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The



Rue Benouville Diaries

PARIS. OLIVIA DE HAVILLAND & THE ART OF AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

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Bonjour!

It's lovely to be with you again.

In my last letter I shared my first encounter with Olivia de Havilland in the charming boudoir of her Parisian *hôtel particulier*. Her bright brown eyes, her impeccable style, her reassuring voice that immediately put me at ease.

What I didn't tell you is that I went on to spend almost every weekday afternoon by her side for 14 months. And after my final *après-midi* in June 2005, I made a quiet promise to myself: *I will honor her legacy*. She had changed my life, after all.



3 Rue Benouville Boudoir 2004

But what would that look like? To live as she taught me—with excellence, graciousness, and integrity? Or perhaps through some other meaningful act of remembrance?

Over 20 years later, the answer began to take shape. This excerpt from *My Year with Dame Olivia* manuscript explains more:

"In May 2023, I read in The Hollywood Reporter that Dame Olivia's daughter Gisele had hired an auction house to hold an estate sale of Olivia's belongings: a silver compact once owned by Bette Davis, a check signed by Errol Flynn. And that a portion of the proceeds would be donated to The American Cathedral in Paris. Reading about the people and places that had been so important to Olivia brought back a flood of memories that I hadn't revisited in years."

Three months later, a dear friend in Nashville threw a launch party for her debut book. Something clicked. It became clear: I wanted to write a book. After all, people had encouraged me to do so for years. But first, I needed Gisele's blessing.

I frantically searched a file of papers I'd kept from my year with Olivia, looking for Gisele's contact information. I found an old cell phone number that, miraculously, still worked two decades later. I asked her permission to write the book, which she graciously gave me and wished me a warm 'Bon courage.'"

Those are the events that unfolded behind the scenes that set my writing journey in motion.

But the broader question remains: why this book—and why now?

Because I believe readers are hungry for something deeper. They want stories that offer wisdom, show examples of character, and provide a blueprint for living more intentionally.

In today's fast-paced culture pressuring you to do more, have more, be more, it's easy to lose touch with who you truly are. So often, the world prioritizes surface over substance.

My Year with Dame Olivia: Paris, Olivia de Havilland & the Art of an Extraordinary Life is a guide for reclaiming your life from the busyness and superficiality that surround you. Through six counter-cultural life lessons drawn from Olivia's example, the book explores how ordinary moments, approached with intention and presence, can become extraordinary ones.

And you don't have to move to Paris, work for a celebrity, or wait for the "right" circumstances to begin. You can start just where you are. You can start *now*.

My Year with Dame Olivia Book Update

I'm thrilled to announce that I have officially signed with literary agent Mary Elizabeth Colton of the Ami McConnell Literary Agency! She is the perfect partner for this project: strategic, passionate, well-connected, discerning, persistent as well as a devoted Classic Hollywood and Olivia de Havilland fan. And did I mention she's a Francophile? I'm deeply grateful to have her guidance as we seek to find the perfect publishing home to bring Dame Olivia's wisdom to readers.



In my next letter on July 1st, what would have been Dame Olivia's 110th birthday, I'll celebrate her extraordinary legacy by sharing the story many people still don't know: how she helped change Hollywood forever.

À la prochaine,

Ganna

P.S. If you enjoyed this edition, please forward it to one friend who loves Golden Age Hollywood, Paris, or inspiring true stories. Invite them to subscribe to *The Rue Benouville Diaries* by clicking the blue button below.

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