Fall of the Chateau Glissant, Chapter 1

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It begins: Annabelle reconnects with an old friend.

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Even after all that had happened, I didn't panic until the evening I awoke from a nap and heard her throaty wail from across the house, rounded the corner, and saw her naked and bent over on all-fours. Somehow, all the drugs, and all the booze, the makeout sessions, even the threesome with me and Chase, didn't sound the alarm in my head. Like water coming to a boil, it all happened quickly in the scheme of things, but was still gradual. One thing led to another, and we were having fun. At least that's what I told myself.

Her mouth, gaped open in a rhythmic gasp for breath, curled up at the corners. I knew she was okay. But when our eyes met, hers gave mine a very clear message: "You're panicking right now, but don't say a fucking word and don't intervene, it's too late for that."

Her doe-like pupils peered into mine, defiantly steady against the pounding that her body was taking. Her moans were deep, as if from a dark place well below her lungs, and nearly vibrated the walls. Only now that I was in the room, steadying myself against the door jamb, could I hear his grunts, each time a split second after the loud slap of his groin against her ass. He was either ignoring me on purpose or was so into fucking Annabelle that my presence simply held no priority for him; maybe there was no difference.

I turned around just as Omar's pace quickened. I took a step back out of the room, feeling a sick swirl gather in the pit of my stomach. I didn't want to be there when they were done. I didn't want to hear it, and I didn't want to come to terms with it. Somehow, it was just different to have the finish laid bare in front of me, as if leaving in progress still left the reality of it somewhat in doubt, but I couldn't move very quickly. The thundering howl of their moans echoed down the hallway. I knew it was happening, and there was nothing to deny. His gutteral finish was unmistakable and gave me a bitter taste. My mind desperately tried to separate the real sounds from the visuals, but all I succeeded in doing was reaching the end of the hall. Standing at the head of the stairs, I steadied myself before descending, listening to Annabelle's faded giggle in the distance.

The only things that had occurred were things I myself had set into motion.

“It’s not real life, it’s just a good time,” I told her, more than once. Until about two minutes earlier, I think I believed it, too. I was halfway down the stairs when the doors opened.
“Hey, baby girl,” said Jordan. “I got everything you need for this thing: more party favors and more party people!” He laughed as he strolled into the foyer, followed by two girls and three more guys, one of them carrying a duffel bag and another carrying a large ice chest. “Jimmy says you’re good for it, so tell these motherfuckers where to put the goodies.” I hid a second wave of unease under a dead gaze and made a mental note to text the footballers; I could use friendly reinforcements.

My boyfriend was upstairs fucking my friend. My stepbrothers and their bandmates were stoned out of their minds and sharing pool loungers with some girls they picked up earlier that day at the beach, and now my drug dealer’s goons and their hangers-on were here with enough drugs to kill us all. The mental torment fought a momentary losing battle with my urges: I had a high to replenish, and it was going to be a long night. With a sigh and a crooked grin, I walked past them and toward the pool terrace, dropped all of my tenuously organized thoughts into a scrambled pile, and motioned for them to follow me.

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Living in the shadows of the Hollywood Hills meant being familiar with the Chateau Glissant. Unlike most of the other homes, perched carefully amidst the trees of the canyons, it loomed prominently atop a bare cliff overlooking the city. With its grey stone walls covered in overgrown vines and its dark windows staring balefully back at all who gaze up into them, the name of the house, as given by the family that built it, certainly lived up to its haughty French name. Vacated by its owners back in the 1980s after a violent murder within, it was sometimes whispered about ominously in social circles, the kind of house that long-time locals drove by slowly when showing visitors around. But the sea air and gentle climate did wonders to preserve it through the years, so when the heir to the house made the decision to move back in, he had the Chateau Glissant renovated back to its original glory in just over a year. That man was my father, and no more than a year after we moved in, he and his second wife died in an accident, leaving the house and everything else split between me and my two step-brothers, Chase and Foster.

