



summer
of
antoinette

a novel by
Pete Trudgeon

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Dot Screen Studios

Detroit

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For Nastia, sneak thief of my imagination

Foreword

I'd abandoned guilt. My parents, father Ronald, mother Margret while alive were not religious. Yet, on the right breast of the grey blazers that my younger sister and I wore during our 12 years of formal education bore the insignia of Our Lady of the Blessed Virgin. I suppose sending us to a private institution, staffed by priests and nuns, practiced in a faith no one in my family held, was an attempt to bestow in us a sense of structured morality. Like most good intentions it was doomed to fail. Spending so much time in such a fetishistic environment allowed time for many a seed to be planted.

Over the years I'd been forced to listen to the long held complaints of former students from identical schools. Their laments are always identical whining of rigid structure, the occasional corporal punishment (wooden paddles on the backside) and lack of individuality. I, on the other hand, enjoyed my environment and have fond memories. I even volunteered my services as altar boy for the once a week, Wednesday morning mass. I liked the way the priest's orations echoed off the church's stone walls, the sound of the organ and the glow of lit candles. I felt a participant in an ancient and somewhat mysterious rite. Above me the large crucifix with the figure of Jesus attached by nails, sad eyes staring backward, and in front of me were row after row of my female classmates; dozens of pairs of knees rosy from kneeling. The way their moist tongues pushed out to receive the paper thin wafer, meant to represent the flesh of their lord and savior.

Still, there was nothing in my upbringing that would lead me to believe I'd one day hold the thoughts towards, or commit the acts I'd perpetrate with Antoinette Mouse. Antoinette Mouse: young in body, ancient in soul. She who purified me through corruption. I've come to an understanding regarding this mysterious thing we call desire, unpredictable in its arrival, triggered by a photograph, a scent, or a gesture such as a young girl lifting her hair so that she may rub the back of her neck. In other words, a thousand such things. It leads one on a journey, often lonely, where you know neither the length of the road nor what is behind the bend until its been turned. You are hungry, but not fed, you thirst, but are not quenched.

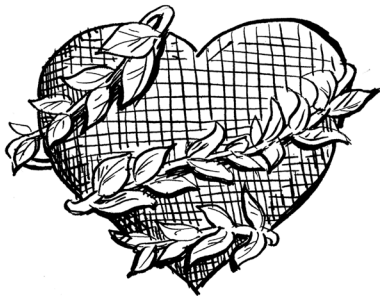
My history with females had two commonalities. Most accused me of

keeping secrets, and fate always conspired to, at one point, rob me of their company. First was Michele Alberts who bestowed upon me my first kiss. It happened on a cold February afternoon during kindergarten recess. She was followed by Lisa Wheeler, my babysitter and first love. She will be discussed in detail later.

As the years passed, they came in this order: Barbara Looker, elementary school temptress and completely unobtainable. Joyce Laurent who lost her virginity to me at age 16 in her parent's basement. There are more, their faces and bodies are faded images floating in my memory, only their names are clear: Jennifer, Ami, Maureen, Regina, a few others. But with the exception of my dear Lisa, none stir any gentle nostalgia or harsh regret, and with the arrival of Antoinette they'd finally be transformed into the hollow couplings they'd always been.

Part One

MAY





Chapter One

I'd recently returned to America to bury my family, mother, father, and little sister Alison. I'd been living in Italy when I received the news of their deaths. A plane crash, they'd been on their way to visit me.

To my late parent's relief I'd finally secured employment after a long period of idleness. It'd come to me purely by chance while attending a dinner party. There I met Passolini Salo, a film director who'd gained notoriety for specializing in the horror genre. He was a large man, but carried himself with such ease and swiftness in his movements that one never thought of him as fat or slovenly. His tight salt and pepper curls were swept back and his eyes were always hidden behind amber lenses. To this day, I'm ignorant of their true color.

His English proved better than my Italian and our initial conversation was flavored by alcohol and scented by his large Cuban cigar. Passolini's films were structured around a half dozen gruesome set pieces. I'd let an idea fall, a variation on the 'Black Dahlia' murder, which appealed to his taste for the macabre.

I'd begun writing as a hobby since childhood, graduated as an English

major, but after I'd taken it up professionally, I'd found it difficult to completely devote myself seriously. As a result, my income had been sporadic at best. I was either flush or dead broke.

