

Chapter 3: A Night for a Fright

Where: Hall of Mirrors,

Time: Just after midnight, August 28, 1855

Characters: Veronique, Alice, Milou the dog, Lucy the maid



Hall of Mirrors



Lucy Lamballe

Alice: (Walking into the Hall of Mirrors) Wow! Louis XIV sure liked a big room. It looks even bigger now that the guests have gone home. It was full tonight at the gala. I had a hard time walking around in my large dress. Is there a lamp or candle we can light? It's so dark in here.

Milou: Woof! Woof! Woof! (Milou runs down the hall and finds someone)

Veronique: "Milou" come back here you silly girl! It's just a maid cleaning the floor! Please excuse my dog, she's just extra silly tonight.

Lucy: No problem, ma'am (petting Milou)

Alice: You're working late. What is your name?

Lucy: My name is Lucy, ma'am. I work the night shifts cleaning in the palace.

Alice: Wow, what is that hanging around your neck? Is that a key?

Lucy: Yes, ma'am. It's a master key for cleaning. It was designed by King Louis XVI. He was fascinated by locks. He designed it himself. We still use it at the palace today. I lost one a few months ago and got in a lot of trouble; I wear this one around my neck, so I don't lose it.

Veronique: I do the same thing at home. Tell us Miss Lucy, were you working at the gala this evening?

Lucy: Yes ma'am. I came in early to help serve deserts and tea.

Alice: There were a lot of handsome gentlemen and well-dressed ladies this evening, weren't there?

Lucy: Yes, ma'am. That was the fanciest royal party I've ever seen. Such beautiful lace on the dresses and such fine jewelry everywhere. One lady dropped a diamond earring in my tea pot and I had to go fetch it out with a spoon! I thought Mr. Fouquet the gardener looked especially dashing this evening.

Alice: Yes, I saw him. He's quite handsome, isn't he? I tried to get his attention, but he was speaking with my mother.

Lucy: Well ma'am, it's just as well. I understand his heart is already promised to another.

Veronique: Such a shame Alice. He's taken! I guess you'll have to take him off your Valentine card list, won't you? Tell me Lucy, how do you like working nights in the palace? With all these paintings and statues looking at you from the dark shadows, does it ever scare you?

Lucy: No, mam. My family has worked at Versailles for generations. My grandmother was Superintendent of the Household for Queen Marie Antoinette.

Veronique et Alice: Wow! You mean your grandmother was princess Lamballe?

Lucy: Yes, she was the queen's closest friend and organized all the queen's activities. She was killed by a mob during the French Revolution when she refused to betray the queen. She was loyal to the bitter end.



Princess Lamballe, Superintendent of the Household

Veronique: Incredible! What loyalty! What can you tell us about the work your grandmother did for the queen?

Lucy: Oh, let me see. My mother use to tell me stories. Well, she told me my grandmother controlled the list of people who could visit the Queen. She also handled the Queen's mail, including her secret coded messages. She placed the Queen's breakfast on her bed every morning. She invited guests to activities held by the Queen, such as balls. She also supervised all the other women who served on the Queen's staff. She was kept quite busy, but it was the most important staff job in the palace. She loved it. And she was granted that position for life.



Princess Lamballe at work. Painted by Elizabeth Vingé LeBrun

Veronique: You are one brave person to work nighttimes around Versailles? You're so young. How old are you? 17? 18?

Lucy: I'm actually 20 ma'am. I'm not married yet, but I'm hoping that will change soon. And I don't find it scary—even with all the paintings and statues staring at me. But I am the youngest maid on staff, so I have to work the night shift. When I clean, I am walking through the same rooms as my grandmother. You might find this odd...I never met my grandmother...but I feel a connection to her here.

Alice: I understand, still, this place would scare me in the dark!

Lucy: Oh, I see from your accent that you're British. I'm very proud to work here ma'am. Versailles is so French; it feels like home to me. In fact, I've grown up here, learning all about how to keep it clean.

Veronique: Lucy, do you ever get a break from all your evening chores?

Lucy: Yes ma'am. I have Sundays off and each night I get a break at 2am so I can eat. The kitchen is open for staff. Sometimes I go down to the royal stables to see the horses. I don't know a lot about them, but I bring them carrots and pet them when they are nervous at night—the chef lets me take extra carrots from the garden. So long as I get my work done, the head ladies' maid is happy.

