

MARIELLA NOVOTNY  
(Anna Marie Capes)

THE MAN IN THE MASK PARTY



*Mariella Novotny, had John F. Kennedy among her lovers, hosted an all-star orgy where a naked gent, thought to be film director and Prime Minister's son Anthony Asquith, implored guests to beat him. Osteopath and artist Stephen Ward, whose portrait subjects included eight members of the Royal Family, has been charged with pimping Keeler and Rice-Davies to his posh friends. Part of Ward's bail was reportedly posted by young financier, Claus von Bulow.*

Mariella Novotny was born in 1942. Her father was of Czechoslovakian provenance. According Christine Keeler, Mariella's real name was Stella Capes, but she changed it to Mariella Novotny, because it "had more whiplash ring to it."

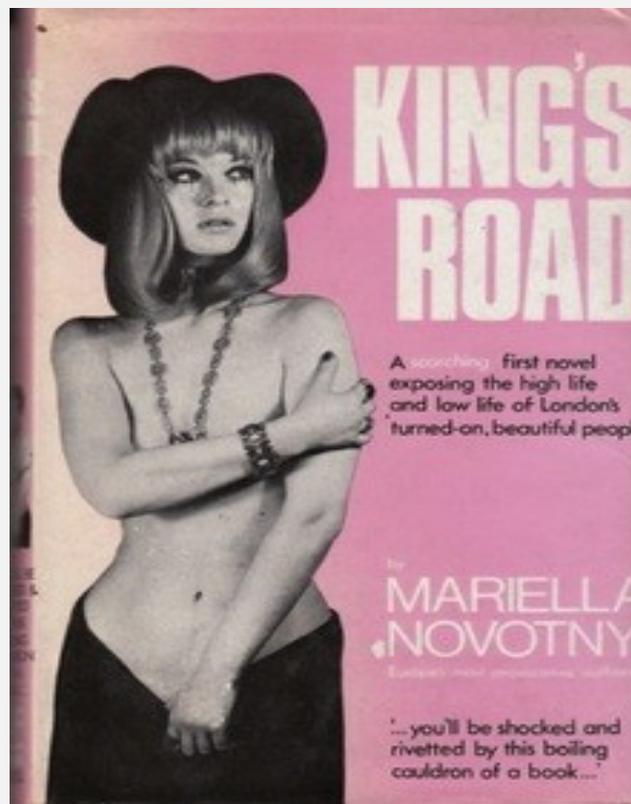
Mariella also claimed that she was the niece of the former President of Czechoslovakia.

After the death of her father she became a striptease dancer to support her widowed mother. Novotny also worked as a prostitute in London. Christine Keeler later recalled: "She had a tiny waist that exaggerated her ample figure. She was a siren, a sexual athlete of Olympian proportions - she could do it all. I know. I saw her in action. She knew all the strange pleasures that were wanted and could deliver them."

"It would be humbug if I did not confess that I looked forward to the sex orgies. I have been to every type of that party - those specializing in certain perversions and those given in an elaborate setting where all the formalities were observed."

"Many of the people who attend are rich and famous - many faces that are seen in public life and on television. If their public could only see them like this."

- Stephen Ward, osteopath and society artist, 1963





Mariella Novotny and Horace 'Hod' Dibben, at their wedding

"Hod Dibben was allegedly a man of fathomless depravity in whose hands Stephen Ward was clay . . . in addition to his interests in black magic, he had a tremendous appetite for sex, so long as it was sufficiently perverted.



Horace 'Hod' Dibden

"Mariella Novotny was a beautiful blonde of Czech origin. She had grown up witness to the horrors of the turbulent post-war years in central Europe, and her experience of rape and torture twisted her nature into something vile and deformed."

— Thomas Critchley, civil servant and secretary to the Denning Enquiry, 1963.

It was Lord Denning who called Mariella Novotny's December 1961 orgy the "Man in the Mask" Party. She preferred to call it the Feast of the Peacocks. It took place in her husband's mansion flat at 13 Hyde Park Square. Mandy Rice-Davies and Christine Keeler arrived fashionably late. They were greeted at the door by their mentor, Stephen Ward. He was attired in a sock. Everyone else was naked. Apart from Mariella, who was wearing a black corset and holding a whip. She was in bed with six men. Mariella had a ready wit and her joke du jour was that she was the Government's Chief Whip.

She came to London as chubby-cheeked Stella Marie Capes in 1957. She made her debut as a topless dancer at the Windmill Theatre, in Soho. She was 16. She said it was her mother's idea. A year after her arrival in London, aged 17, she married 56-year-old

Horace "Hod" Dibben in a much-publicized ceremony at Caxton Hall. David Bailey took the photos.



