

# Tease

Immodesty Blaize

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Extract

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## Chapter 1

‘Okay girls, tighten me up and tie me off!’ roared Tiger Starr, clinging to the wall with both hands. The energy in the dressing room switched instantly, the nervous undertow shifting through the gears into hyper excitement and bootcamp-like efficiency. Tiger’s dressers Cherry and Brandy jumped for her corset strings. They each wrapped a length of the silk cord round their wrists and heaved smoothly in opposite directions while Cherry held her foot in the small of Tiger’s back. This was the second tightening process of the night.

Tiger had been sitting in the corset for ten minutes already, flexing her ankles in her crystal-covered *pointe* shoes, whilst waiting for her internal organs to resettle themselves before going in for the last couple of inches with the corset. Her waist shrank eye-wateringly before everyone’s eyes.

‘Ooof,’ exhaled Tiger, bracing herself and still gripping the rail tightly, ‘have you got that last inch?’

‘Yeah, just gonna tie it off, that good for you?’ replied Brandy.

‘Well, I can’t breathe any more . . . perfect . . .’ Tiger gasped, wriggling uncomfortably. ‘Holy cow . . . okay Mario, it’s time to batten down the hatches!’ Tiger purred breathlessly to her hairdresser who was already hammering hair pins through the feet of the stuffed doves perched on her hair so that they nested firmly among her teased pink curls. She was now feeling the familiar warm tickle of butterflies in the pit of her stomach as Mario worked away at her immaculate coiffure as only a creative genius could. Tiger never liked her tension to show;

only her stylist and best friend Blue could detect a faint tremble in her hands from across the dressing room.

'Geev 'em a shake darlink,' Mario ordered. Like a good girl, Tiger shook her curls back and forth, flicking her head from side to side, testing any movement that might dislodge the birds on stage. Gone were the days of her wearing real doves. Bird shit in the hair was a price even Tiger was not prepared to pay for the ultimate in insanely glamorous accessories.

'Spray!' came her next command. On cue, everyone in the room covered their faces. Cherry paced evenly round Tiger wielding an industrial-sized aerosol can of diamond powder, spraying her liberally and smoothly. Tiger knew instinctively when to turn each limb so that every square millimetre of her was sparkling.

'This is your ten-minute call,' crackled the stage manager over the intercom.

'Oh god!' wailed Tiger. 'I almost forgot, but I have presents for you all!'

'What – now?' started Blue.

'Here. I want you to have them before the show starts! Just a little something to say thank you for all your hard work . . .' said Tiger hurriedly dishing out four small gift-wrapped boxes.

'You're kidding?' squealed Cherry.

'Well, I couldn't look like this without you guys,' she murmured softly, before passing a Fortnum and Mason bag to Blue. 'These are treats for the crew – can you give them out in the interval, darling?' she whispered. Cherry and Brandy had already ripped their presents open and were gasping at the expensive-looking sparkling pasties – bejewelled nipple covers – nestling in beautiful-velvet lined boxes.

'Jeez! Come on guys, this is no time for unwrapping!' bellowed Blue impatiently. 'Chop chop!' he clapped his hands together loudly. Cherry and Brandy hurriedly put down their

gifts, snapped to attention and swooped to collect all Tiger's pre-sets.

'Stilettos.'

'Check.'

'Diamond g-string.'

'Check.'

'Bath towel.'

'Check.'

'Fans.'

'Check.'

'Dress.'

'Check.'

'Liberace coat.'

'Check.'

'Let's go!' and off they whisked towards the stage with military precision, grinning from ear to ear. A wave of excitement surged through Tiger Starr as they left the dressing room and she hopped up *en pointe* in anticipation, her arches like taut little semi-circles in her ballet shoes. These were precious final minutes to psyche up for her opening night.

