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## Icon

Judy Klass

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Judy Klass  
Icon

Some people will try to con you. They swear some Clones are genuine. Elvis dug up at Graceland in the dead of night, they'll whisper, a few cells salvaged—that boy over there with the cowlick and the perfect sneer is the result. Little Miss Perfect Monroe? Look at the eyes, look at the smile! Don't you see, it's her DNA, it's Norma Jean, in the flesh . . .

Those people are liars, or fools. I con you not. Trannie or born gender-aligned, you *earn* your clonedom. You watch the person's films or videos. You watch him/her move, you practice the sighs, the screams, the tossed-off one-liners, you become your own tailor, you find a surgeon who is an artist, and you sculpt.

It means pain, and sweat, and if the *need* to be fabulous is not there, or the potential, you will never know what it means *to be real*.

I'm the best Garland I know, and I'm not Judy. Judy longed for a long neck; I agonize over the length of mine. The adam's apple isn't prominent enough to risk surgery, but the neck lifts the head too high. And I'm too tall to be a perfect Garland.

But surgery has given me The Face. Any Icon collector knows from a block away who I am. And perhaps most important, I have The Voice. The warmth, the nervous vibrancy, the huskiness, the liquid sob, the soaring, intoxicating joy—I have it all, when I speak *or* sing. That's why I'll never get that final cut done, frankly. A vagina would be nice, but I won't risk The Voice for one.

Not many Garlands in this city. Or anywhere. I'm not the Last of the Mohicans, but we are on the endangered species list. Was a time gay men knew what Judy meant; she was a touchstone. Now it's more recent pinups they ape. They've lost themselves, they've lost sight of Judy as our Rosa Parks: the spark of our civil rights movement.

But men who used to dress as Judy or Liza were Wannabes, not real Clones. Drag Queens of Olde were a crude minstrel show:

Parodies, not tributes to a goddess.

I have no patience with Wannabes. Honestly, it's better to be a Cape-Carrier without pretensions than some sad Madonna Wannabe, with cone tits but a face like a football player's. Some peroxide Bette with no sense of how to sweep up a Warner's staircase, some sad Crawford pseudo-clone, with inked-in lips and eyebrows, waving a wire hanger . . . There are no Wannabes in our gang—just Icons and Cape-Carriers. Some Icons are more fully realized than others, and I'd say that I'm one of the best—but these are all boys and girls who have studied their god or goddess, and worked at their mystery. And our Cape-Carriers know it.

Another nice thing about our gang is we're a homo/hetero mix. We have boy Monroes and girl Monroes, and those who'd rather you not know if they're pre-op or post-op unless they get you alone in a private place. Usually, you'll see a Family of XY boy Monroes turn up their noses at double-X girl Monroes and vice versa, or you'll even see them cat-fight with knives and laser-cigs. With us, there's tolerance, it's all about dedication and quality. And we're not such total divas toward our Cape-Carriers. A lot of us just date them.

Since before I joined, the gang was led by James Dean, and I respected him from the first as an authentic Clone. He had the red jacket, the hair, the quizzical wrinkled brows, he had the cigarette dangling from his lips—a real one, not a laser-cig. Some guys who clone male Icons eschew the nip and tuck. Jimmy had work done, I think—still, it was not too obvious, which is also crucial.

Things started getting weird on a Saturday night, when we were out, twenty strong, on the Boulevard. Out in force, almost all of us present, Jimmy and his entourage of Rebels, four or five Monroes, the usual chromosomal mix, a fabulous Mae West chick, done up as a Belle of the Nineties, our loyal Cape-Carriers, me, and a skinny Marlene who started life as a nerd named Harry, and who has been reborn through a dip in the baptismal fount of fabulousness, and looks better as a girl in mannish clothes than he ever did as a nerdling boy. I should know; I used to have PE with him in junior high, and he was as awkward and heinous a nerdling as my own terrified, miserable juvenile incarnation.

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We saw a Wayne crowd heading toward us, and no, I do not mean Wayne's World. You take an ugly, unimaginative guy who really should be a Colorless Straight, and he decides to "dress up," and all he needs to imitate is the drawl to convince himself he's a John Wayne Clone. Leaving the likes of me to wonder: why did he "dress up" in the first place?