An uneasy alliance between us was born, and since then, Chase and I have remained in the house, paying from the family coffers to keep everything up and the staff in place. Behind the stately doors of our dark mansion on the hill, the regular parties and the revolving guests became the norm without my father and Chase’s mother around. Yet, somehow, we always remained in control. We kept it together, at least for the most part, until Annabelle came to stay.

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We had met as kids in summer camp up in the high Sierras. My father sent me, just as his father had sent him, and though I'd much rather have spent those July months at home, I developed a few friendships that I looked forward to renewing with each passing year; none more than Annabelle. We were opposites in so many ways: I was an outgoing L.A. raven-brunette with a sarcastic attitude and a rail-thin body, and she was a shy, earnest small-town blonde with more than a touch of baby-fat, but at 11 years old, we somehow became the best of friends. As we got into our late teenage years, Annabelle's cheerleader camps supplanted all else, and as for me, family vacations to Provence and Mykonos sounded like much more fun than powdered eggs in the California spruce woods. Nevertheless, we kept in contact from time to time, and when Annabelle chose to attend a college in Los Angeles, I insisted that she spend a week here with me prior to moving into her dorm.

"So, it's just you and your stepbrother living there now?" she asked. "No adults or anything?"

"Annabelle, we *are* adults," I said. "And no, there's nobody to lay down any rules, but we don't need them anyway."

"I'm so jealous. I still have a curfew here, and my dad wants me to call him from college on school nights to update him," she said with a sigh. I wanted to tell her how stupid that was, but there would be time for that later, and with any luck, she would see it for herself.

"No worries, girl," I said. "We'll make up for lost time and have some fun while we're at it."

"I can't believe it's been three years," she said. "It will be good to kick back and catch up some before I have to tackle 'life in L.A.', and college, and all that. So, you and your stepbrother don't even have to have jobs? I bet it's like a big party there!"

"You have no idea", I said, gazing past the empty bottles onto the hazy morning view of the city below. "You'll see."

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I was laying out by the pool when I heard Chase's voice over the music in my earbuds and lifted my head.

"Your friend's here," he said from the covered terrace. "We're rehearsing, you mind getting off your ass and show her where to put her stuff?" A moment later, her luminous blonde hair appeared in the sunlight, eyes covered by dark sunglasses but mouth agape, as if pleasantly overwhelmed.

“Oh my god, you’re rich!” she said in genuine amazement.” I laughed. “And look at you, you look great!”

“So do you,” I said, more out of honest reaction than politeness. Annabelle’s baby fat hadn’t gone away, it had just efficiently relocated to all the right places.

Chase bulged his eyes for effect and pantomimed his cupped hands in front of his chest- the universal douche symbol for “her tits are big!”- then circled back into the house. Annabelle was oblivious to that, opening her arms as she approached, then wrapped them around me. My platform sandals made us the same height as we embraced, her scent briefly sending me back in time to those late nights on her cabin bed, watching out the screen window for boys on the loose.

“I can’t believe I’m finally here! I love your house!” she said.

“Thank you,” I said, stepping back to get another look at her. “It’s been in my family for a long time. Why don’t I show you around?”

She loved the house indeed, especially her third floor suite with a balcony and a view. She loved the mojitos- the first ones she’d ever had- that Chase’s bandmate Stephen made for her. She loved shopping on Melrose with a heavy buzz, and she loved wearing what she’d just bought to the club that my boyfriend Omar got us into that night after meeting us for sushi.

“I like your boyfriend,” she said to me over the deafening house beats. “How did he get us in here without fake IDs?”

“He’s a club promoter, he can get us in all over town,” I told her. She didn’t really understand, but it didn’t matter. I ran into a few friends of mine who bought a couple rounds of shots, and in the lightning flash of club lighting, I caught a glimpse of Annabelle lip-locked with one of them on the dance floor. A few minutes later I went to look for her and saw that they had moved off to a dark corner. Relieved that she was enjoying herself and satisfied that she was in decent- albeit groping-hands, I returned to the dance floor, where I’d remain until Omar let me know he was ready to go.

