

# And The Fur Went Flying

**Judith Nolan**



*“Once you can accept the universe as matter expanding into nothing that is something, wearing stripes with plaid comes easy.”*

*Albert Einstein*

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Jacob jerked into wakefulness. He frowned, finding that he was lying prone on the floor of his chamber, for some peculiar reason. His memory of the most recent events was fog-filled, and blank.

He opened his mouth to inhale a ragged breath, and began to cough. Something long and silky stuck to his tongue, as he passed it over his dry lips. He tried to spit it out, but it made no difference.

With his face planted deep in something he couldn't identify, he felt as if he was being smothered. The same silky fibres were blocking his throat. He coughed again, and sneezed, causing his aching head to swim alarmingly.

He gagged on whatever the furry-tasting thing it was, that was filling his mouth, and he groaned. He tried to open his eyes, but he couldn't see a thing through his matted lashes!

His heart began to pound with real alarm. *God save me, I've gone blind!*

He struggled to secure a grip on reality, trying again to raise his stubborn eyelids, but to no avail. His body felt equally unresponsive. It seemed as if he'd been nailed down to whatever it was he was lying on. His limbs refused to obey. He turned his head to the side and spat out more fur.

He became aware that, from lying flat for some immeasurable time, his arthritic knees were hurting like the very devil. After a long struggle, he finally managed to raise his lower legs, crossing them at the ankle. *Oh, the blessed relief!*

A sudden chill shivered through him. He sensed that on both his feet something flopped. He wriggled his toes experimentally, and knew he was wearing some kind of slip-ons, instead of his usual sturdy boots. His naked lower legs responded to the sudden movement, and chilly air, with a shudder of goose-bumps.

*What, by all that's holy, is happening to me?*

And then he remembered...

“Damn Sebastien!” He swallowed tightly, against the rawness of his throat. “And damn his ridiculous fondness for Absinthe!”

His good friend, the magician, had appeared in Jacob's chamber long after everyone else had either gone home, or to bed. They'd been up late celebrating the arrival of the new millennium in fine style, and Elliot had brought gifts for everyone. He'd generously given Sebastien a large bottle of the magician's favourite tipple.

The old codger had been delighted. He'd insisted it needed to be shared, and who better to indulge himself with than his old friend, Jacob? He'd appeared in the entryway of his chamber, just as Jacob had been preparing for bed.

Jacob knew he had no head for strong liquor, but his friend had been so insistent. It seemed churlish to deny him some much-needed company. So, they had settled in to play a game or two of chess, and pass a few hours of good conversation.

Jacob groaned. That must have been hours ago, judging by how cold he now felt.

He finally succeeded in lifting his head, thought the pounding pain was excruciating. He managed to crack one reluctant eye, and immediately wished he hadn't. His whole horizon danced and wobbled, stubbornly refusing to remain still. In his haze, he sensed a wetness on the right side of his face. It felt sticky and uncomfortably painful.

A fresh bout of horror gripped him then. Hadn't it been rumoured that Van Gogh had sliced off his own ear, while under the influence of that same evil, alcoholic drink?

Struggling to his elbow, Jacob managed to push up a hand against the side of his face, and breathed his relief to find himself still intact! He must have drooled in his drunken state, and it had pooled on the side of his face, leaving a sticky mess.

He heaved a deep sigh of relief. He even smiled to himself at his old man's foolishness. He rested for a moment, his aching face propped on his upraised hand, trying to reassemble reality.

But then the maddening puzzle of his curious predicament deepened alarmingly. Jacob turned his head to glance down at himself. He was lying on the floor of his own chamber, sprawled on a large, white fur rug, clutching a pipe in his left hand, and he was wearing, of all things, a pink towelling robe!

“*Good God!* How, on earth...?”

He didn't smoke a pipe, and where had the rug and robe come from?

And then his returning memory threw up a stark reality. *The Marilyn dare!*

Sebastien was utterly obsessed with Marilyn Monroe. He had been ever since he'd first seen her back in the 50s. He carried an old black and white picture of her in his battered wallet.

Not the iconic one of her at Lexington Avenue and 52nd Street in September, 1954, filming the subway-grate scene for “The Seven Year Itch.” No, it was a more wholesome image of a carefree, smiling young woman, lying on a polar bear rug, with her bare legs kicked up behind her, crossed at the ankle, and...

Jacob dropped his face back into the fur with a rueful thud. *Now*, he remembered, only too clearly. It had all been for a stupid, stupid dare! He should have known better!

*I will never again brag that I can equal Marilyn Monroe in anything...*

Well into their third shot of that mind-altering drink, Sebastien had taken out the picture and sighed gustily. He'd sniffed tearfully, and said, “No one could beat that, no-one. It isn't possible. One of a kind.”

“Just look at it...” He'd held the photograph out, tears streaming down his cheeks. “Beautiful...” He swallowed another mouthful of drink.

Jacob had managed to close one jaundiced eye to see it better. He'd felt a weird sensation of being totally out of control, but he couldn't stop himself.

He'd foolishly boasted that he could do that. "Not in a blouse and a skirt, of course. I still had *some* standards left. But, I'm sure there's a fur rug, and just the right robe, around here somewhere..."

Sebastien's frowning look was deeply skeptical. "Oh, can you now...?"



*"I've lived long enough to know that life doesn't always stick to the rules...The perfectly impossible and absolutely ridiculous keep happening all the time."*

*Elizabeth Winder*

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