Mariella Novotny

Hod Dibben dealt in antiques and official secrets. He ran nightclubs in Shepherd Market and Mayfair, where he played host to Anthony Armstrong-Jones, the Duke of Kent, Lord Astor and the Kray twins. He and Mariella held dinner parties for Earl Spencer. At one of these parties, Mariella met the TV producer-cum-procurer, who set her to work in New York. It was 1960 and there was a new permissiveness abroad. Hod gave his blessing and off she went. In May 1961 Mariella escaped from a hotel in New York, where she had been restricted by a probation order as a minor on vice charges. She arrived back in England on the Queen Mary, and sold her story to the senior crime reporter from the *News of the World*. It was a good one. She told him that she was

the niece of Novotny. And that, as a child, she had spent four years in a Soviet Stateless Persons Camp.

One of the facts that Denning did not reveal in his report on the 'Profumo Affair' was the scandal's global impact. It was not Christine or Mandy or even Stephen Ward who excited the interest of the FBI. It was Mariella. Whilst on a visit to New York, she had played nurses and patient with JFK, then the president-elect, and Suzy Chang, star of *Nudes of the World*.

It was bad enough that one of the nurses was Chinese, but the other was suspected of being a Communist from Czechoslovakia. Robert MacNamara, the US Defense Secretary, told a senior FBI agent that he "felt like he was sitting on a bomb" as headline after headline in British newspapers opened the lid on the Profumo Affair. Even Robert Kennedy, it emerged, was caught up in this sex and spy ring. Lord Denning and his secretary, Thomas Critchley, developed an unhealthy obsession with the sex life of Mariella and Hod. They suspected Satanic rituals were being performed in their basement flat in Hyde Park Square. Scotland Yard set up surveillance.

The true story of the Profumo Affair will never be told by us, here. But what can be revealed is that much intrigue of an international flavor surrounded it. Mariella Novotny, the woman who hosted a party that spun a nation into scandal, embodied that intrigue.

Her most enduring trait was to embody the old and the new. In 1960 she was 19 years old, and married to a man born in 1905. Although still a teenager she had crossed two continents and jeopardized the presidency of the United States. Escaping the clutches of the FBI, she had disembarked in Southampton on the *Queen Mary*, a cosmopolitan call girl ready to take the Old Smoke by storm. But she would never quite lose the sinister shiftiness of post-war, rackety Europe. Neither was she alone in her attachment to the past.

In '*The Pendulum Years*' Bernard Levin wrote that the 1960s had begun with "an attempt to stop the decade entirely and replace it with an earlier one". The Obscene Publications Act was a case in point. It was passed in the last year of the 1950s, and was designed to deal with such books as D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, no less.

"This being the case," Levin went on to say, "It naturally came about that the Director of Public Prosecutions selected as the

first book to be prosecuted under the new law *Lady Chatterley's Lover*."

The trial provided a staged confrontation between forward-thinking liberality and tolerance and the cloistered and sequestered morality of a monarchic, aristocratic, social and political system. When it became clear that the prosecution's grasp of what constituted literary merit was somewhat feeble, the case of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* became a case against Constance Chatterley for adultery. "There are, are there not, certain standards" was a constant refrain from the lawyers. The jury was invited to condemn the lady's behavior. Furthermore, as Wayland Young pointed out in the *Guardian*, the language Counsel used took on the tenor of Old Testament patriarchs. It was suggested that "wives and servants" remain protected from such indecency. Lovemaking, or "fucking" as Lawrence would have put it, was referred to as "bouts", "holy wedlock" or "my lady's boudoir".

The condemnatory attitude towards the Lady's unholy wedlock was to receive explicit support in the House of Lords. Levin reported that "solemn exchanges took place about the character and psychology of *Lady Chatterley*, about her intentions and future plans, about the likelihood, or lack of likelihood, of a stable relationship between her and Mellors, the gamekeeper, about her life before the book begins". Then the argument developed into a complaint that "the story [Lawrence] tells is pure invention; it never actually happened" as though Lawrence's inventiveness made the act of writing his book even more infamous. Finally, Lord Boothby stood up to speak. Boothby was, respectively the adulterous lover of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's wife and the homosexual lover of East End gangster, Ronnie Kray. His response was this: "That is the thing about fiction; it doesn't happen."

