



## The Two Vladimirs

by Sue Hitchcock

There were two students from Yugoslavia at St Martin's School of Art, where my husband worked when we were first married. Strangely they were both called "Vladimir". It is such a common name, and Yugoslavia was a united country, Communist and atheist under Tito. The two Vladimirs came from different parts of the country, one from Serbia and the other from the Dalmation coast, they must have been very different, though I only knew one.

We had been married for a couple of years and I was desperate to have a baby, but my husband, quite reasonably, pointed out that I should finish my external degree first, while I was working at the museum. It was rational, but the urge, the reproductive imperative, made me crazy. I was on heat, not something young men around me could ignore.

The Vladimir I met was visiting the Egyptian gallery, quite appropriate for a sculpture student. He had visited us at home before and so we talked. Then he drew me behind a giant head of a pharaoh and kissed me.

I was guilted, though I never bumped into Vladimir again in the museum. I'd see him occasionally, when I visited my husband in the sculpture department, but with no nod or wink to acknowledge the event.

It wasn't without repercussions. My husband kept talking about Vladimir and I had the impression they were lunching together. I challenged him and he laughed. It was a different Vladimir he was lunching with. This Vladimir was quite different – stocky, jovial, ebullient even, certainly a good conversationalist. The Dalmation Vladimir was slim, sensitive, emotional. So was it now resolved?

I began to fantasize about a possible sexual relationship between my husband and the unknown Vladimir. A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy grew in my mind and the more I realitied it, the more excited I became. I had to picture it before sex - it was never a deterrent.

I had to be confessed, to my husband, of course. He just laughed at my nonsense.