When I did work I wrote for various music publications, mostly I covered up-and-coming American rock bands as they toured overseas. My articles were sanitized records of backstage debauchery. I grew to intensely dislike musicians and became bored with their world. After abandoning my career as a journalist, I gathered what savings I'd managed to accrue and spent the past 18 months traveling through Europe.

I'd bought a secondhand camera and had begun to dabble in photography. I'd been told by a few people that I had a good eye.

Passolini had been so taken by my scenario he asked me to read the script he was about to shoot and offer any suggestions I had on how it could be improved. I accepted his offer and found much wanting. This resulted in my being hired as a rewrite man. After that film's completion Passolini offered to keep me on, he was already preparing his next project. But the sudden death of my family made remaining in Europe impossible. America was calling. I had obligations. We'd finally come to an agreement that once my affairs were in order I'd begin work on the new script. We'd communicate by phone until he arrived in the States.



Chapter Two

The return home turned out to be less stressful than I'd originally anticipated. There were meetings with my parent's attorney where condolences and cups of coffee were offered before I lent my signature to the numerous documents that required it. Then there was the funeral, all three were buried at the Olive Cemetery, in family plots that had been bought a decade previous. The weather during the ceremony was, as my mother would have noted, pleasant, sunny and cloudless. It was attended by what few relatives I had, and family friends. Some I recognized, most I didn't. If anyone was angered by my status as sole heir they didn't voice it. All of their faces have since vanished from my memory along with their kind words and wreaths of flowers. The only thing that lingered was the sickeningly sweet smell of those bouquets. Once my loved ones were put to rest I immediately set about getting reacquainted with my childhood home.

My father made his money from inheritance and his work as a corporate lawyer. He'd purchased the property when the area was still mostly wilderness and scattered farms. He worked in the city and had long made up his mind not to live there, even though this decision came with a daily commute of over an hour both ways. This was

before they expanded the freeway system. This also meant the school we attended, the aforementioned Blessed Virgin, was nearly forty miles from our front door. There we walked the halls and inhabited classrooms with the children of families who lived within walking distance of Lake St. Clair. Old money, Alison and I were considered 'country' and treated as such. Nothing stated openly, there were other ways to show condemnation. Those children would've never considered traveling to us, and we were similarly disinterested. We were without peers in our immediate surroundings as well. As a result, Alison and I had only each other for companionship.

By the time we'd reached our early teens civilization had already encroached, but our home remained surrounded by a natural barrier of trees so it retained a quality of still being somewhat isolated. Unseen from the road with only a modest brick transom at the foot of the driveway and a mailbox with our address stenciled on its side as clues to its existence. The house was set back behind a front yard that was kept in year-long shade. Our mother sometimes complained of what she considered the gloominess of this front exterior, but our father would never entertain the notion of taking down a single tree. As a compromise he made the backyard open and the sun was indulged. Alison and I were quite happy, especially with the lot to the left of the house. Despite numerous and generous offers from developers my father refused to sell it and so it remained untouched. It was in these woods we spent many days of our childhood within the trees and in our wandering imaginations.

Although we were not twins, Alison was two years younger than I we were often mistaken as such. Both of us had the same straw blonde hair, pale blue eyes and fair skin. Adults often complimented us on our reserved manner, our disinterest in their patter was taken as good manners on our part. Unknown to even our parents, Alison and I had managed to develop our own form of silent communication. We seemed to be of one mind instead of two, this extended to the physical.

It first happened when I was 15 Alison had newly reached her thirteenth year. Our parents had made arrangements to visit out of state friends for the weekend and had pronounced us old enough to be responsible for our own well-being. Naturally, we were thrilled with our

upcoming independence, though, outwardly we behaved nonchalant.

Friday morning arrived and we bid our parents goodbye and wished them a safe journey. The rest of the day passed uneventfully. Our only indulgence was staying up past midnight and watching “Beyond the Door” on television. But by the following afternoon the weather had begun to sour, and by nightfall the wind had kicked up with such force that it bent the trees sideways. It was followed by a fierce thunder storm. Our house was continuously hit by waves of thick pellets of rain, the sound reminded me of a machine gun being fired.