The strange thing about the 'Man in the Mask Party' was that it did happen and at a time in British history when the ruling classes collaborated in maintaining a fiction that this sort of thing did not happen at all, and that if and when it did happen, it was out of the ordinary, deeply regrettable and entirely wicked. This fiction was necessary because a morbid fear of sex still pertained. All this despite the judgment made on 2nd November 1960 when twelve jurors acquitted *Lady Chatterley's Lover* of corrupting morals or causing offence. In the *Guardian*, Young alleged: "Lawrence reared up from his grave, sheltered goodness, truth and beauty, and annihilated prosecutors, judges,

guardians of taste, fussy spots, sadists and all the runners of grey lust with the single cauterizing of clean English prose."

For generations desire had been twisted into strange, unbidden shapes. Furtive conniving ensured that consummation remained hidden, unspoken and ultimately condemned. Mariella Novotny understood well this enigma and made a living out of it. One year after the famous ruling, she hosted a party that was to fuel a controversy that has lasted over fifty years. Controversy such as this thrives on the ingredients Mariella so thoughtfully combined, those of; illicit sex, secrecy and high-profile, politically sensitive members of a self-serving elite section of society. Her principal guests remain 'officially' unidentified to this day. This is despite the fact that just two years later, a Law Lord was commissioned to investigate the night in question as a potential threat to national security. He drew a veil over Mariella's party. It can only be assumed that the truth he uncovered was too suggestive of a split in the social fabric. Certainly, if the truth involved the son of a prime minister who was a prominent figure in British cultural life, it was best to allow the fuss to die down.

But women like Novotny do not go quietly. She only had one recourse left to her and that was to put pen to paper. Her record of that night and of her life in general has been, according to those searching, lost in yet more contentious circumstances.

But remnants have remained and can be pieced together by the astute. "I was determined to be the best hostess of my age," she confided to her diary. So, on her return from the USA during early 1961, "Naughty Novotny" as the scandal sheets had dubbed her, started to give lavish dinner parties in London. Her guests flocked to meet the 20-year-old woman who had had such an impact on the most powerful man in the world, the newly elected president of the United States, John F. Kennedy. The address she gave was her husband's address, 13 Hyde Park Square, W2. It was more of a pied-a-terre than an apartment in a mansion block that was starkly modern in its severity. However, there was a covered patio entrance, a porter in the lobby and a goods lift. Hod and Mariella had a basement flat. Above them were eight floors of brown brick, peering onto a classic Victorian square with wrought-iron railings, hydrangeas and plinths.

At number 15, Mariella's neighbors provided some showbiz glitz. Fenella Fielding and Albert Finney were flat mates and young theatrical stars making names for themselves on stage and

screen. Finney had just triumphed in "the landmark British film of the Angry Young Man", *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. He was set for stardom. Fielding, apart from delivering husky double entendres in Carry On films, found more scope for her talents in the theatre. At the time of Mariella's soirée, Fenella Fielding was starring in a satire on theatrical vanity called *So Much to Remember: The Life Story of a Very Great Lady*. She had written it herself, and was said to keep a copy of Plato's *Republic* next to her bed. Fenella had a take on life that was skeptical, and she worked with new dramatists like Harold Pinter and revue artists like Peter Cook. Despite these promising beginnings, however, she never quite emerged from the low farce of the 'Carry On' films. Perhaps she was too ambivalent for success on Finney's scale in that she found Plato's objections to mimetic arts too persuasive. Or perhaps it was her deep cleavage and come-hither voice that betrayed her wit and subtlety.

Mariella's bedtime reading was Bertrand Russell. She had been reading the chapter on Plato on her wedding night, when Hod so rudely interrupted her. At the age of 17, she had no interest in sex. She wanted instead to develop her intellect and foster an appreciation of the finer things in life. As a wedding present, 56-year-old Hod had given his teenaged bride a Queen Anne house in Hampshire. She took to the part of chatelaine with gusto. But she became stuck with a sexy role.

"Since my name was linked with extremely erotic activities, I decided to entertain on a large scale . . . and normally arranged for twenty-four to dine. I chose to concentrate on exotic food and fascinating personalities, and served about seven or eight courses. This combination stunned my friends when my sexual games completed the dinner parties. Within weeks my parties became the subject of gossip among the elite in London." Not all her dinner parties involved sex games. Some of these parties were designed to impress leading figures in the arts world, so that Hod could sell precious objects to them. Not all these precious objects were truly precious. But when the parties did descend into orgy, "some strange incidents developed".

On this particular evening in December 1961, Stephen Ward, society osteopath and portraitist, descended the basement steps of 13 Hyde Park Square. Ahead of him was a well-known female personality dressed as Juno in a silver mask, and behind him, an equally well known male dressed as a Viking in a bronze helmet with horns. The door to Mariella's flat was open and in the large through room was a crowd from another world; a Crusader in

a tunic with a large red cross; a pair of lovely female savages painted black, in straw skirts; couples in evening clothes wearing sequined masks; and Helen of Troy in a golden gown with crossed straps over a very bare back. This was Mariella, unmistakable because of her slight frame (she was four foot seven in bare feet) and distinguished by the lofty manner in which she carried her Fabergé lorgnette. Mariella was short-sighted, and her husband, Hod, did not like her wearing spectacles in company. Hod's costume was a hussar's frogged jacket, red and green, which set off his luxuriant sideburns and roué's leer.

