

# Damaged Beauty

*Joey Superstar*

Margaret Gardiner

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This is a work of fiction. The characters, names, incidents, places, and dialogue are products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real.

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# **DEDICATION**

*To My Boys.*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*strangers whose random acts of kindness to me have left me in awe of humanity.*

*To anyone who has been there that I've not named, forgive me.*

*This is for all the people who have been made to feel less. Whose voice has been quashed. For the beauties who have been made to feel ugly so someone who is ugly inside, can feel better about themselves. This is for the broken. For the people who get up each day and try. Beauty is not about how you look, it's in each of us, all we have to do is open our hearts, give others grace, and give ourselves a break.*

*If you feel alone, unseen, suicidal, tell someone, call a helpline, love yourself enough to fight back and believe that you are enough as you are. We are all worthy of love and lovable.*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**M**argaret Gardiner was a cover girl in Paris at 16, Miss Universe at 18, and fashion editor of goldenglobes.com. She's worked with A-list actors from Angelina Jolie to Zendaya. She knows what it is like to be on the red carpet and in the spotlight, and what goes on behind the scenes.

Twice nominated for the ICG Publicists' International Media Award, as well as the 'National Arts and Entertainment Journalism Award' by The LA Press Club, Margaret's first Best Seller: 'Margaret Gardiner's Complete Health and Beauty Guide,' was followed by 'Margaret Gardiner Winning in Modelling and Beauty Competitions.' Margaret holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and her research had been published on gender inequality, unconscious bias and DEI for several publications.

Hosting duties include as a co-host of the *Miss Universe Pageant* and guest host on *Good Morning South Africa*. She has also hosted panels with influencers on mental health, A-list Stylists on fashion, and women in entertainment on inequity. She has organized virtual panels on DEI in LA and at The American Pavilion at the Cannes Film Festival. The LA-based journalist has also hosted and participated in podcasts.

Still active in the world of beauty, 2023 found Margaret guesting on Miss Universe which was Telemundo's No. 1 entertainment program that night in adults 18-49. For many years she coordinated red carpet fashion for Goldenglobes.com including for the Award Show, Golden Globes.

Margaret has directed, written, and edited segments for television magazine programs and has written for *Marie Claire*, *Mademoiselle*,

*People Magazine*, etc. Newspapers include *The Sunday Times*, *The Weekend Argus*, and *Rapport*. She continues to interview the ‘who’s-who’ of entertainment and her video interviews can be found on YouTube: *MargaretGardinerUniverse*.

Margaret, whose first poetry was published as a 16-year-old, continues to be a sought-after ‘cover girl.’ Margaret has walked in, sat front row, and covered Paris Fashion Week and recently walked in LA Fashion Week for designer Oliver Tolentino.

‘*Damaged Beauty: Joey Superstar*’ is the first book in the ‘Damaged Beauty’ series about good girls who play nice, are underestimated, get damaged, find their voice, and break the barriers to become who they really are.

For every would-be fashionista, influencer, or model, here’s a peek behind the proscenium.





# 1

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## **JOSAPHINA BRINKLEY - AKA - JOEY CÔTE D'AZUR: 1985**

**T**hey'd driven east along the Côte d'Azur, the endless sky above, the Mediterranean a dirty blue to her right. The villas packed together vibrant oranges and creamy whites, like too much acne on an overcrowded cheek. The light was lemon, and she was sour.

A headache had throbbed when Josaphina – Joey – had awoken in the subtle Seurat hues of Nice before sunlight drenched the landscape vividly. She was exposed, naked and thirsty, on the silk sheets. Mascara smudged like an owl. Lips stained for sex – undefiled. Not alone. While she'd slept, her husband had returned.

