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Voluptée Magazine

Mariell
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by Henry Rene d'Allemagne
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MARIËLL

Eccentric Erotica

Original Edition

Halfmoon Erotica
A Division of Halfmoon Entertainment
New York
2001



For
Cannibal Fairy,
my Love,
my Inspiration,
&
my Soul Mate.

Very special thanks to all of you who have offered your talents and time to help me either creatively, emotionally, spiritually, or sexually . . . to complete this book. You know who you are and the roles you play in my life.

A million kisses from my lips, painted with
Chanel's *Lucifer Kissed*.
Love,
M.

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Preface

What did I learn while writing this collection? I learned that my real sexual needs were of a unique nature and that I had been craving to explore and reach beyond familiar, traditional physical intimacy. I set aside my beliefs and forgot about what used to arouse me, letting myself be whisked into the lives of my characters — their desires, their climaxes. This opened intense explorations into my sex life during which I freed myself from long-instilled ideas about sexuality. Experiences that I once viewed with trepidation or disgust, I now enjoy and seek out passionately.

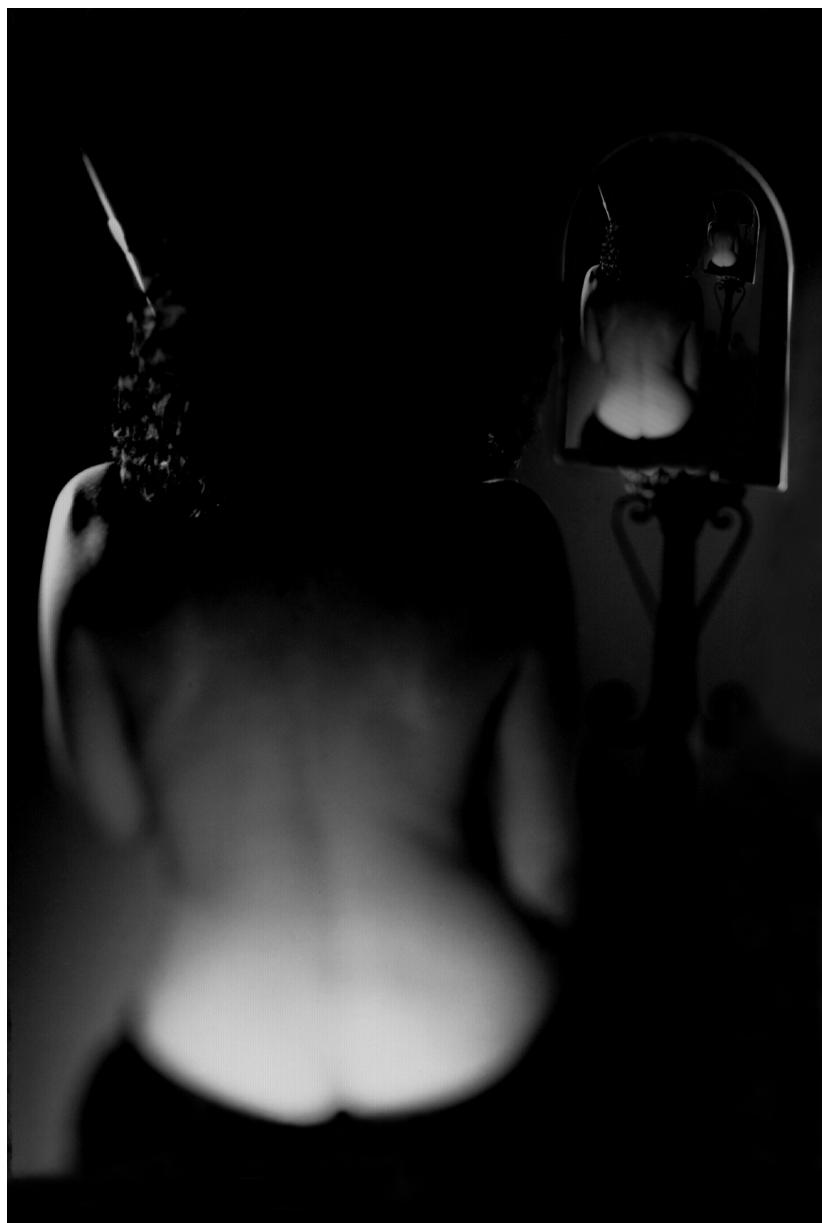
I used to view my sexuality frozen in a dramatic black-and-white photograph, prisoner of hard crisp lines that it would not dare cross. While writing this collection of stories, I slowly enticed my sexuality to cross the lines of eccentricity, decadence, perversion, and debauchery. As it took each step into the light, succulent, luscious, vivid colors seeped into the black-and-white photograph.

I invite you into my world, my imagination, to take an eccentric, erotic voyage, to get lost in the stories, and to live through each character. Enjoy your journey.

Mariëll

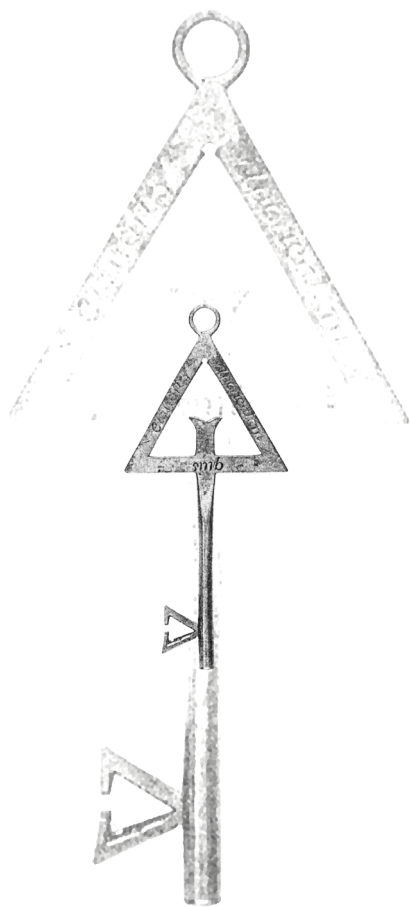
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Cleopatra's Menagerie

Buzzing, hissing love in the animal "queendom"



*M*arc Antony's blood surged onto the stone floor of Cleopatra's tomb.

In a final act of passion, the Roman general had impaled himself on his battle sword. Antony was convinced that the Queen of Egypt, his lover, was dead. But no sooner had he driven the sword into his flesh than a messenger brought a battered papyrus scroll, written in the Queen's own hand, assuring him that she was still alive, proving the earlier news of her death to be a vicious rumor spread by his enemies. Feeling death now looming over him, he ordered his

faithful guard to take him to the Queen's tomb, her hiding place, leaving behind the battle, his men, his victory or his defeat.

"Why?" Cleopatra whispered.

She cradled Antony's head in her arms while his body draped across her lap.

In order not to offend her with the sight of his blood, he summoned the strength to swallow the warm liquid, which had flooded his mouth.

"For love . . ."

She parted his lips with her kiss, and tasting the bittersweet coating of blood in his mouth, drew in his last breath.

"No!" she screamed inside her head. "I need you to live!"

His body went limp in her arms, and in the dim light of the torches, Cleopatra saw that his face was now tranquil.

And when the Queen of Egypt realized that death had welcomed her lover, she wept. The reality of his passing tore open her soul, and all that she believed poured out. She rocked back and forth, clutching his face to her breasts.

"Wait for me, Antony. Wait for me," she sobbed.

As her lover's soul glided out of her tomb, Octavian, the newest Roman conqueror, and his soldiers violated the secret chamber, sweeping into the sanctuary like a blinding, overpowering sandstorm.

Over the clanking of their metal chest plates and the rustling of their cloaks, Cleopatra instantly recognized the cry of her son, Caesarion. Octavian's first officer shackled her beloved child with his armor-covered arms, squeezing the tiny body without mercy, as a ferocious lion about to kill a helpless colt traps it between its powerful jaws. The toddler embodied her union with Julius Caesar: the golden curls, the developing aquiline nose, the distinguished pouty mouth — all belonged to Caesar. When the boy saw his mother, he screeched and struggled to escape the grip of the soldier.

Anxiety invaded Cleopatra at the sight of the Roman officer holding her little boy. She clenched her teeth. Tears had swollen her almond-shaped brown eyes and blackened her chiseled face with kohl.

"Is Antony dead?" Octavian asked. He had heard the rumor of Antony's attempted suicide but did not believe that the Roman general could be so weak.

She glared at Octavian.

"Charmain! Iras! Gently lay my lover's body on my couch!" she commanded.

Her most trusted slaves, who never left her side, lifted Antony from her lap. They struggled to align the body on the solid ebony couch. Soft crimson bolsters and square gold pillows embraced the dead general, providing comfort to him during his long journey through the turbulent waters of heaven to the underworld.

Death had taken his soul, but it had not yet diminished the size of the rippled muscles of his arms, nor the firmness of his legs. His chest swelled under the tattered, bloody military uniform. His rosy color had drained from his complexion, almost transforming him into a beautifully, newly chiseled marble statue.

Octavian stared at Marc Antony's body.

"My brother-in-law . . . why did you betray Rome and my sister?" he anguished.

Octavian's face displayed disgust, yet his blond eyelashes betrayed him as they darkened with tears of sorrow.

"Give me my child!" Cleopatra demanded.

Octavian turned his eyes to the Queen now standing before him. The curved lines of her slender figure were faint beneath the blood-stained white sheath. Tears pasted a few strands of hair to her right cheek. Her regal stance and bewitching appearance did not entice Octavian; instead, her towering intellect threatened him. From her eyes, she radiated the strength of a conqueror. She had manipulated her people to help her steal the throne of Egypt from her brother; she had led her empire to war; she had seduced two of Rome's greatest leaders.

"I command you to return my child!"

"You have claimed two sons of Rome; now I shall claim yours!" Octavian snarled.

Driven by the instinct to protect her child, Cleopatra lunged like a great black panther, but before she could reach Caesarion, she was caught around the waist by one of the Roman guards, while another seized her arms. She began to struggle but halted. In her mind, her father's voice shattered her maternal instinct: "You are the daughter of Isis! Always behave like a goddess! No one, no matter what the circumstances, can ever change the course of your destiny."

"Mama!" the little boy screamed.

Octavian drew his sword from the sheath at his waist. He grabbed the blond, curly hair of the child and severed the small head from its body. Blood erupted from the tiny neck, showering the Queen and the soldiers who restrained her.

The shriek of the slaves echoed through the tomb, but Cleopatra remained silent. Cold perspiration formed in small beads over her face, and she no longer felt her body. She started to faint, but called upon the strength of both the goddess Isis and her father to enclose her in dignity and help her resist the urge to collapse.

As Octavian dangled the child's head from a clump of curls entwined in his fingers, he smiled, a crocodile satisfied with the nimble body of a young gazelle, the slender neck caught on its pointed teeth, the terrorized head swaying from its monstrous jaws.

Blood from the boy's head continued to drip down the lacerated strands of flesh, each drop gathering into a small pool on the floor, each drop sending an echo of inhumanity through the tomb. Fear froze the boy's brown eyes, and his little mouth remained slightly ajar; a screech was trapped on his tongue behind tiny, white teeth and the florid flesh of his mouth.

"Dispose of the body," Octavian said to the first officer holding the torso. "He cannot be welcomed into the afterlife without his body intact. Isn't that correct, mighty Queen?"

He tossed the small head into the air. Cleopatra trembled at the sound of the skull crashing onto the stone floor. The crippling thud of death drummed in her chest as Caesarion's bloody face and hair rolled to her feet. Face, hair, face, hair, face, hair . . . The head rolled

toward her and stopped when the side of the tiny nose rested on the top of her sandal.

As sorrow dropped like a curtain over her face, her stomach churned, as if she were poisoned, and hot, sour nausea entered her throat. She swallowed. She could not look at the small form, so she followed the trail of blood back to Octavian.

Hatred now masked her grief.

Octavian looked at her with his mocking eyes and slightly upturned mouth.

"Octavian, if you are to condemn the soul of my child, will you not spare Antony from desecration?" Cleopatra spat.

"He will go back to Rome with us."

"His body must be preserved! You have proven your knowledge of our religious beliefs, but are you aware of the heinous rituals our Egyptian embalmers practice?"

His mouth tilted downward and he arched his right eyebrow.

"Embalms," she continued, "practice sexual violation of all royal corpses, including men."

"What violation?" he growled.

"They impale the bodies with their members and other instruments. They rip and shred every orifice. They believe that the sexual souls remain in the bodies of the dead. The power of these souls can be seized and harnessed to sexually hypnotize and control others."

The guards still restrained the Queen, but their clutches no longer pinched her flesh, for her limbs had gone flaccid.

"Octavian, listen to me! Can you see them now salivating at the thought of seizing the power of the great Roman general, Antony?"

"No Roman will be subjected to such desecration; this Egyptian witchery has no place in our world," he said condescendingly. He turned to the two guards standing closest to him and said, "Guard Antony's body until we return to Rome."

Octavian was fuming with rage. The Queen had proved him ignorant before his soldiers. She was a sorceress capable of crippling any man.

"Strip her," Octavian ordered the guards.

They ripped the blood-stained linen gown from her body. Her breasts were two beautiful teardrops with large, dark nipples. Her small waist was a delicate shell, soft and curving; it cushioned an incandescent white pearl adorning her navel, a gift from her beloved Antony. Her hips were slender and barely revealed that she had carried children. The dark delta of womanhood was erased, revealing the mouth of her sex.

"Turn her around," he said. Her legs were muscular, and her behind was round and fleshy. "Make her kneel."

The guards did as he commanded, and the naked Queen of Egypt knelt on the stone floor. Her hands and knees reddened with the mixed blood of her lover and her son.

Octavian pointed to Charmain. "Grab that one! Lay her on the floor and put the Face of Egypt between her legs."

A derisive laugh erupted from the soldiers as they followed the command of their leader.

They tore open the tunic of the voluptuous slave and forced her to the floor. The girl screamed with each breath.

"Silence! Do as you are ordered," Cleopatra hissed.

"Drink the polluted water of peasantry," Octavian roared.

"Octavian." Cleopatra intentionally whispered his name to draw him closer to her so that only he would hear her words. "I will obey your command on one condition."

"No conditions," he whispered.

Cleopatra continued speaking softly, making sure that the soldiers and her servants did not hear their exchange.

"If I were to obey this command willingly, would you not gain greater respect from your soldiers by being the only Roman conqueror not ensnared by the Queen of Egypt?"

He pulled her hair, and her disheveled wig fell to the side of her face. He forcefully lifted it off her head and threw it on the floor. Grabbing her chin, he raised her face to his. He thought for a moment about threatening to kill her, but his better judgment told

him that he needed her alive, and that death, to her, would only be a welcome event.

"What condition?" he asked through his teeth.

The stench of his breath and the sweat dripping from his brow sickened her.

"The body of my son," she whispered.

He tightened his grip, digging his nails into the flesh of her face.

"Bring back the boy's body," he ordered as he released her jaw, pushing her head forward.

Cleopatra descended to the dark, entwining curls of her slave. The legs of Charmain shook and attempted to close.

"Hold that peasant's legs open," Octavian said to his guards.

On each side of Charmain, a Roman guard knelt on one knee, and with strong callused hands, forced open her legs.

Cleopatra laid her hands on the sides of her slave's sex. The brown lips were fleshy and covered with soft, sable curls. She gently pinched them between her fingers and bit them with her teeth. She slowly separated them, revealing smooth cinnamon-colored folds, pursed together. As she spread them further, the color darkened into a black, hollow opening. The cavity offered no nectar and emitted a rancid odor.

The acrid smell of blood rose from the floor, and Cleopatra's stomach churned, threatening to erupt. She had saved the body of her lover, and now, she had to save the soul of her child. Determination overshadowed her own dignity. Her son would be intact for the underworld.

She plunged her mouth into the sex of her slave and devoured the folds. With her wet tongue she traced each petal, and when she discovered the knob, she pressed her lips against it and sucked it into her mouth.

With her long fingers she instinctively explored the inside of the slave's womb. She pushed upward until soft, wet flesh surrounded her fingers. She discovered the fleshy orb hidden high in her slave's womb and began to caress it with a rhythmic, circular motion.

Charmain's body involuntarily responded. Her wetness coated Cleopatra's fingers and flowed down, dampening the Queen's palm. The slave's wide hips began to undulate, and her nipples became erect. The stimulation had moistened Charmain's sex, but fear robbed her of the mental pleasure of climax. She and Iras had experienced this climax together, and even though such pleasure was forbidden by Egyptian law, they had risked punishment for their intimacy. They had only each other, for royal slaves could never marry.

Charmain's mind shifted from the attention given to her sex to the hands of the Roman soldiers. Aroused, they watched the Queen lap up the milk dripping from the slave's sex. They tightened their grasp, digging their nails into Charmain's flesh.

The mocking laughter that earlier had burst out of the soldiers' mouths was now replaced with deep heaving gasps of unsatisfied desire.

Octavian, observing the intensifying interaction, felt his own sex inflate with lust. He gestured to his soldiers to release Charmain's legs.

The slave's legs tightened around the Queen's head. Cleopatra withdrew her fingers from the opening and grabbed the slave's thighs, clamping them even closer to her face.

Cleopatra continued her relentless feast on the sex of her slave. The arid folds flooded. The rancid smell dissolved into the aroma of desire. The paralyzing fear of her slave finally surrendered to paralyzing pleasure.

The sound of metal hitting the stone floor startled Cleopatra as it echoed through the tomb. She did not look up and her mouth remained fixed on Charmain's sex.

A hard, narrow shaft interrupted her labor and forced open her own womb, as a strap of leather stung the curve of her behind.

She quickly glanced up to see the lustful eyes of Octavian's soldiers watching their leader enjoy the spoils of war.

"Keep your head down," Octavian ordered.

With every thrust Cleopatra's face was driven deeper between

Charmain's legs. The Roman general ordered her to continue pleasing the girl, but the attempt was futile. She could no longer maintain her established rhythm and was forced to dance to the time of her rapist.

