One Hot Savanna Night
By Melissa O'Brien Rice

Savanna was atomic. She sizzled like a nuclear reactor. The first time Dominique laid eyes on her was at a traffic signal. He heard her before he saw her. A powerful rumbling that only a Harley can make. She pulled up beside his Porsche and stopped. She glanced his way. When the opposite light turned yellow she let out a howl, pulled up her skimpy t-shirt and flashed her two gorgeous breasts at him and then she was gone leaving only laughter on the wind.

Dominique was stunned for a moment. All he had seen from the neck up was a pair of dark rhinestone sunglasses, a sexy smile, and a helmet with a long red fox fur flying from it. She was a mystery, but he would recognize those breasts anywhere, and he would find out where 'anywhere' was. He mentally put her on his list of things to accomplish.

Dominique was used to getting what he wanted. He didn't ever have to ask for it. The world knew that he was meant to be served, and automatically did it. He had the air of aristocracy, old money and power. He turned right into the front parking lot of the hospital and slid into his reserved parking place. All six feet four inches of him stepped out of the car. His suit was impeccably tailored, his sunglasses were Armani, and his shoes were hand made to order. He looked around as if ascertaining his kingdom. Tall, dark, and handsome perhaps described some distant Neanderthal version of who he was. Lethal was the only word close to describing him now. He had the physique of a large wild jungle cat, and sex appeal that could have a woman stripped in sixty seconds without once uttering a word. He had long ago tired of that game.

Savanna swung her leg over the seat and dismounted the bike like she had just made love to it. "I'll be back baby" she whispered, as she hung her helmet on the sissy bar and stalked away. She was drop dead gorgeous in her tight Levis. She rubbed some lotion into her tight brown arms and shook her long mane of golden blond hair as she approached the entrance of the building. The cool felt good as she walked through the door. Heading down the corridor she said hi to people as they greeted her.

It was almost show time and she needed to hurry. She twirled the combination on her locker and pulled out her eccentric costume. Excitement danced in her stomach as she started getting ready for her performance. She spread the make up on extra thick, especially the bright red lipstick. It was a special crowd today and she had to look her best. It was a tough way to make a living, and she often came home with some bruises. Her audience could get a little too hands on and rough, but the rewards were worth it. She came through the door right on time. The room went wild. She heard the applause and the cheering and her heart leapt as it always did. Everyone had their calling and this was hers.

She looked at the faces of the children; most of them were bald, and her heart did a back flip. She honked her red clown nose and did a quick little tap dance in her huge clown shoes while she started making balloon animals. Her outfit was baggy and every color of the rainbow. The wig was orange and curly. She started pulling a scarf out of her pocket which just kept on going forever. The cigar she pulled out of her other pocket blew bubbles instead of smoke. Her laugh was totally contagious and in no time all of them were on the floor rolling around giggling out of control. They formed a big circle, held hands and sang songs of hope and life, friendship and love. For this brief magic spell of time she put their disease at ease.
Dominique stood in the doorway and watched the clown entertain the children. He was a few minutes early for the Board of Trustee's meeting. There was something familiar about the clown that he just couldn't put his finger on. He let it go and walked away towards the Board room.

"Thanks Savanna, that did the kid's the world of good. You are just what the doctor ordered." said the head nurse as Savanna walked by. "They are the best medicine in the world for me too." replied Savanna. "See you next week." Savanna thought of the many lockers that she had at different hospitals. All just a Harley ride away. She was all over that state.

She put on her helmet and unleashed the power of the 1992 Classic Heritage Softtail. She wrapped her legs around the huge engine and flew like an eagle on the ground. The bike was Arizona sky blue and she called it Marilyn. She stroked the famous Playboy centerfold picture that was airbrushed on the gas tank. "Let's catch some wind Marilyn" she said, and kicked the bike into gear. The Hollywood legend rode that Harley naked all of the time. Savanna had been known on a few occasions to do the same. This would be one of those nights. She could feel it coming on, but for now she needed to focus on her very special date. This was a ritual that had been going on every full moon for years. She drove for two hours into the deep wooded mountains until the road ended. Glancing in the rear view mirror she made sure that no one followed her. She was the keeper of a sacred trust that could not be broken. She locked the bike and grabbed a paper sack out of the saddle bag. She hiked in on foot for an hour. The animals heard and smelled her long before she got there. So did the man. She arrived at the allocated spot, sat on a log and patiently waited. One by one the animals came out to greet her. First a skunk waddled past her with his nose and tail in the air. Then a deer came out from the left and leapt out of sight in an instant. When Savanna looked around for the reason she caught the gaze of the wolf buried in the underbrush surveying her also. He kept his distance. He was just curious over the years. A white owl swooped through and a family of Squirrels scurried out of a tree and rolled and tumbled, playing a game of tag with each other.

