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Chapter 2

Presented By



I heard about my name in his column before *Fashionista* ever reached my zip code. My closest friend, April Lefkowitz, lives on The Mouth's street in their gated community in Paradise Valley, the millionaire's ghetto adjacent to upscale Scottsdale. Los Locos Avenida. What was that developer thinking? At least where I live in Tempe the builders named the streets after their eight Mormon kids.

"Did you see it? Did you read what he wrote about you?" she asked me.

"Who?"

"Ohmigod, Jean, you must have read his column. You did see it, didn't you?" Her voice rises a pitch when she gets excited.

"Who?"

But I knew. It's devil's hot here in the summertime with most of the wealthy people escaping to southern California. The Mouth didn't have anyone else to pick on so I became a target. April read the part about me. All I heard after my name was "...harridan...riffraff..." How did he find out we were having Lara's wedding at The Biltmore? I felt sick inside. Why does he keep bothering me? Maury, my husband with the heartbeat of a snail, would tell me to shrug it off. Who cares? Who reads that junk anyway? Only all my friends.

I wish The Mouth were dead.

Laurence Duvall's tortured so many of us for so long, we might even miss the little twerp in a perverted way if he were gone. He certainly gives everyone enough to talk about every week. All those attacks on poor working people trying to make a living. Okay. Some upscale nouveau riche Scottsdale types trying to get ahead.

Oh, how he took us all in at the beginning when he started, *Fashionista*, his wedding and society paper! His sincere expression complimented the latest Escada, while hidden behind the Versace tinted glasses was a devious, nasty mind plotting to destroy us.

Personally, I would be delighted if he disappeared. The way he attacked me when I sold the boutique! There I was on the front page of his dirty little rag, and I do mean dirty, but I'll get to that in a minute, with a big black X drawn over my face placing me with the "out" crowd instead of his cool, "in" crowd.

I call it a dirty rag because the cheapskate buys the lowest priced newsprint available so he can squeeze the maximum profit out of the weekly diatribe. Consequently, as we all flip through it trying to find our names, we have blackened fingers. All you have to do is touch anything--the baby, the white Corian countertops, the leather seat in the Mercedes--and it's marked for life. Some of my friends read *Fashionista* wearing gardening gloves. That way there's no proof they've looked at the awful paper. They can pretend they're much too

busy with Heart Ball, the premiere event of the season, to waste time on such trash.

The truth is they can't wait to read it. Even their husbands pore over it while hiding in the bathroom. More than one has threatened to have The Mouth's legs broken or worse yet, have an attorney take a look at it for slander.

The Mouth is always in the hot seat, and yet, people court him like crazy. One wouldn't think of having a dinner party without including Laurence Duvall and Coleman, his latest in a string of companions.

How could you leave the two most important society editors off your list? You'd never get mentioned again! How can one keep up the adult popularity contest if there isn't a picture in the latest ball gown from Neiman's or a mention of a generous donation to charity?

He hates me with a passion because when I had the clothing boutique, I refused to be blackmailed into buying one of his overpriced ads. Lucky for me I sold the store before The Mouth could do any more damage. I had already been slimed once. Laura Chameleon, the caterer, wasn't so lucky.

Laura built her Paradise valley clientele over ten years, through word of mouth, delighting them with the most elegant, exquisite food fests. Last year The Mouth told her (told her!) to donate filet mignons for the pooches at his annual Put on the Dog fashion show. I

sympathize. When you're a small business owner, the profits aren't that huge. She turned him down, but was nice about it, offering a substitute of chicken pieces in a bourguignon brown gravy sauce shaped like a filet. That wasn't good enough for Laurence Duvall. He wrote this horrendous paragraph about her in his "RUMORS and Innuendos" column saying her catering expertise rivaled McDonald's. It was over. No one would hire her after that, for fear of The Mouth blacklisting them. Poor woman eventually left town.

We're all afraid of him. What will The Mouth say next? Who will he destroy? Whose unfaithful husband seen with a blonde will be written about? Or what unsuspecting shopper might have her tawdry mishap with a salesperson appear in print? Worse yet, whose divorce settlement will be spelled out for all to see? How does he get away with it? He must have spies hidden everywhere. There are always those who will sell their soul for a bit of publicity or major coverage of their daughter's wedding. The rest of us are being held hostage.

Put on the Dog was utter chaos. The concept was supposed to be a Parisian bistro where the French do indeed take their dogs, but he didn't quite pull it off. Instead, the Phoenician's Ballroom was a minicircus of barking greetings, air kissing collagened lips, Manolo Blahnick shoes caught in the paper runners to protect the carpeting from the invariable accidents, and jockeying for positions near the

runway. More than one Frank Olive hat fell off as a leashed dog lurched to sniff another one's pubic parts. Never mind the slobbering animals eating at the same table with all those manicured fake nails. It was too disgusting! Who did The Mouth pay off at the Health Department to allow such an unsavory happening?

At any rate, a lot of people in Phoenix wish the jerk were dead.

April was sympathetic to my cause, but moved on to another topic that had to do with the *Fashionista* King. She was out in her running gear--she wasn't really running--walking her two Lhasa apsos. Now I might remind you here that I love April dearly, but the woman does not have a life. It's all about getting dressed in outfits, working out and running errands. Okay. So maybe I'm a little envious that she's completely gorgeous and makes men cry just by walking by.