'Mario, get outta my hair,' she pleaded as the Italian hovered about her, pushing more pins through her curls. Tiger was purely focused on channelling her energy, and she couldn't care less about hair grips right now. Pre-show anxiety was a feeling Tiger had trained herself to embrace, and feel comforted by. Nerves gave her a mean adrenalin hit, which always gave her the edge when she made her entrance. Tonight she most definitely wanted her show to go that extra inch – for she had all her chips riding on this one.

Tonight her first number would be her infamous 'reverse strip'. Inspired by the late, great, burlesque star Lili St Cyr, with whom Tiger's grandmother Coco Schnell used to perform; it involved Tiger actually putting her clothes on, rather than peeling them off. People travelled miles to see the

spectacle, especially as from the audience's vantage point, Tiger – ever the tease – never quite showed everything. Of course there was always the hope in people's minds that tonight her bath towel might slip just that little too much, and occasionally an overzealous fan would convince himself he had caught a rare glimpse of 'landing strip', but in reality Tiger's diamond-encrusted merkin was always firmly in place to preserve her last bastion of mystique. As far as Tiger Starr was concerned, that was the art of the true showgirl – to be mysterious, otherworldly and untouchable for mere mortals. If that meant people thought she grew diamonds down there, then that was just perfect.

For the show's big finale Tiger would lay on her *pièce de résistance*, playing the part of a 1940s *femme fatale* vixen on her giant vintage glitter telephone with spinning dial, accompanied by the 'Starrlets', her gorgeous troupe of sparkling, leggy chorus girls who paraded, slinked and kicked in exquisite symmetry around her. For Tiger's final *dénouement*, the Starrlets all posed on stuffed black panthers that had been automated to rear up and roar for the crescendo, baring their porcelain fangs. It was a camp fantasy that made Lawrence of Arabia look like a low-budget student pilot.

Tonight, standing in her dressing room, Tiger was as radiant and as ready for her close-up as ever. 'Blue, honey, whaddya think?' she asked her stylist with puppy dog eyes, reaching for a compulsive squirt of Chanel No. 5. Before each show Tiger would seek Blue's approval as a matter of course; not that she really needed it, but Tiger was curiously modest about her considerable charms. If only she saw in the mirror what others saw, she would realise that she could make a bin liner look like *haute couture*.

'You're stunning, darling,' answered Blue, giving Tiger the once over. 'I must say the boys are looking breathtaking today,' he sighed, ripping his eyes away from the sight of her

incredible tits to smile at her reassuringly. Slowly he surveyed the towering glamazon standing before him. He took in her firm caramel skin, her miniscule waist spreading into full rounded hips. She had legs that could only be described as a masterpiece – long enough to reach her armpits, with powerful thighs strong enough to crack a pistachio nut. Her large, pert breasts, dressed with the most eye-wateringly expensive diamond-encrusted nipple tassels had the kind of delicious weighty bounce to them that was the preserve of only the most natural of assets. Her make-up accentuated her striking features, making her lips even more pillowy, her eyes more cat-like. Even her hair, cascading into her trademark powder-pink curls, looked as if it would have smelled of delicate rose powder. Put simply, she dazzled.

This was what Blue lived for. He had decided many years ago that what *he* lacked in physical beauty, he lived to hone in others. Although as a tall, strapping beefcake with a soft effeminate accent, a striking face often diplomatically described as characterful, and a garnish of impeccably designed stubble, he was pretty hard to miss in a room himself. He and Tiger had met seven or eight years ago when Blue was the reigning queen and Fashion Editor of *Below Magazine*. He had decided to shoot her for a ‘La Dolce Vita’-inspired story. Needless to say they had clicked as though they had known each other for a lifetime.