In an instant the man appeared out of nowhere growling, and made her jump. "Jesus Christ Dad, you scared the shit out of me!" she said, her heart still in her throat. He smiled. "I know, wasn't it great? I've still got it!" He looked like Charlie Manson mated with a werewolf. He was covered in hair, leaves, twigs and dirt. Savanna held her nose and replied "Stand over there down wind, could you smell any worse? Are you ever going to bathe? How long has it actually been since water touched you?" The man thought long and hard. "I don't remember, I guess when it rained a few months ago. This is my natural scent; that little brown bear I've told you about is letting me share her cave now." He beamed with pride. "Well, I hope that she hugs you because I am not going to!" stated Savanna. "Here." she said as she threw him the brown bag. He looked inside "Oh, you angel. I just can't seem to beat this weakness for camels and Jack Daniels." he said. "Your welcome", she replied. He felt the pull of the forest and she felt the pull of the Harley. "Bye Dad, see you next month." "Bye honey, love to your mom." and he vanished as quickly as he had appeared. Only the smell lingered. Once she was back at the bike a hundred hidden forest eyes watched curiously as Savanna took off her clothes. She took the small bottle of Southern Comfort out of the saddle bag and put her clothes in its place. This was better than 'Miller Time'. This was ‘Savanna Time’. She took a couple of swallows and put her head back and howled at the moon. She heard her father howl back, and then the wolf joined in and they all three howled in harmony. Life was good.

She put the bottle back in the saddlebag. The roar of the engine tore the silent night apart. The full moon's glow bathed her as she headed for home. Her heart pounded as she leaned into
the curves and felt one with the wind. She thought long and hard about her dad, John. He hadn't been alright since he came back from Vietnam. The experience of war had broken him into a thousand little pieces and he was never able to put them back together again. The only comfort he managed to find was deep in the forests with the animals. When Savanna sported the first lights of civilization she pulled over and got dressed. She figured that it was about ten o'clock. She had time to swing by and say hi to her mom. Half an hour later she pulled into the long driveway and was greeted by a blond Labrador with a ragged slimy tennis ball in his smiling mouth. "Hey Sparky, what's shakin besides your behind?" She threw the ball the mandatory three times and then headed around the back. She ducked in under the wisteria hanging from the trellis and caught the intoxicating aroma of the jasmine. She saw a soft glow coming from the back terrace. "Everybody decent?" she called out. "No, fortunately!" her mother replied. As Savanna rounded the corner of the old wood house she saw her mother in the glow of the candlelight. The table was laden with flowers and bowls of fruit. Her mother's name was Katrina but she liked the world to call her Kat. Out of the french doors came her mother's best friend, Irene, with three mugs of hot cider. She gave Kat a mug and then bent down and kissed her gently on the mouth. She stood up and winked at Savanna. "When did that happen!" asked a surprised Savanna. "A couple of weeks ago" said her mother, "isn't it wonderful!" Savanna burst out laughing. "I am really happy for the two of you. You really do make a great couple!" How's your dad?" her mom asked. "As crazy and smelly as ever?" Savanna rolled her eyes and replied "Yes, I think that he is going to move in with that little brown bear." Kat smiled. "That's nice dear. I never wanted him to be alone." Savanna played with the flame of the candle. "He said to say hi to you mom." Kat looked up at the full moon and started to hum. All of a sudden Savanna was exhausted. She finished her cider and crawled up on the chaise lounge. Kat got up and covered her with a comforter, stroked her hair for a moment and kissed her on the forehead. Two huge cats jumped up and nestled in for the night. Kat blew out the candles and gently took Irene's hand as they walked quietly through the french doors. Savanna awoke to the soft pastel colors of a gentle sunrise and the smell of coffee brewing. She noticed the cats, "Hey scoundrels, how you doin?" She petted them and then shook them off as she stood up to go pee. They gave her a nasty look before they went off to start the morning's killings. The sound of running water and laughter came from upstairs. She grabbed a quick cup of coffee and left a note.

In fifteen minutes she was clicking down the road. The sun was coming up over the trees as she pulled up to the light. She heard the purr of an engine behind her. It was the Porsche from yesterday. Dominique pulled up beside her. Eyes met, spirits circled, souls joined. There was no choice now. The connection was too strong. They sat motionless as a power greater than themselves intertwined their destinies forever. Love is the freak rain shower that explodes the dry plains into a vast Garden of Eden. They both noticed as the first drops began to fall.