

Cheyenne Brando - the beautiful girl who had no chance

Written by Andy Owen



Marlon Brando was one of the finest actors that has ever lived. He was - and still is, to many - an icon.

But, his life, the way he lived it and the damage it inflicted - especially to family members - was deplorable and the results were tragic.

He was the father of 23 children. 11 were officially acknowledged - another 12 were not, but were common knowledge. It is pretty clear that he loved his children dearly, but his talents as a father or role model to any of them, left a hell of a lot to be desired.

Most of his offspring were based in Tahiti. One of Brando's main pieces of advice for all his children was "don't go to Hollywood".

By and large, most of the kids obeyed. Unfortunately, two didn't - his son Christian and his daughter Cheyenne.

And they both paid a heavy price. Cheyenne, especially...

Cheyenne was born in 1970.

Her mother was Tarita Teriipaia - a stunningly beautiful former French actress from French Polynesia.



She was Brando's third wife. He met her while filming Mutiny On The Bounty.

Tarita raised Cheyenne on Tahiti. Tarita and Brando separated when she was two.

While Cheyenne was growing up, Marlon Brando did not allow her, or her brother Tehotu to visit him in the United States.

In 1976, he said: *"As Tahitians, they are too trusting. They would be destroyed by the pace of life in the States."*

Cheyenne adored her father during her childhood, but as she became a teenager, she began to hate him for abandoning her.

She started to regularly badmouth him in public.



In an interview she said, *"I have come to despise my father for the way he ignored me when I was a child. He came to the island maybe once a year but really didn't seem to care whether he saw me or not. He wanted us, but he didn't want us."*

She started drinking too much, was smoking heavily and cut her hair short.



Her father became very concerned about her and tried to get her to stop what she was doing - and start thinking of her health and well being.

But she wasn't listening.

He tried taking her surfing and snorkelling, getting her interested in horseback riding.

But she stayed sad and lost, no matter what he tried...

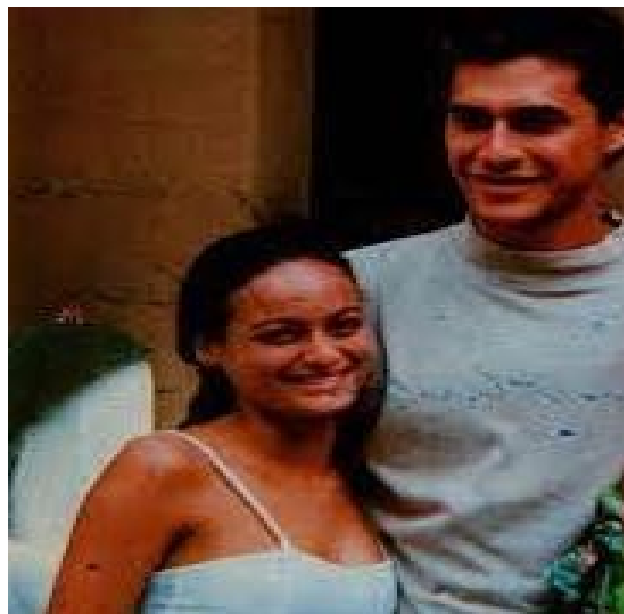
Cheyenne eventually dropped out of High School and began smoking marijuana, as well as taking hard drugs, including LSD, PCP and many others.

She was going downhill fast...

But, potential salvation was seemingly around the corner.

In May 1987, Cheyenne met a man called Dag Drollet. The pair were introduced at a family gathering, as the Brandos and Drollets had been long-time friends.

They started dating, she quit drugs and began dreaming of a bright future.



He was 6 years older than Cheyenne and the son of Jacques Drollet - a member of the Assembly of French Polynesia. He was one of the strongest political figures in Tahiti.

Cheyenne fell in love with him.

In 1989, she got pregnant. On hearing the news, Marlon invited both of them to visit him in his Los Angeles mansion. The couple stayed at Brando's house on Mulholland Drive, for a few weeks.



Cheyenne was very beautiful and had ambitions to be a big star.

She had a talent as a dancer and, while in the US, became a sought-after model, due to her stunning looks and her family name.

But, despite this new positivity, she was, underneath it all, still a disturbed soul. The mental issues were never far from the surface.