“Oh my god I can’t believe I did that...but it was so much fun!” she recounted in an exhilarated slur during the cab ride. “He asked if everyone was going back to your place, Nikki, but I didn’t know if that was happening or not.”

“He would’ve been welcome to come back with us, no problem. The party didn’t have to stop on the dance floor for you two,” I said with a wink, sitting on Omar’s lap facing her. She just smiled blankly

and turned to look out at the lights of L.A. lighting up the sky from below as we ascended the hill towards the house.

Chase and a few friends were watching a UFC replay in the basement den when we got home, so we stayed in the upstairs living room. Annabelle drunkenly asked for another shot of vodka, which I obliged, joining her in a final toast to our reunion. Sitting next to me and tipsily leaning the weight of her upper body onto mine, she told me how great it felt to let loose, which she never really could back home because so many eyes were on her.

“It’s hard being miss ‘everything’...” she said, her voice trailing in and out like a weak radio signal. “...and then my parents would hear about at it at church on Sunday, and people talk...I just want to know what it’s like to live like you...”

“Those people aren’t here, Annabelle,” I said. “Nobody cares what you do here.” I promised her that in the days ahead, she’d have every chance to let her party flag fly higher than she’d ever imagined. As I eased her onto her back and covered her with a throw-blanket, she told me she loved me and closed her eyes.

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The next morning, about an hour before noon, we were having coffee under the covered back terrace. Annabelle was still in her dress from the night before, having just peeled herself out of a bed, and I was in a tank top and sweatpants. Our sunglasses shielded us from the blinding sun’s reflection off the pool deck, but I could see that her thoughts were lost somewhere between remorse and bewilderment.

“Did it bother you to see us fucking last night?” I asked. Annabelle clutched the oversize coffee cup with both hands, both legs pulled up into the seat with her knees against her chest. “I hope not. We’re not ashamed to be seen.” She pulled the cup to her face for a delicate sip, then shook her head with a pursed grin.

“Good,” I said. “It’s sort of ‘anything goes’ around here sometimes. Thought it might have taken you by surprise.”

That was a half-truth: I knew it had taken her by surprise. She had been asleep for a couple of hours, and Omar and I had just finished a joint and were half-watching a movie when I felt his cock harden against my lower back. I hadn’t been fucked all day or night, and wasn’t going to let it go to waste. I didn’t care how tired he was, I’d gladly do all the work; I just needed to feel him, and I wanted to cum.

I pulled his pants down to his ankles and wrapped my lips around the head, savoring the familiar salty tang of sucking his cock after a long day, caressing every inch of his shaft with my swirling tongue. I knew just how far to take it before I risked making him pop in my mouth. He pushed my skirt down and pulled my top off, then pulled me onto his lap to fuck him. I was pulling his shirt up, craving as much skin contact as I could get. I pressed my body into his, rolling my hips with his cock fully inside me.

My dirty whispers had their desired effect as Omar began to thrust his hips up and slid two fingers between us, pressing into my clit and against my vulva. The slow simmer broke: I lifted up, just holding the tip of his shaft inside me, before dropping back down again with a shudder. His wet fingers slid my clit back and forth between them while his other hand roughly clutched my breast, forcing me into the hard fuck I wanted.

I was coming down from my orgasm when I felt Annabelle's eyes on us; we must have awakened her. I flipped my hair to the other side and met her gaze, struggling to keep her in focus as our bodies crashed together in a rough, frantic cadence. Only her eyes and nose were exposed above the fringe of the blanket, but I knew her attention was rapt. His hands rose up my back from behind just as I felt him tighten up. He gripped my shoulders and slammed me down, shooting his load as deep as possible. We kissed as his hands slowly traced down my naked body, coming to rest with a soft grip on both of my stiletto heels. When I finally raised up from sucking him clean and hard again, Annabelle was gone. Letting him fuck me a second time from behind, I pondered our shared look, and knew I'd better address it the next day.