Unlike me, Alison had always harbored a deep fear of these storms and couldn't stand to be by herself when one was raging. As a small child she'd seek comfort by crawling into bed with my parents, but the practice had been discouraged as she'd gotten older. That night she sought solace by quietly entering my room and sliding beside me. It hadn't been the first occasion and normally my presence was enough for her to fall quickly asleep. But this evening Alison seemed even more agitated than usual. She wrapped her arms around me and I felt her shivering as she hugged her body closer to mine. I stroked her hair while whispering assurances in her ear, this seemed to calm her, but as our bodies remained pressed together I began to feel a strange warmth emerge from inside me and I began to entertain unnatural ideas. There had been times when we were alone together, our knees accidentally touching, our eyes lingering. Alison sometimes would leave her bedroom door open, wide enough for me to catch a revealing glimpse and there were occasions I felt she was provoking my gaze.

When I lifted her chin and put my lips on hers she didn't resist me, instead she encouraged me to proceed further. We took things to their conclusion. I remember waking up the next morning, naked in each other's arms, shafts of dusty sunlight came through the windows.

That would not be the last time we'd share such intimacy. It would always occur spontaneously and was never discussed afterwards. I'd always wondered, but never sought out an answer to a pair of questions. Did our parents have knowledge of that night's storm, and did they consciously keep it from us?



Chapter Three

Aside from my assignment for Passolini my life was rather idle. Being the sole heir I was in no need of earning a living. In a matter of weeks I'd transformed into somewhat of a hermit, neither speaking, nor seeing anyone except for Passolini and the man I'd hired to mow the lawn every other week. I'd venture out to buy groceries and once went to a movie, but my obligations and desires remained modest.

At some point I'd began a ritual of taking extended walks around the property. I'd start out just before dusk and brought along a flashlight to help guide me after dark. These strolls served a dual purpose of either working out a script problem or simply clearing my head. On several occasions I became overcome with the feeling I was being watched. I'd always attributed it to an animal, perhaps a stray cat or a raccoon, even deer were not an uncommon sight. It was only much later, upon reflection that I considered that this voyeur was human.



Chapter Four

Thursday, May 25, that was the day I first met Antoinette Mouse. I'd taken to writing outdoors on the backyard patio. The weather had been warm, but not oppressively so, there'd even been gentle breezes that kiss the back of my neck. After a few hours I'd decided to take a break and had stopped inside to take a bottle of beer from the refrigerator. I'd returned to my seat and was nursing the drink when out of the corner of my eye I spotted Antoinette.

She was standing behind a tree. How long she'd been there silently observing me I'd never know, but when our eyes met she smiled and stepped out from behind the cover. As she silently approached me, I took the opportunity to contemplate her. Her hair was a sun-bleached mop whose ends curled around her face, her lower lip had a pout that hinted mischief. She wore a light brown halter top and cut-off jeans, clothing that did little to conceal that Antoinette's body had bloomed early and her flawless skin had already begun turning a caramel color. She was barefoot, a pair of brown leather sandals dangled from the fingers of her left hand. But her most profound feature were her eyes: blue like a tropic sky. Striking, even at a distance, so ungodly beautiful they shouldn't have existed. Yet they did. They looked at

me, held me.

‘Hello, my name is Antoinette Mouse.’ She said it without a trace of embarrassment of being discovered, uninvited on a stranger’s property. On the contrary she behaved quite at home. Antoinette held out her hand, I took it without question and felt heat radiating from her palm. Once I let go she sat down in the chair across from me and tossed her sandles on the ground. Within seconds of that first encounter I’d already felt the rush of blood below my waist. As Antoinette stretched out her legs she resumed speaking. ‘I’m spending the summer with my aunt. Perhaps you know her, Miss Christine Fairfield, she lives five houses down, she said, pointing to the left with her thumb.

Although the name was vaguely familiar I couldn’t conjure a mental picture of the woman.

‘We may have met, but it was probably years ago. I’ve just recently returned after living abroad for several years.’

Antoinette’s eyebrows went up slowly, ‘Where exactly?’

‘London briefly, but the weather was dreary so I went and stayed in Paris for a month. But most of my time was spent in Italy.’

She lifted her right leg and began to scratch her knee, ‘I’ve visited some foreign countries with my parents. Nowhere glamorous like you, though, mostly places where they haven’t yet discovered indoor plumbing. What are you writing?’