The couple returned to Tahiti. Whilst there, Cheyenne was seriously injured in a car accident when she crashed a Jeep whilst driving erratically and much too fast.

Apparently she had flown into a rage, when her father refused to allow her to visit him while he was filming *The Freshmen* in Toronto.

She sustained a broken jaw, a nasty cut under her eye - and her ear was badly torn. Marlon Brando flew her to Los Angeles to undergo extensive reconstructive and cosmetic surgery.

But the accident effectively ended her modelling career. She started to take hallucinogenic drugs again.

After the accident and her surgery, she started to have deep bouts of depression and she attempted suicide, including trying to hang herself with a length of dog chain after coming home from a disco at 3am.

Cheyenne and Dag separated in March 1990.

But, despite the separation, they flew to Los Angeles together on 1st May 1990. She was there for psychological counselling after her disfigurement and trauma following the car accident.

She was 7 months pregnant.

They once again stayed in the Brando home on Mulholland Drive.



Whilst in LA, Cheyenne reconnected with her older half-brother, Christian, who also lived in the city. Just over two weeks later, in Christian's apartment, his phone rang.

It was Cheyenne. In tears.

"Dag hit me", she screamed.

Christian drove over and confronted Dag, who pleaded his innocence.

After a brief struggle, Christian pulled a gun from his jacket and shot Dag in the face. Point blank.

He was dead before he hit the floor.

The police arrived and Christian was arrested. Two days later, he was charged with first-degree murder.



Christian Brando maintained that the shooting was totally accidental and said that the gun went off, after Drollet had tried to take it away from him

The prosecutors of the case tried to subpoena Cheyenne to testify at Christian's trial. They wanted to prove that the killing was premeditated and felt her account of the night's event, would be crucial in proving it.

However, she refused to testify and fled back to Tahiti.



On 26th June 1990, she gave birth to a son she named Tuki Brando.

Not long after Tuki's birth, Cheyenne attempted suicide twice and was hospitalised for drug detoxification in a psychiatric hospital.

On 22nd December 1990, Cheyenne was declared 'mentally disabled' by a French judge and was deemed unable to testify at her half-brother's trial.

Without her testimony, prosecutors could no longer prove that Drollet's death was premeditated. So, they offered Christian Brando a plea deal, which he accepted.

He pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and was sentenced to ten years.

He served a total of five - and was placed on three years' probation.

In an interview given after his release, Christian stated that he now doubted Cheyenne's accusations of physical abuse against Drollet, due to her mental instability. *"I feel like a complete chump for believing her"*, he said.

And later on, he also came to doubt whether Dag had ever truly been abusive, as he discovered that Cheyenne had a history of lying and inventing stories and situations.

He was unaware of this before, as they had grown up apart.

The ordeal of the shooting and the trial left everyone involved, utterly broken.

In the years following Drollet's death and her half-brother Christian's trial, Cheyenne Brando's mental health steadily declined.

She was flown to Paris with her mother, her doctor and a new boyfriend, as well as her father's Tahitian public-relations man - and was checked into one of Europe's most exclusive psychiatric clinics.

Whilst there, she publicly accused her father of molesting her and accused him of being an accomplice in Drollet's death, both accusations he vehemently denied.

Six months later, she disappeared from the clinic and returned to Tahiti.

She was later formally diagnosed with schizophrenia and soon became completely isolated from her former friends.

She also lost custody of her son Tuki to her mother, who raised him in Tahiti. (*When he grew up, Tuki Brando, like his mother, would go into modelling and also enter medical school*).

Cheyenne Brando hanged herself at her home in Tahiti in 1995.

She had been in seclusion for months. It's still not known whether a suicide note was ever left.

Christian Brando died in 2008, of pneumonia. He was only 49.

He had suffered an incredibly traumatic upbringing, with his parents continually fighting amid massive drug and alcohol abuse.

He was even kidnapped by his mother when he was 14 years old and placed with a hippie commune in Baja, California.

His father, cruelly described Christian as a "*basket case of emotional disorder*".

Just for the record, Marlon Brando died in 2004 of respiratory failure, whilst also suffering from diabetes and liver cancer.

He was clearly a very psychologically disturbed man - and most of his kids suffered as a result.

They had little or no chance of coming out unscathed.

The beautiful, fragile Cheyenne especially...

It's a very, very sad story that has no winners.