"I was surprised," she said, smiling a little more broadly. "Just seeing you do it out in the open like that..."

"Well it was just you, and I thought you were asleep," I said. "So I don't really count that as 'out in the open'. But I don't really have a problem doing that, either." Annabelle broke our gaze, staring out over the valley below.

"So how often do you have parties?" she asked.

"Like, real parties? Here? Every now and then. Mostly we just hang out, have a good time. I hope you had a good time last night." Her smile returned.

"I did, it was crazy though. Got into an L.A. club, made out with some guy I didn't even know," she said, shaking her head in amused disbelief. "Then I saw you..."

"Having sex," I said. "It was just sex, nothing I'm embarrassed about you seeing, that's for sure."

“I know...I’ve just never...,” she said, catching herself for a moment and re-gathering her thought. “It’s never been ‘just sex’ before, for me. You know, I’ve only had sex with one person, and that one ended so badly. And I do miss the sex, I just wish it wasn’t with a jackass.” I signaled for Maria to bring more coffee, then leaned forward, facing Annabelle.

“Yeah...but listen, girl. All that shit is behind you now. Your dumb-ass small-town ex-boyfriend, your overbearing mom and dad. I know they want to still have control over you, but fuck them, Annabelle. You’re here now, you can do what you want. You should live.” She nodded, stretching her arms.

“Well then, you’ll just have to teach me,” she said.

“There’s nothing to learn. Just let your inhibitions go,” I told her, then stood up to remove my clothes. “A little of just about anything is good for you, and a lot of most things won’t kill you.” My tank top and pants were laying on the concrete deck, leaving me nude as I addressed Annabelle. “You’ve gone without anything like this for your whole life. Consider this your remedial course before your life starts for real,” I said. “Starting today.” I then turned toward the pool and dove in, savoring the crispness of the water against my body. When I surfaced, Maria was delivering new coffee to an empty table; Annabelle was at the edge of the pool, shoving her dress past her ample breasts and down her torso. When she finally wriggled free, looked around in a moment of self-consciousness, then jumped in, I knew she’d taken my words to heart.

“Are you sure nobody’s going to see us?” she asked.

“No,” I said, then slipped under the water while she giggled.

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Sundays were rehearsal day for Superdeep, the band Chase formed with his older brother, Foster, plus Stephen, whose father was a record label rep, and two guys that answered their Craigslist ad. They were attempting to write some original songs and do something close to metal, but out of a whole day’s “practice” in what used to be the library, they mostly attempted Sublime and Red Hot Chili Peppers covers, smoked weed, and hung out. Despite claims that Stephen’s dad was going to get them some radio play “as soon as the demo’s done”, they had exactly two paying gigs and no records to their name after several months together. Still, it was “just a matter of time”, as Chase and Stephen told Annabelle during one of their many extended rehearsal breaks, before they found their groove and got discovered.

She and I had spent the first part of our day in and out of the pool, enjoying the cloudless day of sun

with the help of frozen margaritas and some peace and quiet. When the boys showed up for rehearsal, she elected to make a run for a towel and go change into a bikini, but I was fine the way I was. It was nothing any of them hadn't seen before, and it's my house; I'd let them stare all they wanted.

The sun sank below the far edge of the ocean, and the jam session in the library played on in a thick cannabis haze, even with the french doors to the patio wide open. Annabelle and I were sitting together on a mahogany bureau, she was still in her bikini and I wore a sarong, never having bothered to change into anything. I was high, just like everyone else but her. She agreed to try it, but when the pipe got passed into her hands, she couldn't do it.

"I've never smoked anything in my life," she screamed in my ear, nearly drowned out by Chase's wailing vocals. "I think I'm already feeling just the smoke in here!" I gave her a wink, took the pipe and the lighter, took another hit, and passed it on. Then I handed her a pill.