Blue ended up putting Tiger on the cover. When Blue had been usurped by a bitter rival, followed by the spreading of one too many vicious rumours alleging plagiarism and an all-round lack of talent for Blue to have any hope of finding another job in the industry, it was Tiger who had come to his rescue like an angel out of the mist. She had offered him a full-time job as her personal stylist and wardrobe mistress, and Blue was thrilled to have a welcome niche in which to let his true creative talents shine, away from the incessantly

fickle politics of the fashion industry. Even though Blue found joining Tiger's hard-working team to be a thoroughly warm and fluffy experience, he had experienced one or two 'entry difficulties' in his professional relationship with Tiger's manager, Lewis Bond. But over the years, Lewis and Blue had developed a grudging respect for each other. Blue now lived with Tiger in the Diana Dors wing of her Regency London mansion, as much her confidante and occasional dog-walker as her professional eyes and ears. Tiger was without doubt his best friend; an honour for Blue, knowing how cautious she was about who she allowed into her inner sanctum. Although he had also seen many times just how generous she was with anyone she thought she could lend a hand to.

'Well, if Lewis doesn't crack a smile tonight at the sight of you then squeeze me into a unitard and call me a eunuch,' sighed Blue. 'C'mon, Mario let's go sit with him out front and get him in the mood.'

'Oh god, Lewis! Where's he sitting?' Tiger quivered.

'Oh, he's charming the guests as usual, darling. Last time I looked he was taking care of Dianne Castrelli and the rest of the Vegas scouts; stage left, four rows back.' Blue knew that Tiger lived to please her manager. Lewis Bond was her biggest support – and her harshest critic. In fact, he was the only person in existence who could turn Tiger to ash at a glance, but then after fourteen years of working together, they understood each other like no one else.

'You just do your breathing, babe, get in your headspace,' said Blue with a comforting pat on her bum.

'Oh god, I'm on edge now. Did you pop your head in on the Starrlets? They happy?' asked Tiger uneasily. 'You gave them their first-night gifts?'

'Stop worrying, will you? Lewis' girlfriend has got them all fired up.'

'Georgia? Hmm, I'm sure she has. I bet she got Lewis fired

up too while she was at it.' Tiger tried to see the good in everyone but even she sometimes wondered what her manager saw in such an arrogant and predatory girl like Georgia Atlanta. Each to their own she supposed. She could tolerate Georgia as long as she made Lewis happy – and as long as she left her attitude at the dressing room door and danced her arse off on stage. That was all that really mattered to Tiger.

'Right, I'm off. Enjoy it, darling!' trilled Blue, clapping his hands together with finality. 'It's gonna be a helluva show! The Starrlets look delectable. And as for you, my darling? Well, you could just stand up there and *fart* and they'd be cheering with you looking like that! Hey – you okay?' Blue stared at Tiger, concerned.

'Fine!' she laughed. 'Now bugger off!'

'But babe, you look like you're going to be sick. Are you sure you're okay? You're not – *nervous* are you?'

'I'm just peachy,' reassured Tiger. 'That smoked salmon I had for breakfast must have been a little sketchy. I'm fine. Now scoot!'

'Okay my darling, if you're sure. See you out there. Break a nail!'

As Blue and Mario disappeared excitedly to stake their seats in the audience, Tiger swiftly shut herself in her dressing room and leaned against the door to steady her wobbling ankles. Darn! She never liked anyone – even Blue who saw more than most – to see just how terribly nervous she got in the last couple of minutes. She gently reminded herself that the day the butterflies stop should be the day a true performer quits the job. Nerves were the one true mark that you really cared about your performance. She'd always thought that a performer without nerves was either arrogant or bored – or smashed – and what audience wants to see any of those on stage? As Tiger leaned at the door, she closed her eyes and used her final moments to take some slow, deep breaths, a

generous slug of gin and tonic, and to channel the spirit of her idol, the queen of showbiz himself, Liberace. She would need him watching over her tonight, she thought, with the knowledge that the Vegas scouts and the entire population of London's critics were in the audience for her grand opening. She prayed her publicist, Rex, was out there entertaining them with his usual charm.

