
JUDITH

DAZ

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KRANTZ

ZLE

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For Magic Johnson, James Worthy, Byron Scott, A. C. Green, Michael Cooper, Mychal Thompson, Orlando Woolridge, Vlade Divac, Larry Drew, and the other members of the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team of 1990. Together and individually, inspired by the intensity of their great coach, Pat Riley, and the leadership of the incomparable Magic Johnson, the ultimate basketball player of our era, the Lakers constantly enrich the lives of their fans as they demonstrate great-hearted courage, unselfish dedication and breathtaking talent.

For my husband, Steve. All writers agonize. But I'm lucky enough to have a husband who listens to my doubts, evaluates my solutions, puts matters into perspective and banishes the agony. When my day's work has gone well, Steve is the only one with whom I can fully share the joy.

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Victoria Cameron Pearson, fashion and personality photographer.

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Medina Rosner and *Harris Rosner*, who provide pleasure and inspiration.

DAZZLE

In California an earthquake isn't considered to have happened until people are able to get to a phone and discuss it. If friends aren't at home, any stranger who answers the phone will provide a satisfactory ear, so long as that person has also experienced the quake and can validate its existence. A dentist's answering service, a temporary file clerk, a children's nurse are all satisfactory repositories of post-earthquake exchanges. Only after such a conversation can a Californian be satisfied with the earthquake and put it into its right place in the scheme of things.

Today was such a day. There had been a distinct but insignificant temblor as Jazz Kilkullen drove to work and traffic had been tied up for an hour, but, alone in her car, with its long-unrepaired radio, she had only the irritated faces of strangers in other cars for verification. Finally Jazz pulled her classic 1956 turquoise and cream Thunderbird into her usual lot, vaulted out of the driver's seat and ran full tilt up the street from the lot to Dazzle, her photography studio.

Of all days to be late, she thought furiously, as she barnstormed past the occasional strolling couple who stepped back out of her way and stopped to stare at her. These tourists in Venice, California, already pleasantly alarmed by the minor but definite movement of the earth, were in a mood to be gratified by anything they encountered in this curious sideshow of a neighborhood. The sight

of Jazz only confirmed Venice's reputation for eccentricity and authenticity.

On this slightly ominous but otherwise ordinary Friday morning in September of 1990, this girl in full stride, who ran as if the street belonged to her, wore the kind of improbable hat they'd seen in photographs of women at Royal Ascot, a big black straw cart-wheel, its brim laden with giant, floppy red poppies. Her red wool skirt flared five inches above her knees, revealing long, glorious legs in black hose and high-heeled black shoes. She must be *someone* special, they decided as they looked after her. Who but someone special would sport such feature-concealing, outrageously big sunglasses, who but someone special would run with such a single-minded lack of awareness that anyone was in her path?

Jazz arrived at the street entrance to Dazzle, flung open the double glass doors and confronted Sandy, the receptionist.

"Did you feel the quake, Sandy? How long has he been here?" she demanded breathlessly. "Damn! I hate to keep people waiting!"

"It's O.K. One of his people just called from the limo. He'll be late, at least another hour, probably more."

"He'll be late? *He'll* be late? After I almost went starkers in that traffic jam? Didn't you feel that quake? He's got one hell of a nerve. I hope you told them that."

"Sure I felt the quake. It was just your ordinary shiver. I called my sister in the Valley and she didn't know there had been one. Jazz, if you had a car phone, I could have let you know that he wasn't here," Sandy complained. She lived basically by the grace and favor of the telephone, and the fact that Jazz refused to profane the interior of that old heap she drove so proudly with such an indispensable instrument was a constant irritation to her.

"You're right, as usual," Jazz replied, grinning like a cocky urchin who had just committed some undiscoverable mischief. She took a deep breath and recovered her habitual insouciance, holding herself with the invisible discipline and confidence of a bare-back rider in the circus who makes the most difficult balancing act look easy.

She took the stairs two at a time to her second-floor studio where the walls of the outer office were covered with large framed pho-

tographs. Each frame contained two shots of the same subject, one taken during the first minutes of a session, when the subject was still suspicious, stiff and balky, determined to project a cherished persona, the other taken at the end of the session, when the subject had been transformed into a spontaneously reacting, openly human creature whose inner truth had been revealed by Jazz's camera.

