

Jilly Cooper is a journalist, writer and media superstar. The author of many number one bestselling novels, including *Riders*, *Rivals*, *Polo*, *The Man Who Made Husbands Jealous*, *Appassionata*, *Score!*, *Pandora* and *Wicked!*, she lives in Gloucestershire with her husband, Leo, her rescue greyhound, Feather, and five cats. She was appointed OBE in the 2004 Queen's Birthday Honours List for her contribution to literature.

Find out more about Jilly Cooper and her novels by visiting her website: [www.jillycooper.co.uk](http://www.jillycooper.co.uk)

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*By Jilly Cooper*

FICTION

Wicked!  
Pandora  
*The Rutshire Chronicles:*  
Riders  
Rivals  
Polo  
The Man Who Made Husbands  
    Jealous  
Appassionata  
Score!

NON-FICTION

Animals in War  
Class  
How to Survive Christmas  
Hotfoot to Zabriskie Point (with  
    Patrick Lichfield)  
Intelligent and Loyal  
Jolly Marsupial  
Jolly Super  
Jolly Superlative  
Jolly Super Too  
Super Cooper  
Super Jilly  
Super Men and Super Women  
The Common Years  
Turn Right at the Spotted Dog  
Work and Wedlock  
Angels Rush In  
Araminta's Wedding

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Little Mabel  
Little Mabel's Great Escape  
Little Mabel Saves the Day  
Little Mabel Wins

ROMANCE

Bella  
Emily  
Harriet  
Imogen  
Lisa & Co  
Octavia  
Prudence

ANTHOLOGIES

The British in Love  
Violets and Vinegar

# SCORE!

Jilly Cooper



**CORGI BOOKS**

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**SCORE!**

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To Ann Mills,  
dearest of friends,  
with love and gratitude.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

<b>JAMES BENSON</b>	A very smooth, extremely expensive private doctor.
<b>BETTY</b>	One of Rannaldini's pretty maids.
<b>TEDDY BRIMSCOMBE</b>	Rannaldini's head gardener, renowned for his green fingers and wandering hands.
<b>MRS BRIMSCOMBE</b>	Rannaldini's long-suffering housekeeper.
<b>MR BROWN</b>	An Australian racehorse owner.
<b>MISS BUSSAGE</b>	Rannaldini's PA – a gorgon.
<b>RUPERT CAMPBELL-BLACK</b>	Multi-millionaire owner/trainer, ex-Olympic show jumper and Minister for Sport. Director of Venturer Television. Still Mecca for most women.
<b>TAGGIE CAMPBELL-BLACK</b>	His adored second wife – an angel.
<b>MARCUS CAMPBELL-BLACK</b>	Rupert's son by his first marriage, recent winner of the Appleton International piano competition.
<b>TABITHA CAMPBELL-BLACK</b>	Mistress of the Horse for <i>Don Carlos</i> . Rupert's estranged daughter from his

	first marriage. Serious wild child and event rider.
<b>XAVIER CAMPBELL-BLACK</b>	Rupert and Taggie's adopted Colombian son.
<b>BIANCA CAMPBELL-BLACK</b>	Rupert and Taggie's adopted Colombian daughter.
<b>EDDIE CAMPBELL-BLACK</b>	Rupert's father, five times married and raring to go. A sexual buccaneer of the old school.
<b>BRUCE CASSIDY</b>	Beleaguered press officer for <i>Don Carlos</i> . Inevitably nicknamed 'Hype-along'.
<b>CHLOE CATFORD</b>	Mellifluous mezzo soprano, and compilation queen. Sings Princess Eboli in <i>Don Carlos</i> . Significant Other Woman in several marriages.
<b>GIUSEPPE CAVALLI</b>	Capricious Italian bass, the ghost of the Emperor Charles V in <i>Don Carlos</i> . The innamorato of Granville Hastings, he sings like an angel and drinks like a fish.
<b>LADY CHISLEDON</b>	A pillar of Paradise.
<b>CLIVE</b>	Rannaldini's sinister leather-clad henchman.
<b>MISS CRICKLADE</b>	Paradise village busybody.

<b>HOWIE DENSTON</b>	Artist's agent and ghastly creep who runs London office of Shepherd Denston, toughest music agents in New York.
<b>DIZZY</b>	Rupert Campbell-Black's comely head groom.
<b>DETECTIVE SERGEANT KEVIN FANSHAWE</b>	Rutminster CID smoothie and new-style catcher of villains.
<b>FLORENCE</b>	Hortense de Montigny's ancient retainer.
<b>CHRISTY FOXE</b>	Indefatigable PA during recording of <i>Don Carlos</i> .
<b>DETECTIVE SERGEANT TIMOTHY GABLECROSS</b>	Old-style catcher of villains.
<b>BERNARD GUÉRIN</b>	Battle-scarred veteran. First assistant director, <i>Don Carlos</i> , Tristan de Montigny's <i>droit-hand</i> man, who acts as sergeant major keeping order on the set.
<b>DAME HERMIONE HAREFIELD</b>	World-famous diva and Rannaldini's mistress. Seriously tiresome, brings out Crippen in all.
<b>BOB HAREFIELD</b>	Her charming, mostly absentee husband, long-term lover of Meredith Whalen.
<b>LITTLE COSMO HAREFIELD</b>	Hermione's fiendish nine-year-old son. Could give



	lessons to Damien in <i>The Omen</i> .
<b>EULALIA HARRISON</b>	A frumpy feature writer.
<b>GRANVILLE 'GRANNY' HASTINGS</b>	English bass, singing the Grand Inquisitor in <i>Don Carlos</i> . Outwardly cosy old pussy-cat.
<b>LYSANDER HAWKLEY</b>	Formerly a man who made husbands jealous, now happily married to Rannaldini's third wife Kitty. Rupert Campbell-Black's assistant.
<b>THE REV. PERCIVAL HILLARY</b>	A portly parson, who confines his pastoral visits to drinks time.
<b>GEORGE HUNGERFORD</b>	An extremely successful property developer, chief executive of Rutminster Symphony Orchestra. Live-in lover of Flora Seymour.
<b>JANICE</b>	Rannaldini's head groom.
<b>JESSICA</b>	Ravishing production secretary, <i>Don Carlos</i> .
<b>BEATTIE JOHNSON</b>	A seductive, totally unprincipled journalist.
<b>SEXTON KEMP</b>	An extremely fly East End film producer. Chief Executive of Liberty Productions, who are making <i>Don Carlos</i> .