On one knee, between Cleopatra's legs, Octavian entered her repeatedly. He had lifted his uniform and covered her behind with his kilt. No one was to see his manhood.

Her hairless sex was barren of wetness and lacked the tightness of virginity. But he wanted her. He wanted to conquer her. This harlot would not entrance him. He would have all that was Caesar's and all that was Antony's.

The arid passage to Cleopatra's womb stayed raw, as the small shaft scraped against her tender, inner flesh. Her intuition told her that Octavian's assault would not last. He had neither the finesse of Caesar nor the stamina of Antony. His strength dwindled with each thrust.

The barbarian clawed his hands around her waist in an effort to drive his short member deeper inside her. When the Roman conqueror could not enter further, he used short, quick strokes and released his fluid into her womb. He pretended to withdraw his shaft, but she felt it instantly deflate and fall out of her.

He arranged his uniform and stood up. The hard stone floor had dimpled his right knee. His face was wet with sweat and flushed from exertion.

He turned to the guard who had brought back the body of the child. "Bring the Queen back to the palace and confine her to her bedchamber."

To the other two soldiers he ordered, "Do what you will with her slaves, but don't kill them."

He clasped his leather belt and sword around his waist. He then reached down to the waist of the Queen and ripped the shimmering pearl from her navel, tearing her delicate flesh. The Queen did not cry out, did not wince, but she hardened her body, tensing each muscle so as not to crumble before her torturer. Although the death

of her lover, the murder of her child, and the rape of her sex had drained her spirit, it was this one last act of defilement that depleted her strength. Tears of blood trickled down her belly, as tears of sorrow were dammed inside of her.

“A souvenir,” he laughed.

As Octavian exited the secret chamber, the guards took advantage of the gifts from their leader.

Cleopatra collapsed over onto her right thigh while her hands still supported her weight. She reached for her torn gown and tied it around her waist, leaving her breasts exposed. She saw her wig, yet chose to leave her shaved head uncovered.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the blond hair of the discarded head of her baby. She crawled on the floor, following the river of blood which led to it. Her breasts swayed as she moved, and the gown trailed behind in her wake.

The Queen became deaf to the screams of her violated slaves as she reached the tiny head of her son. She closed the eyelids, trapping the terrorized frozen look behind them. Her child’s face was now tranquil, as if he were sleeping, and she cuddled it against her breasts, stroking the soft, golden curls.

“Osiris, please take Caesarion to the underworld with you,” she prayed.

Cleopatra rose from the stone floor, her hands and knees pocked and reddened with blood. As silent, unnoticed tears flooded her eyes, the seed of Rome dripped down her legs, like tears flowing from her ravaged womb.

She walked to the couch where the soldier had placed the decapitated body. Carefully, she aligned the head with the lifeless corpse. Her army could not protect him. Her gods could not save him. Her maternal love could not restore his life. No longer able to uphold her regal title, her born duty, or her pride, the Queen of Egypt sunk to her knees, heaving with trapped sorrow.

II

Before the people of Rome, Caesar had ordained Cleopatra Venus, goddess of love and beauty. Antony had hoped to reinforce the delusion. Yet the Romans hated the Queen of Egypt and despised the lavish show of adoration Caesar had bestowed on her; they hated the undying devotion Antony had given her. Octavian would gain their respect and support for being the one who would finally crush this mortal woman. He had arranged for Cleopatra to be taken to Rome and paraded through the streets as his prisoner, bound with chains and dragged behind his mighty chariot. He knew the Queen had witnessed her sister Arsinoe being humiliated as Caesar forced the young sibling to march in the same manner, and Octavian relished the thought of inflicting this ultimate agony on Cleopatra.

On the eve of her last day in Egypt, Octavian granted her three requests out of the many she had arrogantly demanded during her incarceration. At her last royal dinner, he gave his permission for her to wear a sheer dress made of gold; for Charmain and Iras to adorn and serve her; and for her most beloved musician, Aziza, to play for her.

The torches flickering throughout the room softened the white stone walls and floors of Cleopatra's bedchamber, painting each surface a warm amber. The aromatic scent of frankincense floated through the air, and the royal musician wrapped the space in harmonious sounds from her lyre.

"Aziza, sing from my secret book of love," Cleopatra said gently.

It was in her secret book of love that Cleopatra had collected forbidden poems, erotic sonnets, and lustful odes from ancient civilizations in faraway lands.

Aziza's melodious voice entered the Queen's ears, traveling into her head. It was a brief deliverance from the pain that had been constant since the loss of both her lover and her child.

Aziza continued to caress the room with soothing melodies, words of love, and songs of intimacy, while Iras and Charmain began to manicure their Queen.

Iras filled a carved stone tub with hot water. She poured scented rose oil from a small alabaster jar into the water. The sweet aroma filled the room as a thin cloud of steam carried it into the air.

“My Queen, your bath is drawn,” Iras announced.

As Cleopatra drifted toward the tub, she dropped her white linen robe to the floor. Her slaves quickly grasped her elbows, supporting her as she stepped into the warm water.

The steaming water at first felt cool against her skin, but within a moment the heat intensified, and as she lowered herself into the tub, the hot water awakened her sex, then her navel, and finally her breasts.

Cleopatra felt the water dissolve the heaviness of her body into lightness, making her feel as if her soul was dissolving into the fragrant water. Eventually, she relaxed in the embrace of the stone womb.

Charmain and Iras began to bathe Cleopatra with sea sponges. Charmain stood at the head of the tub and washed the Queen’s shoulders and chest. Cleopatra’s large, brown nipples hardened as the wet sponge kissed her breasts. She became one with the warm, scented water, and her sex filled with hot, wet desire.

Iras knelt at the foot of the tub and cleansed the Queen’s lower body. She began with her right foot, rubbing it with the soft sponge. Iras’ sponge worked up the taut leg and down into the water until it reached the Queen’s sex.

Cleopatra felt the pearl of her sex throb with desire. It had become erect with the sensations received from the tiny, teasing mouths of each porous opening of the sponge rubbing against her. She wanted to climax, to release her sexual energy. It seemed as if centuries had passed since she felt this desire.

“No, I must wait for my lover,” she thought. “I will have him soon and then . . .”

"Remove all the hair on my body," Cleopatra said.

The slaves finished cleansing the Queen and assisted her out of the tub. Her body glistened in the warm torchlight as droplets of oiled water veiled her skin. They led her to a flat couch covered with white linen. The Queen reclined on her back, submitting to the four hands massaging her body with scented oil.

She inhaled the lingering scent of incense and relaxed into the skilled hands of her slaves. They kneaded her tense muscles and she felt herself drift off, accompanied by melodies from Aziza's lyre.

When they sensed that their Queen was completely relaxed, Charmain brought an alabaster box, which held inside a pair of copper tweezers and two flat, flint razors.

The razors glided easily over the oiled skin, removing the unwanted hair and leaving behind a smooth, soft surface. They effortlessly shaved her legs, forearms, underarms, and head, but extra precision was required as they began to remove the hair from the Queen's sex.

Iras massaged more oil into the now-visible triangle and pulled the skin taut, while Charmain carefully ran the razor over the area, erasing the dark, curly hair. Once the Queen's mound was bare, the slaves opened her thighs to remove all that grew in between.

They spread Cleopatra's legs and her sex opened, revealing wet, smooth inner folds and a budding bead. Iras gently sheltered the bead and the inner folds with her hand, shielding them from the sharp blade, as Charmain removed the hair from the outer lips.

A piercing thrill traveled from Cleopatra's sex up through her navel and into her throat, threading her body like a sensual string of beads. She cast out his name on her breath.

"Antony."

She longed for him. He could merely breathe on her pearl, and she would collapse into a rapturous climax. He was generous with his mouth and believed in a code of honor mandating that a woman's pleasure always be of the first priority. Even after he would empty his manhood into her womb, he would drop his face between her

legs and drink their mingled juices as the mixture fountained out of her sex. Antony would then kiss her, and they would both taste the evidence of their desire, the tangy, mellifluous elixir as it blended together in their mouths.

“Are you finished?” she asked.

“One more stroke, my Queen,” Charmain answered, removing the last trace of black down.

Iras covered the exterior lips with a thin coat of oil to soothe the burn of the razor. She rubbed the Queen’s sex, as Charmain massaged the royal hips, belly, and full, rounded breasts. Cleopatra’s nipples rose into the hands of her slave, her sex moistened and its folds swelled, sending a painful plea to be brought to climax.

Cleopatra knew she had to wait to satisfy her desire. Cleverly, she tricked her mind, diverting its attention to the completion of her toilette.

“Make up my face and bring me the wig with the long, black curls,” Cleopatra said.

She rose from the couch as the slaves scurried to do as commanded.

The Queen glided over to her dressing table and sat before a round mirror, contemplating her reflection in its burnished disk. The hue of her image was copper, and the sharp lines of her face were clearly reflected: a square jaw, chiseled cheekbones, plump lips, and almond-shaped eyes. Her image was regal, beautiful, exotic. Only in her eyes, now black and haunting, could she see a flicker of anguish, of pain, of sorrow. She saw her dead lovers, her dead son, her dead Egypt. She saw . . .

Iras and Charmain, pattering across the floor, returned holding a wooden box and the requested wig.

Charmain opened the box and withdrew a selection of cosmetics. She covered the Queen’s eyelids with ground, green malachite. Taking a long bone stick with a bulbous end, she lined Cleopatra’s eyes with kohl.

“My lips need soothing,” Cleopatra said.

Charmain lifted the lid from an ivory jar and painted the fleshy

curves with a red ocher salve. The color enriched the dark brown eyes, making them bright. It was then, in the burnished copper disk, that the Queen saw her agony melt away, draining out of her eyes. The depths of her pupils sparkled with a majestic aura, an immortal presence.

Cleopatra believed that she was Isis, and her lips curled slightly into a smile.

Iras set the blue-black wig on the Queen's head. The large, loopy curls fell over her shoulders, and the soft candlelight bounced off each twisting coil, intensifying the blue highlights and deepening the blackness captured in the bend of each curl. With a wooden comb, Iras tamed a few strands springing from the wig.

Charmain brought over the golden dress. Cleopatra stood up, and her slaves fitted the gown over her body. It clung to her curves, falling over her shoulders, resting on her breasts, with the sheer gold fabric draping in a series of scallops down the length of her body. The dress defined the Queen's exquisite figure, its delicate sheer material giving only glimpses of her dark nipples, her hairless sex.

Iras knelt on the stone floor and gently guided her Queen's delicate feet into soft, jewel-encrusted sandals. The soles were leather, and the red ocher straps wrapped around her ankles up to her calves.

"A beaded headdress, or the Double Crown?" Iras asked.

"My Double Crown," the Queen answered.

Iras set the magnificent golden crown over the black wig.

The transformation was complete. The Queen radiated as the flames of the torches reflected off her gown, casting a sparkling net of golden light around her.

Her beauty enthralled the slaves. Before them stood not just the Queen of Egypt, but the embodiment of the goddess Isis.

Cleopatra left her dressing room. She passed by a long wooden table on which a buffet of her favorite dishes was set: plump purple grapes on the vine, overflowing a large silver bowl with luscious sweet figs nestling amid the vines; fish from the Nile, lying on a bed of fig leaves; honey-glazed pheasant, Antony's preferred dish from

Gaul, towering majestically on a silver platter; and loaves of bread, baked with honey and pieces of fig, resting in an intricately woven basket. An ornate silver decanter held the Queen's royal wine. Strewn over the surface of the table, amidst the lavish spread, lotus flowers exuded their exotic scent while thick, white candles gave out a soft, golden glow. This was her last royal dinner.

"My Queen, will you eat?" Charmain asked.

"No food this evening, only drink. Bring me a cup of my wine."

Charmain remembered the effect of the Queen's wine. How many nights had the slave silently witnessed her Queen, under the spell of the royal drink, seduce and open her lips to Roman centurions as she waited for Caesar and later for Antony to return? Her body was always faithful to her lovers, but her mouth was true to her own unquenchable desire. Charmain had beheld the entwined body of Cleopatra and the many men as they seemed to swim together in a pool of lust. As the violet nights surrendered to the hot morning sun, after Cleopatra had long retired to her chambers and the centurions had been dismissed to their camps, Charmain would collect the discarded robes, pick up the empty goblets, and secretly taste the sensual, intoxicating wine. Just a drop, or sometimes a sip, but never more, for fear of being caught and beaten.

While the royal wine was deliriously sweet, it was the precious thickened sap extracted from the poppy plant which was dissolved into the liquid that rendered the wine, when ingested, a potent drink of passion, awakening the skin to countless sensors of delight.

The wine was not gulped or swallowed quickly, but rather savored, each drop allowed to trickle off the tongue and down into the belly. The first few sips aroused desire, tempting and seducing the soul, but after even one half-glass, the aphrodisiac flooded the body with an enormous, consuming passion.

Charmain poured the wine into a goblet and followed Cleopatra, who glided over to the carved ebony couch covered with soft azure pillows. The Queen reclined, stretching her legs.

The servant presented the wine to Cleopatra. The Queen lifted

the goblet to her lips and let the potion slip over her tongue and down her throat. Like a fever engulfing her body, the intoxicating liquid overcame her senses. A revelry began in her belly, and a lustful prompting for sensual contact radiated through her like the rays of the sun, lighting desire in her breasts while heating her womb.

"Have you prepared the member?" Cleopatra asked.

"I have, my Queen," Iras replied. A small triangular key hung from a cord around the slave's wrist, and she glanced quickly at a carved ivory box and its lid resting beside it, both decorated with ancient intimate passages from another Queen's secret book of love. The box's womb cradled the royal member.

The box had existed for generations, handed down through time from Queen to Queen. It was believed to have been commissioned by Hatshepsut, the only other female ruler besides Cleopatra to wear the Double Crown of Egypt. Hatshepsut had scandalized Egypt by proclaiming herself pharaoh, strapping on a ceremonial beard, dressing in a pleated kilt, and going to battle.

When Cleopatra inherited the box, it was empty, void, castrated, and she often wondered how many royal members it had held, how many Queens those members had satisfied.

Cleopatra thought of the moments without Caesar or Antony, the moments when her desire was thick and unquenchable. The intimate memories aroused her, reminding her of her destiny.

"Charmain, will you enchant my lover with a dance? Aziza, please play your instrument."

"My greatest dance will be for you, my Queen," Charmain said. Her voice quivered with emotion, and cold anxiety invaded her chest. She did not fear the task at hand, for she was trained in the art of charming. It was the inevitable that frightened her.

Simultaneously, Iras and Charmain began their preparations.

Aziza sent seductive melodies from her lyre through the air, and Charmain brought over a covered, woven basket. Inside were large plump figs.

"Have the reed ready," Charmain whispered to Iras. "After our

Queen has reached the height of pleasure with the member, the reed will guide the lover.”

“Be careful. I could not live without you,” Iras replied. She tilted Charmain’s chin upward and lightly kissed her soft lips.

Iras walked over to a small table upon which rested a wooden box perforated with pinholes on the top. She opened the wooden box, and a cloud of smoke escaped; the aroma of myrrh permeated her nostrils. In the middle of the box stood a small incense burner, around which congregated a swarm of bees. They did not fly out of the box, but remained inside, drunkenly staggering over each other.

She reached into the box, and the bees began to crawl over her fingers. One by one she put them into a wooden phallus through an opening at its base. The bees clumsily walked off her fingers and into the hollow member. She continued filling the phallus with bees. She left enough room for their tiny wings to flutter when they completely awoke, then she capped the phallus with a wooden plug and walked over to the couch.

“A few more minutes and they will be ready,” Iras said.

“While I await their awakening, ready my gown,” Cleopatra said.

Iras parted the golden material, letting it cascade over the pillows and onto the stone floor, where it lay like a sheet of sunshine. The Queen spread her toned brown legs, revealing the smooth folds of womanhood. If not for the full swell of her breasts, she may have been mistaken for a princess. Her hairless sex and narrow hips, which curved into a trim waist, gave the illusion of youth.

A slight hum resonated from the member.

“Is it time, Iras?” the Queen asked.

“They are not fully awake,” Iras said.

“Then stimulate my budding flower with your mouth.”

Iras’ face did not betray her surprise. Her Queen wanted to enjoy this forbidden act in which Iras and Charmain had partaken for many years. She descended to the Queen’s sex, and with her mouth, began to pleasure her.

Cleopatra knew that she was violating the Egyptian decree that

forbade female-to-female stimulation, but in her mind she no longer saw her slave. The image of Antony, her love, materialized before her, and the fragrant aroma of the Egyptian rose filled her memory.

She remembered one of the many times he had crossed the Mediterranean Sea to be with her. Once in her bedchamber, he then crossed another sea. She had flooded the floor with rose petals a foot deep. The soft, shimmery petals licked his feet and ankles as he approached her bed, and with each step, an exquisite net of fragrance was cast into the air. As he approached her, he reached down and filled his palms with petals, which he showered over her body. They floated through the air, covering her in a silky blanket of redness.

Cleopatra's fantasy lingered in the moment of their reunion, and as her servant continued to stimulate her, it felt as if it were Antony's hands that plucked the petals of her sex; his lips and tongue that saturated her folds and erected her bead; he who tasted her sweet ambrosia; his effort that brought her pleasure.

The hum from the phallus intensified into a vibrating buzz, and it was Iras' soft voice that awakened the Queen from her sensual day-dream. Antony's mirage evaporated into the air. Through the whiteness of his dissolving image, Iras emerged.

"It is time, my Queen," Iras said.

She held open the exterior petals of Cleopatra's sex and placed the vibrating phallus against her erect pearl.

Cleopatra again felt the thrill of desire shoot arrows through her body. The vibration sent pulsing pleasure down to her toes and back up to her throat. She would not rush to her climax, but have the pleasure linger, enticing the deepest part of her sexual soul to awaken.

While Iras continued to stimulate the Queen, Charmain began to lure the lover out of hiding.

She opened the basket and removed the top layer of figs. At the bottom, wrapped around one of the green fruits, she saw the alternating gold and black bands marking the tail of the deadliest serpent in Egypt. The thin body contained in the basket had not fully matured, yet its fangs could already inject a deadly venom.