Rex Hunter had gone to the trouble of arranging the Royal box with waitresses proffering chilled Krug for the celebrities who were now taking their seats around him. The journalists he had stuck down in the press pit along with Tiger's younger sister, Sienna, who had just joined his PR agency, Hunter Gatherers, as his assistant. Any hack would be cynical if Rex tried the champagne treatment on with them – there was no point trying to butter them up. No, much more subtle to leave them with Sienna, who was down there happily flashing her long legs like a trooper. Whilst Sienna wasn't quite as gorgeous and enchanting company as Tiger – few women were in Rex's opinion – she did at least share some of her big sister's good genes. And she could turn on the charm – when she wanted to.

The press were certainly out in full force tonight, Rex thought, pleased with himself; all the dailies, the news channels, even the long leads, all waiting for Tiger Starr's latest offering. Rex would swoop on them in the interval when most of them would make a bid for freedom to file their copy and catch the next story of the evening.

In a way Tiger made his job easy. Her bold, sexy and unashamedly glamorous show was easily the hottest ticket in town. When Lewis Bond had first brought his new client to Rex for a PR strategy over a decade ago, Tiger Starr's reputation had preceded her; Rex had already heard whispers of the new girl on the block who was dancing and disrobing for princes,

billionaires and movie stars. Considering few people under sixty had even heard of burlesque at the time, she was certainly whipping up quite a storm. But then, Tiger Starr was no mere burlesque dancer. She was a true star as her name suggested, with a heat about her that verged on nuclear proportions.

As Rex surveyed the press pit below, he noticed trouble in the form of one journalist, Lance de Brett. A caustic bugger on a good day, Lance had taken to sharpening his claws for Tiger's reviews, especially over the last year or so. Rex often wondered if he was one of these men whose dick shrivelled when faced with a powerful woman – after all, attack is known to be the best form of defence. Still, Rex's twenty years as a publicist had also taught him there were some journalists who had simply raised cynicism to an art form, and if Lance had just watched Jesus walking on water he'd have certainly given him a bad review for not swimming. A shame then, thought Rex soberly, that the bastard could still make or break a London show. Lance had given *Saddam the Musical* five stars in the *Telegraph* and the bloody thing was still running two years later. In a funny kind of way Rex was slightly in awe of Lance's unapologetic wickedness; it had clearly taken him all the way as a journalist.

'Careful! Take your foot off my dress! Who's got my drink?' a thick, Italian New York accent interrupted Rex's thoughts. Turning his head, he was knocked out by the sight of the infamous Libertina Belle, being escorted by at least six waiters, literally falling over themselves to help her to her seat. Perking up, Rex was suddenly pleased he had dressed for the occasion. With a deep olive tan and thick, dark hair now sun-kissed courtesy of a recent trip to the Bahamas, along with his toned stocky frame encased in slick Saville Row tailoring, Rex had definitely noticed more than the usual number of heads turning on his way to the theatre. He just knew the effort wouldn't be wasted on the immaculate Libertina Belle. Of course Rex

didn't normally go for actresses – too devoid of personality he had always found. But there was something delightfully raw and brassy about Libertina Belle in person, despite her astounding classic beauty and the on-screen sophistication that suggested otherwise. Libertina was the first woman he had felt pure animal attraction for since . . . well, since Tiger. But since clients were strictly off limits, a rule Rex adhered to steadfastly, Tiger would always have to remain his favourite secret fantasy. But Libertina . . . she was fair game ready to be poached.

'Oi! Belle!' hissed Rex above the bubbling chatter from below.

'Rex! Baby, I had a funny feeling we'd see each other this evening,' winked Libertina as she took her seat.

'Ah well, aren't you the lucky lady.'

'So how's business, dahling?' Libertina fluffed her long raven hair and swilled back her Krug like a footballer's wife. 'Not bad, judging by the world's paps outside, hmmm?'

'Business is always good babe,' boomed Rex, 'You're looking good for the cameras too, loving the hair wavy like that, babe. Fiery, like you.' He leaned in and continued in a hushed tone, 'Although you're looking a little tired – you should slow down on the work babe, you know it can be a poison chalice being as in demand as you are.'