Such a Wayne was at the front of the little procession that blocked our path. You could see by his walk, his sneer in our direction, that his gang is "straight" in the old sense, and obsessed with "straightness." When Icons use the word Straight, we're talking about the world of our childhood, the world of our parents, the world we have left. We're talking about businessmen and schoolboys and housewives. If you want to be part of the culture of fabulousness, whether you sleep with girls or boys, whatever you are or whatever you were, you must leave the world of Colorless (though they're not necessarily odorless!) Straights behind. Whether you are an Icon or a Cape-Carrier, you are transformed into someone with lyrical twists and Color and style. Have all the hetero sex you might desire, my dear; so long as one or both of you is an Icon, neither of you is a Straight.

And bear this in mind: a black man or woman can be Colorless too, if he or she plods to the office every day in magazine fashion drab. An Icon like myself has ten times the Color! So does *any* fabulous white boy or girl, and not only if he or she has the dedication to be skin-tinted-transformed into Aretha or one of the Supremes.

But these plodding Waynesmen (and they are usually all boys, which I find funny) are obsessed with people being "straight" in the Olde World sense. Their leading John blocked our Jimmy's path, planting his feet wide, in a V. Our Jimmy stopped. Grinned. Ducked his head and lit a cigarette. The Wannabe Wayne (why? why? why?) twirled a six-shooter. I hoped we would not have the chance to find out how real it was.

"Hey, there, pretty boy," he drawled, slow as molasses. "Which of these kewpie doll men are you doin' right now?"

Our Jimmy smoked and stared at him. He would never answer questions like that directly—kept things ambiguous, which I thought

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was fine. It's what the real Jimmy probably would have done.

"Well, now, then, there, sir, Mr. Wayne," he said with a grin. "Don't believe that's any of your business. Suppose you guys step aside. 'Cause we don't want any trouble."

There was an Elvis boy, at our Jimmy's elbow, as always. Hasn't had surgery, but he's got his own prettiness, he's not grotesque enough for me to call him a Wannabe. "Come away, Jimmy," he said, but Jimmy waved him away.

Now the big-eyed Sal Mineo kid moved forward. Like Elvis boy, I knew he was in love with Jimmy—just didn't know if he ever got to do him.

I hope so. I hope the real Sal made it with the real Jimmy, for that matter.

"Don't even bother with these Clones, Jimmy," he said now, intensely. "They're just a bunch of Straights in drag, pretending to have some Color."

I saw some of the Waynesmen bristle, and Jimmy kept the boy back with his hand. "Stay out of this, Plato," he said mildly. "It's under control."

The main, dull John narrowed his eyes. "Do the kewpie boys speak for you?"

"I speak for myself."

"Swell. Then, let's go. Your gang against my gang, homo-boy."

Jimmy shook his head. He grinned again, and you could see his long, authentic dimples. "My gang has much more to lose. Your pack is about as fabulous as a bunch of housewives playing bingo in a church basement in Omaha. We could cut them up and disfigure them, and who'd even notice the difference?"

Well, the Waynesmen didn't like that at all. Some of them were ready to go for Jimmy then and there. But their leader, Colorless John, waved them back also. "Fine then, Princess Tiny-Meat," and from the intensity of the Wayne's gaze, I wondered if, beneath all the Colorless, regular-guy swagger, he was hot for our Jimmy, "how 'bout just you and me?"

We all shivered inwardly, I think. A shuddering breeze. But there are responsibilities that come with leading an Icon gang, like

any gang, and Jimmy never shirked them. He dropped the cigarette, ground it into a paving square of the Boulevard. "Name your weapons."

"Laser-cig."

"Don't own one."

"Guns."

"Don't own anything like your museum piece there."

"Knives?"

"Knives." Jimmy did carry a knife. He drew it out of the pocket of his blue jeans now, and popped out the blade. And I began to get really scared. If Wayne Wannabe was really hot for Jimmy, and hated himself for it, and hated Jimmy for it, he might cut him deep. We might lose our leader. Lose a leader and the whole tone of a gang can change. This gang had become Family for me, a Family where I belonged, as I never belonged to anyone or anything in my house full of Straights, except the television they left me with, and the places that portal took me. I did not want to lose my real Icon Family, and I did not want it to change, and I did not want our Jimmy to be hurt.

But he and the John were circling. Knives out. Waynesmen cheering their leader on, as we clutched each other, and called out warnings and encouragement to ours. How did we get here and why, I wondered, as their arms sliced the air, as they ducked away from each other, and danced. Do they really want this, do they really want to cut and be cut? I could not tell.

One burly Waynesman, even further off the mark in terms of looks than his leader, slouched under a ten-gallon hat and seemed poised to jump in. He looked to be his leader's second, and Elvis boy was Jimmy's second. He also stood poised. But I hoped the seconds would stay out of it. I wished I could find a way to break it up.