François Mitterrand, Isabelle Adjani, Princess Anne, Jesse Jackson, Marlon Brando, Muammar Khaddafy, Woody Allen: the more difficult it was to establish a relationship, the more pleased Jazz was with the results. Pictures of subjects who had already established a deep complicity with the camera, from Madonna to the Pope, were never displayed on the walls of this studio in which she had become one of the most successful celebrity portrait and advertising photographers in the United States.

"Anybody home?" Jazz called as she entered the studio proper, kicking off her shoes, throwing her hat on the floor, and sinking down on a Victorian sofa, an incongruous prop in the enormous white-walled space whose huge windows looked out onto the Pacific Ocean, which was flat and soothingly blue.

Five years ago Jazz and two other photographers, Mel Botvinick, a top food photographer, and Pete di Constanza, who specialized in car photography, with their representative, Phoebe Milbank, had bought an empty building built in the style of the Piazza San Marco, on Windward Boulevard in Venice, right on the boardwalk, only steps from the beach. It had been a bank before it had been abandoned and allowed to run down for forty years. They were able to get a good buy on the noble hulk, which had been rechristened Dazzle and converted into a complex consisting of three large studios, an office for Phoebe, and plenty of working room for their assistants and studio managers.

Toby Roe, Jazz's chief assistant, a slim young man wearing black from head to toe, emerged from behind the door that led from the studio into the offices, dressing rooms and filing space.

"Hey, are you O.K.? Was it the quake that made you late or is today's job that much of a bore?" Toby asked.

"We didn't blame you when you didn't show," Melissa Kraft added. Jazz's second assistant was dressed exactly like Toby, and

like him carried three cameras. "When you think about it, what is he but just another lowlife macho creep with a good agent?"

"Scum," Jazz agreed. "Your basic theatrical slime. Let's never forget, this guy's an actor. *Just* an actor. You guys feel the quake?"

"Yep," Toby said. "Nothing to get alarmed about. I called my mom but I got her service so I left a message and phoned my brother and told him all about it—he'd slept right through it."

They smiled at each other, the earthquake disposed of and already forgotten. In spite of the wry objectivity that photographers traditionally prefer to maintain toward their subjects, as if they were puppet-masters to the world, all three of them knew the others were excited about the shoot scheduled for today.

In a series of startling performances, Sam Butler, an Australian, had suddenly eclipsed Tom Cruise as the most seductive and talented young actor to emerge from any country in years. Unlike most American stars, he had not yet consented to promote his movies with portrait sittings for magazine covers, so today's cover shoot for *Vanity Fair* was a coup.

"Sandy says he won't be here for an hour," Jazz told her assistants.

"She let us know when his people called," Toby answered. "That's why young Melissa here isn't foaming at the mouth. She's saving it."

"Toby's planning to ask him where he gets his hair cut," Melissa said, busy with a lens. Toby didn't bother to respond. He was looking at Jazz, relaxed momentarily on the sofa, as he repeated to himself the mantra with which he started each day of work:

"Thank God I'm never going to fall in love with Jazz. She's rich and famous and she's my boss. I'm never going to fall in love with Jazz." Armed with this mantra, which he sometimes had to repeat many times if a shoot was held up and his concentration on the job slackened, Toby had managed to stick out two years of hopeless lovesickness.

At least she'd never suspected, he thought as he glanced at her, trying, as he always did, to understand the riddle of her face. He'd been a photographer since his early teens and Toby still couldn't quite capture in his mind's eye, once and for all, what it was about Jazz that fascinated him so. The nature of his work had accustomed

him to looking at women whose central fact in life was their beauty, many of them more beautiful than Jazz, and younger than she was at twenty-nine, but hers was the one face that he'd never been able to look away from with a sense of visual finality, of repletion, of aesthetic surfeit, as if he had seen as much as he needed to see.

Jazz, creature of flesh and blood that she was, had surfaces that could only be compared to a topaz, that rare gem flashing a rich gold with an undertone of warm brown, those precious crystals which the ancient Scots thought were a cure for lunacy. But had those ancients ever seen a woman with golden eyes, Toby wondered? Had they ever looked at a woman whose tawny plumage of golden brown hair looked amber in some lights and chestnut in another, hair that hung all the way below her shoulders in the kind of artless, childlike ripples that other women sometimes possess, but only at their temples or foreheads? Had they ever had to deal with a woman whose skin seemed always faintly tanned, with a tint that gave her cheeks the blush of an apricot-hued Brandy rose, a golden pink blush very different from that of any other rose in any garden? If so, he felt sorry for them, as sorry as he felt for himself.