Anyway, Carmen, Laurence and Coleman's beleaguered housekeeper, was outside sobbing. I can picture April in her red bicycle shorts, midriff top, headband, Gucci sunglasses, and ponytail, her two dogs yapping, and her pursed lips saying, "Que pasa?"

Carmen kept blubbering and wouldn't answer, curling herself into the corner of the front door. April knows Carmen because she's hired her to assist with some of the parties she's done for her husband Steve's firm.

"Tell me what happened, Carmen." No response.

She put her arm around Carmen's shoulder. "Is there anything I can do?" The housekeeper shook her head from side to side. When she took her hands away from her face, April saw a swollen eye with bruise colors rising to the surface.

"Who did this to you?" April asked, her index finger with the long French manicured nail tilting Carmen's chin. She thought maybe we had something on Laurence. No response.

"Did Mr. Duvall hit you?" The noise of crunching gravel distracted them. They both turned to look at a pick-up truck with Barstow Construction lettering on the side. It was backing out along the side of the house stopping briefly, the driver staring at the two women.

A tanned man with small features, a Phoenix Suns baseball cap pulled low on his brow, scowled at them. April recognized Tommy, Carmen's boyfriend. He continued to back up over the desert landscape of small cactus, succulents, and river rock. "Did Tommy hurt you?"

Carmen didn't answer, but her quivering chin indicated a "yes." She shuffled through the double doors into the house, her long, black hair swinging against her sea-green uniform.

April and I chatted some more about how appalling it was the way some men mistreated women. Should April sneak over and give Carmen the phone number of a local shelter for abused women?

Maybe we should call our friend, Glee, to bug her husband, Ted, owner of Barstow Construction, to get after Tommy. We decided to mind our own business for the time being. April said if it happened again she was going to take action, but I knew my complicated life wasn't going to allow me to get involved in my friend's neighbor's domestic's boyfriend's situation. Sometimes you have to stick to your own neighborhood even if someone else's is more interesting. Scottsdale is fascinating.

I'm not sure exactly when Scottsdale and its environs changed from the "West's Most Western Town" to the tony place it is today, but it is a destination for the wealthy from all over the world. The early Hohokam dug 300 miles of irrigation canals that are still in use. When Army Chaplain and Civil War veteran Winfield Scott arrived on horseback in 1888, he bought land in the farming community for \$2.50 an acre. Cotton fields, alfalfa, and citrus crops stood where posh resorts cater to the affluent today. The natural beauty of the desert surrounded by Camelback Mountain on the west, which does look like a camel resting with a praying monk on his nose, Papago and Barnes buttes on the south, McDowell Mountains to the north and the Superstition Mountains and Four Peaks to the east, must have stunned old man Scott. They knock me out when I'm on the 101 freeway

driving into the magenta bronze and copper colors, when I can see them through our brown pollution haze.

The clean, dry air drew Mormons seeking freedom from religious persecution to found Mesa, a neighboring community in the late 1870's with fertile land for their agricultural goals. Tempe, on the other side of the Salt River, began with Hayden flour mill and Tempe Normal School, a forerunner to Arizona State University. Scottsdale had resorts and sanitariums for tuberculosis victims, asthma sufferers, respiratory patients and the wealthy seeking the simplicity of a horseback ride on a dirt road past adobe houses shaded by cottonwood branches.

By the 1950's a population of two thousand resided in the exclusive conclave, many looking to restore their health. The Pink Pony, Scottsdale's first restaurant, entertained everyone from Ava Gardner, a visitor to Main Chance, Elizabeth Arden's exclusive spa on forty-five acres, to baseball player Joe Dimaggio who showed up for spring training. Some visitors like cowboy star, Gene Autry who had his own black booth, rode in and tied up their horses to the hitching posts in front of the restaurant, the heels of their boots echoing on the wooden sidewalks, their western style bola ties glistening in the sun.

Of course there wasn't the shopping there is today, but tourists took home leather goods, pottery, Native American jewelry and the

occasional beaded belt. Fifth Avenue Shops was an abandoned grapefruit orchard whose stores closed up in the unbearable summers. Goldwaters Desert Fashions, Saba's Department store and Lute's Pharmacy met immediate needs, especially when the Parada del Sol, billed as the "world's longest horse drawn parade", marched through downtown in 1951 with the Scottsdale High School Beaver Band stepping high, cattle being driven toward the rodeo.

It wasn't until a local shop owner who sold art supplies to painters who worshiped the desert light and the sprawling mountains shapes, traded goods for a few paintings that Scottsdale had its first art dealer. The wealthy patrons hungry for more than a few trinkets and postcards of the local date ranch brought home pictures and sculptures of cowboys, Indians, their horses, and the stunning scenery. Today it's evolved into one of the largest concentration of galleries in the southwest.

The unique art, posh resorts and high end shopping foster conferences, golf tournaments, and master planned communities. Thousands seek relief from winter weather on a permanent basis, flocking into expensive patio homes and large estates never knowing about the verdant landscape of yucca, mesquite, palo verde, and prickly pear that was mowed down to make room for them. I like to picture what it must have been like when big horn sheep, mule deer,

jackrabbits, and wood rats the Apaches roasted, ruled. I'm sure Chaplain Scott would be amazed to see his small farming community inhabited by a mostly white, non-diverse population of over 200,00 known as the number one resort area in America. Boy, have things changed!