Charmain stepped backward, away from the basket. She began to chant softly in time with the music. She isolated each area of her body, oscillating from side to side, first using her ribs and breasts, then her hips and waist. Her arms floated in the air, and occasionally, they came together, caressing each other.

The head of the lover finally emerged from its restful slumber, and Charmain slowly intensified her dance. She looked into the serpent's black, lifeless eyes and vacillated her head in a circular motion.

The drowsy snake imitated the slave's movements. This was the only invitation for Charmain to draw closer. She would not be invited again. Her steps were long and exaggerated, but above all, calculated. One false move, and she would be bitten.

They danced together, and as Charmain neared the swaying serpent, she inhaled the breath of the cobra deep into her lungs.

She moved her arms around the snake, giving the illusion of a soft embrace. Still in time with her oscillating head, the cobra continued to mirror her movements. It appeared entranced by Charmain, as it did not even flinch when she restrained its head between her fingers.

As she withdrew the serpent from the basket, it wrapped its length around her arm. With her free hand she gently stroked the black-and-gold body.

Charmain proceeded toward the couch.

"The lover is ready," she whispered to Iras.

"The Queen is not finished."

Cleopatra's arms fell away from her body, and her hands reached for the legs of the couch. She glanced up to see Charmain holding her lover. As the swarm of bees contained in the member vibrated against her sex, held open by Iras' warm fingers, she called upon the innermost soul of her sexual being.

Her arms and legs stiffened. The carved ebony legs of the couch imprinted the palms of her hands as she tightened her grasp.

The climax began between her hips in the secret place of her womb.

Her sexual soul whirled inside her, traveled down the dark canal in the form of intense pleasure, and propelled out of her, showering the wooden phallus with hot, wet nectar.

Her body shook with uncontrollable contractions, and almost inaudibly, she said, "It is time for the royal conception."

Cleopatra, caught in the immenseness of climax, was numb to the fear that she should have felt.

Iras dropped the wooden phallus and opened the inner petals of her Queen's sex. Into the dark opening, she gently inserted a smooth, hollow reed, gliding it in until it reached the Queen's womb.

Charmain inserted the head of the cobra into the opening of the reed, which extended away from the Queen's body. She guided the serpent, watching the length of its body disappear into the tube.

"Fear not, for with my lover's seed, I will become fertile with death," Cleopatra whispered. "Have Aziza sing my favorite song from my secret book of love."

Charmain withdrew the reed. Half of the serpent's body lay on the azure pillows between the Queen's opened legs.

The walls of the Queen's womb continued to contract with climax, squeezing the body of the serpent. The exposed gold-and-black striped tail recoiled in toward her sex. With one quick motion, the cobra kissed Cleopatra's sexual soul.

The pain of the kiss was sharp and sent a tremor vibrating through her womb and up into her stomach, but instantaneously, she felt another wave pass through her body. Cleopatra's brown eyes became glazed, and an intoxicating feeling of drowsiness filled her veins.

"Water and fire will never marry, yet at this moment, cold stings me and heat inflames my flesh. Soon I will not know my mind," Cleopatra slurred. "The Book of Dreams declares that if a woman dreams that a barbarian violates her, her husband will be taken, and she will be found dead. So it is written, so it shall be done . . ."

The Queen welcomed death, and as she felt her spirit tear loose from her body and ascend into the air, her lips pulled up into a smile, her eyes unwrinkled. On her face, tranquility was now frozen.

Charmain and Iras waited at the foot of the couch. As Cleopatra conceived death, the two faithful slaves closed her legs, burying the cobra inside. They adjusted the golden gown, the soft curls of her wig, and the Double Crown of Egypt. They guided the Queen's hands together, closing her slender fingers around a sacred blue lotus flower, the symbol of rebirth and creation, and an Egyptian rose, both stems tied together with a golden ribbon.

In the flickering ocher light, shadows loomed, trying to grasp the Queen's departing spirit; Charmain and Iras silently mourned her fate; and Aziza's voice filled the chamber with one last song.

The loyal black-and-gold lover escorted Cleopatra's regal spirit to the underworld. In the Hall of the Dead, Anubis, monitor of the Scales of Truth, was waiting for her arrival, waiting to weigh her heart against the billowy ostrich plum of Ma'at, the goddess of justice, order, and truth. It was here that the dead were judged. It was here that Queen Cleopatra, like all the others who had gone before her, would wait, watching the scales tip and teeter. If her heart was as light as the feather, unburdened by sin and evil, she would be granted eternal life along with her lover, Antony.

Cleopatra VII

Ptolemaic Dynasty

Queen of Egypt

69 - 30 B.C.

Cobra

The lover that never left her.

31 - 30 B.C.

According to Egyptian religious beliefs,
death by snakebite insured immortality.



Bee fore . . .

Before batteries, there were bees . . .

Inside of me dwells a Queen, exotic and arrogant, seductive and powerful. She lies dormant until my lover unrolls his serpent tongue, the pointed tip pricking my sex. When he is ready to poison me with the venom of climax, the controlling Queen freezes my body, demanding . . . the bees.

I see a cloudy vision of my sweet, vibrating insects at home, slumbering in their beehive next to my bed.

“They are at home, asleep,” I tell the Queen.

“Then bring out the batteries!” she screeches in my head.

As my lover severs my sex with his jagged tongue, the sap of my love flowing into his mouth, the Queen imposes a hard tip against my erection. The vibrations radiate through me, and on them rides a faint quiver of climax.



Mouth to Mouth

I was but a tiny grain of sand drifting on the bottom of the ocean. One day a turbulent underwater storm whisked me up and blew me into your mouth, where I embedded myself onto your soft tongue. You closed your lips around me, and when you opened your mouth again, I had transformed into a magnificent, lustrous pearl.

I was taken from your protection and given to a Queen, who wore me in her navel. A barbarian ripped me from her body and I was hidden away for eternity.

But you dug through the heart of the Earth and found me. You gave me to your lover.

I am embedded in the folds of a woman. Her lips close around me. Her ocean water drenches me. I dangle next to my round flesh twin. I am home.

Three Wooden Devotees
Crisis, Cries, and Climaxes



*M*y name is Suzette. I was born both brilliant and dumb. With a sharp mind, I learned how to compensate for my absence of speech.

My mouth was always barren of sounds, but my hands became fertile with songs. These hands eagerly turned into ovaries of creation, and vehicles for communication. I drew and carved. I caressed and stroked. But only upon insistence and desperation did I write or sign.

I am of the good fortune to have been born into a family of

incredible wealth and prestige. Initially, as with most rich families our money was gained through deceit.

It is rumored that my grandfather came from France with only two possessions — a locket made of pure gold and a tiny gold hoop, on which hung a diamond. The locket encased violet petals picked by the Emperor Napoleon from the grave of his beloved wife, Josephine. The Emperor himself planted these flowers. Of the different species she used for seduction, these were the most precious to her.

My grandfather was one of the few *hussards* appointed to Napoleon while the Emperor lived in exile. The Emperor wanted to be buried with the cherished locket and the diamond. He secretly entrusted my grandfather to fulfill this last wish. Although my grandfather was dedicated to his Emperor until the very end and would have given his life for Napoleon, he decided to keep both treasures.

My grandfather eventually escaped from his English jailers, setting sail from the island of Saint Helena to New York City. Upon arrival, he sold the locket to an Englishman, with great regret, but for a small fortune. Vowing to someday buy it back, my grandfather started a lumber business which flourished, making him a millionaire.

His only son, my father, showed great aptitude for business and himself substantially increased the family fortune.

My father is a generous man and has bestowed favor on this silent daughter. While he mercilessly berates my brother and sister, he shamefully coddles me and grants all of my requests. My brother, Gerard, and sister, Celeste, are both of strong will and often challenge him. I suspect he tires of this struggle. I, by nature, have no voice, so I cannot engage in arguments. I believe this is the reason why I have won his heart. Even if I did have a voice, I would not waste my energy in fruitless debates. I would much rather sing. To my knowledge, my siblings do not begrudge me his affection, for they probably pity my handicap.

It is also to my benefit that I resemble my mother, who perished

when I was three years old. I was never told the details of her death, and I am only certain that her life ended violently.

I have my mother's raven hair and her blue-gray eyes. My father has remarked on our similar abilities. My mother was blessed in the art of drawing and painting. She also had the most exquisite voice.

While resembling my mother has led to great material advantage, it has hindered my dreams of worldly experiences. When I turned sixteen, I requested to go away to a private finishing school, where I would be able to learn about art and design. My father adamantly refused. I intuitively felt that he no longer saw me as his daughter, but as the reincarnation of my mother, his only wife. He would not risk losing her again.

His refusal did not extinguish my yearning. I wanted to study drawing, painting, and sculpture. But beyond learning the techniques of the fine arts, I ached to experience life.

At sixteen, I perceived that my fate was to be imprisoned within the walls of our mansion. I was convinced the sentence would last forever. Yet *life* still seeped through the foundation of our house. I watched . . . I listened . . . I learned . . .

Doors slightly ajar became the long, thin windows to *life*. Whenever I could, I would watch Isabella, my maid, embrace the grounds man, their lips meeting lightly at first, then propelling into an aggressive gnawing. Him, moving his biting mouth down her neck to the top of her bodice, and his hands meeting his lips at the top of her breasts. From the very first time I saw the two of them together, I felt the heat in my own body, and an unexplainable tingling between my legs.

I heard the servants speak of lustful affairs. They gossiped about their fellow staff members and the townspeople. I discovered that John, the butcher, was well-endowed and bedded every amenable woman. I overheard that one of them had become pregnant and was disowned by her family. I found out that the bedroom was not the only shrine for consummation, and that unions took place everywhere: in kitchens, in barns, in wagons, and even in churches.

In the library, I learned. I climbed the ladder to the shelves that housed the anatomy and physiology books. I took them down, and behind one of the winged-backed leather chairs, I memorized their content, fascinated by clinical drawings of the male and female bodies, and the descriptions of causes and cures for diseases. But my newfound knowledge did not prepare me for the next series of events.

I was wandering past my father's office when I caught the end of his conversation with what sounded like a well-educated foreign gentleman.

"Hysteria? What is this ailment that Celeste has contracted?" my father asked.

"An ailment considered common and chronic in women. It can be temporarily treated with massages, but the curative in most cases is marriage, with the husband continuing the efforts initiated by the physician or midwife," the gentleman said with a thick, foreign accent.

I had heard that Celeste was suffering from fainting spells and I had noticed that she was very nervous, fluttering about the house. Her considerable appetite had dwindled to eating just a nibble of bread or a small piece of chocolate once a day.

"Well, she is of marriageable age, but I have not found a suitable husband for her. We must commence with these massages at once!" my father said.

"Very well, Monsieur. I will oversee the procedure myself," the man said.

"What is the cause of this hysteria?" my father asked.

"In the past, some doctors have linked hysteria to eating chocolate, dwelling on impure thoughts, reading novels, or performing 'secret pollutions'," the man said.

"Secret pollutions?"

"The act of masturbation," the man said. "In the past, doctors have treated patients using cold sponge baths, cold enemas, borax solution swabbed over the female genitalia, and if none of these treatments worked, the doctors removed the clitoris and the ovaries.

All too extreme! I believe in none of these methods and have made great strides in curing the disease through massages followed by marriage,” the man proclaimed.

Shortly thereafter, overhearing the whispers and gossip that stormed through our house, I found out the identity of this man who was brought in to treat Celeste. He was a French physician named Pierre Briquet, specializing in the treatment of *hysterical* women.

I overheard the servants discuss how Dr. Briquet’s approach was different, and that his genuine interest and dedication to curing this illness was the reason why my father had brought him over from Europe.

The American doctors who treated this disorder were often annoyed with the time and effort it took to administer the treatment, and they were only interested in the huge sums of money that could be gained from conducting this procedure.

Dr. Briquet acted differently, not charging my father a fee, and in return only asking my father’s permission to document the event in his medical journal.

He was engrossed in the controversial study of *nymphomania*, a term I later discovered to mean excessive sexual desire in women, and he was observing patients from the lowliest prostitutes to members of the French royal family.

On the night of the treatment, compelled by curiosity, I sneaked into my sister’s bedroom and hid behind the changing screen. Through a slender crack in one of the panels, I watched my sister return from taking a bath, soon followed by Dr. Briquet, accompanied by a midwife and my father. I felt my heart beating in my head, and I was so frightened I could not breathe.

Celeste lay on the bed in her nightgown. I saw alarm in her eyes, and her lips trembled.

“Lift her nightdress to her waist,” Dr. Briquet said to the midwife.

With his arms clasped behind his back, my father, with stern eyes and pressed lips, stood next to the bed and watched as the midwife lifted the nightgown.

Celeste's pale legs were clamped together, and in the bright light of the oil lamps that sat on night tables on both sides of her bed, the flaxen hair of her sex blended with the color of her skin.

I could no longer see her face because of the movements of the woman and the doctor.

"Open her legs," the doctor said.

The midwife, with her plump fingers, parted Celeste's thighs which, to my surprise, seemed to easily fall open.

I could only get quick glimpses of my sister's body, but clearly saw her sex as if it emanated light, like the sun shining through two fluffy, white crescent clouds.

And when Dr. Briquet and the woman positioned themselves on each side of the bed, my father standing next to the doctor, my sister's sex shone like a brilliant sun.

The down-covered folds between her legs were pressed together, pushing out a smooth, pink, round ball.

"Spread the outer labia," Dr. Briquet ordered.

The midwife, with the thumb and first finger of her left hand, pried apart Celeste's sex to reveal an intricate series of pale pink, glistening folds.

A wild tornado of excitement ripped through me, as it always did when I discovered something new. I had never seen a real female sex before, only clinical drawings of that part of a woman's anatomy, and none of these renditions ever captured the vivid life pulsing through my sister's sex open before me.

Celeste's sex reminded me of an eye. An eye, like the female sex, has many layers: the closed eye hides behind a smooth convex lid and long spindly lashes; the closed sex retreats behind plump convex lips covered with coarse wisps of hair; the open eye reveals a white ball marked in its center by a ring of color, in the middle of which sits a black band; the open sex exposes white lips encircling an organic oval of pinkness, in the middle of which appears a black opening.

If the eyes are the windows of the soul, is the sex the window to

the heart? I watched with bated breath as the doctor continued the procedure.

Dr. Briquet bent over Celeste as his probing fingers examined each and every crease of her sex. When he reached the top of the glistening flesh, her hips rotated upward and she gasped.

"She is responsive," he said, directing his comment to the midwife. "Here is the spot that must be massaged. Don't forget the oil."

The midwife reached with her right hand and dipped her finger into a jar resting on one of the night tables.

Dr. Briquet's fingers were quickly replaced by the midwife's, and she took her turn massaging my sister's sex, rotating her hand clockwise over the tender area.

Dr. Briquet stepped back, observed with a keen eye, and whispered to my father, "Sometimes it takes up to an hour to get any results."

He withdrew from his pocket a small black book and a pencil and began to scribble quickly, trying not to miss one detail of the procedure.

My father did not respond and kept his eyes fixed on Celeste.

Celeste's opening began to flood with wetness, and her breath quickened, as the midwife rubbed her sex.

"I suspect that her *crisis* will happen shortly," Dr. Briquet again whispered to my father.

It was then that Celeste's thighs began to shake, her fingers clenching the sheets, her tiny toes pointing in the air, as she let out a bel-lowing cry.

Her red, swollen sex dripped with moisture.

"Shall I clean her?" the midwife asked.

"Yes, but very gently, as it is her first experience with massage, and I would not want another *crisis* to be ignited," Dr. Briquet said. Then, he turned to my father. "The midwife will finish the procedure. I suggest this be done once a week, increasing the frequency only if the symptoms worsen."

My father and the doctor continued their conversation while they

walked out of the bedroom. I watched with fascination as the midwife swabbed my sister's sex with a cloth.

Celeste's eyes were closed, and a soft smile graced her face.

The midwife rapidly finished the cleansing process, arranged Celeste's nightgown over her legs, and covered her body with a thick quilt.

The midwife cupped her hand over the opening of one of the glass oil lamps and, with one breath, blew out the flame. She circled the bed to the other side, turned the knob on the other oil lamp, reducing the flame to a small blue flicker, and silently retreated from the room.

The moonlight seeped through the window, painting a chessboard of light on the floor, and the flame from the oil lamp stippled the room with a warm, blue hue.

As I crept from behind the screen and made my way out of the bedroom, I thought I saw Celeste's eyes open. The base of my throat contracted, and an intense heat inflamed my stomach. As the flicker of the lamp cast a brighter stream of light over her face, I realized that it was the light coming from the temperamental flame and the shadow it created that made her seem awake.

In the weeks that followed, Celeste's *hysteria* seemed to be cured, and while I was too afraid to ever again violate one of the massage sessions with my secret presence, I once did sneak into her room on a rainy afternoon, hid behind the screen, and closed my eyes, hoping to remember the vivid details of what I had seen. Suddenly, my fantasy of reliving the massage session was shattered as Celeste and her friend Flora swept into the room, locking the door behind them.

Protected by the changing screen, I found myself spying on my sister's life once again, my eyes fixed on the two girls through the familiar slender crack in one of the panels.

"Flora," my sister whispered, "since I have been in treatment for my *hysteria*, I must confess that I have been wanting for this *crisis* to happen more frequently.

"You know how I often borrow books from my brother Gerard's

collection? Well, as I selected one and pulled it off the shelf, I found another book hidden behind it. I opened it, read a few lines, and found myself in such an excited state that I thought I would *crisis* right then and there.”

Celeste quickly opened the bottom drawer of her dressing table. From a secret compartment behind the drawer, she withdrew the infamous book. Opening it to a marked page, she began to read aloud.

“Our charming Superior’s fingers were tickling my nipples, and her tongue quivered in my mouth. She was not slow to observe her caresses were having so powerful an influence upon my senses that I was in serious danger of being entirely overcome,” Celeste read in a low, breathy voice.