<b>LUCY LATIMER</b>	Make-up artist on <i>Don Carlos</i> . Still centre and agony aunt to entire cast and crew.
<b>CLAUDINE LAUZERTE</b>	Actress and Gallic goddess, married to a French government minister.
<b>DETECTIVE CONSTABLE LIGHTFOOT</b>	Eager young constable, traumatized by steamy stint at the 1991 Valhalla orgy.
<b>ISA LOVELL</b>	A brilliant, obsessive jump jockey. A Heathcliff of the gallops.
<b>JAKE LOVELL</b>	His father, ex-world show jumping champion. Now National Hunt trainer.
<b>TORY LOVELL</b>	Isa's mother and Jake's wife – loving and super-efficient, a hard act for a daughter-in-law to follow.
<b>MARIA</b>	An ace cook.
<b>DETECTIVE CONSTABLE DEBBIE MILLER</b>	A pulchritudinous policewoman.
<b>COLIN MILTON</b>	Once-great tenor now playing Count Lerma, the Spanish ambassador in <i>Don Carlos</i> . Old sweetie, eminently bullyable.
<b>ÉTIENNE DE MONTIGNY</b>	France's greatest painter and national hero.
<b>ALEXANDRE DE MONTIGNY</b>	Étienne's pompous eldest son, a judge.

<b>HORTENSE DE MONTIGNY</b>	Étienne's sister – a blue-blooded battle-axe.
<b>SIMONE DE MONTIGNY</b>	Étienne's granddaughter and Alexandre's daughter. In charge of continuity, <i>Don Carlos</i> .
<b>TRISTAN DE MONTIGNY</b>	Étienne's youngest son and Rannaldini's godson. Director, <i>Don Carlos</i> .
<b>DETECTIVE CONSTABLE KAREN NEEDHAM</b>	The belle of the Bill.
<b>OGBORNE</b>	Chief grip, <i>Don Carlos</i> .
<b>LORD (DECLAN) O'HARA OF PENSCOMBE</b>	Recently ennobled television megastar, managing director of Venturer Television and Rupert Campbell-Black's father-in-law.
<b>VIKING O'NEILL</b>	Golden boy and first horn of Rutminster Symphony Orchestra.
<b>OSCAR</b>	Deceptively indolent director of photography, <i>Don Carlos</i> .
<b>FRANCO PALMIERI</b>	Vast and vastly famous Italian tenor, playing the title role in <i>Don Carlos</i> .
<b>MIKHAIL PEZCHEROV</b>	Lovable but rather base baritone, playing the Marquis of Posa in <i>Don Carlos</i> .
<b>LARA PEZCHEROV</b>	Mikhail's adored wife.

**DETECTIVE CHIEF  
INSPECTOR GERALD  
PORTLAND**

Admin king and limelight hogger, Rutminster CID.

**ROZZY PRINGLE**

Exquisite-voiced soprano playing Tebaldo the page in *Don Carlos*. Worn down by overwork and importunate family.

**GLYN PRINGLE**

Rozzy's husband – an accomplished drone.

**PUSHY GALORE**

An ambitious and irritatingly good-looking member of the *Don Carlos* chorus. Real name Gloria Prescott.

**CECILIA RANNALDINI**

Italian soprano and world-famous diva. Rannaldini's feisty second wife.

**SIR ROBERTO RANNALDINI**

Mega maestro and arch-fiend, with musical directorships in Berlin, New York and Tokyo. Co-producing *Don Carlos*.

**LADY (HELEN) RANNALDINI**

Rannaldini's fourth wife and Rupert Campbell-Black's first wife, devoted mother of Marcus and less so of Tabitha. A legendary American beauty.

**WOLFGANG RANNALDINI**

Rannaldini's son from his first marriage. Little Hitler exterior hides heart of gold. Former boyfriend of Flora Seymour.

<b>SALLY</b>	Another of Rannaldini's pretty maids.
<b>FLORA SEYMOUR</b>	Soprano and viola player and former wild child, traumatized by teenage <i>affaire</i> with Rannaldini, now living with George Hungerford.
<b>ALPHEUS P. SHAW</b>	World-famous American bass, singing Philip II in <i>Don Carlos</i> . Splendid-looking, but pompous sexual predator.
<b>CHERYL SHAW</b>	Alpheus's justifiably jealous wife. Great tree and social climber.
<b>DETECTIVE CONSTABLE SMITHSON</b>	A very PC DC.
<b>BABY SPINOSISSIMO</b>	Dazzling Australian tenor and sexual buccaneer of the modern school.
<b>CHIEF CONSTABLE SWALLOW</b>	A Rutshire god, and friend of Lady Rannaldini and Dame Hermione.
<b>SYLVESTRE</b>	Sound engineer, <i>Don Carlos</i> . Man of few words but countless deeds.
<b>SYLVIA</b>	Glyn Pringle's housekeeper.
<b>VALENTIN</b>	Charismatic camera operator, <i>Don Carlos</i> . Oscar's son-in-law.

**LADY GRISELDA WALLACE**

Wardrobe mistress, *Don Carlos*. Nervous-breakdown van always on call during production.

**SERENA WESTWOOD**

Record producer of *Don Carlos*. Cool, competent beauty.

**JESSIE WESTWOOD**

Serena's four-year-old daughter.

**MEREDITH WHALEN**

Set designer, *Don Carlos*. Highly expensive interior designer. Known as the Ideal Homo, because he's so much in demand as spare man at dinner parties.

## THE ANIMALS

<b>THE ENGINEER</b>	Tabitha Campbell-Black's event horse.
<b>GERTRUDE</b>	Taggie Campbell-Black's mongrel.
<b>JAMES</b>	Lucy Latimer's rescued lurcher.
<b>PEPPY KOALA</b>	An Australian wonder horse.
<b>THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS</b>	Rannaldini's vicious and generally victorious National Hunt horse.
<b>SARASTRO</b>	Rannaldini's cat.
<b>SHARON</b>	Tabitha Campbell-Black's yellow Labrador, later has walk-on part as the Grand Inquisitor's guide dog.
<b>TABLOID</b>	Rannaldini's Rottweiler.
<b>TREVOR</b>	Flora Seymour's rescued terrier.