A flash of indignity blazed in Libertina's hazel brown eyes at this remark; Rex just relaxed and beamed care and concern back at her. Bingo. He always liked to make a really rude remark to a woman he fancied – he found this little trick made them feel insecure and eager to win him over by the end of the night.

'So, anyway! I keep hearing all about Tiger Staaaaarr back home,' drawled Libertina, changing the subject graciously, like a true pro, 'She's making waves from across the pond alright. I can't wait to see her performing in all her glory. I met her

during New York Fashion Week last season and god, Rex, she looked amaaazing. The woman's a goddess!' she gasped. 'Oh Rex, look there's Elton on the other side, daaamn! He has his own box! Look, over there, Rex. You didn't say he was coming.'

'Oh didn't you know, Tiger's playing for a huge Vegas deal tonight with the Luxuriana Grande! Well, Elton had to come check her out of course, seeing as her show could be across the Strip from his this time next year!'

'Wow! That's incredible! Good for her! Oh, Rex, you have to take me over to Elton in the interval!'

'Anything, Libertina, anything,' murmured Rex.

Pulling his gaze from her glossy pouting lips Rex surveyed the buzzing crowd settled below. The scene was certainly set. Tiger had done well to get her show on here, thought Rex with sincere admiration. This was probably one of the most beautifully fitted theatres in Europe in fact, and originally built specifically to stage the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. But tonight's show would be worlds away from the opera.

The house lights began to dim. Soft murmurs of 'shh, shh' wafted on the air, amplifying the palpable excitement. Rex shifted around in his red velvet seat and started to wring his hands. Libertina squeezed Rex's shoulder from behind and leaned in, sloshing the last of her icy Krug down the back of his blazer.

'God, I feel nervous for Tiger. Make sure she comes out for the after party, I'd love to meet her again,' she whispered loudly in his ear before settling back in her seat.

Rex pictured Tiger waiting backstage right now, knowing how tense she would be, and he willed her to do well. If she pulled it off tonight and got the Vegas deal, that would mean everything to her. He crossed his fingers out of sight and focused on the velvet curtain ahead.

The heavy red swags parted. The first deafening brass stabs leapt from the twenty-piece big band arranged on stage. As the music swelled, the thousand-strong audience let out a huge appreciative gasp as a cascade of glittering showgirls poured from the wings, bobbing their way uniformly across the stage to the beat, led by their striking Viking-esque dance captain, Georgia. Each girl was poured into a 1950s-style gold lamé swimsuit with cutaways to show their glorious breasts, the ensemble topped off with a sparkling gold swimming cap. On stage, Barry, the first trumpet, could be seen cowering as the army of pneumatic, nipple-tasselled showgirls advanced on him with vigour.

Underneath the stage, wedged uncomfortably in the elevator underneath the trap door, trussed up in her glamorous Hollywood bedtime attire, Tiger's stomach churned. She hated this wait, she always felt she needed the bathroom right about . . . now.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' came the voice of God announcement, cutting through the excited gasps and rendering the audience rapt, 'Welcome to the Savoy Theatre! Without further ado, please welcome on stage the star of this evening's show! She's the ultimate bombshell! She's our own national treasure! She's the incomparable, the one and only . . . Tigerrrrrrr Starrrrrrr!'

The last words were lost as the crowd erupted in to something like the cheer that went up when Arsenal had slaughtered Chelsea the previous week. As the platform slowly rose, bringing Tiger up onto the stage through a haze of dry ice, the heat from the spotlight hit her instantly like the comforting rays of the sun. She trembled *en pointe* like the wings of a majestic butterfly as she felt the vibrations from a thousand pairs of hands clapping and feet stamping the floor, whilst her chorus girls paraded round her glass-fronted slipper bath on the central plinth. Looking out from the stage, Tiger was

blinded by the lights, her audience merely a smoky chasm of black beyond the first two rows. A hit of adrenalin coursed through her as she elegantly fluttered across the plinth before stretching her strong gleaming legs into a positively leisurely arabesque. Immediately drawing her audience in with her feline gaze, she playfully prepared to take her bath, twinkling on tippy toe as she teased off her diaphanous bathrobe and satin corset, before bending over in a most suggestively supple manner to loosen the silky ribbons of her ballet slippers and reveal her cute red-painted toes. She beamed into the crowd, inwardly thanking her stars that she couldn't see the faces out there, especially tonight.