“Scandalous! What is the title of this book? Who is the author?” Flora asked excitedly.

“*Juliette*, by the Marquis de Sade. Napoleon banned it in France. Listen to this passage,” Celeste said, and again read from the book.

“So saying, she stretches me out, spreads wide my legs and lying belly down upon the bed with her head lodged between my thighs, she sets to cunt-sucking me, the while exposing the world’s most handsome buttocks to my companion’s view, from that pretty little girl’s fingers she received the same services her tongue is rendering me.” Celeste stopped reading.

“I am simply inflamed!” Flora said. “Would you . . . show me . . . how to . . .”

“How to *crisis*?”

“Yes,” Flora whispered.

The two young women simultaneously disrobed until only sheaths covered their bodies. The pointed tips of their breasts peaked through the thin fabric.

“Lay on the bed and lift your sheath,” Celeste said.

Flora did as instructed, revealing a cinnamon colored triangle of curls.

“Spread your legs,” Celeste said.

Flora opened her thighs, and Celeste massaged Flora's sex.

As the folds of Flora's sex moistened, and her hips rotated to Celeste's continual motion, I barely heard my sister say, in a hushed voice, "I'm going to *cunt-suck* you."

"Yes, do *cunt-suck* me!" Flora let out through heated breaths.

I saw my sister lower her head between Flora's legs and bob up and down like a kitten lapping up a bowl of milk.

They had become the characters in the forbidden book, and as I watched the enactment of the story, I felt my own sex throbbing so intensively that I had to rub myself, silently reaching my own *crisis*.

After their play-session ended, Celeste put the book back in its secret compartment. They dressed and left the room. I emerged from behind the screen and went to the dressing table, pulled out the drawer, stole *Juliette*, and ran to my room to eagerly devour it.

I was able to piece together some of the mysteries of sexual desire as a result of occasionally spending time behind my sister's screen and regularly reading the passages from my brother's sadistic novel. I believed then that I had discovered all of life's secrets.

I swallowed these experiences into my being, and just as food gives the body strength, my acquired knowledge gave my whole being a sense of power.

With this newly acquired power, I summoned the courage to ask my father once more if I could study away at school. One day I slipped the piece of paper with my request into his hand. He crumpled the sheet and looked at me over the top of his rectangular, wire-rimmed spectacles.

"No!"

His tone pierced my stomach. The world began to spin. My confidence was reduced to a silent sob as I staggered out of his office. I wanted to scream, to release through my mouth all of my years of silence.

I rushed to my room and let my tears pour until no drops were left. But that was not enough to free the confined anger that festered inside of me like pus trapped in an infected wound, so I

slammed doors; I threw books at my looking glass, at my vanity table, at my changing screen; I smashed my porcelain dolls; and I drew horrid portraits of my father on the walls of my room. This was futile.

On the ninth day of my temper tantrum, Isabella brought me a sealed note marked with my father's wax emblem.

I ripped it open.

My Dearest,

I love you!

Your Papa

"Miss, your father would like you to accompany me," Isabella said.

We marched down the hall and scurried up the narrow stairs to the attic. It had been converted into an art studio. Pencils, charcoal, paper, brushes, paints, canvases, and easels had been stored in abundance. This was my father's attempt at encouraging my artistic development. Exploring the newly arranged attic, I also found expensive and current art books from Europe.

I eagerly spent the rest of the day and the night in the attic, using the tools. Drawing, painting, and coloring soothed my hurt, cauterized my wounded heart, and helped to heal my bruised spirit.

I took great joy in creating, and over the years, one art form gave way to another. I began with charcoal drawing. Eventually, I moved to watercolors, then to oil, and after experiencing the second dimension, I attempted to design furniture.

Drawing and painting came naturally to me, and I needed no instructor. But the art of making furniture was far more complex. I needed specific tools and guidance on their use.

Knowing from an early age that I could manipulate my father into giving me anything I wanted, except of course the permission to leave his house, I decided to approach him with my newest demand — an assistant versed in the art of furniture-making. As I expected, my father rapidly sent word out through the county, and within a week, I met Mr. Hurley.

One morning, my father called me into his office. He and a tall man rose from their seats as I entered.

"Miss Suzette, may I introduce Mr. Hurley. He will instruct you on the art of furniture-making," my father said with an authoritative smile.

I walked up to the desk and picked up a piece of paper and a quill. I dipped the tip in a pot of black ink and scratched in a quick, loopy script:

I am pleased to meet you.

I handed the note to him.

"Miss Suzette, ma'am, I am happy to have the opportunity to instruct you," Mr. Hurley said. His voice sounded flat, and I wished that he would not have to speak in order to teach me.

Since childhood I had been sensitive not only to the visual world, but to sounds, music, and voices. I could distinguish between the light footsteps of Isabella as she quietly floated down the hall to my brother's bedroom, and the more solid footsteps of my sister, when she would later join them. I could listen to music and immediately recognize the sound of every instrument.

My sensitive hearing drew me to beautiful sounds. These included voices. If a voice had no distinct pitch, or sounded offensive, I would rather listen to silence.

Mr. Hurley expressed himself with a non-melodic voice, and it took all of my control not to reveal my agitation.

His voice made him ugly to me. He was tall and had a lanky build. His blond hair was unkempt, and he had the nervous habit of constantly pushing it away from his brown, lifeless eyes. His face held no charm and displayed no emotions.

How could this man with a passionless voice and an empty face teach me about the art of furniture-making?

I was angry with my father. His choice of this instructor had been clearly dependent on the unattractiveness of the man.

My father did not scour the county only for a furniture-maker, but for the ugliest furniture-maker.

I was in my eighteenth year by then and had ripened into a beauty, or so Isabella had told me many times. This had not gone unnoticed in my father's eyes. On the few occasions when I accompanied him to the city, I watched his face seethe in anger when the lustful eyes of passing gentlemen coveted my body.

Mr. Hurley displayed no such gloat. I perceived that he was uninterested in my appearance.

I had to leave the office immediately. I did not bother to script a word, not even a polite "good-bye" to Mr. Hurley. I waved my hand in a gesture of farewell and left. On my way out, I heard my father say, "Begin tomorrow."

The following day I arrived at the studio to find it rearranged. My canvases, paints, and easels were replaced by saws, chisels, hammers, clamps, a lathe, and a plane.

In one corner, an array of wood was neatly piled. In the adjacent corner, a colorful rainbow of damasks and silks was meticulously stacked. In boxes next to the fabrics, coordinating tassels, cords, and trims were stored.

"Good morning, Miss Suzette," he said flatly.

I nodded. My face flushed with excitement, and I could not control my smile.

"To me, Miss Suzette, both the art of furniture-making and the art of speaking separate us from the animals."

His words erased the smile from my face. I furiously rushed to my drawing table and scribbled on a piece of paper.

Are you calling me an animal?

"No, no, Miss, you just haven't found your voice yet."

I started printing with such force that the pressure split the pencil in half. I flung the piece still in my hand against the wall and grabbed another.

I have no voice!

Just speak about furniture!

Never say another word about my being dumb!

"Yes, Miss Suzette."

Awkwardly, he began to gather some tools and, as if he was trying to redeem himself, he stuttered, "As . . . I . . . was putting your paintings away I . . . noticed that . . . you have a real eye for art, Miss Suzette, you do . . . really."

His compliment did not diminish my humiliation. I felt tears swell in my eyes, slightly blurring my vision, threatening to drop onto my cheeks. I hated the sound of his voice. I hated the meaning of his words even more. I never could tolerate a compliment, unlike my sister, who expected people to lavish her with praises. I never could understand why I would stiffen when kind words were given to me, or why I would feel unworthy of their meaning.

"Is there a particular piece you would like to start with? Your father told me that you had already designed some furniture and needed help building it."

I clenched my hands, and my nails almost punctured my palms. Finally, I reached to the shelf above my drawing table and pulled down my rolled-up furniture drawings. I set the roll on the table and stepped back.

He moved closer to the table. He picked up the roll of drawings and ran his hands over its length. He then brought the roll to his face and inhaled deeply. The ends of his mouth turned up slightly, and his eyes narrowed.

Suddenly, anxiety gripped my stomach. I felt violated. He was *sensing* my art, and as he continued, I felt as if he were stroking me, inhaling me, penetrating me.

I could no longer look at him. I turned and peered out the window. With my back now to Mr. Hurley, I heard the crinkle of the paper as he carefully studied the drawing on each sheet. I listened to his breath as he drew it in deeply and exhaled with a slight sigh.

My breakfast churned in my stomach, and I knew, if he did not finish soon, that I would have to run to the basin.

"Miss Suzette,"

I spun around and faced him. He was transfixed.

"You have mastered the technique of drawing," he said, shaking

his head, “but it is the concept behind your designs that is unsurpassed. The proportions . . . the attention to details . . . the curve of the legs . . . the delicate fabrics . . .”

He brushed the back of his hand over his mouth.

“I have mastered the art of assembling furniture, but never the art of designing it. Your work is breathtaking!”

His voice sounded different. It reverberated, richer and fuller. As he expressed his thoughts, its tone rose and fell. I felt I was listening to a beautiful piece of music. It was hypnotic.

Finally, he looked at me.

“You have a gift. You really have a gift.”

His eyes dilated, leaving only a thin chestnut ring around the edges. I felt an astonishing passion exude from him, and suddenly, I saw him differently than I had the day before.

It was a grand discovery to witness this unshackled passion from a man so lifeless, so dull. I continued to listen to him speak of our work together, the pieces we would create, the beauty we would bring to the world, all the while entranced by his melodic voice floating into my ears. It was then that I felt a tiny prick of unexplained hope puncture my soul, like an invisible needle and thread beginning to stitch us together.

As time went by, our minds connected. In the microscopic world of my father’s mansion, I realized that no one had really understood my spirit. But Mr. Hurley shared my passion. As I found out, he believed, like me, that nothing else mattered besides creating art, and that while working, time stopped, hunger vanished, and fatigue dissolved. And once a piece was finished, he would suddenly realize, like me, that hours had passed by, and then he would feel hunger consuming him, and exhaustion invading him.

We began with a small side chair I selected from my repertoire of drawings. With the intensity of an artist, he instructed me on the construction of furniture.

He taught me how to use each tool safely. One at a time, he positioned each different species of wood in the clamp and schooled me

on their hardness and grain. He showed by example how to carve and shape the legs of our first piece.

After a few days of this instruction, he said, "You're ready to try."

My hands were shaking, and I felt my face flush with heat as a result of the fear and excitement I was feeling at the idea of carving my first piece of wood.

I went up to the table and began to work on the chair's leg Mr. Hurley had already started. My palms were wet, and the tools became slippery. My grip was unsteady, and the chisel flew to the floor as I struck it with the hammer. I felt humiliated.

Mr. Hurley bent down and picked up the chisel.

In a soft, tender voice, he said, "Let's try again. This time, hold the chisel like this . . ."

He stood behind me. I felt his breath on the back of my neck and his calloused palms on my hands. He was touching me for the first time. A tingle started in my throat, intensified in my stomach, and surprisingly, throbbed between my legs.

I suddenly realized that I desired his touch. Mr. Hurley was no longer the awkward, lanky man I first met in my father's office. He had stimulated my creative mind, and somehow, in my eyes, this had transformed him into a strong, accomplished man.

Proper upbringing reminded me that I should feel ashamed of myself for coveting this man, but I felt no such guilt. I wanted to feel his heat.

"Miss, are you ready?"

His breath smelled of peppermint.

I nodded. He guided my hand that held the hammer and delicately tapped against the head of the chisel. A small piece of wood chipped away.

"See! You can do this," he said proudly.

I nodded my head quickly and smiled. I was enthralled. It seemed that I could not be happier. I was building the furniture I had designed, as well as feeling physical attraction for the first time in my life.

Mr. Hurley stepped back. Suddenly, I felt a ball of unexplainable tears in my throat. Later I became aware that I desperately needed to be touched, that there was a massive hole in the center of my being that needed to be filled with tender caresses, delicate touches, and intimate kisses. I then realized that my father had not only imprisoned me from the world, but also from love. While I could replace the world with books and art, I could never replace love.

Mr. Hurley was oblivious to the sudden shaking of my hands, the quivering of my lips, and the tears that threatened to flood my cheeks. He continued, as was his routine at the end of the day, to put away the wood, roll up the drawings, and sweep up the floor, all to the tune of his whistling.

As the weeks passed, he continued to instruct me. He never touched me unless I needed guidance, and during those moments, he appeared unaffected by the closeness of our bodies.

I became more and more attracted to Mr. Hurley. I cannot tell the true reason for my infatuation with him: the complicated relationship that inevitably flowers between teacher and student, the fact that he was the only man permitted in my life, or a deep-rooted defiance of my father's authority.

His hands caressed my creations as I wished they would caress my body. His mind fell in love with my designs as I wished it would fall in love with my being. The more I had the chance to feel his casual strokes, his accidental caresses, it became clear to me that my need for intimacy, for touch, was intensifying.

I found myself becoming intentionally more clumsy, and not as precise with my carving. Each time I dropped a tool, I hoped that he would help me and that I would feel his arms around me or his hands touching me. In the beginning, this scheme worked, but as time progressed, I could no longer tolerate the charade I was playing with myself, and my love for my art overpowered my desire to be touched. I resumed my intense concentration on building furniture.

My father had been right to select this man to guard my virtue.

His only desire was creating furniture. Only when he spoke about furniture did his voice fluctuate with passion, or his face flush with lust. I listened to him speak, and during those moments, our creative minds entwined. We built lavishly designed pieces to perfection. We carefully coordinated the woods and the fabrics. The pieces were ornately carved, and the pillows were filled with the softest down feathers.

One morning, when I thought that we were going to work as usual, I was surprised to see him in traveling clothing. He informed me that he had to attend to a family emergency and would be back in a week. He wrote down a list of tasks I had to finish by the time he returned and handed it to me.

“Miss Suzette?”

I looked at him.

“You are going to be a superb furniture-maker.”

I blushed. He had never complimented me on my furniture-making.

“I’ll be back soon,” he said, and left the attic.

I decided not to escort him to the door and, sulking, curled up on the settee. I felt abandoned. Was he going to come back as he had promised? What was this emergency that was so pressing that he had to leave me?

Alone in the studio on that midsummer morning, my emotions ignited by his leaving, the air thick and heavy from the rising heat, I felt faint. I took off my frock and pantalets, leaving my body covered with only a thin, white sheath that wetness had glued to my skin, silhouetting the untouched curves of my figure. I was exhausted, for I had spent the whole night designing a new piece. The studio was becoming an inferno, and my lack of sleep induced me to fall into delirium.

I wanted to be passionately kissed by the one man allowed into my world. I wanted to feel his strong, eager hands around my waist. I wanted to feel his desire penetrating my sex, now a warm spring of wetness.

I sprawled on my settee and opened my legs to the warm, temperamental summer breeze that blew through the small, round rosette window. I had learned the art of climax using my own fingers. I explored my body with the same acuteness that I used to explore the world around me, my fingers and hands acting as my lovers.

As the air erected my sex, I fingered my own wetness and my pearl of delight. I had never been penetrated, and I yearned for my womb to be opened.

My lust had been funneled into my designing, but now, alone, I only wanted to think of Mr. Hurley.

As my mind flipped through the pages of my lustful, imaginary picture book, I noticed, propped against the wall, an unfinished carved spindle that Mr. Hurley had started the day before. It was to be one of the legs for our next piece.

Its foot was carved into a ball grasped by the claw of a dragon. I grabbed it and began to stroke my wet sex with its tip. The rounded foot stimulated my own ball of wetness, and the nails of the claw delicately teased it to erection. I continued to roll the foot over my sex with slow, deliberate motions.

My wetness covered the foot, and I decided that if my art was to be my only lover, then my art would not only skim across the folds and erection of my sex, but penetrate me, opening the dark cavern of my virgin womb.

I slowly inserted the foot into my sex. I felt myself pull apart. I glided it in, gently, as I did not want to tear my maidenhead. But suddenly my desire overpowered me, and I thrust the spindle with both hands into my virgin body. Mercilessly, I drove the wooden phallus into my sex and felt the hungry mouth of my womb welcome my lover.

With this wooden piece of art submerged in my sex, my womb and my throat simultaneously reached climax. As the muscles in my sex contracted around my wooden lover, my throat opened, and through my lips, I heard the sound of my voice echo for the first time. It was the sweet sound of satisfied desire.

My voice! My sound! I was overwhelmed with happiness. I was not dumb! I was not dumb!

I was overjoyed, thrilled, and excited to think that maybe I could speak, sing, yell, or scream. I was ravenous to make another sound, and I attempted to thrust it out of my throat, but again my mouth was barren.

I was dumbfounded. Was it just a dream, an illusion? Was it the heat? Was I delirious? Was I going crazy?

No! No! I did hear it! It was really my voice. It echoed in my head as ecstasy traveled through my body, as the faint pulsation of climax continued inside of me.

I knew the secret!

Droplets covered my body, and my hands slipped off my lover as I began to withdraw him from my womb. I removed the phallus, and my sex closed. A thin layer of virginal blood coated the end, and I cleaned it off with my white sheath.

I dropped my lover to the floor and collapsed into the arms of the settee. I was intoxicated with pleasure. As I drifted off to sleep, I thought I heard the descent of footsteps on the stairs behind the attic door.

For a moment I became alarmed. Who was there? Didn't Mr. Hurley leave? Didn't I hear him leave? Had Mr. Hurley heard my voice? But steeped in fatigue and drowned in release, I closed my eyes and fell asleep.

As the sun set and drenched the room in orange ocher, I woke. Disoriented, I sat up and looked down at the floor to locate the leg. The spindle was not on the floor.

I quickly dropped to my knees and looked under the settee to see if it had rolled out of sight. It was not there. I desperately scoured the studio in search of my wooden lover. *He* was gone, or rather . . . taken.

I dressed quickly, putting on my frock, making sure that it covered the bottom of my blood-stained sheath.

I rushed downstairs to my father's office.

He was sitting at his desk, diligently working. He looked up as he heard me come in.