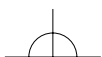


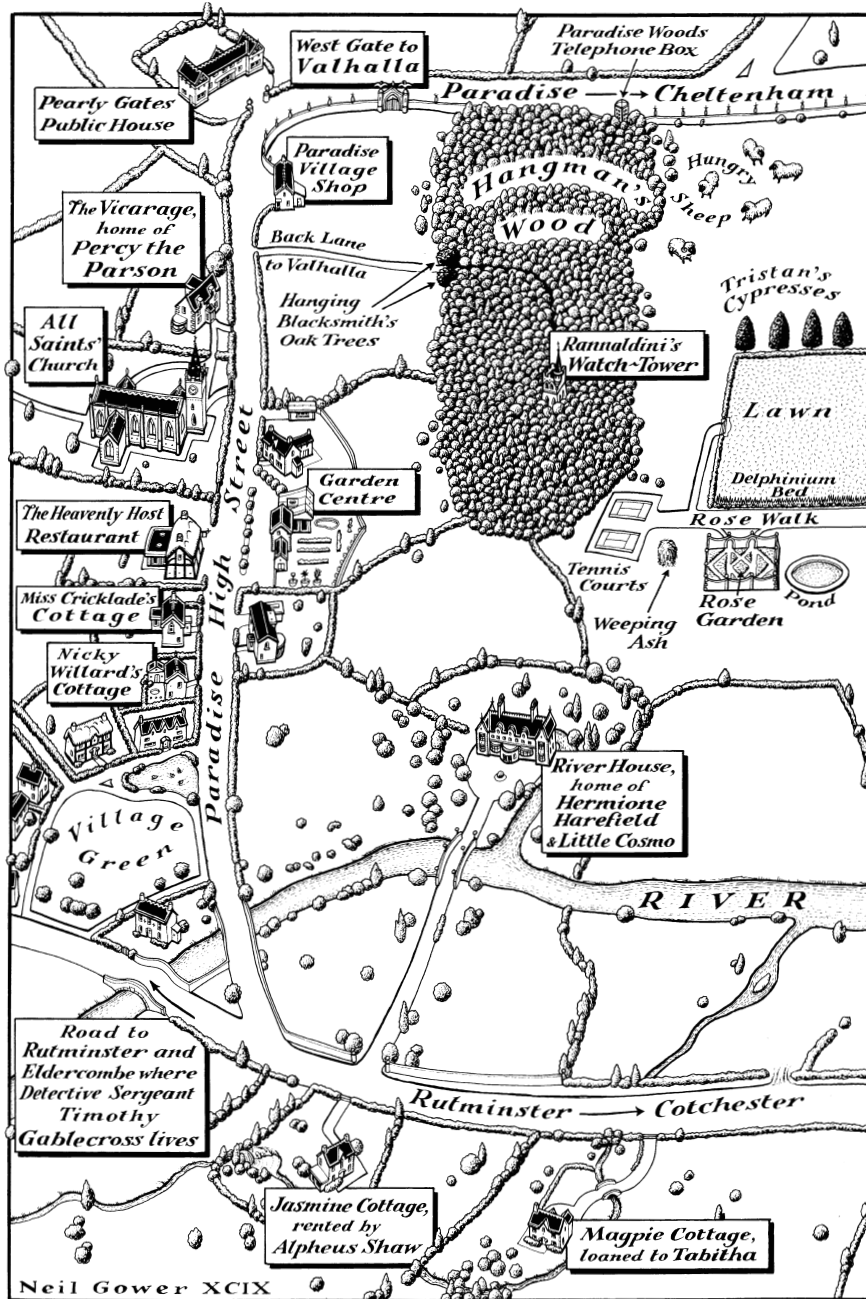


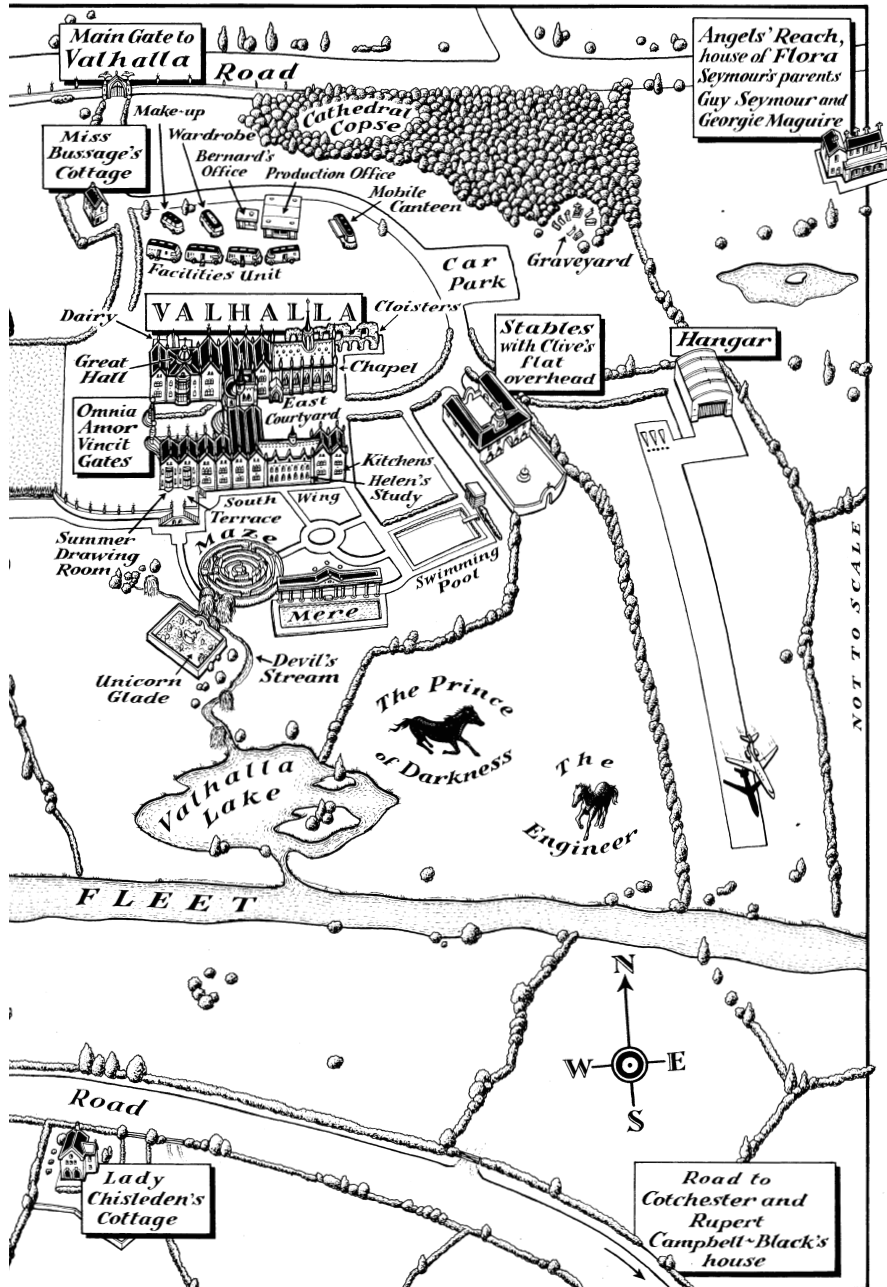
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**DON CARLOS**  
**THE INITIAL CAST OF THE FILM**

