

PART 1: The Merry Widows Have Arrived!

BY ADELE SCIORTINO
& DEB WOOD



The best ideas are hatched over frothy coffees, early mornings, and ocean air. Adele Sciortino and Deb Wood have teamed up to bring you the story of the Merry Widows. A project in the making for nearly two years, the Merry Widows started as the brainchild of Adele. Having grown up in the South, Adele was familiar with the story of the Merry Widows, the troupe of women who make their appearances during Joe Cain Day (Mardi Gras). This group of mysterious ladies inspired Adele to approach Deb about a team project. Together they would brainstorm this endeavor and build this cast of characters; after all, two heads are better than one, right? Deb would design and sculpt the figures, and then Adele would research, design, draft, and costume each widow. You may be thinking, "Did that say 'each' widow?"

THERE'S BEEN A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT. OR WAS IT?

William J. Naugterstik III has met an untimely death. He was found sprawled out on the cold marble floor of his palatial Florida home earlier this week. The coroner was called and his suspicions were piqued by the circumstances surrounding this death, so an extensive autopsy has been ordered. Those tiny puncture wounds on his neck are interesting. Exactly what has happened here?

In the meantime, William's gentle, sweet widow of nearly 60 years, Elizabeth Irene Naugterstik (her friends call her Lizzie), has gone to the funeral home to make final arrangements for her dearly departed Willy. She is prepared to spare no expense in this final act of love and reverence for her late husband.

William was a world renowned anthropologist, a generous philanthropist, a professor of anthropology, and known far and wide for his study of elusive and rare insects around the world. In some circles, however, it was thought that his work in anthropology was simply a cover for his life as a spy. This conjecture has never been confirmed. Perhaps his many travels were a cover for some other activity.

Elizabeth has arrived at the funeral home dressed to kill (we didn't just say that, did we?) in her professionally tailored tweed suit, lace ascot, designer handbag, matching shoes, and her crystal and gold cane. Her stylish veiled hat is perched on her gorgeous gray locks. Elizabeth always makes a statement wherever she goes. However, once she arrives, she is met with an unexpected surprise. Elizabeth is not alone. ▶

Adelaide Rose Naugterstik has arrived at the funeral home to make arrangements for her dearly departed husband — Willy. The funeral director is standing there, slack jawed. He's never encountered a situation quite like this one.

Elizabeth sizes up Adelaide, who is a page torn right out of a 1953 calendar (this gal is a throwback to the age of drive-in movies, '57 Chevys, and 10-cent Pepsi Cola). Adelaide is dressed in cotton polka dots, red crinoline, pearls, a red patent leather belt, and a pillbox hat. Even Jackie Kennedy would be impressed! Let's say she's a bit overdone in the makeup department, and her fiery red curls are piled high on top of her head. It suits her though; clearly her personality is over the top as well. "Drama Queen" comes to mind here.

Meanwhile, as Elizabeth and Adelaide begin to get a feel for exactly what is going on, in walks MehLing. Sleek and sexy as all get out, this Asian beauty claims to also be the widow of William J. Naugterstik III. (The funeral director is now hiding out in his office.) MehLing is long and lean, and dressed in a perfectly tailored satin Asian-influenced embroidered dress with a slit that shows her impressive thighs, full-length dragon tattoo, and Christian Louboutin stilettos. My, my ... that darn Willy. Using her cigarette holder as a pointer, she jabs it in the direction of the other two ladies as if to say, "What in the heck are you doing here?"

The story goes something like this: Willy met Elizabeth when she was a student of his at Ohio University, where she, too, was studying anthropology. They fell in love and upon her graduation, they married. Nice of him to wait that long, huh? After setting up a household in Ohio, Willy began



his pursuit of the elusive Winged Wah-hahah Coleopteran Beetle. Thought to be extinct, Willy made it his mission to find this insect, no matter where it led him.

While attending an anthropology convention in Las Vegas, tricky Willy was invited to dinner with his constituents at the Golden Nugget on Fremont Street, where he was mesmerized by a particularly long-legged, red-haired showgirl, Adelaide. Taken with those legs that went from "here to there," Willy found her charms (and that figure) hard to resist. Willy married Adelaide in Elvis' Wedding Chapel the next day. The year was 1959.