It was difficult to move in the crowded flat filled to the brim with TV personalities, embassy officials, a famous one-armed barrister, and at least one MP. They gossiped and buzzed with anticipation among Hod's collection of fine art and antique furniture. Hod and Mariella had flawless taste. Hod was an expert in 18th-century furniture, some of which he restored, most of which he bought at country-house sales around the provinces. As if to prove a point, photographs in thick silver frames were grouped on occasional tables showing well-heeled individuals posing in front of their stately piles. Hod and Mariella collected titles, too. Their star guest for the evening was Lord "A", whose lean, stooping frame was swathed in silk and set off by a turban speared with a ruby brooch. He carried a pasha's wand crowned with a crescent moon. Two horses' tails dangled from the end, waiting to be swished.

Stephen Ward was a frequent guest of Hod and Mariella's, and a connoisseur of orgies. In the mid-1950s his friend, the Marquis of Milford Haven, had hosted sex parties in his flat at 35-37 Grosvenor Square, in Mayfair.

"It would be humbug if I did not confess that I looked forward to the sex orgies," Ward wrote in his unpublished memoir. "I have been to every type of that party - those specializing in certain perversions and those given in an elaborate setting, where all the formalities were observed."

The Marquis followed the tradition of observing formalities. It was important for the participants to feel at their ease and amongst like-minded men of the world. The evening at Grosvenor Square would begin with card-playing and then, when the drink had flowed for a while, women would make an appearance. The men nearly always tended to be older and wealthier than the women who were young and beautiful. The Marquis invited his guests to place bets on the women, who, one assumes, were paid for their

time and allure. (It should be noted that women in these circumstances are generally termed "girls".) So the girls took part in games called "Chase the Bitch" and "Find the Lady". The winners were the men who bet on the right girl. The winning man won a bout of sexual intercourse in the master bedroom. Sex parties were popular among the more jaded members of the aristocracy, who at this time were usually involved in politics, and so were even more minded to unwind in style. But show business personalities also joined in, and at least one member of the Royal Family. All the participants felt the need to take their pleasures to the extreme and away from prying eyes. "Many of the people who attend are rich and famous - many faces that are seen in public life and on television. If their public could only see them like this," crowed Stephen Ward.

Full-scale orgies were taking place all over London. These were parties where no one was paid for their efforts. Stephen Ward was an eager attender of these, too. This was how his friendship with Hod had developed. Hod had been practicing fetishistic sexual acts since the 1930s. Unlike his peers, however, Hod was entirely relaxed about anyone knowing it. Common factors at the orgies Hod and Ward attended seem to have been at least one naked woman and a steady stream of that most reliable of social lubricants, alcohol. Although at one party, Ward noted he "came across the host grinding up pills in a bowl which he put into everything we drank, whether it was gin, whisky, or just coffee. Benzedrine or Methedrine was used".

It is no surprise then that inhibitions were loosened and sensibilities dulled. "I really was curious in a sort of detached way," Ward wrote. "Looking back one sees how easy it is to be drawn into a situation out of simple weakness, to be horrified to start with and later to accept it all as normal behavior or nearly so."

Drugs were enormously helpful in achieving this state of disengagement. Sleeping pills, appetite suppressants and amphetamines were widely prescribed by doctors. As a matter of course, Mariella Novotny, Stephen Ward and their contemporaries swallowed pills to avoid painful or uncomfortable feelings. If Bertrand Russell could not get her to sleep, Mariella used barbiturates, powerful depressants that slow the central nervous system. If a cup of tea could not wake her up, she popped a black bomber, a cocktail of amphetamines and dextro-amphetamines. Housewives and long-distance lorry drivers swore by them. In one of her earliest newspaper interviews Mariella admitted to using pills to help alleviate anxiety. They also

helped close her mind to what she was doing. "The bizarre became normal for me," she wrote.

With her emotional life suitably deadened, Mariella developed an appetite for extreme and intricate acts of sadism. She was most ingenious. Her country weekends became the talk of the town. Lord Astor was a regular. The rake and gambler Lord Longford, the flying ace Count Manfred Czernin (aka "One of the Few"), the psychiatrist, Dr. Eustace Chesser, who in 1940 had published a sex manual entitled 'Love Without Fear' and was subsequently arrested for obscenity, were just a few who took their places alongside film stars and prominent personages.

