

*When Europa  
Rode the Bull*

a novel  
by  
Barbara Bérot

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any similarity to living persons or actual events is coincidental and not intended by the author.

cover design by Tracy Gibb, BookMasters, Inc.  
cover photo of St. Andrews Cathedral by Barbara Bérot  
photo of Ms. Bérot by Patricia Gershanick, C.P.P.

Published by Streetcar Books  
Mechanicsville, Pennsylvania 18943

Copyright © 2004, Barbara Bérot

ISBN 0-9748899-0-3

LCCN 2003195003

All rights reserved.

First Edition

Printed by BookMasters, Inc.,  
in the United States of America

# *The Myth*

Zeus's voracious sexual appetite was matched only by his wife's appetite for revenge, which she frequently wielded on his lovers. But his passion for the mortal Europa would not be denied, and he would find a way to shield her from Hera's wrath.

The beautiful daughter of the King of Sidon, Europa awoke early one morning from a disturbing dream; two continents, each in the shape of a woman, were trying to possess her. Rather than return to sleep, Europa roused her friends, all fair maidens of noble birth, and together they walked to the sea. Zeus watched admiringly from his vantage point at Olympus, while the girls gathered the fragrant flowers that carpeted the spring meadow. But it was Europa who most profoundly captured his attention, for although the others were lovely, she was as Aphrodite to the sister Graces. And while he reveled in the joy of beholding her, the mischievous Eros sent an arrow straight for his heart.

So that Hera would not know of his desire, Zeus disguised himself as a bull—a chestnut bull with horns like crescent moons, whose scent was sweeter than the hyacinth that bloomed in the meadow. Europa was enchanted by his comeliness and gentle nature and as she approached him, he bowed low before her. She fashioned a garland from her flowers and laid it upon him, then climbed onto his back. To the astonishment of her friends, the magnificent creature leaped into the air and over the sea, as though he was possessed of wings. Europa cried out in terror but he gently

reassured her, confessing that he was the mighty Zeus and everything he did was for love of her. He carried her to the island of Crete where he ravished her and gave her his three sons to carry.

Europa later married Asterius, the king of Crete, who cherished her and adopted her sons. But Zeus loved her always, and throughout her life she remained a favorite of the father of gods and men.

\* \* \*

Self is the only prison that can ever bind the soul;  
Love is the only angel who can bid the gates unroll;  
And when he comes to call thee, arise and follow fast;  
His way may lie through darkness,  
but it leads to light at last.

Henry Van Dyke, *The Prison and the Angel*

# *Acknowledgments*

Writing is such a lonely and frustrating occupation. Many days the task seemed so mammoth, I might have chucked my computer in the pond. But angels of inspiration were hovering about me, guiding and buoying me, lifting me through to the end. To these special people, I will always be grateful. And while it is impossible to acknowledge everyone who helped me, I will make special mention of the more involved.

Early on there was Maryann Bérot, to whom I sent each chapter as it was completed. Her urgent messages of, “When are you sending the next one, you’re not going to make me wait, are you?” infused me with confidence.

And there was the sound advice of James Rahn, who also provided entrée to Sheila Dolan. Despite seeing my manuscript at its raw and rambling worst, she did not flinch, but rather approached it with skill and patience. But for her critical guidance, I might still be in search of a story.

Then came Sarah Farnsworth, whose intelligent editorial assistance was just what my characters needed, and Helene Mathern, whose friendship and enthusiasm for the novel nurtured me through the painful editing process. The team at BookMasters was exceptionally helpful. I thank Anne Clarke for her fine copyediting and Kristen Butler for her skillful management of the overall project.

My family and friends were an ongoing source of encouragement, and there were generous strangers along the way,

such as the Mumfords in St. Andrews, Betty in Oxford, and Malcolm in Kilmartin.

My son Alexis was there throughout, prodding me with “When are you going to finish that book?” His loving and forgiving nature has been a mother’s blessing, and his insightful humor has helped me to laugh my way through the bleakest, most discouraging days.

My husband and ardent supporter, the steadfast Robbie, never failed me; his unconditional love has given me license to be myself and chase my dreams.

But perhaps most important of all was my stepfather, a founding member and vice president of the hay-chewers club. His belief in me was a gift, one that allowed me to see myself as unique and capable, even lovable. He was my archangel, the man who delivered us all from the bonds of mediocrity; without him, I shudder to think.

This is for you, Pop. I miss you.

\* \* \*

For Frederick James Digby  
(1919–1993)