I’d forgotten the pile of papers in front of me. ‘A film script.’

Antoinette leaned forward, enough for me to catch a glimpse of her cleavage. ‘What’s it about?’

‘A homicidal maniac who kills college co-eds with a chainsaw, not exactly the thing that’ll lead to an Oscar nomination,’ I said, suddenly feeling embarrassed.

‘I quite like horror movies, especially British ones from the fifties and sixties. I think Christopher Lee is even a better Dracula than Bela Lugosi.’

'I agree. It's too bad they don't make films like that anymore.' I couldn't help but wonder, who was this Antoinette Mouse, this tanned sprite who showed up in my backyard and spoke to me with the casualness of an old friend? I'd began having a series of lurid thoughts and was grateful for the table that concealed my lower body. Antoinette had repositioned herself so that her legs were draped over the arm of the chair when something grabbed her attention and made her scowl.

'Would you just look at the state of my feet,' she said as she grabbed her right foot and pulled it up toward her face. I noticed they were both grey with dirt, but I found this adorable instead of repulsive.

She released her foot and grinned slightly, 'Aunt Christine doesn't like me going barefoot, says it's something only tomboys do. She can be so funny sometimes. Still, I suppose I should wash up. Mind if I use that hose over there?' She pointed at the hose coiled like a green serpent at the side of the house.

'Go right ahead.'

Antoinette rose from the chair, she picked up her sandals and walked to the spicket. Seconds later water was pouring from the hoses mouth. She tested it on her fingers.

'Cold,' she stated before she proceeded to thoroughly wash both feet. When she'd finished she shut the hose off and slipped on her sandals. It was then I noticed the remains of red polish on her toenails. For some reason it caused a fresh wave of excitement within me.

Antoinette returned to her seat, suddenly she appeared chagrined. 'How terribly rude of me, I haven't even asked you your name.'

I hadn't noticed myself until then. 'Matthew. Matthew Dante.'

Again, she leaned forward, her elbow rested on her leg, her chin resting in the palm of her hand. 'Well, Matthew Dante, I hope you can forgive my boorish behavior, it seems I still have a way to go on the road to maturity.'

'Consider it granted.'

Newly forgiven, her curiosity returned. ‘So what do you do when not writing movies?’

‘I spend a great deal of time being lazy.’

Antoinette brushed some hair from her cheek, ‘Nothing wrong with being lazy. I’m quite good at it myself.’ She flashed me another smile and then stood up. ‘I’ve had a very nice time visiting with you, Matthew, hope you don’t mind if I stop by again.’

‘Not at all.’ I hadn’t said something with such honesty in months.

Antoinette gave me one more little smile before she turned to walk away.

‘Antoinette,’ I half shouted. She stopped and looked over her shoulder.

‘How old are you? My question inspired another grin, not so innocent.

‘Fifteen.’ It sounded like a dare.

For the remainder of the day I replayed my first encounter with Antoinette, examined certain moments, her gestures and changes in facial expression. I dwelled over her golden brown skin, what it would be like to run my hand across one of her legs, starting at the inner thigh, my palm running down the entire length to her ankle. Would it feel warm, like her hand when it had briefly clasped mine? Then there were those eyes that had penetrated me. What had she seen while she’d clandestinely observed me?

She had behaved with such ease, there hadn’t been the usual apprehension I’d noticed in girls her age alone in the presence of an adult male. I’d noticed this same relaxed manner in some of the European girls I’d encountered, particularly the French, who thought nothing of walking the beaches in the skimpiest of swim suits, apparently ignorant of their effect on the leering teenage boys. Of course, I’d known it was a pose, the majority of them were completely aware of the maddening intoxication they left in their wake.

Strangely, in my entire time abroad I’d remained almost completely

chaste. There'd been a lone exception, a twenty-year-old who'd been backpacking her way across Europe. It'd been a one-night stand induced by a couple bottles of wine. I found myself unable to recall in any great detail either the encounter or the girl.

After hours of this frustration I gave in to my baser instincts and went to my bedroom to seek some release. It took but minutes and did nothing to quell the fire that had been lit.