How ugly and dumb those Waynesmen are! I'm not a Judy who goes for Colorless Straights. Give me a gentle Cape-Carrier any day over a macho, beer-swilling fool. Only one of them had an interesting quality—a boy near the back, something between Gary Cooper and Alan Ladd, judging by his looks. What was he doing there, I wondered, in my racing mind, most of my energy focused on our cir-

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cling boy leaders with knives. Why had he wandered into the wrong gang?

The John made a leap, and Jimmy's red jacket was slashed, and some darker red seeped out onto it from his arm, and I knew the jacket would be hard to repair or replace. I knew Jimmy didn't have much money, and when I saw the John sneer, my fear of what he might do started to give way to anger. Here was a Straight, like any who had tripped me in the schoolyard, punched me in the locker room, taunted me and shoved me on a PE field while the PE teacher pretended not to notice—here was a plain, loutish Straight appropriating our tropes, pretending to be one of us. Out to slice up and disfigure and destroy our shining Jimmy.

And then suddenly—the rains came! Pouring down in a cascade! Dresses and wigs were soaked, ten-gallon hats were ruined, and cowboys and Monroes and Cape-Carriers gaped up at the darkening but still clear evening skies in confusion, and cursed and scattered in different directions. The Waynesmen herded back down a Metro hole, the one they had probably popped out of in the first place.

And we took refuge, most of us, beneath the awning of the nearest building. Once we were under there, we could see that the sudden shower was cascading down from its roof – the sprinkler system run amok.

My dress might be watermarked and ruined, and my mascara was running and smearing, turning me into Camille, but really I was glad. Jimmy had gotten off with just a cut to the sleeve; an efficient little girl Cape-Carrier was examining the wound and patching him up. Our clothes and accoutrements could be restored or replaced, so what did they really matter?

That's when Liza made her appearance. My eyes homed in on her, as any mother's eyes might light up when her child slinks shyly out of a doorway. She had laid on the mascara also. But she hadn't gone Cabaret-harlequin-extreme. Still, her hair was just right, her Fosse jacket and black leggings and hat were just right. She was a foolproof Icon—the kind that makes the easily awed nudge each other and speculate that here is a DNA-extract laboratory-gestated Clone.

Her features are plump, but then so were Liza's, and so were

Judy's much of the time. I've got an *Easter Parade* thinness, a *Meet Me In St. Louis* thinness. I didn't ask for it. I think I'd rather have a wide-eyed, round Dorothy face, a Mickey and Judy face. And age naturally into the Carnegie Hall thinness and chic of later Judy, as I grow older myself. But you work with what God gave you, learn to be the incarnation of your Clone you most resemble. This young Liza's chubbiness suited her.

Her eyes locked onto mine, just as I had been drawn to her immediately. Her face broke into a tremulous Liza smile. "Hi, Mama," she said to me. Laugh if you will, but I felt a lump rise in my throat, as she stepped toward us. "Sorry about the sun shower," she went on, speaking to all of us. "But at least the rains drove the Waynes away!" And she laughed uncertainly—perhaps a bit too long.

"You did that?" I asked. "You made it rain?"

She nodded. She now had the attention of the whole gang. "I was upstairs in this building, and I saw what was happening—I re-routed some connections in the sprinkler system." Her smile broke through again. "I'm good with the programming of systems and alarms, I'm a very useful person to have around a Sanctuary . . ."

Our Jimmy, his arm bandaged, his jacket off being mended somewhere, now stepped forward. "You belong to any group?"

She shook her head no. "Not for months! And even then, they were only karaoke buddies, it was never a real Family. I just quit high school," she explained, her voice becoming uncertain again. "I've by-passed alarms to sleep in old buildings. But I watch the Boulevard, and I've watched your gang." Her eyes were wide as she made her appeal to Jimmy. "I'd really like to join!"

You could see that Jimmy was considering what to say. This was not correct protocol—and he was supposed to be pretending he really had wanted to continue the knife-fight with the Duke, the one she had cut short. On the other hand, we'd been unsure about the wiring of our very own Sanctuary since we lost the Tallulah who designed it (she didn't join a rival gang, just found a rich businessman in the Straight world to keep her) and we needed someone new.

And deep down, I think he was grateful for the rains.

"Judy will take care of you," he told Liza, at last.



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Liza turned to me, beaming, and I took her hands in mine.