"Here, take this," I said. She took the pill between her fingers, then looked at me. "Trust me," I said. She put it in her mouth, picked up her mostly-thawed margarita to wash it down, and leaned against me. The strong cocktail of drinks and drugs were sinking both of us into a warm trance. The music reverberated through my body, the people coming in and out of focus by choice. Foster eyed me from behind the drum set, focused on my legs before looking me in the eye. I knew what he wanted; I looked away. The snake-charmy guitar intro to "Snow" sharpened my thoughts, only to dull again moments later when the other instruments came in and fucked it up.

Annabelle's breath was blowing across my skin, tickling and arousing me. The music was a bass beat, the people were colors in movement under light. Foster fucked me with his eyes; I grinned and looked away again. Annabelle's eyes met mine, smiling without her lips revealing it to anyone else. My love for her nearly burst out of my skin; we needed to get away.

I took her hand and led her outside, past the laughing and talking figures in the dark. I wanted to be alone with my friend. I stood at the edge of the hot tub and closed my eyes, savoring the soft warmth of her arms around me and body against me. I unhooked the wrap and let it drop from my body like the unveiling of a statue, then stepped into the water. I wanted more.

"I feel so warm...so awesome," she said in wonder, embracing me with both arms and holding her face not two inches from mine. In the distance, Superdeep played a song we both knew and danced at half-speed, always threatening to dissolve into a static hug. The hot water was making us both roll deeper and more intensely. My lips dragged across hers, then back again. The third time I pressed forward, locking our lips into a kiss. The nylon of her bikini top was like the finest velvet against my bare breasts, and the hot water bubbled against our legs and waists like an orgasmic cauldron.

I didn’t want anything but to feel my body against hers, my lips against hers, and our arms and legs in a tangle for as long as we could. We kissed for what seemed like forever, our tongues flicking against one another and our breath forming it’s own dancing rhythm long after the band called it quits.

I don’t remember stopping, but I do remember the shots we took, and laying down on the cool concrete deck looking for stars in between the deep golden glow of the light pollution. Our feet were intertwined, words failed us, and we laughed.

“C’mon girls, we wanna see a show! Take that top off, blondie,” they said, standing around and wandering past us; we didn’t care. When Annabelle passed out, I ran my fingers across her face, knowing she went to sleep happy.

Chase and Foster carried us up to my bed. Chase made sure she was on her back with her head propped up before they left. A few minutes later, Foster returned alone. I never let him kiss me, but I had an itch for something else of his, an addiction we shared with each other. The dark room glowed at the windows, bouncing a blue light off my naked skin. He undressed and laid on top of me, whispering in my ear. The soft spongy flesh of his dick rubbed against the back of my thigh, beginning to wriggle to life. My skin still buzzed to the touch, and the warmth excited me. He asked if I wanted it, and I tried to roll over; he held me down, and asked me again. I said yes.

Foster pulled me up to my knees and entered me roughly from behind. I think he tried to be quiet; I didn’t. Annabelle was out cold, no way we’d wake her up, even though she was only a couple of feet away. The friction of his intrusion burned; I wasn’t ready, but he pushed himself all the way in anyway. He slid slowly and deeply back and forth, forcing me to adjust, but before long it was pure pleasure. I felt my juices slickening his shaft and heard that dirty churn and smack with each penetration as he picked up the pace. Just when I wondered if he was going to bother, Foster pulled out, spread the cheeks of my ass with his hands, and pressed his cock against my sphincter. I sank my face into my pillow with a loud shudder and relaxed, feeling his cock slide past my tight ring and into my body.

I loved it when he fucked my ass; his cock was the perfect size and shape for it. He wanted it so badly, so constantly, but he always had to corner me in a room before I’d give in. It was part of our game, and he knew the rules. If he picked his spots carefully, he could use the fuck out of my ass, and I’d love it. He only used my pussy to get me wet enough to take him anally, and I didn’t care; he was the only one that I let fuck me there, it was our secret.