PHILIP II, KING OF SPAIN	Alpheus P. Shaw
DON CARLOS, INFANTE OF SPAIN	'Fat Franco' Palmieri
ELIZABETH DE VALOIS, PRINCESS OF FRANCE	Hermione Harefield
TEBALDO, ELIZABETH'S PAGE	Rozzy Pringle
PRINCESS EBOLI, A SPANISH LADY-IN-WAITING	Chloe Catford
RODRIGO, MARQUIS OF POSA FRIEND OF DON CARLOS	To be filled
THE GRAND INQUISITOR	Granville 'Granny' Hastings
THE GHOST OF THE EMPEROR CHARLES V	Giuseppe Cavalli
COUNT LERMA, THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE	Colin Milton









## OVERTURE

1977

Many men hated Roberto Rannaldini. Many women, after loving him passionately, hated him even more. To be regarded at twenty-eight as the most exciting conductor since the war had necessitated brutal trampling on the way up. But at least Rannaldini could count on the unqualified love of his ten-year-old godson, Tristan de Montigny. To Tristan, the dashing maestro, with his suave, catlike smile, his deep, caressing voice, and his recklessly fast cars, was the most glamorous person in the world.

Most importantly Rannaldini had been a friend of Tristan's mother, who had died when Tristan was a baby, and was the only person prepared to satisfy the boy's craving for information about her.

'She was so beautiful, so sweet, so proud of you, Tristan, and she love you so much. Her death happen in moment of madness, when she feel she cannot cope, and was unworthy of your father.'

Tristan's father, Étienne de Montigny, was France's most illustrious painter. He was revered for his portraits and landscapes but most famous for his erotic paintings, many of which, *Salome's Ecstasy*, *The Rape of Lucrece* and more recently *David and Jonathan*, hung in the great

galleries of the world, elevating near-pornography to an art form.

Étienne, outwardly a laughing giant of a man, had spawned a pack of children from three wives and numerous mistresses. Twelve years ago, when he was sixty, he had met Rannaldini, newly arrived in Paris to make his fortune as a conductor. The two had struck up a rapport, and Étienne had taken the handsome, impossibly precocious teenager under his wing. In return Rannaldini had not only milked Étienne's contacts but also posed for him.

Part of the fun for collectors of what became known as Étienne's 'extremely blue period' was to identify Rannaldini in the paintings as everyone from Apollo to the head of John the Baptist. Rannaldini had also provided beautiful young models to titillate the old goat's palate and palette.

The most beautiful had been Tristan's mother, the sixteen-year-old Delphine. Even Étienne's staunchest supporters had been horrified when he had made this exquisite child his fourth wife and within a few weeks impregnated her.

Nemesis moved swiftly. A proud, delighted Étienne was busy sketching his newborn baby, Tristan, when he heard that his fourth and favourite son, Laurent, a young army officer, had been blown up in Chad. Laurent had always been a rebel, and rumours persisted that he had been taken out by his own side. Too crazed with grief even to call for an inquiry, Étienne promptly lost interest in baby Tristan, and hardly seemed to notice when, a few days later, Tristan's young mother committed suicide. She had been suffering from post-natal depression. It was left to Étienne's sister, Hortense, a rusty old battleaxe, to organize Tristan's christening, at which, as one of Delphine's last wishes, Rannaldini was a godfather.

Étienne's indifference persisted. Tristan was the only one of his children he pointedly ignored and never

praised. The boy had been brought up with the rest of Étienne's gilded pack in Paris or at the château in the Tarn, but he was always the wistful calf which grazes away from the herd, longing for yet shying away from love.

Which was why his godfather was so important to Tristan and why on that wintry November evening in 1977 he could hardly contain his excitement as, in his first dark suit, his gold hair slicked down with water, he peered out at the galloping black clouds and frenziedly thrashing trees of the Bois de Boulogne for a first glimpse of Rannaldini's Mercedes.

Although Rannaldini got a Machiavellian kick from singling out Tristan for attention, knowing it irritated the hell out of Étienne, he was genuinely attached to the boy. He had also been a wonderful godfather: writing from all over the world, never forgetting Christmas or a birthday, taking Tristan to concerts whenever he swept through Paris. For his confirmation he had even given him a Guarneri cello, valued at thousands, which Tristan had been practising for days hoping Rannaldini might ask him to play. Tristan had also painted him a water-colour – not too much like Degas – of polo players in the Bois.

There was Rannaldini's Mercedes. Tristan hurtled downstairs, beating the housekeeper, slithering on a rose-patterned rug across the floorboards, shyly shaking his godfather by the hand, before submitting to a warm, scented embrace.

As usual, Rannaldini was in a hurry. As a tenth-birthday present, he was taking Tristan to Verdi's greatest opera, *Don Carlos*. The curtain would rise in an hour so they were cutting it fine, but first he wanted to hear Tristan play and whisked him into the library.

Here Rannaldini paused only to admire himself on the cover of *Paris-Match*, and clock any new artists on the dark red walls. Over the centuries, the Montignys had increased their fortune buying paintings ahead of fashion. Rannaldini had considerably bolstered his

coffers by using Étienne's eye to build up his own collection.

Opening the piano score of *Don Carlos*, at the great cello solo at the beginning of Act IV, he placed it on Tristan's music stand.

'Try this.'

Even though Tristan was sight-reading, he played with total concentration and the sad sound blossomed as his long fingers vibrated on the strings.

'Excellent,' cried Rannaldini in delight. 'You work very hard. And this is excellent too,' he added, putting Tristan's watercolour inside the piano score. 'I will hang it in my study. We must go.'

'I hope you will not be bored,' said Rannaldini, manoeuvring the Mercedes through the pre-theatre and dinner traffic at a speed that astounded even the Parisians. 'It is long opera but very interesting. I will briefly explain story.'

'France and Spain are ending long, bloody war. To unite the two countries, Elisabetta, the French king's beautiful daughter, is to marry Carlos, the son of King Philip II of Spain. Understand?'

Tristan nodded. He loved the way Rannaldini never talked down to him.

'Young Carlos reach France in disguise, wanting to see if he has been lumbered with ugly cow, but when he see Princess Elisabetta out hunting in the woods,' Rannaldini gesticulated at the Bois de Boulogne, 'he find her utterly beautiful, with dark hair to her waist. When he reveal he is Carlos, her future husband, she fall in love too. They will live 'appy ever after.' Jumping a red light, Rannaldini made a V-sign at an outraged crone in a Volvo.

'Then awful thing 'appen. Carlos's father, Philip II, decide he want Elisabetta for himself and marries her instead. This is very selfish because King already has beautiful girlfriend called Eboli.'



‘Poor Carlos, however, cannot stop loving Elisabetta even though she is now Queen of Spain, married to his father, and she still love him. But everywhere in Spanish court they are spied on. I won’t spoil the ending.’