Chapter Five

Antoinette did return, five days later. I'd already developed a callous on my right hand. She had an uncanny gift for stealth. Her arrivals came silently. I wouldn't become aware of her presence until after my pen was set down. There she would be, mere feet away, sitting in the same chair silently observing. She wore tee shirts of pink, yellow, blue, thin white blouses with short sleeves and two top buttons undone. And always those cut-offs, faded, worn fringed edges, one more washing and they'd disintegrate. Tawny skin wrapped in a form that curved in all the right places. I'd taken to keeping a mental record of her skin tone, how much it darkens with each visit. In comparison was her hair, gold and silken.

Our conversations were pleasant exchanges of trivial occurrences, such as the new bathing suit bought for her by her aunt.

'My first two-piece, which my mother would never approve of. It's funny, considering I've overheard her brag to her friends about how she'd danced topless in Golden Gate Park. Of course, that was long before I was born.'

In other instances she'd report on her latest discoveries concerning

her new environment, the neighbors, their habits, and minor scandals. I was informed of her aunt's pronounced drinking habit, and of the man she was seeing.

'His name's Charlie, and he's a complete dunce.'

She'd inquire on how my script was progressing. I'd sometimes ask her to read some pages then ask her opinion about a plot point or line of dialogue. Antoinette would pause before answering, carefully considering her words. Her responses often surprised me with their insightfulness, and I found myself using her suggestions.

More than once she steered our conversation towards the state of my love life, always acting as if it was the first time the topic had been raised. After her departure I'd be struck with how much personal information she'd extracted. Meanwhile, Antoinette, herself, remained somewhat a mystery.

Often, I found my mind drifting and images would be conjured. Antoinette in her bikini, lying on a towel, her skin slick with suntan oil. I'd recall a previous visit, her sitting at the edge of the unused fish pond, eating blueberries and showing me her stained fingers. Drops of condensation on a glass of lemonade falling and splashing against her bare thigh. Or those rare forays out, I'd see her about the neighborhood, on the front lawn of her aunt's home, on a street corner as she waited for the light to change, she'd see me, then smile and wave. It was always as if she'd been expecting me.

I'd come to a realization, of having stumbled into a territory I found both wonderful and terrifying. My previous experiences with females had been, with the exception of Alison, rather ordinary, and always within my age group. I'd been in the presence of adolescent girls, with their thin, flat forms, their faces that went instantly from giggles to frown. Never had I ever felt even the merest tinge of wanting towards one of those immature creatures.

Antoinette was a completely different incarnation. Yes, her darling face was the very portrait of girlish innocence, but below the neck she was fully matured. She was a living paradox, a taboo made flesh. That she was forbidden only increased my dreadful desire for her. I felt the beast stir, weakly did I battle it.

Every man is exposed to at least one tender trap in the course of their years. While they may give in to a fleeting fancy of the mind, they just as quickly return to their senses feeling both fortunate and cheated. Antoinette inspired obscenity, the lecher inside me. She was such pretty poison.



Chapter Six

Passolini had phoned me with the news he'd arrived in America and informed me that I could continue work on the script without haste, he was still haggling over the budget with his producers. Towards the end of our conversation he'd remarked that I sounded preoccupied. Indeed I had been, Antoinette was dancing in my head.

This next statement took me by surprise, 'Matthew, you sound as if you're in love.'

'I am, dangerously so.'



Chapter Seven

I'd set my pen down and had proceeded to doze off. When I awoke I'd found Antoinette sitting in her usual spot. She'd been watching me sleep.

'Hello sleepyhead.'

She wore a pale green cotton top, the front of which was held closed by cross-hatched drawstrings. It plunged into a deep V down to her naval. It seemed positively criminal. I could tell by the expression that came across her face that something was bothering her.

'Is something the matter?' I asked

'David Hersh,' she responded as she kicked off her sandals.

'Who's David Hersh?'

She frowned. 'A boy who just told me he likes me.'

That wasn't a surprise, I'd expected the neighborhood boys to foster crushes towards her.

‘Do you like him?’

Her expression went from soured to shocked.

‘No, he picks his nose and smells odd. Why would such a disgusting person be attracted to me?’

I really didn’t believe she didn’t know the answer already. Still, I offered, ‘The same reason a fly is drawn to honey, because it’s sweet.’

Antoinette smiled and looked down at her feet. Had that been a blush I saw redden her face, was she actually capable of shy moments? She raised her head, rubbed her cheek against her shoulder. ‘So, you think I’m sweet, do you think I’m pretty?’ She asked oh so coyly under her breath.

