A Fashion Fantasy Story

By Diane Weisbeck

Maribel closed her eyes and let the gentle, soft breeze brush against her bare arms. A sensation she wonders if her grand-mère ever felt, weighted down with over a hundred pounds of panniers, extravagant petticoats, volumes of jewel encrusted brocaded silks and a towering, heavy wig. As a lady-in-waiting at the court of Louis the XV, her grand-mère, the Duchess, had no option but to follow the styles as set down by the court. Now, less than fifty years later, Maribel felt the luxury of freedom. Even the clothes she wore today were almost as if they weren’t there at all. The sheerest of finely woven gauze dresses, in the new, fashionable, simple style of the ancient Greeks. Tiny, delicate rosebuds embroidered by the finest embroidery artists in France embellished the semi-transparent fabric. Her slippers were whispers of the most velvety of satins, in the color that could only be likened to the blush on a peach.

Lounging under the big, ancient oak trees, her elegant guests floated between strolling through the gloriously maintained grounds and enjoying the delicate tidbits served in voluptuous fashion on heavy, sparkling silver plate, each piece stamped with the old family blazon of the plumed helmet of a knight under an ancient oak tree. The smartly dressed footman, their gold buttons flashing, constantly arranged and rearranged the exotic fruits and rare sweets on the shining service and cut crystal that sparkled in the brilliant sunlight. Her dearest friend, the young Comtesse was chatting away gaily with her amour of the moment, the dashing Marquis. With the ancient ancestral castle hazy in the distance, the scene was one of perfection.

“Mother always says young people don’t appreciate what they have, but she’s wrong; I do,” whispered Mirabel, thoughtfully to herself. As a daughter of the House of d'Orléans, I can trace my distinguished family heritage back to Philip of Valois in 1344. I am proud to be a daughter of an old aristocratic French family. I don’t mind thanking Uncle Philip for all this beauty his legacy has given us.

Mirabel’s eyes became heavy. She blinks them open, the bright sun blinding her for a moment and realizes she is on the back of her beloved horse, Beau. Riding is one of her favorite pastimes, she couldn’t remember if she had started walking or riding first. Beau seemed to be prancing along, choosing his own path. She looks down at her blue jeans and custom made riding boots, handmade by the finest bespoke bookmakers in France. The savoir faire riding boots are the most luxurious and fashionable made-to-order equestrian riding boots in the world. She would never think to get upon her horse without them.

 Suddenly, she realizes she is now living in the 21st century. Sometimes she wondered which was the reality and which was the dream. She always seemed to be living in the early 19th century and dreaming she was living in the 21st century. Or was it the other way around? She wondered if it mattered so very much. As long as Maximo…

With a start, her head snaps up as a princely young Hussar gallops up to the charming out door table and, brandishing his sabre, severs the cork off of a frosty bottle of champagne, in the tradition of the sabrage. The striking cavalier is dashing in his fur edged pelisse, covered in gold braid slung over one shoulder, tight riding breeches and glossy, fitted leather boots. Maximo reaches down, and in a swift motion grabs the champagne bottle, a long fluted glass and gently tosses Mirabel lightly onto the back of his saddle and rides off.

The last image the other guests have of the couple is of the beautiful dark haired woman leaning toward her Hussar, laughing, her diamond ear bobs sparkling in the afternoon sun. She reaches around and gently tugging at his cadenettes, the adorable slender braids all Hussars sport on either side of the head, she pretends to guide him as if she were holding his reins and he was an undisciplined stallion. It is a game they will play for centuries to come…

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