The night before had been a desperate evening of laughter without humor as destruction filled the air. She'd entered the private soiree after everyone was seated, like a queen taking her throne, upright, aware of the looks, accustomed to them, discounting them, waiting for his that never came. Her body was like a racehorse - fine-honed, glistening in the candlelight like a well-oiled sex toy, unused. They were buzzards, searching for fresh flesh to feast and satiate, to distract from their personal destruction. Old love is tired, and his was exhausted. She didn't know why.

It had been a long time since she'd had sex, and she needed it. Everything reminded her of the act he seemed to have forgotten how to perform, at least with her. She drank fast and with a purpose. She spoke rapidly to anyone who would listen, though he never did, her laughter a little too long and a little too loud.

Joey noticed the blonde on his right, flirting with furtive smiles and secret touches. The woman's hand had disappeared beneath the table some time ago. Joey's man had straightened, his lips open, and his eyes narrowed as his companion's arm jiggled in the nether world. She saw the change in him.

*I'm not crazy*

The words flashed like a neon sign on repeat in her head. She inserted another.

*Escape!*

Joey pushed back from the table and walked away from him. Maybe she could play his game? Maybe prompt him to react? Her hand trailed the fine fabric of shoulders until she felt the tightness of muscle beneath her fingertips and stopped. He was a friend of a friend of her husband's, with strong forearms. She let her palm crawl down the side of his face to his chin and pulled his head back. The people around him stopped talking. The woman to his right froze with her fork midway between plate and mouth, confusion on her face. The man looked at her. He was beautiful. Hooded eyes, emperor's nose, and a mouth that was made for sucking. Joey rounded him, cutting off the woman on his right. Joey brought her face close to his and whispered with her hand in his hair, "Would you love me tonight?"

His eyes took in her platinum hair, the mountain range cheekbones, the inflamed mouth, and he said so softly she strained to hear. "A woman like you should not have to beg."

"I know."

"Fix what is broken. Make your life right." His expression like a mother looking at her wayward child, with comprehension and compassion.

That hurt more than a blow, for it mirrored her desperation. She loped out onto the patio and down to the pebbled beach, slowing only to scoop up an open bottle on her way to the shore. She sat alone and drank as the clouds cruised the sky, and the sea made soft

laughing sounds. Then she lay back in the sand, looked at the black heavens, and dreamed that her man still cared.

She awoke chilled, the beach ingrained on her soft parts, sandpaper rough, like her heart, scratched and scarred. The wind had picked up while she slept, a cloying minstrel wind that felt like a thousand caressing strokes. She arched at the pleasure and pretended it was her husband's touch. The pretense pained. The lack of physical contact had been too long. She retraced her steps through the floodlit garden, ignoring the fuchsia and succulents. Beauty was nothing; it was no balm to her yearning. Joey climbed the flat stairs to the patio, peering into the private room. It was deserted.

Heels in hands, she by-passed the table still baring remnants of the repast, like a talisman to what had been, and what no longer was. Joey climbed the stairs to their quarters. She opened their door. The room was empty, like her womb.

*If she'd been able to carry the fetus to term, would he be next to her?*

She'd fallen asleep alone. When she'd awoken, Giovanni was packing, so she scrambled to catch up and packed too, not wanting an excuse to be left behind. They hadn't spoken then, nor now.

She ruefully realized that she was climatizing to his silence, though it still wounded and unsettled her. Possibly his intent?

The relentless sun notched the intensity, so she squinted as the clashing colors blurred, assaulting her senses as they raced away from Nice. Her headache clamored into a migraine, the result of too much red wine the night before and no love. He drove relentlessly, elegant in Italian designer wear, deliberately unknown. The man she married was like an image in a luxury advert: handsome and unreachable. As she hunkered in the passenger seat, she worried that she was getting accustomed to being 'alone,' even when he was right beside her.

The car slowed. Joey watched through the Bentley's window as girls streaked down the Croisette on mopeds, their perfect, parted

thighs clenching their machines. Giovanni stopped at the Carlton Hotel. The porters greeted them by name.