“Suzette, I have some bad news. Mr. Hurley just gave his resignation. A family emergency. Dear, I am sorry. We will find someone else. I promise.”

I walked out of the room holding tears in my eyes. My anger pulsed through me, and my head swelled, pounding on the inside of my skull until I finally let myself cry. I ran down the hall, away from my father, and the more the tears streaked my face, the faster I ran to the safety of my studio, where I threw myself on the floor, weeping.

The room was dark, lit only by the small flicker of a candle.

I wanted to combust in anger. Mr. Hurley had left with a souvenir he had no right to take. I felt rejected. I felt violated.

I had lost my innocence to my art. I believed he had witnessed the consummation that I had longed for him to partake in with me.

I was horrified at the thought of him watching as I pleased myself and infuriated by the idea that he knew that my art would end my silence, that he knew I would find my voice. He saw my climax, but what pierced my soul is that he *heard* my voice.

I felt ashamed and insecure. Did he think I had a beautiful voice?

The desire to hear my own voice again triggered a new obsession. Mr. Hurley had taken my first lover, and I was now on a quest to bring new ones to life.

I could not help thinking that Mr. Hurley would have been impressed with my craftsmanship. I emulated his hunger for the feel of a piece of wood, his enjoyment in stuffing upholstery, and his taste in details. Once finished with a new piece, I anointed each leg with the water of my womb. A rite of passage. A baptism.

The pieces I created began to accumulate in my studio, so it was necessary to have them displayed throughout the mansion. My father praised my inventiveness, but my awakened sexuality was beginning to overcrowd our home.

I decided to take a new approach. I would design a single chair.

It was to be my master creation. It would have an ornate, wrought-iron back and legs, a wooden seat, and a down-filled velvet cushion, marrying design and desire.

Studying with Mr. Hurley had not included iron works, so I had to send the designs to the city for casting. The legs twisted like vines growing from the earth. The back had interlocking organic curves. The chair had no arms, and the wooden seat, which I made to fit inside the wrought iron frame, had a round opening in its center.

In the sewing of the pillow, I was meticulous. I intricately double-stitched the fabric together, for it had to be able to endure the intensity of my passion.

I covered the seam with red fringed cord three inches long. I imagined it bouncing in the wake of my movements.

When the chair was finished, I smiled and set the red velvet cushion on the seat. An opening punctured its center and aligned perfectly with the round opening in the wood.

I stepped back to admire my creation. I was spellbound. I had never designed a piece with such life, such motion. The wrought iron beckoned me like fingers of desire.

The breeze from the window urged the red fringe into a ritualistic cotillion, and the strands began to waltz in unison. My chair embodied the nature of my soul.

It was the last task, however, that would bring me the greatest rapture. On the carving table I set three pieces of wood, each from a different species. Oak. Mahogany. Ebony. All would be carved with a ball-and-claw foot, but cut to different sizes. I spent days carving them to perfection.

The oak piece was the most slender, measuring four inches in length and three inches around. I named *him* Henri. The mahogany piece was of medium girth, measuring seven inches in length and five inches around. *His* name was Louis. The ebony piece was the largest of the three at ten inches in length and six inches around. I surrendered to *him* the most. Napoleon was *his* name.

They became my lovers, my fiancés. If I was destined to be

without a real man, then I would share my body with three, or more, wooden ones.

When I became engaged to my wooden fiancés, I remembered a southern tradition that had drifted north on the winded breath of my sister's well-traveled friends.

Far away, nestled against the Mississippi River outside of New Orleans, was a plantation known as Nottoway. It was the largest plantation home in the south, vastly spreading its 64-room Italian-and-Greek-revival-styled architecture across the rich soil that nurtured acres and acres of sugarcane.

Visitors and guests boasted of the home's grandeur, speaking of its intricate, lacy, plaster frieze work, its painted Dresden porcelain doorknobs, its carved marble mantles, its Corinthian columns, and its Grand White Ballroom. The enchanting ballroom, with its floor-to-ceiling windows, cut-glass chandeliers, wrought-iron candelabras, and romantic terraces, became renowned amongst New Orleans high society for its magic. It was a well-known fact that if a young couple danced just one dance while looking into each other's eyes the whole time, they would fall in love forever and eventually become engaged.

When the first one of the seven daughters living in the Nottoway home became engaged, she used her diamond engagement ring to engrave her name on a corner pane of glass in one of her bedroom windows.

This became a tradition followed by her sisters. It was a symbol of true love as well as a ladylike test to evaluate the quality of the diamond.

My sister and her friends were so smitten by this story that they all decided to follow the tradition when they became engaged.

I, as well, was charmed by this romantic custom, but I, unlike my sister and her friends, assumed that I would never be permitted to marry.

I wanted to practice the custom anyway. In the front wall of my art studio were three small, round windows. Spanning across each of their centers, in loopy artistic penmanship, I, breaking with the

tradition of using my own name, engraved the names of my three wooden fiancés, Henri, Louis, and Napoleon.

Instead of using a diamond ring, I used a very special piece of jewelry: the gold hoop, on which dangled a small diamond held by three gold prongs, once owned by Josephine, Napoleon's wife. It was not part of a pair of earrings, nor the missing link of a larger necklace. The Empress Josephine had had her sex pierced, and that is where she wore the golden hoop.

Once, my father revealed the story about my grandfather's escape, taking with him the hoop and the locket, but never told me where the hoop had been kept, claiming that he never saw it himself. I was immediately driven to find this hidden treasure. My intuition told me that it would still be in the house. If my grandfather had indeed been so devoted to his Emperor, and had had to sell the locket, I could not believe he would separate himself from the hoop. I devised a plan and, in a secret leather-bound journal, listed every room in our house. I was systematic in my search, scouring each space, then checking it off in my journal.

I proceeded to look under every rug, move every piece of furniture, and even empty all the flower vases, looking into each bottom. I looked under beds, behind armoires, in closets and jewelry boxes. After a few weeks, having failed in my search, I gave up my senseless hunt and put away my journal.

Since my mother's death, my father had forbidden anyone from rearranging or even using the drawing room. Her harp, the furniture, the curtains, the paintings, and the clock with its hands forever marking 10:23 remained untouched.

One day, after quarreling with my father, I, unbeknownst to him, defied his order and went into the sacred drawing room to curl up in a corner. The room should have smelled old, the smell of aged wood and dust-filled fabric, but in it lingered the scent of my mother, the sweet aroma of violets.

I looked around the room, my gaze eventually resting on my mother's beautiful gilded harp. I imagined her sitting beside the

instrument, the bottom of her ivory satin dress catching the light in each of its folds piled around her on the floor. Her delicate, porcelain fingertips striking the long slender strings, sending an ethereal sound through the room.

I imagined her parting her tender lips to sing, but as I waited, longing to hear her voice, a voice I was told was beyond exquisite, her colorful image blurred, faded, and evaporated.

Tears filled my eyes, the room became glassy, and for one brief moment as I began to cry, a tiny, white twinkle forced me to look at the base of the shortest string on the harp.

Through my pain, through my tears, I crawled over to the instrument. On the wooden base rested the golden hoop, on which hung a diamond.

I ran my finger over a few strings. The sweet sound ascended higher and higher in pitch until I reached the shortest string, the sound of which was dull, flat, and short.

This is how I found my diamond, possibly left there for me by my mother.

It was with this piece of jewelry, with this tiny diamond, once attached to the sex of a great Empress, kissing her delicate folds, that I engraved the names of my fiancés in the glass of my windows.

My love for my wooden fiancés was true, my devotion to them unfailing. They were kings, rulers of my body, and the only witnesses to my voice.

I hid my secret lovers in a carved ivory box. The box was intricately decorated with symbols from an ancient language. The top could only be removed by inserting a small triangular key into a keyhole hidden between the twists and turns of the complicated pattern composing the language. I felt the magic of this box, and my mind journeyed, wondering what precious objects were once held in its smooth belly.

My lovers were safe, secured from possible prying eyes. Under the heaps of fabric, behind the boxes of cording, I stashed the ivory box,

and usually once a day I would dig through the mess, fetching my royal wooden fiancés.

The key was always with me, tied with a scarlet satin ribbon to the black lace garter holding up my stockings, choking the top of my thigh. Sometimes, through my layers of clothing, I would feel the key slide across the top of my leg and dangle against my tender, untouched flesh.

To retrieve the key marked the beginning of each sensual experience. The rustle of my skirt and petticoat as I sifted through the layers to get to my stockings, the snap of releasing each garter, the whisper of each unrolled stocking, the succession of thuds as I pulled at the buttons of my shoes, all awakened my body, my senses readying me for my lovers.

My varying mood, my unpredictable cycle, or my explosive temper dictated which of my fiancés I would choose to make love to me on each given day. Once a king was selected, I would fasten the phallus into the opening of the red velvet throne. I would dance before it like a courtesan. I bowed to it and dropped to my knees to wet its shaft with my mouth, my sex engorged with fire, my nipples puckered into small beads. After thoroughly drenching the wood, I would rise and spread my legs over the seat of the chair. I would position the ball and dragon claw foot at the opening of my sex and slowly lower myself onto the phallus.

I entwined my fingers in the intricate detail of wrought iron on the back of the chair and thrust myself onto the seat. The soft velvet cushioned my bottom as the hard wood divided my sex. I would finger my own erection, and as I began to climax, the sound of ecstasy faithfully burst forth from my lips.

It was melodic, delightful, and rousing, and hearing my voice satisfied a deep need. I wanted to fill my mouth and my ears with sound. I savored that sound. It was the meal I never wanted to finish, the drink I never wanted to empty, the dream I never wanted to end. But it always did.

I would withdraw from the throne and recline on the settee in an

elevated state of being. My body dripped with perspiration. Then my mind would slowly travel.

I would dream of speaking or singing with my new voice. I would float to exotic places around the world and would communicate in foreign tongues. I would find the love of my life, my soul mate, and we would create art. I would sweetly whisper in his ears while he would explore my body with his own.

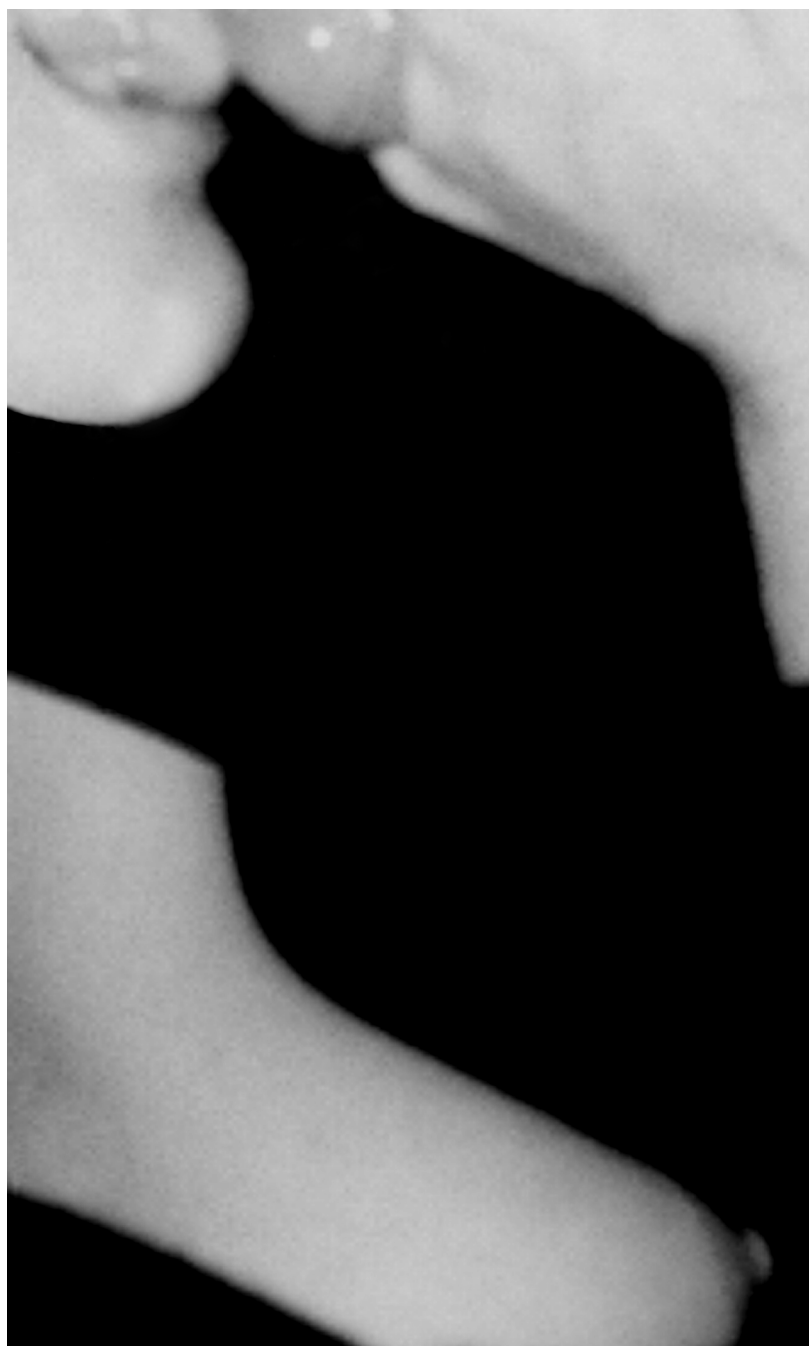
I cannot help but think about Mr. Hurley. My anger, humiliation, and insecurity have now subsided, so I can see him through different eyes. He would be impressed by my master creation, and I can hear him speak about it with an elated voice.

I impishly smile to myself and wonder if he knows how often I, and my three wooden devotees, listen to the sound of my voice.

For

DL,

We can chat forever — maybe one day under lights and in front of cameras — but our private late night interviews are my inspiration.

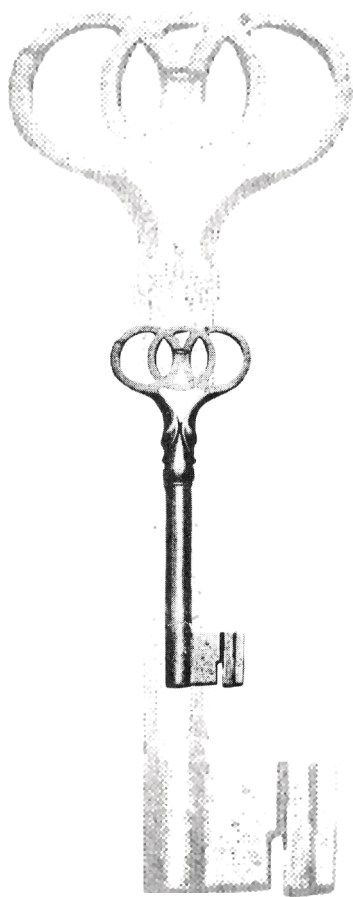


Moondrops

I grasped the cusp of the crescent Moon,
The pillows of my thighs astride his lips.
He blew his tingly breath into my womb,
And my sex sparkled with moondrops.

The Letter

She who tells the truth, brands well.



*T*aboo . . . Forbidden . . .

Adele read with expectation as she traced the cold, embossed sign by the entrance of this East Village club. Her coarse fingertips enjoyed the sensation of the cold metal while her eyes followed her carefully manicured garnet fingernails. The letters, like dripping candle wax, seemed to be melting off the small tin plaque affixed to the limestone façade.

The club was the meeting place that Piers Playfair had proposed for their third date, the first time in many years she had accepted an

invitation past the sinking second date. She always lost interest quickly, as if dates were born to be bores.

She had arrived early, as was her habit. Even if she was just on time to any rendezvous, she always felt she was late. To ensure her punctuality and reinforce a badly needed sense of control, she fastened two watches to her wrist. The one she always slid on first and wound daily displayed a faded antique face with delicate Roman numerals. It was fitted with a modern elastic band, which often pinched her flesh as it spun around her wrist. The other she buckled tightly, its crocodile leather band caressing her wrist, its black, naked face reflecting flashes of light, its silver hands revealing *Adele's* time, running fifteen minutes faster than the first watch, which kept real time.

Her obsession with promptness was a consequence of too often allowing herself to be easily whisked into situations where she became the erotic puppet in other people's experimental sex shows. Her watches, which gave her a sense of controlling time, reminded her that she always had a brief moment to refuse acting the part of a puppet, as opposed to giving in and submitting herself to the will of other people looking to pull her strings and use her in their fantasies.

Tonight, the stage for her third performance with Piers would be Taboo. She made her entrance, walking down a narrow cement hallway lit by bright, naked fluorescent tubes, leading her silhouette to the main doorway of the club.

A woman of Polynesian descent stood at the entrance behind a metal hostess stand. Her straight black hair cascaded over her shoulders. Her complexion had a green cast as she stood directly under one of the fluorescent tubes. This, however, did not diminish her beauty.

Adele remembered seeing a similar face on a glossy page in one of her many art history books. She reflected for a moment and realized that the woman before her embodied a Polynesian stone statue, the one that guarded the entrance to a secret shrine visited by women in

their time of flow. Her image reflected a thin, modern version of this fertility symbol.

The hostess had heavily darkened her large brown eyes with makeup, accentuating them, elongating them making them look like the slightly slanted eyes of a Siamese cat. Her gaunt face sparkled with the newest, trendiest MAC face powder, each speck dusted onto her face, neck, and cheeks reflecting the green light of the fluorescent tubes.

Adele thought the woman looked delicious, an exquisite piece of exotic fruit that beckoned to be bitten and maybe a little more. Adele wanted to taste the woman's lips and steal the sugary nectar from her mouth.

"Hi," Adele said flirtatiously, the pitch of her voice rising.

"Hi," the hostess said in a cold, accented voice.

Adele tried to guess how long this woman had lived in New York. Studying the stern expression on her face, the affected attitude, and the avant-garde makeup, Adele concluded that this desirable creature had lived in Manhattan for at least a year.

"I'm meeting someone. He's tall with dark hair. Would you know if he has arrived?" Adele asked.