Taking pride of place at tonight's party, in front of the fireplace, was another titled man. This one was naked, except for a masonic apron and leather mask. He was strapped between two wooden pillars. Mariella had planned the evening very carefully, personally supervising the laying of the antique silver on old lace for the dining table, and the accoutrements for pleasuring her man in the mask. "A flail or whip was in front of his naked figure. As each guest arrived they gave him one stroke, then left the man to join the party. When he was released before dining, he was ordered to remain beneath the long table, out of sight".

Once the man in the mask had taken his place at his hostess's feet, dinner was served. This was Mariella's moment of culinary triumph. For dinner that night she had "cooked a pair of \*\*\*\*\* for the main dish," she explains. She had "\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\*\* in position, and added the colorful \*\*\*\*\*."

Twelve guests, six on either side of the table, with Hod at the head and Mariella facing him, gasped at the gaudy dish set before them. "The Feast of the \*\*\*\*\*," Mariella announced. This was the stuff of Roman Emperors and Tudor monarchs, but not everyone was impressed.

"When they were carried to the table, a girl became hysterical and screamed that the \*\*\*\*\* signified death," Mariella wrote. "She created havoc and had to be sent home, before she ruined the party." Mariella could have told her guests that the \*\*\*\*\*, according to Saint Augustine, symbolizes not death, but resurrection, because it replaces its feathers every year. As such, the \*\*\*\*\* is associated with Christ. Ten years almost to the day after the Feast of the \*\*\*\*\*, also known as the 'Man in the Mask' party, Mariella was interviewed for the Sarasota Herald Tribune, in the United States. She recalled the party,

and in particular referred to the girl who had screamed. "We laughed at her, but five of the guests at the party - two of them titled - died within a short time." This was the atmosphere in which Mariella was cooking. Meanwhile, "under the table (the man in the mask) obeyed any order I gave him to please my guests."

Two guests arrived late, missing out on most of the fun. They were a pair of 17-year-old showgirls called Mandy Rice-Davies and Christine Keeler. To Mariella and her friends, Mandy and Christine were known as "Stephen's popsies". Stephen Ward was a purveyor of pleasure, and kept a stable of young women eager to meet rich men. This occupation guaranteed his usefulness to high society, and, it would later emerge, to MI5. But his social and political usefulness started as a private passion. He found the popsies in station cafes, he told Hod. He would ask if they were models, and then sketch portraits of them to put them at their ease. He always had a sports car parked around the corner. No one was to know it was on hire purchase. The girls usually came from the provinces, and were still in their teens. They had come to London to hit the big time. Stephen would offer a place to stay and then deliver an intensive grooming regime before introducing them to delicately placed men. The rest was up to the girls, he told them.

Not even Stephen had ever met a girl like Mariella. She fascinated him, Christine Keeler wrote in her memoir. Like Athena, she had arrived on the London scene fully formed, as though hatched from Zeus's thigh. Hod had snapped her up while she was still a topless dancer. Unlike Stephen's girls, Mariella was cultured, had intellectual leanings and was mysteriously "Eurasian" in appearance. The inscrutable air she cultivated added intrigue to her slanting eyes and haughty bearing. And she wasn't just a pretty face. She told exotic stories about a runaway communist and a fairytale castle in Prague, where her childhood was spent. In the former territories of the Austro-Hungarian empire, in the aftermath of war, her portrait, she claimed, was "engraved on the nation's banknotes, and her birthday declared the Czechoslovakian National Day of celebration". It was hard to remember she was born in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, which was exactly what she wanted. Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies, from Staines and Solihull respectively, were just as lovely but more straightforward. They were classic products of Stephen's tried and tested finishing school. Six months previously, Hod had spent the evening at Stephen's flat in Wimpole Mews, W1. He told Mariella what he had witnessed.

"Hod watched Christine serve dinner," Mariella recorded. "Ward had finished training her, but to test her ability instructed her to cook, lay the table correctly, and eat with them. Hod related to me her lapses, and how Ward told her not to sprinkle salt on her food. She obediently poured a small amount on the side of her plate. Several such mistakes were criticized by Ward - he wanted to impress Hod with his teaching technique."

Both men saw themselves as Pygmalion. But how much Hod contributed to the finished article of Mariella remains, like everything about her, a mystery.

The party was virtually over by the time Christine and Mandy arrived. Stephen had telephoned them to suggest they come along after he had been caught in the bedroom on his knees. In fact, Mariella almost fell over him as she was groping around in her shoe cupboard. On closer inspection she saw that Stephen was holding one of her stilettos over his nose and mouth, leaving his other hand free. Normally, she observed, Stephen was a watcher rather than a doer. But on this occasion he was "huffing and puffing with excitement". He asked Mariella to put her highest heels on and stand on his scrotum.