They were approaching the opera house.

‘Rannaldini, Rannaldini,’ shouted admirers, surging forward.

A group protesting against nuclear tests was also lurking. One, a handsome but ferocious blonde, banged on the Mercedes window, which Rannaldini lowered a fraction.

‘How would you like your testicles shrivelled by radiation?’ she yelled.

‘Sounds interesting,’ murmured Rannaldini, closing the window as her furious face disappeared in a tidal wave of fans.

‘I’m getting a bodyguard,’ he complained, as a couple of doormen finally dragged him and Tristan through the stage door.

Tristan was unfazed, particularly when Rannaldini, while donning the splendour of white tie and tails, offered him a birthday glass of Krug. All down the passage, singers could be heard warming up.

A white gardenia in a glass box for Rannaldini to slot into his buttonhole was delivered to the Maestro’s dressing room. Most of the flowers arriving were for Cecilia Rannaldini, his second wife, who was singing Eboli, and who now could be heard screaming, ‘When will people learn I only like *red* roses,’ as she hurled everything else on to the floor.

Chic and svelte for a diva, Cecilia had done much to advance Rannaldini’s career, not least by changing her famous name to his. Having barged into the conductor’s room and smothered Tristan in kisses, she started rowing with Rannaldini in Italian.

Carlos was being sung by a plump, good-looking Italian, Franco Palmieri. Rannaldini’s latest discovery,

an unknown South African called Hermione, was making her début as Elisabetta.

The packed audience was too old to interest Tristan but, with his chin resting on the front of the red velvet box, he gazed down in wonder at the glittering instruments in the pit. Opposite him were the cellos and behind them towered the double basses, red-gold as beeches in autumn. But once the action started on stage, and hunting horns heralded Hermione as Elisabetta riding in on a real grey horse, Tristan hardly noticed the orchestra. Hermione's thick brown hair did indeed curl to her waist and he couldn't take his eyes off her cleavage, which seemed to part like curtains whenever she hit a high note – and how gloriously she sang!

Rannaldini's black hair was drenched with sweat, as his dark eyes sent laser beams to singer or musician so they responded almost without realizing it. Now he was smiling at Hermione, magicking increasingly beautiful sounds with a twitch of his baton.

Cecilia Rannaldini had a pure, clean voice. But, not realizing that shouting and crying all night can harm the vocal cords, Tristan thought she sounded very rough. She was, however, a great actress and, as she glared at Hermione, put him in mind of the wicked queen in *Snow White*. King Philip, on the other hand, was so stern and cold with his son Carlos, he reminded Tristan of his own father, Étienne.

Alone in the big box, he was also terrified by the Grand Inquisitor, blind, hooded, bent over his sticks like a black widow spider, and when the flames began to flicker round the poor bare feet of the heretics, Tristan leapt to his own feet screaming, 'No, no they mustn't burn,' which was luckily drowned, by orchestra, church bells and chorus loudly praising God and the Inquisition.

Every role in *Don Carlos* is demanding, but it was the young Hermione who drew the most rapturous applause. Tristan clapped his hands until they were as

pink as the carnations that cascaded down on her.

After more champagne and hugging, as people poured backstage to congratulate them, Rannaldini, Cecilia, Fat Franco, who'd sung Carlos, and Hermione swept Tristan off to the Ritz, where he still couldn't speak for excitement. Everyone was sweet to him because Rannaldini made sure they knew both of his birthday and of his famous father.

The management presented him with a frothy fruit cocktail filled with coloured straws. Rannaldini, who never minded what the boy ate, allowed him to have lobster Thermidor with sizzling cheese topping, followed by blackcurrant sorbet.

Hermione, who'd changed into low-cut dark blue lace, presented him with one of her pink carnations. Then a birthday cake arrived with ten candles and he opened Rannaldini's presents: a red leatherbound copy of Schiller's play *Don Carlos* on which Verdi had based his opera, and a video camera. Tristan couldn't stop saying thank you.

'He already play cello very well,' boasted Rannaldini.

'Are you going to be a musician?' asked Hermione.

'No.' Tristan blushed and stroked the camera. 'I'm going to make films.'

He was too happy to absorb the tensions around him. Singers are often so fired up after a performance, they want sex instantly. Franco's machismo was clearly dented because Hermione made it plain she was interested only in Rannaldini, which didn't improve Cecilia's temper either. She and Franco muttered that Hermione had deliberately hung on to notes to make them run out of breath. Nor would she have got such applause in the middle of Act V if Rannaldini hadn't made an artificial pause. Fortunately Hermione didn't understand Italian.

She was like one of his sister's old-fashioned dolls, Tristan decided, who opened their big eyes and said, 'Mama,' although in Hermione's case it seemed to be, 'Me, me.'

‘Was it really twenty call-backs?’ she was now asking Rannaldini. ‘Pinch me, so I know I’m awake.’

She screamed as Rannaldini pinched her hard enough to leave white marks on her arm. Then he dropped his sleek dark head and kissed them better. Cecilia stormed out, pretending that their daughter Natasha had flu.

‘My wife is more neurotic than the horse in Act One,’ grumbled Rannaldini. ‘You should be specially interested in *Don Carlos*,’ he added to Tristan, ‘because one of your Montigny ancestors visited Spanish court during Philip II’s reign. And the Inquisition kill him, thinking he is spy. I wish I had smart relations like that,’ he went on fretfully.

‘I cannot imagine you not being smart, Signor Rannaldini,’ said a soft, dreamy voice, and they were engulfed in the sweetest scent, as though a bank of violets had bloomed behind them.

It was the only time Tristan had ever seen his godfather blush. Pausing at the table, in floating chiffon as violet as her eyes, a gently mocking smile playing over her full pink lips, was the most beautiful woman in France: Claudine Lauzerte, the actress wife of the opposition Minister for Cultural Affairs.

‘Madame Lauzerte!’

Jumping to his feet, Rannaldini kissed her hand. Then, clicking his fingers at the wine waiter, he beseeched her to join them.

‘I am leaving. I hear your *Don Carlos* is wonderful, with a sensational new star.’

Bowing and scraping like a brothel-keeper at the arrival of a royal stag party, Rannaldini introduced Hermione.

‘And this is Franco Palmieri who play Carlos.’

Leaping up, Franco sent several glasses and a vase of flowers flying.

Claudine Lauzerte had such impact that for the first

five minutes people talked gibberish in her presence, so she turned to Tristan.

‘This is my godson, Tristan de Montigny, Étienne’s boy,’ explained Rannaldini proudly.