Leaning closer to the statuesque woman, Adele set her white hand on the edge of the steel stand, hoping that the warmth of her body might melt the woman's coolness.

The hostess shook her head.

"No, I don't remember seeing anyone matching that description. He may have slipped past me. You may go in and look for him," the hostess answered.

"He would have noticed you. You are incredibly beautiful," Adele said.

The hostess' face softened. It was as if the stone shell had cracked open down its middle, exposing the vulnerable nature of the young woman.

"Thank you," she said.

Adele seized any opportunity to seduce women, using compli-

ments with finesse, knowing that a compliment given by another woman was far more powerful than a compliment given by a man. Women, presumably without motive, sound far more genuine than men, who are always suspected of promoting a sexual agenda.

Simultaneously, Adele and the hostess reached for the doorknob. Adele's fingers accidentally grazed the hostess' soft hand. The touch ignited a pulse in Adele's sex. It was the beginning of the type of erection that quickly emerged when she touched a *woman*, whereas her sex would gradually inflate when she touched a man. It was as if she were male when she touched females, her body immediately responding between her legs. When she touched a man, her erection awakened slowly.

As Adele passed through the door, she smelled the floral fragrance that enwrapped the hostess. Adele felt the moisture of her own sex lubricate her fleshy folds and creases, pooling in the fabric of her panties. If she would have lingered a moment longer, her desire would have seeped through her underwear and down between her thighs.

Once inside the club, she began to search for her date. She walked over Oriental rugs scattered on top of the cement floors. She weaved through empty, overstuffed sofas and chairs.

She sauntered past the bar, sprinkled with only a few patrons whose eyes reflected the dim lighting. She felt these gleaming pairs of eyes watching her, yet did not return their glances. Instead, she lengthened her stride and straightened her posture, pretending that she was on stage, acting out a role.

She was confident in her wardrobe for this part. She felt she exuded sexuality. She wore a long black skirt slit up to her mid-thighs into six panels and secured to her waist with a black leather belt.

As she walked through the space, the black material opened, revealing her muscular legs covered with fishnet stockings. She wore a green sweater, cut off right above the waist, the buttons of which were left open to expose her cleavage.

Tonight her breasts were full, thrusting up out of her sweater with

the help of an exquisite piece of French lingerie given to her by one of her lovers.

Dates and lovers are two different things, she thought. She had yet to find a lover she could date or a date who could become a lover.

Adele circled the space. Unable to find Piers, she decided to walk toward the back of the club into a small rectangular nook furnished with two sofas, one yellow and one purple, and a few scattered chairs.

It was on the purple sofa that she reclined. She leaned her head on one corner, her body stretching out all the way to the other. The pieces of material that composed her skirt fell away, revealing her legs. Her feet, weighted down by motorcycle boots, dangled over the edge of the sofa.

She ordered a glass of champagne and looked at the watch with the faded antique face, the one showing real time.

A moment later, coming from behind her shoulder, a strong hand with well-manicured nails presented her a flute of champagne.

"Your drink of choice this evening?" a low voice rumbled.

"Is there a more appropriate drink for a goddess? I enjoy the way it slides over my tongue and down into my stomach, leaving tiny intoxicating bubbles in my throat," she said without turning her head. Her voice was affected, imitating the kind a classical actress, playing the part of Cleopatra, would use to seduce Antony, or Caesar, or any of her would-be lovers.

Tonight, Adele felt strong and beautiful, as if, like the great Queen Cleopatra, she was lounging on her royal couch, waiting to be served by one of her lovers.

She needed to absorb these feelings of emotional invincibility and staggering loveliness, and prolong the physical reaction they created in her body, for it would not be long before he sucked her into the vacuum of his soul, where she would become his plaything, his doll, his puppet, and cease being herself. She was easily malleable in the hands of a strong man, and her fear of losing herself compelled her to have only brief encounters with male lovers, dashing away before they could criticize, change, or reject her.

Soft lips brushed her cheek, leaving traces of wetness. Her date materialized before her with a bottle of champagne and a second glass.

"What would life be without the company of a dramatic woman?" he teased.

In one motion, he slid next to her and snuggled his head between her shoulder and her face.

Adele attracted two breeds of men: both were afraid of her, with the first eventually trying to change her and the second eventually leaving her for a lesser version of herself.

Piers belonged to the first breed. Initially, he would be delighted by her drama and sexuality, but soon it would drain him of his charm, and he would insist on reducing the colossal spotlight under which she needed to live, and demand that she exist in a narrow beam of dull light.

"So what is the 'activity' this evening?" she asked.

"I have an idea for a story that you and I will write together. You'll write a segment and I'll read it, then I'll write a segment. You'll write a segment and I'll write a segment, et cetera, until we have a completed tale."

"What if I am not in the mood to write?"

"You're a writer, an artist. You should always be in the mood to write and create."

"I'm sure that prostitutes are not always in the mood to prostitute themselves."

"Tonight, you will be the Anaïs Nin of Taboo."

"Impressive. You are actually familiar with her. One of her jobs, of course, was to write erotica for a dollar a page." She paused. "I charge a dollar a line. Cost of living increase."

He chuckled.

"I've never read your work. How do I know you are worth it?" he asked.

"High risk, high return," she replied.

"Fountain, or ball?"

“Fountain.”

He pulled out of his pocket a black Mont Blanc fountain pen and a small but thick pad of paper.

“The story begins with a man and a woman meeting for the first time.”

“Meeting and what?” she asked.

“It is up to you. Shall we begin?”

He handed her the fountain pen and pad. She sat her half-filled champagne flute, now decorated with the red halfmoon of her lip print, on the floor. She drew her knees to her chest and rested the pad of paper against her legs. After shifting her body to find the most comfortable position, she pondered for a moment and began to scratch her story onto the pad in an elegant loopy script:

Sex erupts from the city of San Francisco. A body of land pushing up from the Earth into the sky. The continuous curves that the streets follow entice and tease, baiting the mind to succumb to ravenous desire; the sound of the cable cars that almost exhaust themselves reaching the top of each hill, screaming as they plummet down the other side, excites and electrifies, tempting the spirit with passion; the fresh scent of the sea that the wind blows in from the bay intoxicates and liberates, seducing the soul with the aroma of lust; the raindrops that struggle free from the clouds to drench the flesh caress and fondle, finally luring the body and its essence with fervor.

Serena was not immune to the temptations. As she ascended each hill and descended into each valley, she visualized hands stroking her, guiding her to decadence.

She felt caressed by the sun's long fingers bouncing from one hill to the next. The fine rays cast their most penetrating light, revealing the charm of the city, exposing each corner and every crevice. When the sun dropped between the neverending string of breasts, the moon would rise, and a single beam of light

pierced through the black, curvaceous silhouette of the city, pointing to one particularly deep crevice, known as "In Cest." Inside the womb of this underground club, she met Salomon.

Serena knew she would have him. They reflected each other in body and spirit: an unexplained connection.

Salomon was tall, dark, and mystical in nature. His muscles rippled his clothing, sending a current of desire through her.

Submerged in her sex was a ravenous shark that hungered, and its mouth urgently sought to devour this man's flesh. It swam in the thick, black sea of midnight, not the succulent, sapphire-blue water of daylight.

Her breasts were double moons pasted high above the horizon, with the pointed tips watching, like bulging eyes, as Salomon approached her shore. It was on their powerful water of desire that his sail was now raised.

Adele handed the pen and pad back to Piers. Her lungs inflated and her neck lengthened. She was proud of her impromptu performance, perhaps slightly over the top.

"Amazing! I fear that I will not be much competition," he said.

"You are not going to give up before you try, are you?"

"No. I write letters, not fiction or poetry, but I'll try."

Salomon was strong and aggressive. She knew he would take her quickly, satisfy himself and then her.

"My first attempt," Piers said, handing the pen back to Adele.

She looked at him, then lowered her eyes and smiled. Her intuition told her that Piers was clever, much too clever to write so clumsily. She was intrigued by the nature of this game. Adele whisked the pad of paper away from him and again began to write:

Salomon glided up the iron staircase in the middle of the club, leading Serena to the mezzanine above the crowd overlooking the dance floor. Serena watched his muscular bottom, bait to the restless shark starving inside her sex.

When they reached the top of the iron stage, he made her lean over the railing, her back towards him. He stood behind her and lifted her skirt. He entwined his fingers in her lace panties, and with one quick motion, ripped them from her body. It felt as if the shark inside of her sex had been caught by the line of a fisherman.

Salomon raised the panties to his face and inhaled the aroma on the fabric, letting his tongue taste the wetness of her fire.

His arm encircled her waist while his free hand blazed a trail of heat from her breasts, to her waist, to her flat stomach, and finally to the secret sea between her legs. He parted the lips of her sex with two fingers, and she felt her erection emerge like a tiny island in the middle of the sea. With a slow, circular motion, his middle finger stroked her erection. She weakened, falling against him.

Toward the end of the last section, Adele's handwriting became almost illegible as excitement gripped her fingers and vibrated through her body. Very consciously, she sucked on the end of the pen as the large hand that had served her champagne was now tracing one of the open slits in her skirt. The garment had become disheveled and revealed the bare skin above the binding of her thigh-high fishnet stockings.

Much like her character, Serena, Adele's own wetness began to flow out of her, and she did not stop Piers' hand from venturing beyond the top of her stocking to her exposed skin. Her sex swelled painfully as he lightly brushed a finger against her black, lace thong

panties, a gift from another lover. Her bra did not match. She wondered if she would ever be able to make a matching set out of the ones she had received from her different lovers. Probably not.

"Your turn," she said wiggling away from his fingers.

"You're doing so well. I can't compete."

"I thought bankers had to be competitive," she challenged.

He took the pen and the pad of paper from her.

Salomon put his hard cock between her thighs and pushed in and pulled out. He quickly came when she crossed her legs, tightening the grip of her muscles around his cock.

Piers handed the pen and the pad back to her.

"Quick and to the point. Not indicative of your own lovemaking style, I hope," Adele teased.

"Write," he laughed.

"And . . . no condom? Not very safe sex."

"Fantasy needs no protection."

Though Adele and Piers had met before, she did not know much about him, and it was evident that she would not gain any insight through his writing, so she probed further into his mind to evaluate if he was worthy of a possible night of intimacy.

"So there is no need for a *mind condom*?" she asked.

"What is a *mind condom*?" he asked.

"Protection for the mind."

"Protection from what?"

"Protection from the risks of fantasizing and acting out certain fantasies."

"I'll take my chances," he said.

"You'll take your chances?" she asked.

He unknowingly just gave Adele the freedom to express her most outrageous fantasies.

Adele started reading aloud the first few words of the next section, slowly, pacing her voice to the rhythm of her writing. She became quiet as she continued:

Serena's sex, a famished shark, devoured Salomon, ripping open his flesh and swallowing the hot foam erupting from his body. The giant creature, its appetite barely curbed, lurked in the salt water of her womb.

"I'm not finished. Come with me," Salomon said to Serena. With the meticulous touch of a fashion stylist, he straightened her skirt and smoothed the wrinkled fabric while feeling the curves of her behind.

Serena, entranced by his aura, agreed to accompany him back to his apartment.

When they reached the door of his apartment, Serena, impatient with lust, pinned Salomon against the intricately carved wood, pressing her breasts against his muscular back, reaching around his body and pulling herself toward him, thrusting her pelvis against his behind. He had taken her from behind in the club, and now with one hand clutching his chest, the other digging into his thigh, she was the one in control.

Surprised, Salomon turned his face to the side. Serena smelled his warm breath, a breeze carrying the scent of freshly cut poppies. The smell of his cologne, the hardness of his physique, the prickling stubble of his face against her lips set her body ablaze. An irreplaceable feeling, as only aggression could spur, surged through her, electrifying her flesh, a fence of heat protecting a most beautiful garden.

Salomon managed to unlock the door and escape her embrace. As he pushed open the creaking door, he whirled around, grabbed her wrist, and pulled her through the threshold. He shut the door with his foot and pushed Serena away from him.

Serena, her luring, dilated eyes staring directly into his,

tore open her shirt, and the tiny black buttons sounded as they fell on the wooden floor. With her breasts now set free, she lunged for him, grabbing his arm and pulling him to her.

"Down on your knees!" Serena commanded.

Salomon dropped to his knees, and Serena grasped the top of his head, entwining her fingers in his thick hair, pulling his face to her nipples.

He raped her breasts with his mouth and assaulted her nipples with his teeth. The bites hurt her and she gasped. As he continued to bite, suck, and tear at the knobs in his mouth, he tore her skirt at the seam, shredding the fabric. She let the skirt fall to the floor, opened her thighs, and forced his face down to her sex.

Salomon grabbed the hand that was holding his head down and pulled Serena to the floor. He spread her legs and stared at her wet, gleaming sex, and just as she thought he was going to enter her, he descended onto her erection, giving her pleasure with his mouth.

He teased her swollen erection with quick flicks of his tongue. When she arched her hips and was about to explode, he buried his mouth between the lips of her sex and sucked her to ecstasy.

When Serena was finished quivering from her climax, Salomon entered her quickly, and she felt his hardness open her sex with uncontrollable force. Her womb swallowed the flesh he was plunging into her.

He continued for a few minutes and then pulled himself out of her depths to resume his previous position, sucking and biting her erection.

Her carnivorous sex stirred inside of her, causing a hurricane of excitement, creating an enormous swell of wetness, sending it crashing into his mouth. Her pleasure continued as he swallowed the water of her breaking waves.

When he felt that her sex had calmed down, he plunged himself back into her opening, again sending rippling tremors

through her. Her insides were still convulsing from the oral pleasure when he released his fluid deep inside of her womb.

Breathing in deeply, Adele put the pen down. Her own sex was dripping, overflowing with a desire so potent that she felt tiny pricks in the swollen folds of her secret flesh.

She often aroused herself when she wrote the scripts for the shows she gave as a performance artist. On her desk at home, guarding her *American Heritage Dictionary*, her *Roget's International Thesaurus* and her *Strunk and White The Elements of Style*, stood two vibrators. One was small and resembled a bullet. The other was called the Great King. It was enormous and pink, and attached to its soft rubber surface was an external stimulator in the shape of a kangaroo's long snout.

When Adele felt like she needed to orgasm, or to simply release tension, she would use the bullet vibrator, but after a long night of writing about people engaging in the forbidden, she would take the Great King to bed.

"Now you," she said to Piers.

He continued:

From that moment on, they were always together. They did not have to work, thanks to Salomon's trust fund. He provided for Serena financially; she provided for him in other ways.

"A short break," Piers said, setting the pen and pad aside.

He cupped his hand under her chin and drew her soft red lips to his mouth. He gently kissed her, and ever so slightly parted her lips with his tongue. She opened her mouth to receive him, but he withdrew. She sensed he would be sensual. His tongue was not small and firm, but relaxed and wide. He motioned to her to continue the

story and she noticed a small smudge of lipstick on the corner of his mouth. She had left her mark on him, subtle and almost undetectable in the darkness of the club, and she thought about the primitive act of marking her terrain and how she was unexpectedly excited by it.

"I'm making a fortune," she teased in a whispered voice.

"I'm investing a fortune," he countered.

Serena's father had been castrated with the knives of impotency and sterility. The once-vigorous man was unable to unite with his wife in the traditional manner, so he compensated with the skillful use of his mouth and fingers.

Serena's mother was satisfied by the nature of their intimacy, yet in her heart, she longed for children. Serena's father, an open-minded man, accepted that his wife be impregnated by a sperm donor.

While sperm donation was not common practice in California in the 1960s, a few medical schools dedicated specialized facilities to the procedure.

Serena's mother became pregnant on the first attempt and had an easy labor and delivery. She loved her new little daughter, giving her the name Serena Suzette after the famous nineteenth-century mute furniture designer.

While Serena's mother showered her little girl with love and affection, her father reacted indifferently. Unexpectedly, the birth had left him emotionally sterile as well, and he found it hard to show true fatherly love to little Serena. The lack of attention compelled her to search for her biological father. When Serena turned eighteen, in accordance with California laws, the name of her biological father was released to her.

His name was Dr. William Tate. He was a very successful plastic surgeon, a bachelor who lived a luxurious lifestyle. His practice catered to very wealthy women. Unfortunately, Serena

never met him, as he passed away a few days before she discovered his identity.

“No more sex?” Piers said.

“Do you want to hear about parents having sex?”

“No. It’s true. I definitely wouldn’t want to hear about my parents having sex.”

Adele handed the pen to Piers. He pushed her hand back to the pad of paper.

“Please, continue,” he said. “I love your imagination.”

Salomon’s Spanish ancestors arrived in the New World cloaked in the security of gold. Generations of prosperity imprinted nobility on him.

But even the Spanish coins inherited from his forefathers, which would always guarantee him a luxurious lifestyle, could not protect him from emotional tragedy.

His father and mother were always cordial with each other in the presence of company; however, when the guests departed and the servants retired for the night, the battles would begin.

This behavior never abated, and during those times Salomon would retreat to his room.

On the evening of his twentieth year, after he had escaped from the damaging rhetoric that was passing between his parents, his father stormed through the door of his room to divulge a shattering secret.

He was furious. His face brightened with redness. His eyes enlarged with rage.

Salomon had never seen his father like this before, and his first instinct was to sift through his mind to recall if he had done anything wrong.

“Salomon, I am not your father!”

Salomon sat in his chair, stunned, as the verbal blow of his father's revelation paralyzed his mind.

"Dad . . . ?" Salomon cried.

"Your mother had a horse-riding accident while I was in Europe, and while she was recovering she had an affair with her plastic surgeon. She got pregnant. I raised you as my own, and I have always thought of you as my own, but you are not my son.

"Salomon, your mother didn't want me to tell you, but I felt that it was time for you to know the truth. I ask that you keep it a secret."

His father, not waiting for a response, turned and walked out of the room. Salomon, unable to speak, did not ask what had prompted his father to expose the truth on that very night, nor did he seek to know the identity of his real father.

In the days that followed, Salomon withdrew, spending time alone, speaking neither to his father nor to his mother, and when he finally regained the strength to function, he packed his bags, his grief, and his dishonor and moved to San Francisco.