Once he had recovered, he made the phone call. In an interview, Mandy recalled: "Stephen met us at the door, wearing nothing but a sock. I thought it was a joke. Everyone was in deshabelle, and Mariella was there, wearing a kind of black corset, and carrying a whip. Naked people were everywhere, draped over chairs, or standing around laughing and joking.

"I didn't know where to look," recalled Mandy. "After all, I was only seventeen, even if I had been around. I remember spotting this plate of tangerines - they were a rarity in winter in those days - and I attacked those tangerines and some chocolates until I felt sick."

While she devoured rare treats, Mandy could not help noticing that her hostess was in bed with six men. Christine got up close to investigate. Mariella "had a tiny waist that exaggerated her ample figure. She was a siren, a sexual athlete of Olympian proportions - she could do it all. She knew all the strange pleasures that were wanted and could deliver them."

And then there was the man in the mask - still cowering under the table.

"The man in the mask was a masochist," wrote Mariella, "and asked me to treat him as my 'slave'. I willingly agreed, and caused him mental and physical pain. This was what he wanted - I did nothing against his wishes. The humiliation he underwent was extreme, but was the dream of his life." The man made Mariella promise to keep his identity secret. This she did, even after his death four years later, in 1965.

In fact, it was not until 1987, four years after Mariella's death, that Hod indicated that the man in the mask might have been the Honorable Anthony Asquith, youngest son of a Liberal Prime Minister, the First Earl of Oxford and Asquith. Anthony Asquith had the added distinction of being one of Britain's most successful film directors. His films included a 1938 adaptation of *Pygmalion*, a storyline that also occupied the imaginations of Hod and Stephen Ward. Other films were *The Winslow Boy*, *The Browning Version* and *The Yellow Rolls-Royce*. Asquith's cinematic successes were stellar. He was a fellow of the British Academy and Governor of the British Film Institute. To his overbearing mother, he was simply "Puffin".

Margot Asquith was known within the family to be highly demanding and critical. Poor health frequently made her "difficult". There were rumors she was a "sapphist". The young Anthony's early experience of his mother was punctured with her capacity for making terrible scenes. People become masochistic, Freud said, as a way of suppressing their desire to sexually dominate others. Anthony Asquith was 61 years old when he is rumored to have paid for Mariella's services. He was unmarried and his friends wondered if he was homosexual. They puzzled over his weekend hobby of serving tea at a lorry drivers' café near Catterick, in Yorkshire. They wondered if it signified an escape into anonymity à la T. E. Lawrence's forays into the desert. The desire to submit, Freud argued, arises from guilt over the desire to dominate. Asquith's mother was most formidable. Mariella, the dominatrix, had an unerring instinct for the weaknesses of men. But did her client list include the youngest son of the Home Secretary who had signed the "gross indecency" arrest warrant against Oscar Wilde? Asquith, his closest friends say, was happily ensconced in a relationship with a working-class East End chap who was married to a most accommodating lady, with whom Asquith had an affectionate, almost familial, bond. It is unlikely that Asquith was her client.

With each addition of pain or restraint, the man in the mask would stiffen slightly. Then he fell into a deep calm, waiting only to obey his mistress.

I have spoken to the man who burgled Mariella's flat in 1977. He did so under the auspices of my grandfather, a conman whom Mariella was investigating for Special Branch. By the 1970s her heightened sense of drama had led her into an equally rarefied field of work. Mariella now styled herself an agent provocateur. But Tricky Dicky was most struck by a manuscript he found that dated to this earlier period of his life. Next to the words "man in the mask", were the initials "P.P."

The truth will not be disclosed here, and arguably no one really cares now. If controversy rekindles it is because of the suspected cover-up and infamous mistrial that took place. Stephen Ward had let his penchant for parties develop into a blackmailers' charter. A man with a taste for the high life has to pay for it somehow. Those closest to Ward knew that he kept a stash of pornography, including photographs of a compromising nature. These photos were made to order and of special people. Ivanov boasted to Mariella about the Politburo - KGB's stash of porn that he had obtained for them. "I have all of them!" he gloated. He made special reference to the following, "including 'a tall, blond man of Greek origins' and his daughter".

"Everyone went home well satisfied," were the last words the "Government Chief Whip" had to say about her party. In December 1961 she was at the top of her game. Two years later, her taste for theatricals crystallized the public's notion of a British Empire in decay, and a government run by elderly degenerates. The game was up. Mariella's clients were running for cover as the "gross indecency" trial of her day found Stephen Ward and, indirectly, his associates guilty of immorality.

