybe you're right that you shouldn't have gone to that concert last year to see him. I still can't even believe how popular he still is, going all over the place at his age and putting on those mega-concerts. Sounds like seeing him stirred the pot of memories for you."

"You could certainly say that! Hey, here we are at the airport already. I really do appreciate this. You're a great friend, John!"

"Happy to help you out, and I hope you and Lynn have a great time."

"Oh, I know we will! I just love cruises!"

John pulled the car up to the curb at the American Airlines terminal, and both he and Susan got out. John helped Susan get her luggage to the curbside check-in, then hugged her goodbye.

Susan smiled in anticipation of being with her best friend, Lynn, again and cheerfully walked into the airport to the security line. An hour later, her plane lifted off the ground, and she was winging her way to Texas where Lynn would pick her up before driving them both to Galveston and the ship.

The flight to Dallas/Fort Worth was three hours. Susan had packed her Kindle in her carry-on bag but became annoyed at herself when she realized the battery was near dead and the charger cord was in one of her checked bags.

"*Oh well,*" she thought, *"I'll just have to entertain myself in some other way."*

She looked at the movie guide as soon as the "fasten seatbelt" sign went off, but nothing appealed to her. Grateful to have a window seat, she looked out as the plane gained altitude over the ocean then made a turn to head east from San Diego to Texas. She looked down, trying to

recognize something, but as usual, from the air, nothing looked familiar. She leaned back in her seat and closed her eyes.

She was looking forward to being with Lynn, her best friend from elementary school. They shared so many good times and memories, and she especially remembered the ones where she and Lynn had gone to see the most famous band of all time.

The band had consisted of four boys from Brighton, England, named Derek, James, Ian, and Blue. "Blue" was actually a nickname for Bernard, their drummer because he wore the color blue all the time. Lynn became infatuated with Ian and Susan with James, attending three of their concerts in 1964, '65 and '66.

Susan thought back to the first concert in 1964 when she was twelve years old and watched James through a pair of binoculars. Everyone was screaming, and she remembered wishing they would shut up so she could hear better. She, Lynn and another friend, Joy, had tickets in what she called the "nosebleed" section, being so far from the stage. The only good thing about being so far back at the Hollywood Bowl was that they were right below the speakers, so she could at least hear some of what one of the boys in the band would say when they announced a song.

The most memorable moment at that first concert had been when James stepped up to the microphone as Susan pressed the binoculars into her eye sockets, holding her breath, waiting to hear what he was going to say and wondering what song would be next. Shivers went down her spine as she heard his voice, and then he started singing what had become her favorite song, "*All My Kisses*." Tears poured down her face as her young, pre-teen heart wrenched for want of something that she couldn't identify. All she remembered was that she was certain she had fallen in love, and she imagined James was singing to no one but her.

That particular stage in her life had been an unhappy one. Her father had passed away five years previously and her mother, unable to cope with his loss, became so mentally unstable that Susan, her brother, and mother moved in with her grandparents.

Susan's mother had no patience for her and constantly berated her, often screaming and throwing things at her or even pulling her hair or slapping her. To add to her misery, her uncle, who lived across the street, began molesting her when she was ten years old. She was too young to fully understand what his touches and fondling were all about, and he made her keep it a secret between them, but for some reason, it didn't seem right to her. It made her feel dirty and ashamed.

The one joy in Susan's life was her ballet classes, and she put all of her energy into working as hard as she could to become a good dancer. It was her dream to be a famous ballerina one day, and until James entered her life, she spent many hours in a fantasy world where she was the most talented ballerina in the world. The only drawback to ballet was the fact that her mother didn't drive, so her sole transportation to and from classes was her uncle. Every time he came to pick her up, she cringed, knowing what he'd want from her before they got home.

Then James and his band came to the U.S. in February 1964. Susan joined in with Lynn and her other friends to become fans of the group, seeing them first on the Ted Flannagan Show, buying their records and looking at their pictures in magazines. But, it wasn't until the Hollywood Bowl concert that Susan went over the cliff with James and made him her dream prince, just like Sleeping Beauty had a dream prince.

James became her escape from the harsh reality of her life, and once he'd embedded himself in her heart, there was no turning back. He became everything to her, and whenever things became unbearable, she ran off to be with him in the fantasy world she had created for them both, especially during the times she had to spend with her uncle on the drive home from ballet class. She blocked what he did to her from her mind, thinking instead of James holding her in his arms and telling her everything was going to be okay.

And then the chance meeting in Disneyland...She chased thoughts of those moments out of her head. She still couldn't believe it had really happened.