Above her golden eyes Jazz's brown brows formed unusually strong and level lines, as precise as those drawn by a ballerina. They shot straight up when she was surprised, provoked or amused, and often only the expression in her eyes would signal the difference in her emotions. Below the firm, independent and potentially impudent line of her nose, her mouth was a study in contrast, her upper lip delicate, almost childish, her lower lip too full, too frank, too swollen for classic beauty.

For with it all, Toby reminded himself, Jazz Kilkullen was a hussy, an electric hussy, a fabulous flirt, a player of games, a mistress of disguise, a creature of many moods, a teller of truths, a lady of accomplishments, and as hardworking a photographer as any he'd ever heard of.

Thank God I'm never going to fall in love with Jazz, Toby repeated to himself as he checked the cameras for the tenth time that morning. Jazz owned a score of cameras she rarely used but today she'd told them to load all six of her Canon T 90's with the

multiple metering system that gave her three computerized options for focusing. She was playing it as safe as he'd ever known her to, for normally she scorned automatic focus.

While Melissa counted the host of easily movable lights and tiny flashes, all self-powered by battery packs, she observed Jazz's outfit, from the Cecil Beaton hat to the short, skittish skirt and thin red wool blouse cut like an oversized smock, apparently held together with one giant jet button. She'd expected that her boss would think today's challenge called for the combat boots, the Army-Navy store sailor pants and the five-hundred-dollar Harry Truman Hawaiian shirt, worn with dangling antique garnet earrings and delicate, precious old rings on each finger; one of the getups that she sometimes wore to confuse and control a new victim.

But apparently Jazz had decided on the ladies-lunch-at-the-Bistro-Garden approach, another manipulation tactic, relentlessly overdressed in a way in which no other photographer would feel comfortable.

Jazz never just put on her clothes in the morning, Melissa thought with exasperated admiration. She overdressed, underdressed, fancy-dressed, screw-you-dressed or didn't bother to dress at all in her brightly colored rugby shirts that she mixed with jeans when she wanted to look as if she could be safely ignored. Melissa was wise to her boss. She knew that if Jazz really intended to be ignored she'd wear all black as Melissa did herself. One day, when she too was a famous photographer, she'd throw out every black thing she'd ever owned, Melissa vowed silently as she went to answer the intercom from the desk downstairs.

"They're on their way up!" Sandy shrilled as the intercom rang again. "Now they're almost on time—honestly, don't you think they could have called?"

Melissa hung up without answering. "Battle stations," she said warningly to Jazz, who was still lying on the sofa. She raced into the office to summon Sis Levy, an efficient young redhead who was Jazz's office manager.

"I was almost asleep," Jazz protested, yawning, but she got up and into her hat and shoes two seconds before a group of people spilled out of the elevator.

"Come on in," she said, as Melissa and Toby faded into the

background. She had never seen such a large entourage, not even when she'd photographed Stallone and Streisand together for *Rolling Stone*. And they were all female, like members of a cult that dooms young widows to wear deepest mourning, skirts falling either to mid-calf and worn with flat, ankle-high boots, or cut just below the crotch and worn with black tights and spike heels.

"I'm Tilly Finish, from the magazine," the oldest of them said, coming forward to introduce herself. "Sam will be right up. He saw some sort of car downstairs and he wanted to take a better look at it."

"That's my punishment for having a car photographer on the first floor," Jazz said pleasantly, as she mentally damned Pete di Constanza for not hustling the new Ferrari Testarossa inside his shop under wraps the way he did when prototypes arrived. Sometimes the cars leaving and entering his studio became such an attractive nuisance that she and Mel Botvinick had to complain formally to Phoebe Milbank.

Tilly Finish started to introduce the other women who gradually filled the entrance to the studio. Jazz and Sis Levy shook hands all around. Three of them came from the public relations agency that handled Sam Butler; two more were stylists, each with an assistant, all holding garment bags with items from the vast wardrobe Sam Butler might deign to wear; Tilly herself had two assistants, both of them carrying cellular phones; there was a hair lady and a lady makeup artist. Jazz counted an even dozen, all young, all pretty, all smiling tentatively, like a newspaper photograph of the wives of a renegade Mormon of the old school.