‘Ah.’ The violet eyes widened in amusement. ‘Your father often ask me to sit for him, but we are both always so busy.’ She glanced at the video camera. ‘You are obviously destined to become a director. With those looks, every leading lady will do exactly what you tell her.’

Noting Tristan’s pallor, his deep-set eyes mere hollows, she chided Rannaldini. ‘This poor child’s exhausted! Take him home.’

‘I will send you tickets,’ Rannaldini called after her.

‘I cannot believe I’ve met Claudine Lauzerte,’ babbled Hermione. ‘She must have had several facelifts to look so lovely.’

On the drive home, having jettisoned a furious Franco, Rannaldini pointed to a round white moon, retreating behind a lacing of dark clouds.

‘She is upstaged by your beauty,’ he told Hermione.

From the back seat, Tristan noticed Hermione continually holding her throat as if it were some precious jewel. Tomorrow he would take his new metal-detector, a present from Aunt Hortense, into the Bois and find her – and perhaps Claudine Lauzerte as well – a diamond ring.

Hermione was now complaining about lecherous conductors.

‘I was doing Rinaldo last week and Sir Rodney Macintosh, who must be over sixty, asked me to his room for a nightcap and greeted me wearing nothing but a pair of socks.’

Rannaldini wasn’t remotely shocked.

‘Eef you knee conductor in groin, he won’t give you more work. You must invent fiancé, preferably black belt at judo.’

Even such a fascinating subject couldn't stop Tristan dropping off. Later he never knew if he'd dreamt it, or whether Rannaldini's hand really had vanished into Hermione's dark lace dress, and a moonlike breast emerged.

He did wake screaming, however, as Rannaldini pulled up outside the house and Étienne, still in his painter's smock, loomed huger and blacker than the Grand Inquisitor in the doorway. Although his father cheered up when he saw Hermione, he curtly dispatched Tristan to bed.

'And no ducking out of school tomorrow.'

'Good night, little one,' called Rannaldini, then, to irritate Étienne, 'I'll be up in a few minutes.'

In fact it was an hour, and Tristan again woke screaming from lobster-induced nightmare as another broad-shouldered black figure loomed over him.

'It all 'appen four hundred years ago,' said Rannaldini as he tucked the boy in. 'You mustn't 'ave bad dreams.'

Looking round the bleak attic room, seeing the video camera, the red leatherbound copy of Schiller's *Don Carlos* and Hermione's carnation in a tooth-mug on the bedside table, he picked up the silver frame, containing the only photograph of Tristan's mother, Delphine, in the house.

'So beautiful, a little like Madame Lauzerte, don't you think?'

'Will she sit for Papa?' asked Tristan hopefully.

'I doubt it. She is very pure lady – her nickname is Madame Vierge.'

'Did they really burn people alive in those days?'

'They do today with electric chairs and bombs. That's how your brother, Laurent, died,' said Rannaldini.

But the terror in Tristan's eyes was in case his father walked in and heard the forbidden name. Such had been Étienne's heartbreak, no allusion to Laurent was allowed in the house.

‘Why didn’t King Philip like Carlos?’ Tristan asked wistfully.

‘Fathers and sons.’ Rannaldini brushed back the boy’s hair. ‘Philip was jealous, Carlos had whole life ahead of him – to pull the girls.’

‘Can I work for you when I grow up?’ murmured Tristan.

‘One day we will make great film of *Don Carlos* together,’ promised Rannaldini.



Eighteen spectacularly successful years later, on a wet, windy, late-October morning, Sir Roberto Rannaldini gazed down on the valley of Paradise, often described as the jewel of the Cotswolds.

Rannaldini owned many splendid houses, but the brooding, secretive Paradise Abbey, which he had somewhat hubristically renamed Valhalla after the home of the gods in Teutonic mythology, was the one he loved most.

From his study on the first floor he could admire, albeit through mist and rain, his tennis courts, swimming-pool, hangar for jet and helicopter, lovingly-tended gardens and racehorses, grazing in fields sweeping down to his lake and the river Fleet, which ran along the bottom of the valley.

To his left, coiled up like a sleeping snake, was the famous Valhalla Maze. To the right, deep in the woods, lurked the watchtower, where he edited, composed and seduced. Beyond, disappearing into the mist, was the ravishing mill house, belonging to Hermione Harefield, his mistress for the last eighteen years.

But even as Rannaldini gloated over his valley, the dying fires of autumn seemed to symbolize his own decline. For the first time ever, his massive royalty cheque was down. Last Sunday, when he was conducting at the Appleton piano competition, his favoured candi-



date and latest conquest, the ravishing Natalia Philipovna, had been beaten into second place, despite intense lobbying, by Rannaldini's detested stepson, Marcus Campbell-Black.

The same evening, Rannaldini learnt he had failed in his bid to take over the Rutminster Symphony Orchestra, who had accompanied the finalists. As an ultimate humiliation at the party afterwards, the first horn had hit Rannaldini across the room – his fall had been broken only by the pudding trolley and the flaccid curves of a grisly crone from the Arts Council. The newspapers had had a field day. Rannaldini shuddered.

Like Philip II of Spain, who had exhausted himself and his nation's coffers trying to hold his Habsburg Empire together, Rannaldini was also learning by bitter experience that his vast kingdom could be maintained only by the crippling expense of waging war on all fronts. He was currently engaged in law-suits with orchestras, unions, sacked musicians, mistresses and ex-wives.

Nineteen months ago, merely to spite his great enemy, the very rich and arrogant Rupert Campbell-Black, whom he believed had orchestrated the break-up of his third marriage, Rannaldini had made a catastrophic fourth marriage to Rupert's neurotic ex-wife, Helen. In return for his habitual infidelity, Helen was now busy squandering his millions and, because Rannaldini was only five foot six, deliberately dwarfing him in public by wearing very high heels.

Rannaldini was sad that his two eldest children from earlier marriages, Wolfgang and Natasha, had left home after frightful family rows. But, saddest of all, he knew his music was suffering. Accusing Rannaldini of blandness in the *Daily Telegraph* last Monday, Norman Lebrecht had suggested he stopped settling scores and started studying them again. Rannaldini might outwardly be the greatest conductor in the world, with orchestras in New York, Berlin and Tokyo, but he was poor in spirit and horribly alone.

Outside, rain swept across the woods like ghost armies marching on Valhalla. Although his office was tropically warm and the windows and doors were closed, an icy wind suddenly rustled all the papers and the fire died in the grate with a hiss. On the chimney-piece, a gilt and ormolu clock of Apollo driving the horses of the sun chimed twelve noon.