"We're goin' back to the Sanctuary now," Jimmy added. "We'll see if you can explain our alarm system just by lookin' at it."

The rest of us smiled inwardly. Some initiation test—he wanted her to explain it so he could begin to understand it himself!

We turned to head toward Sanctuary, which is the boiler room of an old building down a skinny side street off the Bouelevard. People were attempting to put themselves back together, as we stepped out from the shadows of the awning. Jimmy bummed a pocket mirror off of a Monroe Clone. "Hey, Judy. Wanna see a monkey?" He handed it to me.

Well, I gasped and then laughed when I saw what the mascara had done to my face. A Cape-Carrier named Billy approached me discreetly, offering me a tissue and a bottle of water, and I repaired some of the damage.

We had not traveled thirty yards when a figure stepped out of an alleyway toward us. It was the Gary Cooper/Alan Ladd boy. We halted, wondering if he were a scout for the Waynesmen, and if they were looking for trouble all over again.

"What can I do for you?" Jimmy asked him pleasantly.

"Name's Slim," he told us shyly. "I'd like to join."

Two in one day? You could see in Jimmy's face that that was more than he thought we could assimilate. But this one looked promising to me also, and so I intervened.

"Let me take charge of this one too, Jimmy," I urged him. "It will be all right."

Jimmy looked surprised, annoyed—and then Sal Mineo was at his elbow. Maybe, just like me, he saw in this new boy a certain quality.

"It makes sense, Jim. The Waynesmen wing you, but we claim one of theirs, so the round goes to us."

"I ain't passing no secrets of the Waynesmen," Slim warned us bluntly. "I'm leavin' them, whether you folks take me or not—but I ain't no spy."

His face was hard. But Jimmy Dean broke into a grin. I think this little speech caused him to like the new kid a whole lot more.

"Well, who asked you to be a damn spy? Just follow the crowd

and move along with us now.”

And so Slim was in.

We all breathed easier once we reached Sanctuary, of course. You'd never recognize it as a boiler room, though sometimes you hear the pipes jerk and rattle, and the machinery hum. We've covered those things with hangings—Icons painted on black velvet, and black and white film posters, and Japanese screens. We have wires strung across the vast space, dripping with boas and scarves, weighed down by hangers heavy with clothes. We have large wooden flats, the murals covering them painted by all of us, and behind the flats are vanities and beds and divans for those who want to change or rest, or who need a little privacy together.

In the largest open space is our seventy-inch TV screen, and the chairs, and the sound system. This is the Family Room.

People flung themselves into chairs, or disappeared behind flats to reinvent themselves. I led Liza and Slim behind the screen where I kept my things.

“Sixteen?” I asked her, as I settled before the vanity and removed my damp wig.

“Fifteen,” she admitted, and hung her head.

I clicked my tongue. “And you?” I asked the boy.

“Seventeen.”

“A couple of very forward March chicks,” I told them, wondering who I was trying to quote. Alas, not Judy. “And do you have the loyalty to be part of a Family?”

“Yes!” they said together, with such urgency and intensity that I was touched to the depths of my cynical soul.

“Can you sing?” I asked Liza casually, as I reapplied base, and then blush, and then powder. I didn't want her to know how crucial the question was to me—didn't want her to feel pressured into lying.

“Of course I can sing, Mama! You taught me how to sing,” she answered promptly.

I patted her hand. “That's my girl,” I said. “Well, we'll soon see.”

When we emerged, the other Icons had all changed back into themselves, and a few Cape-Carriers were applying the final touches.

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Jimmy “tested” Liza by asking her to explain the alarm system to him. And I think she taught him much that that sour, spiteful Tallulah had neglected to make clear, before she disappeared.

Perhaps feeling spiteful myself, perhaps because she seemed too good to be true, I thought I’d catch the girl off-guard, when she and Jimmy re-joined the group.

“And now, everyone,” I announced, “Liza and I are going to sing for you all.” I turned to her, and launched right into: “Forget your troubles, come on, get happy . . .” And she sang it right back at me! “Shout hallelujah, come on, get happy . . .” It was magical. Everyone stopped, and stared. She had *The Voice* also, not only for speaking but also for singing, it was the same, and it bubbled up out of the two of us, warm, expansive, full of bittersweet richness, it was one, the strands of the harmony entwined like flowers climbing a wall, and rumbled and shook, more shimmering and shining than when Judy sang this song with Barbra, glorious, glorious . . .

We had found each other. Any fool listening to us would have known we were mother and daughter.