‘I think you’re quite beautiful.’ It left my mouth too quickly and I’d begun to feel uneasy.

‘So, you like me,’ came out a statement instead of a question.

I didn’t get a chance to respond, Antoinette got up and slid into my lap. The beast was wide awake. She wrapped her arms around my neck, her twin sapphires fixed. Then, after she nipped her lower lip, she leaned in and whispered into my ear, ‘Matthew, I’ve seen the way you look at me.’ Key inserted into lock.

My hands were still firmly on the chair.

‘I liked it.’

The key turned.

That first kiss, wet, tasted like bubble gum. When my hands came up to embrace her I realized her shirt had no back, my fingers felt bare spine, then shoulders, and I pressed her closer.

The door opened.

I felt my pulse quicken as her tongue darted into my mouth, each kiss lingered a moment longer and our breathing became fervid. When I felt Antoinette’s hand reach down and touch the wakened beast I heard myself inhale sharply. That delicate hand within reach of my

appalling instrument.

‘Don’t worry, I’m not a virgin.’

Antoinette rose up she took me by the hand and led me inside, as if she knew her destination by instinct. I knew what was about to happen. It could be argued I was fully capable of preventing it. I didn’t put up even the weakest of resistance. I didn’t want to. What man puts a stop to what he’s been dreaming of, even if that dream is despicable?

That was the day I became a deviant.

I wanted Antoinette, a little girl. The child turned out to have an appetite. I’d been with females nearly twice her age who weren’t nearly so aware of themselves or their bodies’ cravings. Antoinette was happy to give pleasure, happier when taking it. Antoinette above me, biting her pout, emitting tiny gasps, smiling at my body’s final convulsions.

‘Don’t worry, I’m not a virgin.’

Indeed. I may as well have been. Afterward, her head resting on my chest, me covered in girl scent. I hear her voice, ‘Now, we’re each other’s secret.’

It was the sound of triumph.

Later, when we stood under the shower the sight of soapy water running down the small of Antoinette’s back reawakened the beast. She indulged it. After Antoinette departed, she had to be home for dinner, and with the memory of her body stretched across my mattress I finally permitted myself the time to consider what had happened.

How long had she been planning my seduction, and how had she been so certain it would be successful? It’s always after consummation that questions come. I felt exhaustion creep over me and allowed myself to lose another battle. I believe that, just before I lost consciousness, in some dark corner of my mind that there would be consequences. Their origin proved to be from a then unknown source.



Chapter Eight

Later that week while attending to some business in town I ran into Mitchell Ortiz, a friend from my university days. It'd been years since we'd seen each other. Aside from a slight weight gain he seemed the same as remembered, vague as that memory was.

We ended up at an outdoor café, over drinks Mitchell brought me up to date on the comings and goings of mutual friends. As he spoke I found myself not entirely engaged. During my entire time abroad I hadn't bothered to keep in contact with anyone, nor had I missed their companionship. I'd recently come to the conclusion that when one is young and finding their way they need friends. But at my then age of 26 these relationships had become just another bothersome hobby.

I'd also come to realize, with increasing frequency, that I had been having difficulty remembering names and faces. It seemed that every other name Mitchell dropped drew a blank. After I'd returned state-side I'd come across a box of photographs, although I appeared in a majority of them I couldn't recall the occasion or the reason it had been deemed worthy of documenting. Before we parted Mitchell

mentioned an upcoming engagement party, the couple's names were Catherine Lime and Anthony Marshall. When he asked if I'd planned to attend I lied and said yes. My memory had once again failed me. Of course, I wouldn't have gone anyway, I'd always disliked anything connected with weddings. As I watched Mitchell disappear into the distance I knew even then that would be the last time I'd ever see him. It didn't bother me in the least

After I'd returned home I received a phone call from Passolini. He'd finally settled his budget dispute with his producers and wanted to know how quickly I could complete my scripting chores. Although, I'd already finished it I asked for two days time and we arranged a meeting for then. For some odd reason I felt the need to stall, but it seemed some relationships were unavoidable.