Valhalla was full of ghosts. They never frightened Rannaldini: they were his accomplices in terrorizing the living. But, hearing an almost orgasmic groan, he looked up quickly at the Etienne de Montigny oil to the right of the fireplace. Entitled *Don Juan in Transit*, it portrayed the great lover, looking suspiciously like Rannaldini, humping a lady of the manor but distracted by the swelling bosom of her young maid hanging clothes outside in the orchard. It was the attention to detail – the yellow stamens of the apple blossom, each hair under the maid’s armpit, the pale green spring light – that made the painting so perfect.

Rannaldini smiled at his reflection in the big gilt mirror. His hair might be pewter grey but his face was still as virile and handsome as Don Juan’s in the picture. He also had two trump cards.

The first was a film of *Don Carlos*, which he was poised to conduct and co-produce. The nightmare of cutting a three-and-a-half-hour opera down to a manageable two hours for filming had not been helped by Rannaldini insisting that an overture, an aria, and linking passages to make the story more accessible, all composed by himself, be included. The plot of *Don Carlos* had been gingered up with several sex scenes and, to appeal to the pink pound, Carlos’s best friend, the gallant Marquis of Posa, would be portrayed as a homosexual.

An all-star cast, who would have screaming hysterics when they discovered any of their numbers had been cut, had been assembled for some time, because singers have to be booked several years ahead. They included Hermione Harefield, who at forty would need careful

lighting to play the young Elisabetta. Nor could she act, but at least she did what Rannaldini told her, which was more than did Franco Palmieri, who was playing Don Carlos and who had grown so fat he made Pavarotti look anorexic. However, it had been written into his contract that he must lose seven stone before filming started next April.

In the past Rannaldini had often given juicier parts, in more ways than one, to his ex-wife Cecilia in lieu of alimony, but she and Hermione would have murdered each other on location. As a result, the part of the seductive, scheming Princess Eboli had gone to a ravishing mezzo, Chloe Catford. The search, though, was still on to find an unknown star to play the Marquis of Posa. Having, in his opinion, agreed to over-pay everyone else, Rannaldini was hunting for a bargain.

Opera films were seldom big box office. Why, therefore, had these vastly high-earning singers committed themselves when they knew what purgatory it was to work with Rannaldini?

The answer was Tristan de Montigny, who by driving himself into the ground to win some recognition from his father, Étienne, was now one of the hottest directors in the world. With his ravishing English-speaking version of Manzoni's *The Betrothed* tipped to win several Oscars, he had spent the summer filming Balzac's *The Lily in the Valley* with Claudine Lauzerte. The word on the street was that, despite being over fifty, 'Madame Vierge' had never looked more beautiful or acted better.

Success with actors of both sexes had been helped by Tristan's wonderfully romantic looks: the model whom Calvin Klein loved best. At six foot two, he was too thin, and his gold curls had darkened to burnt umber, but the peat-brown, heavily shadowed eyes, the cheekbones higher than the Eiffel Tower, and the big mouth, usually smiling but of incredible sadness in repose, made everyone long to make him happy.

But it was a mistake to be fooled by Tristan's gentleness: he could be both manipulative and monomaniac in getting the film he wanted.

He and Rannaldini were both so successful that they seldom managed to meet except for an hour snatched at an airport or a midnight dinner after a concert, but they had retained their affection for one another and their dream of working together, which at last was going to be realized.

But, sadly, too late to please Étienne. All the newspapers littering Rannaldini's desk reported that France's greatest painter since Monet was dying but refusing to go to hospital. Rannaldini was tempted to cancel tonight's Barbican concert and fly out to bid his old friend farewell, but he'd get more coverage if he waited until the funeral. He couldn't spare the time for both.

He felt a surge of hatred as he noticed an intensely glamorous photograph in *Le Monde* of Rupert Campbell-Black embracing his son Marcus before putting him on a plane to Moscow. If Rupert was relinquishing one child, he might consider a reconciliation with another, Marcus's younger sister, the ravishing nineteen-year-old Tabitha. Rupert loathed Rannaldini so much that he had disinherited both Marcus and Tabitha for attending their mother's wedding to Rannaldini.

Tabitha, however, like Tristan, was one of the few people who liked Rannaldini – not least because, when she became his stepdaughter, he had given her a large allowance and bought her a wonderful horse called The Engineer. But within a few weeks of marrying Rannaldini, Helen had caught him leering through a two-way mirror at Tabitha undressing, and packed her off to an eventing yard in America. There Tabitha was winning competitions and was already spoken of as an Olympic possible. She was also making friends.

'I've been invited to fifteen Thanksgiving parties and I'm going to all of them,' she had announced, in her last letter home.

On the other hand, she missed Rupert dreadfully. She had always been his favourite child, the one who rode as fearlessly as he did, and, like Rupert, she had hitherto dismissed her brother Marcus as a wimp.

Knowing it would unhinge her, Rannaldini played his second trump card, faxing out all the cuttings of Marcus being outed before winning the Appleton piano competition and being reunited with an overjoyed Rupert. Rupert had totally accepted that Marcus was gay and in love with the great Russian dancer, Alexei Nemerovsky. He had even flippantly told a group of reporters at Heathrow that he was looking forward to meeting Nemerovsky, and felt he was 'gaining a daughter rather than losing a son'.

Silly, silly Rupert, thought Rannaldini, as he filled his jade pen with emerald-green ink to scribble a covering letter.

*Dearest Tabitha, I know you will want to share your mother's joy that your brother is both a national hero and reconciled with your father.'*

Smirking, Rannaldini handed it to his new PA, Miss Bussage, who looked like being his third trump card. After only a month she had transformed his life, keeping track of children, wives, finances and his gruelling schedule. Nor did she have any compunction about feeding pleading love notes, demands from charities and bad reviews (after the author's name had been put on the hit list) straight into the shredder.

Rannaldini dreamed of Miss Bussage giving him a bed review:

'You were very boring in the sack last night, Maestro, please do better this evening.'

In her forties, Miss Bussage had the look of a well-regulated musk ox, with small suspicious eyes and dark, heavy hair that flicked up, sixties-style, like two horns. Her thick body was redeemed by a splendid bosom and rather good legs. Like musk oxen, she was also able to survive the arctic climate of Rannaldini's

rages, and gave off a strong, musky scent in the rutting season.

Friendly one day, downright rude the next, which Rannaldini, used to sycophancy, thought wonderful, she had now picked up his private telephone, which none of his other staff would touch at pain of thumbscrew.

‘Marcel Dupont for you.’

Dupont was Étienne de Montigny’s lawyer. He had grown rich over the years but had had his work cut out, extricating the great man from scrapes and marriages, and preserving his vast fortune.

‘What news?’ asked Rannaldini, seizing the receiver.

‘The worst.’ Dupont’s voice trembled. ‘Étienne died an hour ago.’