His grip on my hips was tight, and my whole body felt awash in a delicious flame, stoked by his hard cock plunging into my depths from behind. I knew he wouldn’t last long, but I didn’t care. I heard him

groan and felt the flowing heat of his cum pumping into my belly. He continued to thrust slowly until he finally exhaled and fell forward, pinning me down with his softening cock still lodged in my ass.

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The soft early-morning light was streaming in from behind the sheer curtains; we'd had an early night with all the stuff we took, and I just wasn't wired to sleep for too many hours at a time. Annabelle was curled up, still sleeping, and still in her bikini. I felt the trickle of leftover cum from my still-tingling asshole before I noticed the pounding headache. I opened a pill bottle and tapped two oxycodones out onto the nightstand, taking one and leaving one for Annabelle with a note. Between that and a bottle of water, I'd be good as new. I also realized that, completely by accident, I was awake in time to shower and attend my bikram yoga class in Century City that morning. "I could stand to sweat a few toxins out," I thought, suddenly rushing the shower so I could get there in time to pick up an espresso beforehand.

When I left the hotbox and got my phone out of the locker, I checked for missed texts: one from Annabelle:

Chase invited me shopping! I will see you soon :)

Then, one from DeDe:

Girrrl!! You know about the party in Malibu right?? USC people, going with Rey and his boys. Been missin u!! HMU for directions...

DeDe was a friend of mine from high school. Just like Annabelle, we came from different places- she was from the Latino East Side- but we were tight from the start. We chased the boys together; we were ahead of the game back then. Now that we're out of high school, everyone plays the same game. The difference was that DeDe was smarter than me: we both chased the boys, took the shots, and did the drugs, but while I lived only for the next day, she always had her eye on the future. Now, she was attending USC, and her boyfriend, Rey, was a linebacker for their football team. Even living across town, we still made time for each other, sometimes for lunch or shopping, but mostly at parties. Whenever she got wind of a good one, she let me know, and likewise. I texted her back for directions and let her know I'd be there, then drove into Beverly Hills. I was in my workout clothes, but so what, there's no way I'd run into anyone I knew.

Just before my dad died, he was really nagging me to get a job: "something to keep you busy, at least", is the way he put it. But since it was basically the last thing he asked me to do, I felt an obligation to at least get the clothing part right. I parked right off of Rodeo and walked slowly past the

storefronts showcasing their fall collections, not seeing very much that would look good in an interview. I finally walked into Louis Vuitton, having spotted a suit in the window that might work for me, but got sidetracked immediately by the salesperson.

“Well, well! Look who’s here!” she said, putting two blouses on hangers down to come give me a barely-touch hug. “Working out today, huh Nikki? Pilates? You were in my class at Sunstone last year, right? Down on San Vicente?” I shrugged agreeably; it wasn’t worth correcting. Also, she was high as a kite. “Anyway, you look fabulous au naturale! I look like such a tunnel-whore without makeup, seriously, be proud...Nikki, right?”

“Yeah,” I said. “How long have you worked here?”

“Like, six months?” she said, obviously throwing that number out in lieu of any real memory of her hire date. “My dad got me in after I dropped out of Pepperdine. I should’ve known you shopped here! Let me give you my card, so I can get some love whenever you do!” she chirped, and did a quick jog to the sales counter and back. “Meant to thank you, hun, I had so much fun at your place that night, everyone did.” She winked. “Oh, and tell your brother I said hi, he’s such a cutie.” Then she leaned in close: “And whoever deals for you guys, can you give me a number? My guy is hella flaky, right? So just vouch for me.” I nodded, then noticed some cute cork-heel platform sandals on display.

“Got these in a six?” I asked. “I’ll take them.”

I counted out the cash and walked out with the shoes and her card: **Shannon Goldman, Sales Associate** , with her cell number scribbled on the back.

“Later, hun, thanks! Don’t forget to text me about that thing!” she said as the door closed behind me. I had no idea who she was.

The mission for an interview suit would have to wait for another day.