Alice: Do you clean all the palace? It's so big!



Antechamber of the *Grand Couverte*

Lucy: No mam, just the Hall of Mirrors and the rooms on this floor. I wash and wax the floors, dust the chandeliers, light the candles if there is going to be a party. Tonight, I was helping with the food for a while and then I was told to light the candles down the hall in the room called the Antechamber of the *Grand Couvert*. Queen Victoria was going to have coffee in there after the fireworks. But that's when I...I...

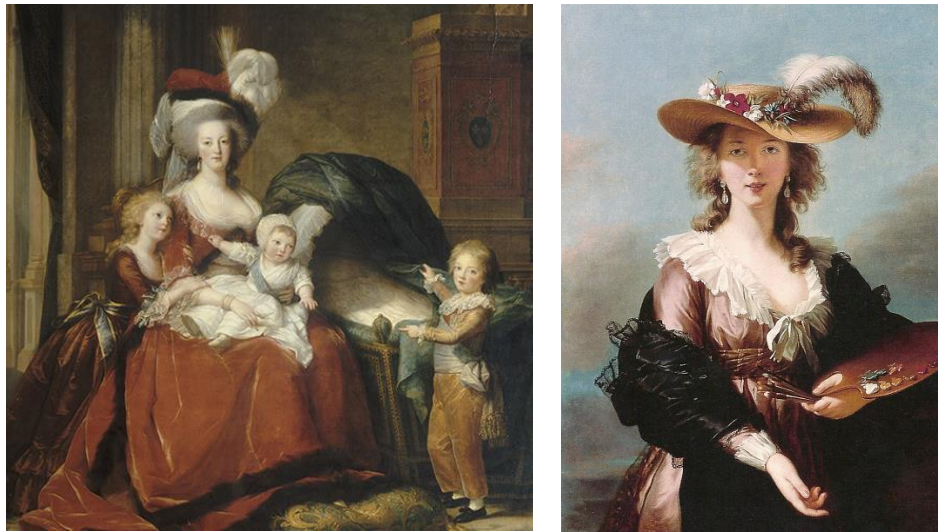
Veronique: ...yes, go on....what?...did you see something?

Lucy: I'm sure I'm just tired from working, ma'am. We spent weeks getting the palace ready for the party tonight. We were all so proud to show the palace off for Emperor Napoleon III. But I think I saw something...would you think I'm crazy if I said it might have been a ghost?

Veronique: Did you see Marie Antoinette tonight too?

Lucy: I'm not sure...I believe so...but how can that be possible? I was dusting the chandeliers by the fireplace. Suddenly I had this feeling like I wasn't alone. I looked behind me and there she was. She was all dressed in white. Her long blond hair seemed to glow in the candlelight.

She was studying the painting on the wall—the famous one painted by Elizabeth Vingé Le Brun. I was so shocked, I dropped my dusting broom and the noise startled her. She looked at me with those big beautiful eyes. She said, "They'll never give my diamond to the enemy." I thought that maybe she was a guest at the party. But then I heard the excitement in the Hall of Mirrors right after the fireworks.



Marie Antoinette with her children by Elizabeth Vingé LeBrun

Alice: The enemy? What could she mean by that?

Veronique: Wow! I understand. Don't you see Alice, when she was queen, the British were the enemy! My uncle was giving the Ice Dragon to your mother tonight as a sign of friendship.

Alice: Have you told the police what you saw?

Lucy: No one has spoken to me yet, ma'am. I was afraid to tell anyone in case it was just a guest. Oh my goodness! Do you think I saw the ghost of Marie Antoinette tonight?

Veronique: It looks like a lot of us did. Tell me Lucy, tell us the truth: have you ever seen her walking the palace halls before?

Lucy: Oh my goodness! I have to catch my breath! My mother told me about the legend. But you have my word: tonight was the first time I have ever seen her.

Alice: It's ok Lucy. You're safe with us. So your grandmother served Queen Marie Antoinette? That must have been a great honour for your family. She chose those closest to her very carefully.

