

over almost daily for her approval, and the clothes flown in on the Italian airline LAI, arriving the week before the wedding and providing another photo opportunity.²⁴ Hollywood studio designer Helen Rose made the wedding dress, a fairytale creation of white silk chiffon over white crepe, with a tight-fitting bodice and flowing skirt. The high collar and long fitted sleeves were appliquéd with lace, and lavishly embroidered with seed pearls, the same pearls encrusting the Juliet cap that held her full-length tulle veil. Pier carried a bouquet of lilies of the valley. She wore neither gloves nor jewelry apart from her engagement ring and diamond cross.

From time immemorial, brides have loved lilies of the valley best of all the wedding flowers. They symbolize innocence, purity, and happiness regained, but few realize that they are also highly poisonous.²⁵ They were everywhere that day: in Pier's bouquet, making up a little spray carried by Marisa in addition to her own flowers, peering from Vic's boutonniere, and topping the wedding cake with their tiny fragrant, bells. Edged with lace and bound with loops of narrow white satin ribbons that cascaded from her hands, the flowers added a perfect finishing touch to Pier's wedding ensemble and they were her only adornment.

On the morning of November 24, Pier floated down the aisle on the arm of MGM executive Edward J. Mannix looking too beautiful for words. It was her biggest day and all eyes were upon her. She was the star.

"I remember I felt faint," Pier said later, "and the lilies of the valley that I carried were shaking."²⁶ Her eyes were misty, her mother crying. "All the faces, they were blurred to me, but *everyone* seemed to be crying. I saw Debbie and there were tears streaming down her cheeks. I heard someone whisper 'She's still such a child.'"

"I was crying too," Helena Sorell re-

members, "but not because of the beautiful bride, I was miserable because I knew she was making a terrible mistake."²⁷

Inside the Church on Beverly Glen and West Pico an angelic choir of thirty-five small boys dressed in red, white and gold sang throughout the ceremony, and four hundred people witnessed Father O'Shea unite the couple who exchanged their wedding rings in a nuptial low mass. After the service was completed but before leaving the church, Pier took the little posy from Marisa and walked to the statue of the Blessed Virgin. She placed the flowers at the foot of the image, and kneeling for a moment of private prayer, asked the Mother of God to bless their marriage and make it fruitful. Then she joined Vic and they proceeded down the aisle, followed by the bridal party.

Exiting from the candlelit church into the sudden brightness of the midday sun, Pier was aware of a crowd of people on the steps, and photographers up close and shouting "Hey Pier!" "Look this way Vic," then "Kiss him, go on Pier." Vic had his arm around her, and as Pier turned toward him for their first married kiss for the cameras, she was aware of the noise of a motorbike revving up across the street, and glimpsed a familiar figure taking off at high speed.²⁸ Her heart lurched; she knew who it was. So did Esme Chandlee who was right behind her and witnessed the moment. By now the whole wedding party had arrived on the steps beside them, being grouped for a formal portrait. In the crush it took some time for guests to make their way out of the church, and by then Jimmy Dean was long gone. The pictures taken that day say it all. Pier smiled and smiled, and laughed like an overexcited child, but not a single photograph records a loving glance between her and Vic—he seldom looked at the camera and not once did he look at her.

The reception was held at the Bel-Air