One of Mariella's most endearing traits was her resilience. Tired of the hassle that the aristocracy and politicians carried with them, she started frequenting the dens of Soho. Villains were her latest quarry, and - typical of Mariella - she dug away until she dredged up one of the best - Agent Zigzag. And so she began the next episode of her strange, thwarted and yet triumphant, secretive life.

Mariella Novotny was discovered dead in her bed, in February of 1983. It was claimed by the police that she had died of a drug overdose. Christine Keeler later wrote: "The Westminster Coroner, Dr Paul Knapman, called it misadventure. Along with People in Moscow, I still think it was murder. A central figure in the strangest days of my life always believed Mariella would be killed by American or British agents, most probably by the CIA." According to Stephen Dorrel: "Shortly after her death her

house was burgled and all her files and large day-to-day diaries from the early sixties to the seventies, were stolen."

#### Addendum

Twenty-five minutes before the assassination of JFK, someone phoned the Cambridge Evening News in the UK warning of 'big news' and suggesting the paper called the US embassy in London.

When this story emerged it was claimed the phone-call was anonymous.

However, later that day a CIA officer based in London sent a telegram to their office in Washington claiming that 'some similar phone-calls of strangely coincidental nature previous had been received in this country over past year, particularly in connection with the Dr. Ward's case.'

#### Addendum II

Time Magazine 1st May, 1989

Britain's Minister of War John Profumo, husband of refined film star Valerie Hobson, has been sharing the sexual favors of teen tart Christine Keeler with Soviet spy Eugene Ivanov . . . Keeler's blond pal Mandy Rice-Davies, 18, declared in court that she had bedded Lord Astor and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. Mariella Novotny, had John F. Kennedy among her lovers, hosted an all-star orgy where a naked gent, thought to be film director and Prime Minister's son Anthony Asquith, implored guests to beat him. Osteopath and artist Stephen Ward, whose portrait subjects include eight members of the Royal Family, has been charged with pimping Keeler and Rice-Davies to his posh friends. Part of Ward's bail was reportedly posted by young financier, Claus von Bulow.

The Christine Keeler. Truth at Last 2001

When the FBI investigated they were able to involve Mariella with a Hungarian madam in New York. What alarmed them further was my association with Eugene. You could see how two and two could add up to a very big number indeed with all this information. I believe the Americans were convinced that a

worldwide sex-for-information network, an elaborate blackmail operation, was going on. And that the most powerful man in the world, their president, had sampled the pleasures of these female sex spies. Certainly, Bobby Kennedy did not conceal the concerns of himself and his brother.

The Bowtie files talk of Stephen's American connections such as Averell Harriman, the former US ambassador to London, and the billionaire Paul Getty. There is mention of the "Man in the Mask" party. Mariella's story was published on 29 June 1963, and she talked only of Chang and "a US government official who holds a very high elected post".

At 3.05 p.m. that same afternoon, the President's brother called Courtney Evans, a senior deputy of the FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover, to tell him about the story and order an investigation. According to a memo, "the Attorney General stated that the President had expressed concern regarding this matter". The FBI, which had been concentrating, foolishly, on the air force guys, now went all a flutter. Memos were circulated between Hoover and his deputies about the possibility of "an espionage-prostitution ring operating in England, with American ramifications".

Bowtie files show that FBI agents were sent out all over America, where Suzy Chang and Mariella had worked. 'They identified Chang as Esther Sue Yan Chang, the daughter of two Chinese immigrants who lived in New York, but who had herself been refused a visa to live in America.

Stephen Dorrel, Lobster. November 1983

Maria Novotny knew little of her own background. It wasn't until this year that her husband learned her real name. Maria Stella Novotny was born on the 9th of May 1941 in Prague. Her father was brother to the President of Czechoslovakia, and they lived in the Royal palace until she was 6 years old, when the Soviet Union moved in. Because the President supported the Communists, this family tie would explain why Eddowes thought she had been chosen to destroy Kennedy. But what Eddowes didn't know was that Maria's father was actively anti-Communist. Although opposed to each other politically, the brothers remained friends, the President warning Maria's father that the Soviets were liable to arrest him, and advising him to leave the country. Instead, he joined the underground, making arrangements for Maria to leave the country with the family agent, called Rutter.

They escaped in a railway truck hiding under some corn, crossing the border into Austria. Unfortunately they ended up in the Soviet sector where they were put in a displaced persons camp.

In 1948 Maria was released, apparently through the efforts of a Mrs Capes, who had known her father when he was in England, studying at university. How this was achieved is not known, but Maria was brought to England where she lived as the daughter of Mrs Capes. When she became a teenager she went into modelling and was determined to make it into a successful career.