Fourth row from the front, slouched deep in his velvet seat and sporting his usual pinstripes, black Brylcreamed hair and a stubbled jawline that was more accident than design, Tiger's manager Lewis felt a tic start in his cheek, adding to his general air of a brooding Mafiosi. He kept one eye on the poker faces of the Luxuriana Grande scouts, hoping to detect a hint of a reaction. The deafening cheers of the glamorous crowds did little to sate him. Annoyingly, Lewis could hear Blue gushing on about the costumes right in the next seat, grating on him like a buzzing fly. Grabbing the nearest thing to hand, he jabbed his Mont Blanc pen violently into Blue's side, silencing him swiftly.

Flicking his attention to the stage Lewis watched Tiger carefully. He registered a spark of fire brimming in her eyes, detectable only to someone who had worked with her for a very long time. He knew she had entered what she called 'the zone' and he relaxed his shoulders a fraction. Lewis squinted as he scrutinised the Starrlets intently; a long line of shapely limbs multiplied and refracted across the stage. Ah, Georgia. His latest platinum-blond fuck, up there leading the troupe; leaping into an effortless *jeté* with those long, long legs. An

effusive dance captain, great on stage. No presence, but god she could dance. And boy could she give great head . . . it was about the only time she shut up, he thought ruefully. If only she weren't so damn skinny. Lewis looked sideways at his Vegas guests to see a few of them scribbling furiously. Tapping his foot nervously in time with the drummer he forced his attention back to the magnificent scene unfolding on stage.

Streams of iridescent bubbles floated and winked around Tiger as she splashed about in her bath to the rhythm of 'Harlem Nocturne'. The frosted glass panel in the bath made no question of her nudity. With one hand Tiger lightly traced the silhouette of her breast. Arch the back! she reminded herself, exercising every last vertebrae to squealing point. As bubbles floated past her she burst them at her fingertips as the music swelled into a voluptuous chorus. On cue, she sank deep into the tub. Keeping her head carefully above the shallow water, she kicked up her legs into a vertical position, just as her thirty Starrlets took their positions too, synchronising with each of her carefully choreographed leg movements.

Waves of applause rolled over them as Tiger and her chorus girls expertly scissor kicked, posed, stretched, swam, and cycled their legs rhythmically through the crescendo with fountains of water jetting up into the air behind them, programmed in time with each kick and every crash of the cymbals. From her position down in the bath Tiger blinked repeatedly with the spray from the fountains and the glare from the lighting rigs above her. Holding her legs gracefully above her head in a muscle-burning splits position and counting the beats with gritted jaw, she wondered if she had remembered to leave some food out for her little terrier, Gravy. And breathe! she reminded herself as she emerged from the tub into full view with a glowing smile, kicking her feet playfully amongst the bubbles.

The Starrlets moved into a new tableaux, preparing for Tiger to rise from her tub like a majestic Venus from her shell. With one hand Tiger clasped her fluffy bath towel across her front and tantalisingly patted herself dry. With the other hand she slid on her sparkling g-string in one long smooth movement, slipping it inch by inch over her taut thighs. With her back to the audience she dropped the towel as the g-string settled into the crease of her peachy buttocks. A cheer went up in the theatre. Facing the band nude like this, Tiger raised an eyebrow and shook her breasts as a playful 'hello'. A couple of bum notes rang out from the brass section. Pete on the double bass patted his heart faintly between strums. No matter how many times they saw Tiger's saucy flash, she never lost her ability to thrill.