Upstairs, she walked naked across the room. Prowling like a tiger, he avoided. There was a time when the sight of her shoulder had made him hard. She turned in the window, the drink he'd given her despite the early hour, in her hand.

“How was she?” He turned away.

*Had he not heard her, or had she not spoken?*

She frowned, doubting herself. “How was she, Giovanni?” The delivery was no longer sotto, trying for conversational but unable to hide the edge.

He ignored her as though there wasn't a naked woman unraveling at his back - though it was his intent. The silence separated them. Deliberately. She understood that now and didn't know how to combat it. So, she crossed to him, pressed her naked body on him, and reached for him. He pulled her hand away, shredding her remaining dignity, igniting the long-held-at-bay anger. She stepped in front of him, grabbing his face hard, “Look at me. You used to love me.”

“That was long ago,” he'd spoken. At last. Confirmation of her fear.

*She was not crazy. Her husband did not love her.*

He turned away. She waited. Maybe he would speak again?

*What to do?*

She craved interaction and physical contact. Anything would be better than the isolating silence that disappeared her. Now, he had spoken she wanted the words to continue. Tentatively, she picked up her glass, hesitated, and decided. She rounded him - and tossed the red wine in his face, watching it cascade over his rigid features, soaking into his fine white shirt, waiting for a reaction. She hoped for anger that would lead to passion but noticed he was not aghast nor aroused. He moved unhurriedly.

*Calculatedly?*



He wiped the liquid from his brow. Granting her wish, after months of silence, he spoke spontaneously, and in so doing, he aroused her suspicion. A little smile flashed. “Let’s not do this again.”

*Why the smile? And why was he talking again? Now? After the eternal silence?*

She had hated his silence, but the talking was a sign. Something was about to change. She waited.

*Would he speak again?*

He continued dabbing calmly at the wine forming droplets on his sparse chest hair. He looked pleased but covertly so. She shook her head, not understanding the change or what was to come.

She returned to what she knew. This had been their thing. Live brightly. Fight formidably. Fuck ferociously. Repeat. Somewhere the fucking ferociously had fallen away. The bright living had taken on an exigency with no thrill, and make-ups, manufactured or real, never happened at all. Still, she would try. He seemed to be waiting for something. So, she tried what had worked in the past: Break up and makeup.

She hit him. It was not hard, but the sound was loud in the quiet room.

*No reaction. No heated passion like their footprint from their tussles in the past. This had been their foreplay.*

She scrambled back onto the bed, parting her legs, opening her nakedness to him. Thrusting her womanhood at him.

“Love me, Giovanni.”

“No.” He moved to the bathroom.

She scrambled after him, insisting, “I’m not crazy.”

“Then don’t act it.” He shook her off, adding slyly, “Take your medication.” He said it like planting a seed and watched her make the connections.

She recoiled, whispering the words this time. “I’m not crazy.”

He raised his eyebrows. “Aren’t you?”

She saw the provocation framed in his expression, quickly concealed. She backed away, trying to understand. What had she seen?

*Triumph.*

Her mind rejected the fleeting exposé but suddenly recognized, just out of focus, what he had planned in the months of psychological games that brought them to this moment.

*This was an ending!*

Her mind scurried for an act of normalcy so she could salvage her marriage. Her head was chaos, the migraine expanding.

*She was not crazy. She'd read the signs correctly.*

She felt fear.

*Why had she provoked him? Maybe silence was preferred?*

Docilely, she went to the balcony and stood bare in the bright traitor sunlight, seeing not the sparkling Mediterranean but looking into herself at the stretch of days where she'd been discounted, nullified, ignored, where she'd tried to respond to abnormal as normal.