When only 18 she met Horace 'Hod' Dibden, then aged 57, at the Black Sheep Club in Piccadilly, which he helped run. An expert on English antiques and furniture, he had many friends on the London scene, including Stephen Ward, who he had known since the war; and, interestingly, Michael Eddowes, who had given up his solicitor's practice and become the owner of a chain of restaurants. Hod and Eddowes had known each other for twenty years.

Hod and Maria were married in January 1960. The marriage was conditional on her being allowed to carry on her own life. She appears to have been a highly intelligent, very beautiful young girl, determined to get on in the world, hoping to use Hod's contacts and money to climb the social ladder. In her personal account she claims to have been a virgin at the time, and, in reality, rather turned off by sexual relations. To her, sex was a 'game' designed to shock other people: she took her pleasure watching the reactions of people to situations she had organised. After the honeymoon they were regulars on the night club scene. One particular party in February 1960, given by an American millionaire, Huntingdon Hartford, was a turning point.

Among the guests were Stephen Ward and a more 'sinister' man, Harry Alan Towers, who claimed to be a film producer and owner of a modelling agency. Maria and Towers didn't meet at the party, but Towers must have recognised her: four days later a letter arrived suggesting a meeting at Claridges to discuss some possible modelling work. The letter was actually signed by Tower's mother, Margaret, who Novotny claims had an extraordinary influence over him, and from whom he took his instructions. At the meeting Towers was brisk to the point of rudeness. He told her that he could make her a top television model doing commercials in America. Although she didn't like Towers, she found it difficult to turn down the contract, which offered upwards of \$50,000 a year.

Over the next days the contract was sorted out and Maria was introduced to some of Towers' friends, one of whom tried to have sex with her in Paris. Towers, over the next year, made no sexual advances towards Maria but didn't mind pushing his friends on her. She signed to Towers' modelling agency and he gave her a large deposit. The day she left for New York Stephen Ward went to a dinner party with her at which he made some sketches of her. Maria claimed that Ward and Towers knew each other. To Eddowes this provided a link between the Kennedy and Profumo episodes. Hod also thought that Ward and Towers knew each other at this time.

Towers flew ahead a few days earlier and met Maria at what became Kennedy Airport. Almost immediately they were arguing with each other, and Maria became doubly suspicious of him when he told her to sign a hotel register as Maria Novotny. Up til then she had been known as Maria Chapman, Hod's family name. Towers insisted that while she was in America she should use Novotny. What else, she thought, did Towers know of her background?

At first her modelling career went well and they went to the usual round of parties. But it seems that modelling offers were the result of her sleeping with television producers. After two weeks Towers arranged a lunch for her with Peter Lawford, the brother-in-law of President John Kennedy. Towers claimed that it would do her modelling career good if she got to know Kennedy. Maria didn't see the connection at the time; it was only later that she realised that Towers had engineered the meeting for other purposes. On reflection, it spelt blackmail to Maria and Eddowes.

Unknown to her at the time she was scheduled to be the replacement for Simone McQueen, a TV weather forecaster, who had just finished with Kennedy. Lawford took her to parties and she briefly met Kennedy at one and arranged to meet him again. They were more intimate at a party where the singer, Vic Damone, was the host. She was introduced to Kennedy and almost immediately shown into a bedroom where she went to bed with him. They weren't gone very long before there was a commotion in the main room. Damone's Asian girlfriend had made an unsuccessful suicide attempt and had been found in the bathroom with her wrists slashed. The apartment quickly emptied, Kennedy disappearing with a bodyguard and his associates.

The incident was hushed up. The quick departure may have had something to do with the fact that, according to Maria, one of

J. Edgar Hoover' s men was known to attend these parties. Word would have quickly reached Hoover who would have no doubt added it to his files on the Kennedy brothers.

Maria continued to see Kennedy and his brother, Robert, though I doubt that there is much truth in the published accounts of her relationship with Robert. Her own account rarely mentions him - or, for that matter, the sensational claims of her involvement with UN officials. The latter appears to have involved Towers' other girls.

At the end of the year Hod arrived in New York to buy antiques. At this time Maria had had enough of Towers. Her modelling career was nowhere in sight. She decided to leave Towers and move into Hod's apartment near the UN building. Towers was extremely angry and determined to make her stay in his flat. But as he was commuting between London and New York at this time, he had little real control over her. She moved in with Hod.

During this period when Towers would later be accused of running a vice-ring at the UN building, he was in constant touch with his mother - and one other person, Leslie Chateris (re; The Saint - Roger Moore).

Adversitate Custodi Per Verum