With that line of thought I'd began encouraging Antoinette to forge friendships with some of the neighborhood girls, they could be used for excuses and alibis. Susie is having a birthday party, Britney a sleepover, and the like. How quickly I found myself turning crooked, it was made easier by my very willing accomplice.



Chapter Nine

I was laying in bed waiting for Antoinette to return from a trip to the kitchen, she'd gone for a glass of ice water. I listened to the sound of the oscillating fan I kept on top of a chest of drawers. It'd been a noise I'd always found reassuring. Antoinette returned, other females I'd known would've slipped on a robe in a false front of modesty, she made no effort to conceal her nakedness.

Antoinette climbed into bed and offered me the glass in which she'd placed a straw. After I'd taken a drink she took some for herself and placed the glass on the night table.

'I forgot to brush my teeth,' she declared before she leapt out of bed and walked briskly to the connecting bathroom.

I got up and followed. I'd wanted to watch this bit of business. Antoinette stood over the sink dutifully going about with her orange toothbrush. Many mornings I had been brought to a smile seeing it resting in its holder. She rinsed, spat and wiped her mouth with her hand. I could never make another person understand the joy I derived from watching her perform these benign rituals. Finished, she turned to me, raised herself on tip toes and kissed me on the lips. I

tasted peppermint.

We returned to bed, Antoinette rested her chin on my chest and trailed circles on my stomach with her fingertip.

‘It looks like I’ve made some pals,’ she informed me before she rolled over on her back.

‘What are the names of these newfound companions?’

‘Tara and Ruth Derbyfield, they live in a yellow house around the corner.’

We simultaneously turned on our sides so we faced each other.

‘Are they nice girls?’

‘Ruth is, but Tara seems a tad snobby.’

‘That’s how it often is with sisters, one sweet, the other sour.’

‘I suppose so.’

Antoinette’s brow creased as if she’d just remembered something. ‘I need to wan you, my aunt is planning on inviting you over for dinner. I let slip that you were a writer. She loves playing patron to the arts. Plus, she’s got this snooty friend who claims to be a fan of Salo and has been pestering my aunt to introduce you to her.’

The idea of dinner with Antoinette’s aunt piqued my curiosity just slightly.

‘What’s the name of this friend of your aunts?’

‘Enez Sparrow.’ Antoinette elongated the woman’s name so it came out sounding ‘Eecenneezz’. ‘Even though she hasn’t met you she acts all goey like she has some crush on you.’

I heard a trace of annoyance in her voice, she obviously did not like this Enez Sparrow. I leaned forward and kissed Antoinette’s forehead. ‘Did you inform Miss Sparrow that I’m taken?’ She climbed on top of me and instantly the beast began to grown.

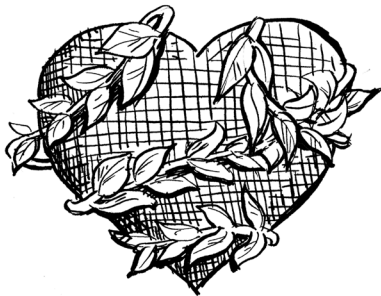
‘And expose you as the corruptor of her friends sweet, little niece?’


‘My love, you are sweet. But I’m the one who’s been corrupted.’

This caused a fiendish grin to emerge. ‘I know, it’s my proudest achievement.’

She then proceeded to corrupt me further.

Part Two
JUNE





Summer of Antoinette reveals how one man willingly disregards consequences in order to fulfill his forbidden desires.

Matthew Dante is a screenwriter living the idle, good life in Europe, churning out scripts for horror maestro Passolini Salo when he's forced to return to America after the tragic death of his family. Matthew sets about reacquainting himself with his childhood home. Almost immediately his life is altered the day he meets Antoinette Mouse, an alluring teenage girl, staying with her aunt over the summer. They begin a taboo affair that at times turns hallucinogenic and introduces him to the Bronze Peacock, a secret society dedicated to the worship of the nymph.

Their relationship is threatened by Enez Sparrow, the beautiful, but sexually twisted friend of Antoinette's aunt. As Matthew is jeopardized by submission under Enez and the loss of Antoinette, he begins to suspect his love may be something more than just an ordinary girl.

Pete Trudgeon is a writer, director and occasional actor. His first film, *After The Blood Rush*, was produced in 2008 and he has since appeared in several independent films. *Summer of Antoinette* is his first novel. He currently lives in Michigan.