Tiger knew now to step up the pace. She covered herself in fans of thick ostrich plumes and descended her plinth. Joined by a chorus of thirty flapping wings behind her she revealed and concealed her glorious hourglass figure, using the feathers to tantalize with the kind of expertise that made the enormous fans appear to be weightlessly and flirtatiously caressing her. In fact they were excruciatingly heavy, with a twelve-foot wingspan. They often gave her cramps in her hands, but she would never let the audience see that. She rotated the fans in turn through the air above her head in seamless figures of eight, then drew them fluttering slowly over her form. She used them as majestic peacock tails, cheekily revealing her *derrière*, but always using one of the fans to carefully conceal the right parts, constantly teasing. Diamond powder shimmered in the lights as it fluttered from the feathers with each swish. The audience sat in awed silence.

Tiger's sister Sienna sat in the press pit, impatiently tapping her foot. Just how did Tiger manage to make it seem as though you were in a room with her on your own, she wondered. Just

as the *Mona Lisa* appeared to smile at you from anywhere in the room, Tiger always seemed to be shaking her breasts just for your eyes only. Their parents might have been ashamed of the way Tiger made her living and Sienna was certainly never one to give her sister credit, but even she had to admit Tiger was pretty awe-inspiring up there on stage. Sienna was also loath to acknowledge that she wouldn't mind some more curves of her own, but nonetheless found herself unfastening the top button of her blouse and rearranging the fabric to show some of her own cleavage. This was particularly out of character since she had always endeavoured to hide her bustiness throughout school. Yet now as she fiddled absent-mindedly with her blouse she wondered what it would feel like to be up there under the lights, holding the audience rapt. She did have longer legs than Tiger after all, she thought sniffily, even though she had been mercilessly teased at school for being way too knockery and completely out of proportion with her long scrawny limbs. Of course, Sienna would never, in her eyes, 'lower herself' to Tiger's antics on stage, but imagining herself up there was preferable to the reality of being stuck down here with all the bad-tempered journalists while her boss got to swig champagne in the Royal box with the celebs. Talk about being in Tiger's shadow . . . literally.

Sienna sighed as her eyes grazed across the crowded gathering of photographers, and dutifully checked they weren't taking any more shots. The protocol dictated that they were only ever allowed the first three minutes of a show to get their pictures, so that the artistes on stage could then relax into the performance and concentrate on pleasing their audience rather than thinking about their best angles for press shots and being blinded by flashguns. Sienna could see a couple of the photographers now gripping their cameras tensely, clearly frustrated by the myriad forbidden photo opportunities on stage as Tiger weaved her magic spell. As a ripple of gasps

swept across the audience behind her, Sienna grudgingly stared back up at her sister.

Tiger was on the homeward strait and unleashing the full might of her seductive wiles as she dressed sensually for her audience in stockings, heels and her magnificent Dior cocktail dress, before mounting the riser for her final reveal. Her dancers had arranged themselves about her with their fans held in such a way as to entirely frame her beautiful face with enormous flower petals of ostrich feather. One by one and in quick succession the girls whisked away the fans for the final reveal. There stood Tiger rising from a sea of gold and fountains, draped in her final layer; the most colossal arrangement of rich pink feathers and ruffles, a replica of a cape Liberace had originally worn for his grand exit from a Fabergé egg back in the 1960s. With a flourish she swept open the cloak like a soaring bird to expose a lining entirely made of the fluffiest, floatiest feather fronds. Audience members in the first row caught a waft of Chanel No. 5 on the breeze.

On the blackout a cheer erupted like an explosion as the audience jumped to their feet to applaud. Oh Lordy, thought Tiger, allowing herself some breathless panting while concealed by the blackout, they're already on their feet and they've got the rest of the show yet. Keep going girl! As the spotlights found her, she held her breath, switched on the megawatt smile and took her bow, as poised as if she'd hardly lifted a finger. My god, I think Liberace is actually smiling upon us right now, thought Tiger, proudly holding her shoulders back and chest out for her first standing ovation of the evening.