*When had normal frayed?*

Sometime after she'd miscarried - but who wouldn't break at that? She'd plummeted into darkness and was given a little white pill to normalize. It had made her sleep and experience the world through a removed haze, a state she welcomed, especially when he'd layered the guilt for the miscarriage as hers and not an act of God. Being framed responsible when she was not, triggered her childhood, evoking memories she fought daily to ignore. So, for a while, she welcomed that little pill. But recently, she'd realized that her husband liked her sedated. When she tried to exert herself, he called her crazy. Joey began to wonder if she was crazy. She took on his truth. Had she been responsible for the miscarriage? Were all the things he told her about herself true? Was she wrong to be suspicious of the women who became part of their circle and then were replaced by a carbon copy?

*Was it her?*

She'd stopped taking her pill. She'd been determined not to be caught feeling. Reacting. Yet, here he was again, telling her their marriage failed - because of her. He seemed so certain. She felt confused.

*What had she done wrong but mourn for an unborn child?*

She was so accustomed to people telling her who she was and what she should do. She'd tried to please; she knew she had. She felt her youth close in. That old familiar feeling of disappearing in plain sight. Not heard. Framed. The injustice exploded in her head. She'd tried so hard not to feel, but now that she had, the emotions bubbled, clashing inside her head, mixing with the migraine. She became aware of an annoying guttural sound.

*I did nothing wrong.*

The sound made it hard to think.

*It wasn't me. It was him. Everything I did was a reaction to him.*

Her fury ignited. She clasped the stone railing as reality rushed at her. The guttural sound filled her head and blocked out her logic - unwittingly playing into his hands. The sound traveled with her as she barged into the suite. She picked up the poker next to the marble fireplace and attacked the locked bathroom door, calling him a coward, calling him out.

When he failed to do her bidding, she released her suppressed rage on his suitcase, then the mirror, the glass table, and the delicate French furniture, wishing someone would shut off the awful sound screaming in her head. She trampled through the splintered glass, trailing footsteps marked O negative in her wake until she stopped at the sight of a naked woman who looked familiar but for the wildness in her eyes and the blood on her feet. She began to shiver, telling her broken reflection the one truth as she knew it, "I'm not crazy."

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**THE HOUSE OF REST – 1985**  
**ONE MONTH AFTER CANNES**

**T**he House of Rest sounded like some exotic club, but it was what the name intimated: a place to rest, talk, and be medicated. You saw the world through layers of gauze, and you never felt anything. Not pain, not joy, and you never ever wanted sex.

After months of compulsory confinement, Joey had felt calmer, but she strained at the restraint. White on white looked good in *Vogue*, but no human color made the mind do interesting things. It was like all the world's hues had blended together and solely lived in the eyes of the staff, as intense jewels floating in an achromatic world. The orbs looked at you but never met your gaze like you weren't really there. Joey needed to be acknowledged.

"Therapy is about trust," Dr. Brand had told her. "You can be open with me." It had occurred to her that she could say anything, and he would take it as truth. But she found that people believed you more if they desired you. She needed an ally. She needed to get out of The House of Rest.

Joey sat opposite him in her white skirt and waved her knees in and out provocatively.

"Why do you do that?" he asked.

"Habit," she lied. "I do it when I'm nervous. You make me nervous." She flashed her model smile. It was hard to remember to lie with the drugs crowding her mind. She'd hiked up her skirt, parted her knees, and adjusted her panties over her crotch. "Sorry.

I'm not supposed to do that, I know." She arranged her face into collaborative contrition.

He didn't react to her provocation. He looked at her for a long time. At her face, not the parted thighs. He was around forty. Hair trimmed but mussy over the crown. His moods were etched into his face - it seemed like he laughed a lot, frowned a lot, or maybe both. He was frowning now, touching the folder on his desk with his fingertip, delicate but definite.

"We have your file, Joey. Josaphina. I know your past."

She'd felt the cold shower wash over her.

*Mother. Had mother intervened?*

Joey stopped wiggling her legs. Joey closed her knees. Adjusted her skirt downwards towards them. Dr Brand saw her change from someone in control to someone on the brink.

"I know your obligatory time with us is almost done, but I don't think you're ready to leave, Josaphina."

And he was right, for all she desired at that moment was the sanctity of her little bleached room.