Sis Levy took over the crowd, directing the stylists' assistants and the hair and makeup women to the dressing rooms, so that they could dispose of their burdens, but the others refused to move, standing about, watching the elevator, like nervous Secret Service men who've lost the President.

Jazz looked at her watch. It was almost lunchtime and they were far from starting. "Carry on," she told Sis as she zipped out and clattered down the staircase. On the street floor of Dazzle, Jazz rushed out of the building and around to the side where Pete's studio had its delivery entrance. The double garage doors, big enough to accommodate the largest truck, gaped open and inside

she saw two men walking intently around the Ferrari as if it were the first car to have been invented. Henry Ford had a lot to answer for, she thought grimly, or was it the Wright Brothers?

Jazz walked up to Sam Butler, as bumpuously as a winning colt. "I'm Jazz Kilkullen," she announced, extending her hand. He took it without looking at her. "Right, I'll be with you later," he said, and turned his back, opened the door of the hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar car and slid behind the wheel. "Would you mind if I took this baby out for a spin? I've been wanting one but I don't know, it might be a bit too flash."

"It's perfect for you," Jazz said, firmly grappling him by his upper arm with her strong fingers, pinioning him by the tweed of his jacket. "If you don't drive the best, who should? Let's come back later, shall we? You have a fan-club meeting upstairs." Angrily he turned to look at her. She gave him a deadpan stare. He was so beautiful that it was simply silly, Jazz thought, a minor genetic joke. She refused to try to deal with this large blond creature visually until she was behind a camera.

"They can bloody well wait," Sam Butler said.

"But I can't."

"You have all day."

"Half of it's gone. This is a cover shot, remember?"

"I don't want to do the thing anyway."

"But I do." Jazz tilted her chin so that the brim of her hat no longer shadowed her face, looked him straight in the eye and smiled at him, half siren, half London bobby, wholly excessive. "Later you can have all the Ferraris you can eat," she said with a clear-cut twist of promise. "Let's let Pete do his job and we'll do ours, so you can come back to this car just as soon as possible. All right, Mr. Butler?"

"Call me Sam," the Australian said, leaving Pete without a glance. Jazz turned back to the car photographer. "If you do this once more, honey-child, I won't let you help audition the girls for the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue," she warned him before she followed Sam Butler up to her studio.

Five minutes later, as the widows' club fluttered purposefully but distractingly around the actor, Jazz conferred with Sis Levy and appeared at Tilly Finish's elbow.

“This isn’t going to work, is it, Tilly?”

“What do you mean?”

“Now, now, don’t play innocent,” Jazz said with a conspiratorial smile. “Obviously you’ve run into this before yourself, a woman of your sophistication. All these little girls are in heat. One can’t blame them but they’re useless. Total brain drain into the lower parts, wouldn’t you agree? Look, if you could just take them all downstairs to lunch at 72 Market Street—I’ve reserved a table, and they’ll put it on my bill—I’ll send Sis and my assistants with you and by the time lunch is over I’ll have the cover shot.”

“Don’t you need your assistants?”

“Everything’s prepared. Six cameras loaded and ready. Anyway, I was an assistant for years. . . . I can still load film in the dark underwater upside down, and I always do all the lighting myself.”

“But Sam isn’t dressed yet,” Tilly squeaked. “I haven’t decided what he should wear. New York left it up to me.”

“He’ll look great, I promise. Anyway he doesn’t need makeup or hair . . . you know they want a natural look. The important thing is to get the cover—I simply have to have the studio to myself for a few hours. Don’t forget, we still have another outdoor color shot and three black-and-whites for the body of the story and he’s only given us today and next Wednesday. We’ll be lucky if he even shows up next week—he’s not the most obedient boy, your Mr. Butler.”

“My Mr. Butler,” Tilly Finish said wistfully. “Wouldn’t that be the day?” She clapped her hands. “Everybody, lunch break. Sam, I’ll leave you here if you don’t mind, to get started.”

In minutes the studio was empty.

“Thanks,” the actor said. “They were beginning to make me nervous. Why are they all in black? Did somebody die?”

“It’s political,” Jazz assured him, dismissing the whole question of young Hollywood chic. “If you’re hungry I’ll make you a sandwich before we start.”

“I never eat lunch. It slows me down.”

“Good. There should be a Versace raincoat in the dressing room. Would you try it on for me?”

“Yeah, right. I fancy that myself.”

And well he might, Jazz thought. Sam Butler was the most