We finished. There was a moment of silence, then the room erupted in applause.

“Sing something else, Mama,” she asked me.

I thought for a moment. And I must have been feeling very foolish and sentimental indeed, because I launched into “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas,” from *Meet Me in St. Louis*.

But an ill-mannered little Marilyn interrupted, a few bars into it. “Do ‘Over the Rainbow!’” she yelled. “Together.”

Liza and I looked at each other, and I could see we were on the same wavelength. She turned to explain. “I don’t like to sing that song. That’s Mama’s song. Finish what you were singing, Mama.”

So I did, and then I asked her to do “Cabaret.” She belted it out, her arms spread wide, so that the rafters seemed to shake. I felt proud of her. And together we sang “It’s Wonderful,” from *Annie Get Your Gun*, the film that Judy recorded a few songs for and should have made, but the studio brought in hee-haw horrible Betty Hutton to replace her. We didn’t try to harmonize, we didn’t divide the parts, we just allowed *The Voice* to soar, in stereo. And we took everyone

in our Family with us.

After that, people began to retire for the night. I showed Slim and Liza where the three bathroom cubicles were. Generally, since there are so few to share, in the morning and at night, the guys and pre-op trannies among us allow the double Xers and post-ops to have the cubicles; we have a long urinal trough we make do with. I let the new kids sleep in my space, behind my screen, since I was taking them under my wing. Once they'd each selected a personal futon from Supplies, we bedded down for the night.

The next day was Sunday, and many in our Family like to head to the Watering Hole for brunch. Just to show off what they're wearing, and check out the talent in other gangs. It's a restaurant owned by Straights, but it's Icon-friendly, and just off the Boulevard. The weekend is the time to swan around, for Icons, if we want a proper entourage. On weekdays, many of our Cape-Carriers have to leave our district and work at Straight-world jobs, to provide for our Family.

There are even some Clones among us who remove their wigs and make-up, disguise themselves as Colorless Straights, and work at menial jobs in their world. I could never handle such a concept. I cook, and tidy the Sanctuary, do some mending and clothes-designing, and act as mother hen to the others. In these ways I feel I earn my keep.

Sometimes I go along for Sunday brunch, but on this morning I thought I would laze, and get to know the children better. There was milk in our Family fridge (our Cape-Carriers keep it well-stocked), and there were bowls and cartons of cereal—breakfast enough.

So, it was me, Slim, Liza, Harry the nerd-turned-Marlene, Sal Mineo and Billy the Cape-Carrier who stayed behind. Our voices seemed to echo through the vast space of the Sanctuary, with everyone else gone. I pulled a flapper dress with beaded tassels at the bottom off of a wire running across the room, and handed it to Liza. "Try this on, baby," I told her. "I'd really like to see you in it."

She disappeared behind my screen—and came back looking Erté fabulous, *Cabaret* fabulous, wearing a tiara with an ostrich plume. I hadn't seen her pick it up, but she understood the era she

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was cloning; she knew just what she was doing.

I was shocked to learn that Slim had seen *no* Judy or Liza films—not even *Wizard of Oz*!

“How can you clone, then?” I asked, genuinely puzzled. “How can you be an Icon—”

“I’m not, exactly, an Icon,” he reminded me. “Not tryin’ to be, not sure I *could* be. And they didn’t exactly smile on that musical theater stuff, amongst the Waynesmen.”

“So, your favorite movie is what? *Shane*?”

He nodded. “*Shane* is a fine film. That and *High Noon* are probably my top two.”

So, he saw himself as a Cooper/Ladd hybrid, just as I had seen him from the first. Figured.

“*Shane* is a wonderful movie,” Sal Mineo said shyly. And I realized that he was after Slim—he was making a play. Fair enough. Jimmy had been paying more attention to Elvis boy lately, anyhow.

Now Billy broke in severely. “But it’s sad and shameful that you’ve never seen *Wizard*. Clone culture, Color culture, demands that you understand about Judy and Liza. How can you be fabulous and leave the Straights behind, without even knowing these two?”

Suddenly, I realized that Billy was jealous. Perhaps he suspected that Slim interested me as he interested Sal. Perhaps he suspected more had happened behind my screen the previous night than a mother Icon saying goodnight to her chicks. Billy was my favorite Cape-Carrier, and on the nights when he had visited me behind the screen, it’s true that a lot more *had* gone on.