Piers brushed the stubble on his face against the tender skin of Adele's neck.

"That weakens me," she said. "I can't write if you keep doing that," Adele giggled.

He pulled his face away from her neck and stroked the skin with his fingertips.

In San Francisco, Salomon hired a private detective to ascertain the identity of his biological father. Though the identity of his real father was discovered within two weeks, Salomon would not get to meet him, since he had been dead for two years.

Salomon scoured through the report and the photographs and tried to see a physical resemblance to the plastic surgeon, but concluded that he only had his mother's features.

San Francisco offered a new life for Salomon. He lived like a bohemian and frequently experimented in the risqué. He left nothing untried. He became a regular at sex clubs, both straight and gay.

While he preferred women, he derived great pleasure from impaling men. He persuaded them not to use any more lubricant than was already on the condoms, watching his shaft rip and tear their tender anal flesh, while their faces prised into almost intolerable pain and unexplainable pleasure. He never indulged in drugs or alcohol, remaining in the arena of sexual deviation.

Salomon was open with Serena, telling her with explicit details all about his sexual adventures. She never questioned his habits and found that listening to his tales fueled her own fantasies while they made love. As she plunged into orgasm, she imagined spying on Salomon as he aggressively entered a man, or took a rigid shaft in his mouth, sucking it to climax.

Only once did she inquire about his sexual habits that she considered extreme, but he never addressed her question, and she refrained from bringing it up again.

A year went by, and Serena and Salomon emotionally drifted in and out of their relationship. Physically, they still experienced the passion they felt when they first met, but during one of those emotional retreats, Serena began an affair with another man.

Salomon discovered her infidelity and reacted in a peculiar manner.

One night, as she was leaving for a rendezvous with her new lover, Salomon stopped her at the door.

"Go lay on the bed and pull up your skirt," he ordered.

Still imprisoned by the velvet ropes of his aura, she imme-

diately did as she was told. He came in and gently took off her stockings and panties. He pushed her legs together and examined her dark black fluff.

He left the room returning with a pair of manicure scissors, a razor, a long red candle, and a book of matches.

"Lay very still; I won't hurt you," he said.

With the artistry of Paulo Spalla, the erotic jewelry-maker, he began sculpting and shaping, as if the hair were a delicate golden ring or a bronze pendant. Once finished, he instructed her to remain still.

"Close your eyes," he said in a hypnotic voice.

She lowered her lids so that her upper lashes rested on the lower ones. Her face was tranquil and trusting until she heard the swish of a match striking the matchbook, and saw behind the darkness of her eyelids the flicker of warm light. Her face contorted in fear for a brief moment, but she remembered that he would never hurt her.

Salomon gazed at her, beautiful, naughty, a resting enchantress. He was torn by the complexity of opposing emotions. She excited him, aroused him using her charm and charisma to attract other men, but her games and her need for adventure wounded him, and he became possessive.

Tonight he had felt both emotions clashing inside of him, dueling to win. The battle began as he watched her prepare herself for her date. The delicate detail as she applied her makeup, the careful attention to her hair as she teased it into shape, the fragrance she spritzed over her body, the mist covering her neck, wrists, thighs, and ankles. The pain gripped him as his heart raced, pounding in his chest, in his veins, in his erect shaft. He loved her, enough to let her go, enough to bear the agony of her betrayal. But she would not leave without his mark, without his seal.

The wax now liquefied around the wick and the flickering flame. He had used this same red candle before, christening it

by inserting it into her sex, then lighting it, with the flame intensifying the ocean scent of her womb.

As to not have the wax splatter over her body, he dipped a thin, flat wooden spatula in the warm wax, filling the crevices he had just created.

Serena felt the warm lick that threatened to burn her flesh and she felt her skin pull under the hardening wax. Salomon continued to paint her skin, and she lay motionless, torn between anxiety and curiosity.

After he finished, he spread her legs and placed his mouth near her sex. Feeling his breath on her thighs and sex, she rotated her hips upward, trying to reach for his lips. He teased her, flicking his tongue against her hardened bead, and when she could bear it no more, she pulled his face against her sex, where he licked and sucked her to rapture.

Always a noble gentleman, Salomon cleansed between her legs with a warm wet towel, wiping the mixture of his saliva and the fluid from her sex so that her new lover would not detect Salomon's scent.

Before Serena could rise, he left the room. She collapsed into herself as an emotional tidal wave crashed over her. She suspected from Salomon's behavior that he knew about her new lover, but she wondered why he had not acknowledged him. She wanted Solomon to yell at her, to scold her, to beat her, to love her, even in the guise of abuse. But he withdrew from her as her father had, and she sank into a familiar abyss of rejection.

She could not cry. Years of paternal rejection had evaporated the water in her eyes, leaving only a profound sadness in her pupils.

She had to move on, so she pulled herself from the bed and examined herself in the mirror. Facing her was the reversed initial of the first name of her new lover, red wax caught in the soft down of her sex.

Serena was horrified at the thought of Salomon knowing her secret, yet charmed by his ingenuity.

She was branded as an adulteress, a scarlet letter melted on her skin instead of embroidered on her clothing. But she assured herself that the symbol could be easily peeled away.

She went into the bathroom, pulled her skin taut, and with her right thumbnail dug under the edge of the wax, peeling the hardened letter off of her body.

Pieces of red wax fell on her thighs as she obliterated the branded letter. But as she feared, Salomon had been thorough with his laborious punishment, and once the wax was completely removed from her flesh, she saw that the letter remained shaved in the hair of her sex.

Adele could no longer resist the teasing torment of her date, the gentle caresses, the tender kisses. She dropped the pad and pen into her lap.

“End of chapter one. When do I get paid?” she asked in a breathy voice.

“My checkbook is at home.”

“A check?” she teased.

“You are so good I have to put you on my payroll,” he responded. “Shall we?” he asked.

Adele grinned coquettishly.

“Finish your drink,” he said.

“No, I’ve had enough,” she said.

Piers emptied his glass. He stood up and helped her to her feet.

The streets in the East Village of New York City were dark and trash-laden. The sewers belched steam from openings in the man-hole covers. Walking by poorly lit doorways, Adele and Piers could sometimes smell the stench of urine.

As they turned onto First Avenue, they noticed a young homeless woman curled up on the sidewalk. As they passed by her, the woman

lifted her stained, flowered dress, spread her legs, and stuck the needle of a syringe full of what must have been heroin into her crotch.

Piers put his arm around Adele and quickened his pace.

"What is she doing?" he asked.

"Getting off."

"A new twist on needle dick," he laughed. "Let's get a cab."

Piers raised his arm to call a cab.

Two cabs screeched to a halt and almost collided. Adele and Piers got in the one closest to them.

"Where to?" the cabby asked with a strong foreign accent.

"23 Central Park West," Piers said.

The cab sped through the streets. Adele and Piers, both strapped in by seatbelts, were jostled in the back seat.

The yellow cab finally stopped in front of a glorious apartment building overlooking Central Park. It was a 1930s building and had a sandstone facade with fluted columns and small carved gremlins watching over the street.

The lobby was decorated in rich mahogany wood, and an Oriental carpet covered the marble floor.

Lilies and lilacs, in Chinese vases, punctuated the air with their overwhelming aroma, and a cut-glass chandelier hung from the ceiling.

"Good evening," the doorman said.

"Good evening," Piers replied.

In the elevator, on the way to the penthouse, Piers pinned Adele against the wall. He buried his face in her neck and aggressively bit her skin.

Around her neck Adele wore a locket that threatened to break under the force of Piers' advance.

"Be gentle, or you will break my locket," she whispered.

His kisses became light as he fingered the piece of jewelry.

"A gift?" he asked.

"No. An old heirloom," she teased.

She kissed his mouth and wrapped her leg around his waist.

He found his way through her clothing. Just as the elevator door slid open, she felt his fingers thrust up inside of her wetness.

He quickly ushered her into his apartment.

The door was barely closed when Adele and Piers embraced with longing arms and passionate kisses.

He led Adele over to the window, where an expansive view of New York City sprawled before them. The lights of the city became millions of tiny candles illuminating their passion.

"Take me from behind. I love being fucked from behind," Adele whispered.

He turned her around and lifted her skirt. When he saw that her rounded bottom was decorated with black lace panties, his sex engorged. He pulled the panties down and squeezed her erect sex between his finger and thumb.

He began to push his erection into her.

"No! This is not fantasy, this is reality. Do you have a condom?" she asked.

He pulled a familiar blue packet from his pocket. Holding it in his mouth, he tore it open with one hand, took out the condom, and skillfully rolled it over his shaft. He took her from behind and she felt her sex separate. He was generously endowed, and as he entered her, pain and pleasure clashed together in her womb.

"Pull my hair," she commanded.

Keeping one hand on her waist, he grabbed her ink-black hair, jerked her head backward, and pulled her face to his. He entered her mouth with his probing tongue.

Adele closed her eyes. She was going to climax. As she entered the moment, she reached down and stimulated her own erection with her index finger. She moaned and felt her sex contract around his shaft.

While Piers continued his erotic assault, Adele, with a cunning smile, traced the branded letter "P" in the soft down of her sex.

Scraps of Time

He whisks into my life
with the ring of a bell
his heart and his cock
have hardened in hell

He wants from me love
in a carnal way
through my lips I grant passage
my mind runs astray

For less than a moment
the interludes last
then famine begins
and again I must fast

A scrap from his table
of time does he give
expects me to eat
and be able to live



The Ménage à Trois

He walks above me. I hear his footsteps on the floor of my ceiling. I know his gentle gliding step. He soundlessly descends.

I must listen with a bionic ear to catch the slight vibration of his gait connecting without sound to the stacked marble slabs.

Does he ever stop and listen for the resonance of love to echo through the slender page of architecture, dividing

Me from Him,

Him from Me?

As audible melodies of satisfied desire hum through slivers in the structure, does he wonder if a new lover escorts me to ecstasy, or is he deceived by the wood splintering my hand; sanding my sex?

Through a small distorted lens

I see Him,

She wants Him,

We've had Him.

He activates our dormant desire.

My naughty Shadow betrays me and slips under the door, displaying herself arrogantly with elongated svelteness, luring him, mocking me.

"It is I who captured his love. It is you who lost it."

"But sinister Shadow, when you spoke to him with an unflavored tongue, he bounded beyond the sea, following your bright Creator to another illusion."

"The language I speak is my presence, for my face is without features."

"True, you have no lips to utter false phrases, but you are a skillful, seductive ventriloquist, and he listened to your exaggerations."

"I weep for our lost love."

"Our love, Shadow? He holds no favor for me. I was but a tunnel through which he sent his vehicle."

"Yes. Tears wet my face when I think of him."

"Juliet? Is that your name? No, your drama is sheer. You are but a nymph, with no depth and little dimension."

"You multiply my tears."

"You have no tears."

"How pointed you are."

"Shadow, I loved him."

He walks below us. We hear his footsteps on the ceiling of our floor. He silently descends, entwining his fingers through the fading locks of the Creator. Now, as a burr in the hair of light, he is absently pulled across the sea, leaving us bleeding into the darkness.



The Hypnotist
Slaves, disguised, in time . . .



*W*alking up and down the narrow sidewalks of Greenwich Village reminded Fredrik of how much he loved New York in the fall.

“Paris in the springtime . . . but New York in the fall,” he thought.

All the New Yorkers who migrated north, south, east, or west during the unbearable summer months were back, returning with a potent energy, a consuming, addictive force that stroked and stimulated the city, exuding through the Village, whirling up and down the streets, in and out of buildings, through cars and buses,

shops and restaurants, and embracing everything in its path.

Every year at this time, the energy permeated Fredrik's soul, leaving him feeling surreal. It was on one of these magical fall days that he first felt a sudden injection of potent, unknown images. These images were totally foreign to him. They were of Africa and of great, majestic sailing vessels. At first a feeling of tranquility emanated from the visions, then an acute feeling of violence, then within seconds, before he could realize what was happening, the vividly painted illusions vanished, and his mind returned to Christopher Street.

Fredrik dismissed the incident, concluding that he suffered from a twisted side effect due to the cocktail of drugs he had swallowed the night before, and continued on his way to his first appointment with a hypnotist whose advertisement, featured in *HX Magazine*, had caught his attention.

After locating the apartment building, he stood outside and said to himself, "One last indulgence."

He nervously reached into his pocket and pulled out a pack of Camel cigarettes.

He placed a cigarette in his mouth and lit it, taking one big "Norma Desmond" drag after another. His mind drifted through the movie *Sunset Boulevard*, a cult film for some in the gay community, recently made popular again by a new, lavish Broadway musical adaptation that Fredrik despised. "All of those showtime-fags. I am not well for shows," he thought. "Nothing works my hole more than a bunch of faggots running around in tights, skipping and singing with permanent smiles plastered on their faces even though they are all supposed to be poverty-stricken, disease-ridden, and dying."

At times he thought he was Norma Desmond — the one in the movie, not the one in the play — a faded star living in the past, unable to accept the reality of the present.

Fredrik's thoughts trailed back to the Village, his last indulgence mere ashes flying in the wind. He dramatically dropped the cigarette butt onto the sidewalk and crushed the tiny stub with the ball

of his foot, grinding it into the cement with a twist of his ankle, obliterating the orange light with the leather sole of his shoe.

He pushed the intercom button and waited patiently for Louisa, the hypnotist, to answer.

He had been to many therapists over the years in an attempt to analyze his childhood, his turbulent existence, and his manic-depressive tendencies. He even went so far as to make an appointment with a renowned Park Avenue Jewish psychoanalyst to discuss his constant breakdowns over his despair at not being born Jewish, yet still burning to succeed in the entertainment industry.

"I feel guilty that I am not Jewish," he whined to his shrink. "It's tragic. I am really so talented, all I need is . . . I need to convert." His doctor chuckled as he scribbled on his prescription pad.

Now, a visit to a hypnotist. That is different. Hypnotists breach into the realm of the supernatural, the esoteric. Some would argue that so do therapists. At least a hypnotist could make him believe he could be Norma Desmond for a little while; a therapist would certainly talk him out of it.

"Welcome, Fredrik." A beautiful, reassuring voice greeted him. Fredrik heard the familiar buzzing sound, pulled open the door, and walked into the building.

Louisa opened the door of her penthouse apartment. She was a tall, slender woman with baby blonde hair swept away from her face and held in place by a black silk scarf. Her green eyes, fringed by wispy blonde lashes, penetrated his soul with a mesmerizing gaze.

"Hello," she said. "I am Louisa." She extended her hand, and as Fredrik slipped his hand into hers, she drew him into her living room.

The space was cozy and welcoming, in spite of the eighteen-foot ceiling and expansive square footage. It was charming, sprinkled with antique furniture, fresh flowers, and billowy plants. A worn wooden floor, a red brick wall, and three white walls decorated with obscure paintings defined the character of the space. French doors opened onto a lush, exotic rooftop garden, a jungle of tangled

leaves, vines, and flowers, with iron furniture and a trellis of white moonflowers creeping their way up past the framework and into the dark sky.

"Please, let me offer you a refreshment," Louisa said. "Herbal tea, Evian, fruit juice?"

He wanted a martini, straight up with four olives. It had been one of those days. Like yesterday. And the day before that.

"Herbal tea will be fine, thank you," he replied.

As she headed into the kitchen, Louisa appeared to be floating across the room. Her sheer, champagne-colored dress cascaded behind her as she disappeared into another space. Within a few minutes she returned carrying a beautiful Asian tea set. She placed it on the table, then poured him a steaming cup of tea. The fragrance of the tea was intoxicating, with notes of mint, citrus, and an indefinable floral scent.

"Smoking, right?" she said, handing him the cup.

"Yes. I've been a chain smoker for many years and I have decided to quit," he said, watching the spiral of steam from the cup dissolve into the air.

"Wise," she said. Her voice had a magical tone that captured his attention. "Shall we begin?"

"I have never been hypnotized before. I'm a little nervous," Fredrik replied.

"Understandably. Hypnosis is a sleeplike state. Once I have helped you to enter that state, I make suggestions to your subconscious mind that over time will help you quit smoking. The process is rather calming. Shall we begin?"

"OK," he said.

"Relax and make yourself comfortable," Louisa said.

Fredrik shifted, sinking his body into the seat, arms, and back of the chair. Louisa sat across from him and reached down between her breasts. She withdrew an exquisite pearl — luminous, colorful, and ancient — that hung on a black silk string.

He was drawn to the magic captured on the nacreous face of the

pearl, as if time and the ages were encapsulated inside its iridescent shell.

“Fredrik, I would like you to listen to my voice while focusing your eyes on my necklace.”

Fredrik watched the pearl sway back and forth like a pendulum.

“Relax your body and listen to my voice,” she said. “Quiet the thoughts in your head.”

Louisa continued chanting directions and Fredrik fell into a deep state of relaxation.

His eyelids became heavier. His mind became silent. Entering into a peaceful and serene state of being, he remembered . . .

II

Desperately fighting to keep her balance on the edge of the deck of the English galleon, the *King Henry*, Neema shook, rattling her imprisoning shackles, her body attacked by the cold wind and the wet mist jumping from the waves below. Terror had deadened her flesh to the heavy manacles lacerating her wrists, the metal cuffs slitting her ankles, and the iron chains biting into her torn skin.

The deck was cluttered with spectators. The crew, men and a few women disguised as men, responded to the spectacle like Romans in an arena, cheering ravenous lions about to shred the bodies of condemned Christians.

As the slave ship rose and crashed on the waves of the violent ocean beneath it, Neema screamed, sending an echoing shrill through the air.

“Be still, ya stupid slave wench, or I’ll beat ya again before I kick ya off this here bloody ship!” the voice yelled at her from behind. The vicious intonation, rather than the unrecognizable tongue, made her tremble even more.

“I coulda sold ya to that girl-killin’ Countess. *Black gold*, I tell ya.

I'm throwing *black gold* into the sea," the voice screamed, competing with the thunderous wind.

Immediately, Neema identified the voice with the two hands shoving her over the edge of the ship, forcing her into the darkness.