With Elizabeth tucked away in their modest residence in Ohio, and Adelaide kept comfortable in a condo in Las Vegas, Willy thought he had it all figured out. That is, until he traveled to the remote lands of Asia, to Vietnam in particular, in search of that darn elusive bug! There he met the gorgeous, intoxicating, exotic, enticing MehLing. Oh. My. Gosh. MehLing, the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo. Busy Willy married MehLing and brought her back to the good ol' U.S. of A. What a guy, huh?

The three ladies are now starting to get the picture. William has been a very busy Willy. As if this isn't enough, and as they fully evaluate the situation, the funeral director has taken a phone call. It seems despicable Willy's fourth wife will be late arriving at the funeral home because she has broken down on the side of the highway with a flat tire on her VW Beetle.

Good grief, what's next?! By now the funeral director is sitting on the floor drinking gin straight from the bottle.

Elizabeth is stunned, of course. Adelaide is all a flutter. MehLing is impatiently tapping the ashes from her cigarette. While the ladies wait for the arrival of widow number four, they have had a chance to think this through and have devised a plan.

Since the "Willy pot" will now have to be divided so many ways, they have decided they are not spending one more red cent on this philandering, polygamist anthropologist/professor/spy than they absolutely have to. Elizabeth's plan to spare no expense has flown right out the window. So, they are burying Ignominious Willy in a pine box. Sorry. That's it. No frills for Willy.

Stay tuned for the next installment of the story where the fourth widow will be revealed, and you will also find out just exactly how poor Willy died. The autopsy is in ... you won't believe the results! And, don't forget, the big final surprise! ►



Third Widow — Mehling



A LONG-DISTANCE COLLABORATION

The logistics of this project could have been a hindrance, with Deb living in northern Minnesota, and Adele's main residence in Montreal, Canada, but these two didn't let that stop them. Phone calls, emails, and hundreds of reference photos shared across the miles all helped to formulate the concept and complete the research for the widows. Not to mention, a good solid friendship between these two women, an abiding respect for one another, and the strengths and talents of each helped to solidify the plan.

Once a year Deb and Adele meet at the Sciortino's vacation home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where Adele hosts Deb's live-sculpting workshops. It is during this time together that the ideas flow freely and the nights grow long. To say these two artists feed off one another's inspirations would be an understatement. Adele has even been known to take notes while Deb talks, jotting down her sometimes tongue-tied comments to use as material in their story. It's all in good fun though, and lots of laughs evolve as the story line develops and the project grows and grows.

Adele and Deb are busy working on the Fourth Widow and also formulating one more big finale surprise that is, and will remain, a secret until it's time to reveal. You won't want to miss this! The culmination of this project will be when the Merry Widows are presented as online classes through A for Artistic, starting early 2017, beginning with Deb guiding students through the armature design and sculpting of the character faces, the arms, hands, legs, and high heels for each of the characters. She also will instruct the facial painting details, and wigging and hairstyles.

That's when Adele steps in to take over the details of costume design, construction, and dressing the figures, including all the accessory details. There will be five classes in all, and if participants take all the lessons, they will also get the directions and pattern to make the wooden casket and sawhorses! That's right — the casket sets on sawhorses. Remember, no extra frills for Willy. This accessory completes the vignette perfectly.



Deb & Adele



As Deb and Adele explain: "This has been and continues to be a labor of love for us, working together, collaborating on ideas, and sharing everything. We've been told this is a rare occurrence, to have two artists work together like this. We checked our egos at the door; we leave that to Willy. He's got enough ego for all of us. We hope that you will visit us at A for Artistic to learn more about our unique project. We promise it will be fun and informative!"

Adele Sciortino's distinctive figurative sculptures have their own unique quality, made with the utmost care and imaginative focus. She has been involved with figurative sculpture making for the last 25 years while running a very successful business, a commercial printing and online class site, on a full-time basis. Adele is also a certified graphic designer as well as a watercolor artist and photographer. In addition, she owns a successful doll and mixed-media online class site, aforartistic.com, served as president of the Original Doll Artist Council of America, and is the publisher of the A For Artistic quarterly e-magazine. Visit adelesciortino.com to learn more.

Deb Wood has been sculpting one-of-a-kind figurative art since 1988. After discovering polymer clay, and all that could be achieved with it, the ball started rolling and hasn't stopped since. Deb has taught seminars across the country for more than 25 years. More recently, she has started teaching classes online. She is also the president of International Art Doll Registry, an online worldwide group of artists who also create one-of-a-kind artwork in several mediums. You can find out more about the organization at international-art-doll-registry.com. To learn more about Deb, visit debwood.com.