But he was wrong. Slim was sweet—but seventeen? I’m not a cradle robber. It’s not so much ethics as aesthetics. Children are not fully formed people yet, Slim was in the process of becoming rather than being—and that’s just not something I want to sleep with. Why, my Liza, at fifteen, was more fully realized than Slim.

But Slim did not rise to Billy’s bait. “I know I’m ignorant,” he said seriously. “And I’d like to learn. I know that Judy and Liza are Indelible Icons, a source of power and strength for all Clones. Can you tell me why?”

My daughter and I exchanged a glance. She let me begin.

"It comes out of gay culture," I explained. "Perhaps because Judy's father, back when she was Frances Gumm, was gay. And *Wizard* is a crucial world, and helps us all, gay and straight, distinguish between the world of Colorless Straights, and the world of Color we need to live in. And then of course, Vincent Minelli—her director husband, Liza's father—was gay."

My daughter took over. "And then Liza made *Cabaret*, and married Peter Allen, the boy from Oz, Australia, a gay man who later died of AIDS. And she married another gay man, and – there's an energy there, a force that's hard to define. It's *The Voice*, and the joy, and the pain in the smile, it's everything they are."

"It's everything they are," I repeated. "And when men at a gay bar finally fought back against the cops, it was because of Judy, the day she died. She brought us into a post-Stonewall world."

"What's Stonewall?" Slim asked.

I told myself not to roll my eyes. But how little the children know! I turned to Sal Mineo, and told him pointedly, so that Billy would know he had nothing to fear from Slim, as far as I was concerned: "Take this boy, get him some more sugar crisps, and tell him about Stonewall."

Sal needed no more encouragement. Once they were gone, I saw my old friend Marlene eyeing Liza resentfully. It wasn't that Liza was free of adolescent awkwardness; it simply suited the Icon she was cloning. And how blessed she was, with her darkly feminine Voice!

Harry/Marlene is not a Wannabe—but at times I feel s/he tries too hard. For one thing, besides ruthlessly plucking her brows, she's had too much surgery. Addicted, I'm afraid. It happens to some Clones. I've seen black young men become Michael Jackson beautiful, *Thriller* beautiful—and throw it all away, and get the next horrifying nose, and have their skin lasered white, and claim that they have simply become their Icon's next avatar. Ghastly and pointless. I con you not.

Marlene's latest nose is as pointy and pinched as poor Michael's was in later life. At the same time, there are a few details to the Dietrich persona which do not involve pluck and tuck, and which I think s/he could attend to, more thoroughly.

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"Are you pre-op or post-op?" s/he now asked Liza sharply. (It's cruel, I know, because s/he's post-op herself, but I still sometimes think of Harry/Marlene as a "he.")

Liza looked nonplussed. "Post-op," she said.

"And your voice didn't alter with surgery?"

"No, I've always been alto. I mean—I've always been able to sing this way."

"Hmm," Harry/Marlene said, and managed to sound vaguely disapproving.

I pointed to him/her. "What *she* needs is a German accent transplant," I told Liza. "And then she'll be complete."

"My accent is perfectly authentic," Harry/Marlene said defensively, laying it on thickly.

"Mmm, you should hear her sing 'Lily Marlene,'" I told Liza. "Sounds like a Norwegian airline hostess," I teased.

Marlene grabbed a pillow off a couch and swatted me with it.

"Now, now," I said laughing, putting up my hand, "it's just constructive criticism—"

And I guess that's when the XX Marilyn Clone ran in—a girl who calls herself Sugar, after the character in *Some Like it Hot*. She had lost a shoe, her make-up was smeared from crying, and she was panting from running. Between breaths, she screamed at us hysterically: "They're killing us! They're killing people at the Watering Hole!"

We stood, and stared at her. "Who's killing people?" I asked.

"The Iconoclasts! At the Watering Hole, and all along the Boulevard—a swarm of them, different gangs—they've all hooked up."

"But how did—"

"They got Jimmy!" she screamed. "They've turned laser cigs into laser-swords, they sliced him, he went down—I think he's dead."

There was a clatter, as Sal Mineo's cereal bowl hit the floor. No one seemed to know what to say or do, and so I found myself still asking questions.

"Are they outside the Sanctuary?"

"No. Mostly at the restaurant, on the Boulevard—not side streets.

"How many of them?"

"Thirty—maybe forty. The cowboys were trying to fight them—

but they got some of them, too.”

Now I saw Slim look concerned. You don’t lose all your feelings for a Family just like that, when you leave it.

“Could you take us to the building where I met you?” Liza asked. “Would it be safe? ‘Cause I know a back entrance. We could see what was going on.”