Lucy: Yes ma'am. The queen was very kind to my family. My grandmother was very loyal to her. When my mother was born, Marie Antoinette let her play at the Petit Trianon palace with her own children. When she and my grandmother were executed by the Jacobins in the French Revolution, my father managed to escape with his children. The Jacobins killed almost everyone who worked closely with Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

Alice: So, your grandmother was killed before Marie Antoinette, wasn't she?

Lucy: Yes. The last thing the queen asked my grandmother to do was pass a secret coded message to her lover.

Alice: You mean the handsome Count Axel von Fersen from Sweden?

Lucy: Why yes...you've heard of him? ...He was to meet the queen at the Temple of Love in the garden behind her Petit Triannon palace. Marie Antoinette was going to use the Ice Dragon diamond to pay for her escape back to Austria. My grandmother delivered the message as instructed, but the count was delayed by a Jacobin roadblock outside the town of Versailles. The Jacobins captured the queen in her garden and took her to Paris to face trial. The royal jewels were taken to Paris as well, but several were stolen. You probably know that years later Napoleon Bonaparte found the Ice Dragon diamond and returned it to Versailles palace. My mother told me that the ghost of Marie

Antoinette returns here each summer looking for her true love: Axel von Fersen. She's often seen waiting around the Temple of Love during thunderstorms or riding her favourite horse, Victoire.

Alice: That's a nice name for a horse.

Lucy: Yes. My mother told me that Victoire was the fastest hunting horse at the palace. The queen didn't like horses when she was young, but she loved Victoire—she had a good temperament. Eventually the Queen became a very good rider. We have the granddaughter of Victoire here at the stables. It's called Victoire III. She's a beautiful chocolate brown horse who loves carrots. But I fed her cake once and made her sick by accident. I guess I have a lot to learn about horses. But now that Marie Antoinette has returned to haunt the palace, I'll never visit the horse stables in the dark again.

Alice: Seeing Marie Antoinette walking around the palace of Versailles in 1855 is weird enough. Can you tell us if you saw any guests at the party acting suspicious tonight?

Lucy: The servants see all sorts of interesting behaviours at large parties, ma'am. But now that you mention it, yes, I did see something. First, I saw Duke Freddie dancing by himself in the King's Bedroom and kissing his imaginary dance partner... he must have been working up the nerve to ask someone to dance...

Veronique: Oh my goodness, what an idiot...

Lucy: But then I saw Miss Julie Vingé Le Brun walking the hallways alone, while all the other guests were attending the gala in the Hall of Mirrors. I asked if she was lost, but she said she was just looking at the paintings on display around the palace. Her grandmother was the famous artist Elizabeth Vingé Le Brun. She was Marie Antoinette's

favourite artist and often lived and worked here at Versailles during the peaceful years before the French Revolution.

Alice: Why was Julie at the gala tonight? Was she invited?

Veronique: Yes. My uncle asked her to display some of her artwork in the Hall of Mirrors last night. He met her last fall while she was selling her work along the Seine river in Paris. He was impressed. This evening her paintings were on display next to the royal jewels.

Veronique: Thank you Lucy for sharing these stories. We should let you get back to work. It's late.

Lucy: Good night princess Veronique. Good night princess Alice. Be sure to lock your bedroom door. The palace has a different energy tonight...I don't think we're alone.

Alice and I returned to our shared bedroom on the ground floor of the palace. It was a warm August night, so we left the large window open, but I made sure to lock the door. Before I turned in for the evening, I looked out over the moonlit garden and wondered if the ghost of Marie Antoinette was out there somewhere. Then I slipped into bed and tried to take some blankets back from Milou, who was already sound asleep after our busy day. She awoke just once to growl at the window, but then went back to sleep.

Some questions to guide your investigation:

- 1) What do you know so far about Elizabeth Vingé Le Brun?

- 2) What can you tell me about Lucy's grandmother?

- 3) Describe what you know so far about the night Marie Antoinette was captured by the Jacobins.

- 4) What do you know so far about Victoire and Victoire III?

- 5) What does Lucy say to Alice that suggests she is a proud French woman? Is this a clue?

- 6) With what you've learned about Lucy, fill in this detective notebook:

Suspect	Motive (Why take the diamond? Money? Love? Revenge? Jealousy? Other reason?)	Opportunity (Did this suspect have an opportunity to steal the diamond?)	Alibi (Where, supposedly, was this suspect during the time of the crime?)
1) Lucy			