Susan opened her eyes as the plane hit a pocket of turbulence, rousing her out of her thoughts of the far past. She reached up to her chest and tugged on the silver necklace she wore around her neck. A pair of silver ballet shoes hung on the end. She flicked her finger at them.

Here she was at sixty-two years old and still thinking of James like a silly twelve year old. What was wrong with her anyway? Hopefully, spending time with Lynn and going on the cruise would wipe the cobwebs out of her mind along with her renewed feelings for James.

At least she hoped it would.

Susan's plane was ten minutes early arriving at DFW, and when she called Lynn to let her know, Lynn hadn't even left her house yet. Lynn's house was almost an hour away, south of Dallas. Susan began to fidget, annoyed at having to wait another hour.

She managed to get all of her luggage claimed and hauled out to the curb in the parking garage, then went back into the airport, asking one of the security people to keep an eye on her

bags for a minute or two. She shortly returned with a foodie magazine, thanked the security guard and sat down on a bench to wait for Lynn.

She perused the magazine and started to feel hungry looking at all the pictures. A delicious-looking photo of Crème Brulee was on the cover, and she thought if they weren't driving straight from the airport to the ship in Galveston, she'd make some for Lynn and Ernest at their home. It was one of her specialties, and she always had fun with the blowtorch when caramelizing the sugar on top.

She smiled. Lynn was no cook. Ernest always loved it when Susan came to visit because she always prepared fabulous meals and did her best to teach Lynn to cook. Cooking was one of Susan's favorite pastimes.

Susan read the magazine cover to cover before Lynn finally arrived.

"I forgot when your plane was due in," Lynn said sheepishly. "I thought you said 11:00, not 10:00."

"Lynn! How could you have forgotten? It's a five-hour drive from here to our ship, and the ship sails at 5:30! We're going to be cutting it super close!"

"I know...I know...sorry, honey..."

"You forgot what time I was due in last time too, remember? When I came for the concert?"

"Oh, Susan, don't remind me of that!"

"Why not?"

"You turned into a basket case, that's why. I thought you were going to leap off the balcony when James started to sing "*All My Kisses*." I really did!"

"How ridiculous! I was *not* about to leap off the balcony! Why would I do that? I'm not that crazy!"

"Well, I'm not so sure about that when it comes to *him*...Plus, you told me going to see James made you start thinking about him again. You shouldn't be thinking of him at all, you know."

"Yeah, I know...But with Donald all wrapped up in his court cases and everything... Sometimes I don't even see him for a whole week, other than sleeping in the same bed for a couple of hours a night. And, sometimes he even stays at his office all night, so I don't see him at all. He doesn't even make time to call me."

“Susan, he treats you like a princess, and you know it! He adores you. Once this court case is over, you know he’ll sweep you off on a romantic vacation somewhere, just like he always does.”

“Yeah, maybe, but in the meantime, I’ve got James stuck in my head again. I keep thinking of the time I met him in Disneyland...remember when I told you about that?”

“Oh yes! And you were just sixteen! What could he have been thinking wanting to go off with you like that? You would have been underage jailbait! And, what was he doing there anyway? Are you sure you just didn’t imagine it?”

“I’m very, very sure! It was definitely him. I keep wishing I hadn’t run away. What do you think would have happened if I hadn’t run away?”

“Something that you would have regretted, I’m sure. You probably wouldn’t have been a virgin when you met Donald for one thing.”

“He just said he wanted to take a ride on the Monorail and go for a cup of coffee.”

“Uh huh...and I’m the Queen of Sheba. I don’t think so...It creeps me out just thinking about it.”

“Whatever...I’m still going to always wonder. I’m always going to wonder what he’s really like. He seemed so nice up in the Sleeping Beauty Castle... I’d give anything to go back and re-live that time...maybe even decide to go have that cup of coffee with him...”

“You and your thinking he’s so darn perfect. He’s just a made-up dream, and you know it. Your real dream is what you already have. You should appreciate Donald more.”

“I do! But it still doesn’t keep me from thinking what it would be like to go back in the past and be with James again in the castle. Or...even better yet...What if I could go back in the past and meet him before the band became famous? Maybe he’d fall in love with me and then...”

“You’re crazy, Susan. You would have been, what, about ten years old right before they became famous? I don’t think James would have been interested in a ten-year-old. You should do more thinking about Donald, and then maybe you’d forget about James. I forgot about Ian a zillion years ago, and you remember the crush I had on him!”

“I’ll never forget about James...”

“Oh, Susan! What am I going to do with you anyway? You and your stupid James thing!”

“You’re my best friend in the whole world, Lynn...just indulge me, okay?”

“I love you, Susan!”

“I love you too, Lynn! And, we’re going to have a fabulous time on this cruise...I just know it!!!”

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