Glancing up as Apollo’s clock struck one, Rannaldini crossed himself. Death must have been at noon when the fire died in the grate and Don Juan in Étienne’s painting cried out in anguish. ‘I am so sorry,’ Rannaldini’s voice dropped an octave. ‘I trust the end was peaceful?’

‘Did Étienne ever do anything peacefully?’ asked Dupont. ‘Like Hercules, he battled to the end. He wanted to see another sunset. I know how busy you are, Maestro, but . . .’

‘I will certainly be at the funeral.’

Then Dupont confessed it had been Étienne’s dying wish that Rannaldini should join Tristan’s three older brothers carrying the coffin.

‘But surely Tristan . . .’ began Rannaldini.

Dupont sighed. ‘Even in death. I can trust your discretion.’

‘Of course,’ lied Rannaldini.

French law insists that three-quarters of any estate is divided between the children of the blood, with whole shares going to legitimate children and half shares to any born out of wedlock. Tristan, therefore, would automatically inherit several million. But the law also stipulates that the fourth quarter of a man’s estate can be divided as he chooses.

‘Étienne itemized everything for children, mistresses, friends, wives and servants,’ said Dupont bleakly, ‘but he left nothing personal to Tristan, not even a pencil drawing or a paintbrush. Why did he hate the poor boy so much?’

‘Poor boy indeed.’ Rannaldini was shocked. ‘I will ring him.’

‘Please do – he’s devastated, and the end was dreadful. I hope this story doesn’t leak out. Anyway, while you’re on, Rannaldini, Étienne left you two of his greatest paintings, *Abelard and Héloïse* and *The Nymphomaniac*. Both are on exhibition in New York.’

Together they were worth several million. Not such a bad day, after all, thought Rannaldini.



Having witnessed Étienne's extremely harrowing death, Tristan had immediately fled back to his own flat in La Rue de Varenne, trying to blot out the horror and despair with work. He had been on the brink of making the one film his father might have rated, because it was with Rannaldini. Now it was too late.

Scrumpled-up paper lay all over the floor. His laptop was about to be swept off the extreme left-hand corner of his desk by a hurtling lava of videos, scores, a red leatherbound copy of Schiller's *Don Carlos*, books on sixteenth-century France and Spain, sketches of scenes, Gauloise packets and half-drunk cups of black coffee. Photographs of the *Don Carlos* cast were pinned to a cork board on the rust walls. Over the fireplace hung one of Étienne's drawings of two girls embracing, which Tristan had bought out of pride so that people wouldn't realize his father had never given him anything.

He was now toying with a chess set and the idea of portraying his cast, Philip the king, Posa the knight, Carlos the poor doomed pawn, as chess pieces, but he kept hearing the nurse's cosy, over-familiar voice.

'Just going to put this nasty thing down your throat again, Étienne,' as she hoovered up the fountains of blood bubbling up from his father's damaged heart.

And Tristan had wanted to yell: 'For Christ's sake, call him Monsieur de Montigny.'



He also kept hearing Étienne muttering the words ‘father’ and ‘grandfather’, as he clutched Tristan’s sleeve, and the roars of resistance, followed by tears of abdication trickling down the wrinkles.

At the end only the extremely short scarlet skirt worn by his granddaughter Simone had rallied the old man. Tristan hadn’t been able to look at his aunt Hortense. It was as if a gargoyle had started weeping. He prayed that Étienne hadn’t seen the satisfaction on the faces of his three eldest sons that there was no hope of recovery.

There was no way Tristan could concentrate on a chessboard. Switching on the television, he felt outrage that, instead of leading on Étienne’s death, they were showing the young English winner of the Appleton, Marcus Campbell-Black, arriving pale and fragile as a wood anemone at Moscow airport, and being embraced in the snow by a wolf-coated, wildly overexcited Nemerovsky, before being swept away in a limo.

Rupert, Marcus’s father, had then been interviewed, surrounded by a lot of dogs outside his house in Gloucestershire.

‘Campbell-Blacks don’t come second,’ he was saying jubilantly.

God, what a good-looking man, thought Tristan. If he had Rupert, Marcus and Nemerovsky playing Philip, Carlos and Posa, he’d break every box-office record.

He jumped as Handel’s death march from *Saul* boomed out and the presenter switched to Étienne’s death: France was in mourning for her favourite son; great artist, *bon viveur*, patron saint of vast extended family.

‘Montigny’s compassion for life showed in all his paintings,’ said the reporter.

But not in his heart, thought Tristan bitterly. Étienne had never been to one of his premières, or glanced at a video, or congratulated him on his César, France’s equivalent of the Oscars.

‘Of all Étienne de Montigny’s sons,’ went on the

reporter, as they showed some of Étienne's cleaner paintings followed by clips from *The Betrothed*, 'Tristan, his youngest son, has been the most successful, following in his father's footsteps but painting instead with light.'

That should piss off my brothers, thought Tristan savagely, as he turned off the television. Dupont had rung him earlier and, like a starved dog grateful for even a piece of bacon rind, Tristan had finally asked if Étienne had left him anything other than his due share.

'Nothing, I'm afraid.' Then, after a long pause, 'Maybe it's a back-handed compliment, because you've done so well.'

Dupont had meant it kindly. But Tristan had hung up, and for the first time since Étienne had fallen ill, he broke down and wept.

Half an hour later, he splashed his face with cold water and wondered what to do with the rest of his life. He was roused by the *Sunday Times*, commiserating with him, then more cautiously probing a rumour that he was the only member of the family who had been left nothing personal.

'Fuck off,' said Tristan hanging up.

Fortunately this pulled him together. The bastard, he thought. All my life Papa noticed me less than the cobwebs festooning his studio. Looking at his mother's photograph, he wished as always that she were alive, then jumped as the telephone rang.

'Papa?' he gasped, in desperate hope.

But it was Alexandre, his eldest brother, the judge.

'We're all worried you might be feeling out of it, Tristan. You're so good at lighting and theatrical effects and knowing appropriate poetry and music, we felt you should organize the funeral. We want you to be involved.'

His brothers, reflected Tristan, chose to involve him when they wanted their christenings and weddings videoed. He wished he had the bottle to tell Alexandre to fuck off too.

Instead he said, 'I'll ring you in the morning.'

Without bothering to put on a jacket, he was out of his flat, driving like a maniac to the Louvre to catch the last half-hour, so that he could once more marvel over the Goyas, Velazquezes and El Grecos. Every frame in his film would be more beautiful.

When he got home there was a message on the machine. Rannaldini's voice was caressing, deep as the ocean, gentle, recognizable anywhere.

'My poor boy, what a terrible day you must have had. I'm so sorry. But here's something to cheer you up. Lord O'Hara from Venturer Television rang, and he's happy to meet us in London the day after tomorrow. I hope very much you can make it. And I think I have found a Posa.'