We all looked at each other. No one wanted to leave Sanctuary. But we could not simply stand here while our Family was in trouble.

“I think it would be safe,” Sugar said at last, her blonde wig askew, her lip trembling.

Well, the weapons we took with us were just laughable. A length of pipe, kitchen forks and knives. One laser-cig, which none of us knew how to reconfigure into a lethal sword. We were not a violent gang, no desire to rumble, and whenever we faced off against violent groups, it was usually the men like Jimmy and Elvis boy who had fought for us. Leaders fight leaders, and we tried to keep ours out of harm’s way.

But Iconoclasts aren’t interested in following the rules of Clone culture. They are only interested in destroying it. In the name of Reality, of freeing the youth from “hype,” they bash, beat up, deface, destroy, try to grind beneath their heels every trace of Color and fabulousness, imagination and Oz dreaming. They hate us because Icons and their helpers know how to create beauty—and the Iconoclasts only know how to destroy it.

We could hear the sounds of fighting even as we slipped through the backstreets, clutching our pitiful weapons. Jeers cut through the air, and vicious Iconoclast laughter, and the screams and piteous cries of those with Color they were hurting. Liza knew a shortcut through a basement that left us directly behind the building where we had met her. She punched in a code, and the back entrance sprang open. She punched in another, and the service elevator took us to the roof.

The scene below was horrifying. There were literally bodies strewn along the Boulevard, Gables and Barbras and Selenas and Diana Rosses. The dead and the dying. I saw, I was sure of it, the Waynesman leader of Slim’s old family, his body in the middle of the



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Boulevard, sprawled at an unnatural angle. To my surprise, I felt pity and grief for him, though only yesterday I'd hated him for hurting our Jimmy. In his own twisted, pathetic way he had perhaps wanted to be fabulous, perhaps had even wanted Jimmy's love.

In case you are wondering, my dear, there was no hope of help for the police. They turn a blind eye to Boulevard violence—say it's as much as we deserve, that Clones are so twisted, what else can be expected of us? We turn on each other, or we provoke attacks from Straights. They look away, like the PE teachers of my and Harry's childhood, when we were slammed against a locker, or down onto a field—same principle. Some officers have been known to harass or beat us up when we stray too far from our district. I know people of Color who refer to the Iconoclasts as the sons of the cops—and I believe that a few of them genuinely are.

The Iconoclasts were coming back this way now—a group of them about twenty strong. They had prisoners they pushed, prodded, and groped—two Cape-Carriers and a beautiful, glamorous dark Garbo from a rival gang, whom I had long admired—and to our horror, they swung their laser-swords and executed them, before our eyes. Ran a Cape-Carrier through, and lopped off the heads of the others. We cried out as each fell. It was the cruelest, ugliest act I had ever seen.

I felt strange in the head—and realized vaguely, distractedly, that some of the Iconoclasts looked peculiar to me. Something was wrong with the picture. Many wore their “uniform” of a dark plaid shirt and jeans, unadorned. But some did not. One had a bowler hat, like Little Alex. One wore a Hannibal Lector metal mask, and one a Darth Vader mask—swinging his laser-sword, thin as a cig though it was, like a light saber. One had Freddie Kreuger fingernails, I saw. And one a Jason mask. That one clumsily twirled a gun probably lifted off of a Waynesman.

Slim was near me as I murmured aloud: “They’re dressing up? The Iconoclasts? Trying to be fabulous, trying to clone, even as they kill us off for cloning Icons?”

“Some of them do dress up now,” he told me tightly. “I con you not. In my old Family, we heard about it. That Little Alex over

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there wears the false eyelash—everything. Fighting fire with fire, they call it—they only dress up to bash Icons. But it shows there's nothing to their philosophy, to what they say they're trying to protect."

"They just want to hurt and kill."

"They just want to hurt and kill," he agreed.

Liza was huddled over the computer box in one corner of the roof, trying to re-program, trying to master her options, as the Iconoclast pack frisked the corpses of their latest victims, and then slouched and ambled toward our building. Behind us, honeycombing the buildings on side streets, were basement Sanctuaries that might not stand up to an attack.

"What can you do?" I asked Liza.

"I don't know. There are lasers to repel intruders. But I don't think I can aim them down at people, at the street. I don't have that kind of control."

"Can you do anything? Make it rain again? Anything at all?"

We waited tense seconds while the killers moved forward, and she punched buttons and traveled through the security system of the building one more time.

"I could laser-fry the rain," she said at last.

"Do it!" I told her.

And as the Iconoclasts approached the building where the Waynesmen had attacked us the day before, and paused to survey the damage they had wrought in all directions, from that beautiful vantage point, Liza caused the building to shoot out a hundred cross-hatching laser beams, that cooked the sprinkling water as it fell. Some of the droplets disappeared in a hiss of steam. But the rest tumbled down onto the Boulevard below, like a scalding plague of boils.

I am not vengeful or sadistic, but it satisfied something bitter and furious within me to hear the screams of those Iconoclasts as the boiling rain fell down on them, blinded them and burned them. The shock and disorientation of a moment was enough to halt their escape—long enough for the pack of them to be hit. And then they ran screaming, in all directions.

And so the Iconoclasts were routed. And within a few hours,

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those of our Family who had survived had made it back to Sanctuary, and we were caring for them. I hugged sobbing children to me, to my padded bosom (for I do not take hormones either, for fear they might tamper with The Voice) and soothed them, and we bandaged their wounds. We learned about the attack at the Watering Hole, and what gangs were there, and what had happened, blow by blow. All told, we lost four ubiquitous Cape-Carriers, two Rebels, and three Marilyn Monroes that day—and our Mae West.

And Jimmy Dean. Our Jimmy was really gone. Elvis boy had lost an arm, and came back from a Straight hospital a few days later. But without his arm, without Jimmy . . . he had entered a twilight world where none of us could reach him, and to this day no one really can.

We did not know if we could survive as a Family. But Marlene surprised me—Marlene to whom I am not always kind. “I nominate Judy to lead us,” she said.

“And I second the nomination,” Sal Mineo said.

“Third,” Billy said hoarsely.

I gazed around at the wounded children in wonder. It’s almost unheard of for a female Icon—whether born double X, or transformed like myself—to lead a gang or Family. We can be the heart and soul of Families, but it is usually the Jimmys and the Clints, the Tupacs and the Bruce Lees who lead.

And yet, they all seemed to feel the same way. I could not let them down. “I accept,” I said, looking around the Sanctuary, looking each one in turn in the eye. “I ask that I might choose my daughter Liza as my lieutenant and my second. Although she is young, although she only just joined the Family—she drove away the Iconoclasts and stopped the massacre. And my connection with her is greatest.”

No one objected. Except, strangely, Liza.

She looked as though she might cry. “Mama,” she said. “May I talk to you privately?”

We went behind my screen.

She hung her head. And she was crying, and blowing her nose loudly, with tissue. “Mama,” she said shakily. “I’m not what I seem.”

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"You're an Icon," I said gently. "That's a given."

"No, I mean . . ." she smiled through the tears. "Maybe the trouble is that I *am* what I seem. I lied when I said I was post-op. I'm no op. I'm double X."

I blinked at her. I confess that I had felt a twinge of professional jealousy when she told Harry/Marlene that her Voice didn't change at all after surgery—because I ponder the problem all the time. And where, I had wondered, had a fifteen-year-old gotten the money and the courage and the where-with-all to have his/her male organs removed? And now she was saying—she had never had them?

"Why did you lie?"

She looked down. "I was afraid you wouldn't want me here, if you knew."

"We have many double X female Icons. We have Marilyns, we—"

"But not every Family feels that way. I've watched you guys for weeks. I've watched *you*, Mama." She was crying again. "I wanted to join. And especially cloning Judy or Liza, to not have been born male, to think a woman can do it right . . ."

"They were women," I reminded her gently. "And they did it right. I can see that you're a real, authentic Liza Clone, even if you are double X."

"Thank you, Mama," she sobbed. "But with me, it's just—it's the old story of the drag queen trapped in the woman's body, you know?" Again, she laughed through the tears.

My Liza. My beautiful girl. I laid a hand on her shoulder. "You're my daughter," I told her. "And now you're my lieutenant. We need to learn to defend ourselves, when they return. I need to understand our Sanctuary's defenses better. Will you help me?"

"I'll help you, Mama." She embraced me, and buried her head in the padding of my bosom as I held her and rocked her.

When we came out from behind the screen, our make-up fixed, our nerves composed, we stared around the Sanctuary at our beautiful, damaged, defiant Family full of fabulousness and Color.

"You've got a leader and a lieutenant," I told them all. "I need people now to contact the Waynesmen, the Marilyn factions, every gang off the Boulevard. We need to come together, as one Family. We need to fight back."

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