The noise from the cheering spectators mixed into the clamoring wind, creating a sound so sharp it punctured Neema's ears.

As if she were a baby bird falling from the safety of its nest, she plummeted through the cold night air. She felt the wind rush past her body and she clamped her eyes closed so she would not see death, but only feel its brumal breath.

While she gasped for her own last breath, the raging waves reached up, grabbed her body, and dragged her down into the water. Her form created but an insignificant splash in an ocean filled with vicious swells, and her warm tears vanished into the enormous sea.

Neema's tightly bound body sank with the weight of the shackles and chains. She clenched her teeth as the cold, black water tried to pry open her lips and enter her mouth. The brutal sea relentlessly shot up into her nostrils and down into her throat. As the salty water spewed into her stomach, she continued to fall into the suffocating depths.

The sound of her own oxygen escaping from her lungs pierced the silence. She heard the bubbles of air ascend, abandoning her, leaving her to die in the depths of the black water.

Suddenly, she began to struggle, trying to free her imprisoned limbs. She thrashed against the chains and the water, but the reality of death ambushed her spirit and terror plunged her into shock. The ocean seized control of her body, and a final stream of cold salty water gushed through her lips into her mouth, cruelly infiltrating her throat, her stomach, and finally her lungs.

The sea had rendered Neema's body porous, and as she soaked in the deadly liquid, the blackness around her spun into the radiating vibrant colors of an African sunset. Citrus orange, blending into fire red, whirling into powder pink streaked with indigo blue. The silence, broken only by her own last breath, now filled with the

familiar sound of rhythmic drumming echoing through the expansive trees and over the willowy plains, riding the gentle river currents.

A serenity pulsed through her, and before surrendering, she used her last bit of strength to thrust her soul out of her mouth and into the womb of the ocean. Joining companions who went before her, she now dangled as a tiny bead on the string of death.

III

“Wait, don’t do it! Help, God help her!” Fredrik screamed.

He was disoriented and confused as he sobbed for the young black girl.

Louisa’s dainty white hands stroked his cheeks.

She cooed to him, as if he were a baby, but even her calming voice could not extinguish the horror in his mind.

“Why did they kill her? She was so scared and alone,” he cried.

Louisa did not answer and continued to stroke and lull him.

Sweat pasted his cotton shirt to his skin and perspiration covered his face and neck. He felt her soft hand glide over his wet cheeks.

“What the fuck is going on? I came here to kick a smoking habit and I’m dreaming about slave ships,” he said.

Fredrik was hysterical. The vivid hypnotic experience reminded him of the images he had seen earlier while walking towards Louisa’s apartment. What had seemed unimportant, he now remembered with great detail.

“It was the same ship and the same scenery,” he thought. *“It was the same feeling of doom.”*

Anxiety overtook him as he connected the two experiences. He unconsciously reached for a cigarette.

Louisa had stopped stroking him. Suddenly, he felt her overwhelming presence. Forgetting the cigarette, he looked into her green eyes.

"What did you do to me? I am a nervous wreck! I need a cigarette."

"No, Fredrik, you are just coming out of an extremely traumatic experience," Louisa explained.

"I thought it was no big deal to be hypnotized," he said wringing his hands. "I dreamed that I was on a slave ship. I saw her, a young black girl, Neema. She was bound in shackles. Beaten. Bloody. Oh my God, blood was all over her." Uncontrollably, Fredrik began to weep.

Louisa moved closer, pulling him to her and caressing him. His fear subsided as his head pressed against her body. He had never found any comfort in women, but Louisa was strangely different. Her breasts cushioned his face, and as he sunk into the soft pillows, he felt her maternal aura enwrap him with safety. She lulled him, swaying back and forth.

"A past life," she finally said.

"What?"

Lifting his head, Louisa said, "I am a hypnotist, but I am also a past life regressionist."

He inhaled deeply. His face was streaked with tears.

Louisa continued. "I believe that we often succumb to certain addictions, preferences, or lifestyles because of some traumatic past life experiences. You did not dream about Neema, you relived the experience. Do you understand?"

Despondently he replied, "Oh my God, I was the man."

Tears again rolled down his face as the thought of pushing the young girl to her death invaded his mind.

"No," Louisa said sharply, "you were Neema."

"Neema?"

A silence fell between them.

He suddenly noticed that Louisa's appearance had changed. Her swept-back blonde hair had a golden cast, and shades of blue speckled her green eyes. A tranquility emanated from her whole body, and he felt at peace with her.

“How is my addiction a consequence of my past life as Neema?” he asked. Instantly, he knew the answer without a single word from Louisa.

Slowly, thickly he uttered: “Suffocation. Neema died of suffocation. It was quick, a couple of minutes at most. For me it is a slow, lingering death.”

Fredrik hugged Louisa and tenderly kissed her soft cheek.

He did not remember leaving her apartment, nor did he remember walking down the street to the nearest outside cafe. He did not notice the quaint little cafe tables nor the chairs with heart-shaped backs. He did not recall the clusters of couples squeezed romantically together, sharing menus as they ordered steamy, flavored coffees. He did not recognize the photographer who had shot photos of his exquisite neighbor, his table cluttered with cameras, lenses, and contact sheets.

He ordered a dry vodka martini, but called the waiter back and changed his order to Pellegrino water with a lime wedge.

His mind, sharply focused on Neema, began to put together the other fragmented pieces of the puzzle.

His smoking habit, his horrible fear of water, his insatiable love for black men . . .

Fredrik left the cafe to meet his lover.

Fredrik was greeted at the door of Kenneth’s apartment by a strong embrace and an array of kisses.

“I’ve missed you!” Kenneth exclaimed as he squeezed Fredrik in his arms. “How was your session with the hypnotist?”

Kenneth had a face so black that it looked like polished ebony. It was an arresting face, with high cheekbones, a square jaw, and light hazel eyes that always seemed to sparkle with excitement.

“Bizarre . . . But I hope it will be far more helpful than the other tragic methods of healing that I have tried,” Fredrik said.

Kenneth instantly picked up on the small idiosyncrasies betraying his lover’s mood. The higher pitch of Fredrik’s voice, the way he flicked his thumbnail against the tip of his index finger, and the

manner in which he rocked back and forth, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, all told Kenneth that Fredrik was upset. So he ushered Fredrik into the living room, and when Fredrik was comfortably seated on the sofa, Kenneth asked again about the visit.

Fredrik recounted the visions on the street, the process of being hypnotized, and the past life regression episode, using exaggerated expressions and fluctuations in his voice, as was usual for him when embarking on describing his life, omitting no small detail.

Kenneth had an analytical mind and was very skeptical about anything that could not be scientifically proven, yet when it came to Fredrik, he was compassionate and understanding. He viewed Fredrik's situations and crises with complete open-mindedness and often had solutions laced with comic relief.

"Well, I guess this isn't the first time we've been together. Even then you were a *big bottom*," Kenneth teased.

Together they both laughed at the obscure thought of the two of them being together in a past life.

"Who said you were a man? We may have been lesbians!" Fredrik countered.

"Two black dykes on a slave ship. That certainly is curious," Kenneth said.

Fredrik nuzzled against Kenneth, and as their vivid and lively conversation lulled, their words were eventually drowned out by the sound of passionate kisses.

Fredrik opened his mouth and pressed the tip of his tongue against Kenneth's soft, glazed skin. It was the smell of Kenneth's flesh that drove him mad, the combined aromas of musk, oil, and spice.

Kisses rolled into caresses, caresses spun into strokes, strokes whirled into clutches, clutches spiraled into jousting erections.

This duel was one of love, and when Kenneth drove his lance into Fredrik, visions from the past once again trespassed through Fredrik's mind.

IV

Every night, guards forced the slaves to climb up from the belly of the ship, the hold, onto the upper deck, and while the crack of the whip filled the air and the bite of its end lashed their legs and bottoms, the shackled, naked, black people were ordered to dance, allowing blood to flow through their bodies so that their muscles would not waste away. When the exercise was completed, the guards drove the slaves back into the depths and darkness of the ship, continuously flogging their limbs and backs with aggressive, merciless thrashes.

Beneath the upper deck, crouched against the wall in a small, narrow space, Neema listened to the waves of the ocean brush against the outside of the ship.

The night breeze hovered over the one opening leading down into the hold, but when the ship would shift with the current, a small gust of wind would drop into the hole, cooling the hot, sticky bodies shackled in pairs.

Neema found it impossible to sleep. The stench in the space, the hunger in her belly, the inhumane position, the sporadic shoving, the moans of the others, the clanking of their chains and shackles, and the often violent rocking of the ship kept her awake. Attempting to drift off, she closed her eyes and imagined that she was a lioness basking in the shade, escaping the scorching savanna sun.

Suddenly, a light touch skimmed across her face. Not opening her eyes, she swatted her hand in front of her face, thinking she needed to bat away a fly. But the tiny caresses continued over her right eye, tickling her thick, black eyelashes. She looked up into the face of a beautiful boy. His pale skin glowed as the moonlight, falling through the opening of the hold, washed his face with white light. Giant, round blue eyes framed by long blond lashes stared at her.

He unlocked her shackles with one of the many keys that hung from a ring on his belt and helped her to her feet, gently guiding her up onto the deck.

The night sea was calm under a huge full moon dividing the water in half, cutting a line of rippled bright light that escaped to the horizon.

The boy quickly looked around to make sure that no one had heard them climb out of the hold. He took Neema's skinny black hand, helping her over piles of ropes, around barrels of water, and through fishing nets, guiding her slowly and quietly until they finally reached the bow of the ship, an area that he knew was deserted. They could still hear the crew laughing and singing, but the boy did not seem alarmed since he and Neema were on the opposite end of the ship.

One of the anchors to her right and a cannon to her left, she sat hidden from roving eyes.

The boy scurried away from Neema, leaving her propped against the side of the ship. The creaking of the ropes straining against the wooden mast, the splashing of the ocean hitting against the side of the ship, and the whistling of the wind blowing through the bound sails of the jib frightened her. If she was caught on deck without a member of the crew it meant certain punishment and, even in the company of the young boy, she feared for her safety.

The boy returned carrying a bucket of water. He reached down into the bucket and pulled out a drenched cloth. As he wrung out the material, Neema felt tiny drops of cold water pelt her face, arms, and legs.

The boy gently lifted Neema's slender left arm and washed her skin with the wet cloth. He cleansed her other arm, then her face and neck, her breasts and belly, her legs and feet. Even though he washed her very gently, the water stung the fresh, open slices left by the guards' whips on Neema's legs. He spread her thighs apart, baring the tight, coarse hair of her pubis. Her flower was closed, but with his finger and thumb he spread the lips of her sex, running the

wet cloth from her anus, to the opening of her sex, and finally to her erect stem.

He smiled, looking down at folds and creases that had not been sliced by tradition. He had witnessed the bizarre practices enforced by selected members of many tribes on the sexes of their young people. He had seen girls' sexes that had been severed and sewn so that only a tiny opening remained. He had witnessed boys' sexes that had been split down their middle to honor a totem lizard with a split penis. He was at the same time horrified and fascinated by these cultures that mutilated the sexes of their people.

He quickly glanced into Neema's eyes and then back to her folds, her creases, her black opening, wondering why she had been spared any mutilation unlike the other female slaves he had come in contact with aboard the ship.

Neema did not resist him, as the stimulation throbbing through her body was a welcome relief from the stinging lashes of the guards' whips, or the groping and clawing of the other slaves shackled with her below. Her lean body, marked by sharp lines defining each long muscle, shone in the pearly rays of the moonlight.

The boy had tenderly expunged the dirt, sweat, and dried blood from her body, reviving her skin with a fresh glow and charging her essence with new life.

He had washed away Neema's dark, grimy mask to expose her luscious cinnamon skin to the moonlight, which revealed her rounded forehead, high cheekbones, and broad nose.

Neema's large, wide-set brown eyes and thick, fanning lashes, tilted slightly at the ends, hid in the shadows of her face. Tinted with a dash of pinkness, her upper lip peaked in two perfect points, while the lower lip swelled into a single pillow.

The moonlight, now dimmed by a floating transparent cloud, silvered the coarse black hair hanging to her jaw, the strands clumped together, spiraling away from her head like coiling serpents.

The boy was overwhelmed with her beauty and, with the tips of his small fleshy fingers, he stroked her cheeks.

Neema, who in the past few months had been netted like a wild beast, chained, and forced to walk for days without rest; had been driven to struggle with her fellow prisoners for food, water, and a place to sleep; had been slapped, beaten, and whipped by her captors, now embraced the boy's kindness, touches, and caresses. She could have resisted him, shoving him away, but why should she trade tenderness for possible cruelty, or a fate that would surely be worse than his delicate embrace.

As the young white boy offered more and more affection, she realized that she was starving for any sliver of compassion, and she surrendered to him, who seemed to break through the walls of brutality like a tiny single ray of sunshine penetrates the bulbous black clouds of barbaric storms.

His light eyes covered her with an adoring gaze as his fingers explored her neck and traced her protruding collarbones.

He flattened his hand, resting his palm against her upper chest, and then, with a consuming fever, he dropped it to her breast. Her nipple contracted inside of his palm, rising to meet the smooth surface of his hand.

As the boy squeezed Neema's firm breast, he stole a kiss from her lips. His mouth was soft and small, and as his lips pressed against hers, her sex filled with a consuming heat, traveling up into her stomach, rising past her breasts and into her mouth. With fire on her lips, she returned his kiss with fury.

She had passed her fire on to his lips, and as he wandered from her mouth to her neck to her erect nipples, her skin burned under his kisses.

Neema felt a small puff of his hot breath graze her nipple before his plump red mouth framed its tip. His lips were engorged from kissing and had changed from their flesh color into a shining cherry hue.

His face was hairless, and as his lips sucked on her nipple, past the dark ring of flesh surrounding it, she felt the smooth skin of his cheeks against her breast. His fingers and thumb surrounded the

mound he was suckling while his other hand caressed the folds of her sex.

Blended together in Neema's mind was a staggering fear of being discovered and an aching desire to experience more of the affection displayed by the boy, who, as her captor, could have just as well cruelly abused and raped her. She had known only one man, her husband from an arranged marriage, who had violently taken her innocence and repeatedly used her with no regard for her pleasure. Her future was unsure, except for this one precious moment filled with tender caresses and hot passion.

The flow of Neema's desire dripped over the boy's fingers and onto her thighs as she involuntarily rotated her hips, pushing into his hand.

When he felt her wetness coat his fingers, he withdrew his mouth from her breast and eagerly licked the syrup from their tips.

The boy, now steeped in delight, descended to her sex. He affixed her erection between his lips and, with his soft, firm tongue, licked her to climax.

When he felt Neema's legs shudder, he glided two of his fleshy fingers into her sex. The wet, hot interior pulp contracted around his fingers as he continued to suck on her. As her hips swayed upward, he thrust into her the entire length of his fingers so that the knuckles on his hand met the mouth of her sex.

Neema expanded with orgasm, feeling the release of pleasure thrash her body.

The boy slowly withdrew his fingers and laid his head on her still convulsing pelvis and navel.

A sudden noise startled him. Quickly, he abandoned the soft cushion of Neema's abdomen. Moving to an upright position, he scoured the area with darting glances. After a minute, unable to determine the source of the sound, but assessing that there was no danger, he helped Neema to her feet.

The boy, clad in a cap, a loose shirt with alternating white and blue horizontal stripes, and trousers held up by an old leather belt

on which dangled a ring of keys, smiled radiantly, the glisten of Neema's sex still shining on his lips, cheek, and chin.

As they stood on the deck, the chilly night air that had earlier cooled Neema's hot, sticky skin whizzed past their bodies, leaving their flesh covered with tiny bumps.

Suddenly, as if two flames had been ignited in the darkness, Neema caught sight of emerging tips under the boy's shirt. They were not the tiny round pellets of a man's chest, but rather the large beads of a woman's breasts. She realized that the width of the shoulders, waist, and hips of the figure standing before her were the same. The delicate hairless face, the dainty hands, and erect nipples betrayed the true gender of her captor, and through the disguise of clothing, padding, and fake mannerism, she recognized that the boy was really a girl.

V

Kenneth had loved Fredrik's behind with his lance and had feasted on Fredrik's sword with his large lips. He drew from the sword a steamy syrup that cascaded down onto Fredrik's skin.

The cooling glaze on Fredrik's stomach now shimmered as the soft light from a dying candle bounced sporadically around the room. Fredrik stared at the mural on the ceiling — a muscular black male figure embracing a young, slender white boy. Kenneth had commissioned the mural for their anniversary present.

Fredrik glanced to the corner of the room, where a life-sized sculpture by Arturo Fontaine, *Adonis Aroused*, watched over them. Another anniversary gift from Kenneth, a gift he bought in Rome.

"What are you thinking about?" Kenneth whispered.

"What a wonderful and generous lover you are," Fredrik answered.

Kenneth's dark face brightened with a gleaming white smile as he kissed Fredrik on the cheek, wrapping himself around his lover.

Fredrik, who was now emotionally and physically spent, could utter no words about his second vision, desiring only to fall asleep in the safety of his lover's arms.

Blissfully, Fredrik closed his eyes, keeping the sensual vision of Neema and the sailor girl, disguised as a beautiful boy, locked in his memory.

Sea 'Chele

I found my first sea 'Chele on the shore of the Hudson River. She was a magnificent 'Chele, with a black coral body and a strikingly pointed spiral.

I wanted to touch her texture and taste her smooth insides. But I had to wait, for an ugly, lascivious snail inhabited her, and she was not free to love me.

I was not discouraged, and I went to the shore every day to visit her. I intentionally flirted with her in front of the snail. One day, when the snail was asleep, I exposed my breasts to her.

"Many have inhabited me, but it is you whom I wish would taste me," she said. Her voice mimicked the musical wind of the sea, enchanting, echoing into my ears and caressing the inside of my head.

The next day, when I came back, the snail was gone. She had expelled him, and her opening was revealed. I had expected the blackness of her body to wrap around and fall into her cavern. Instead I saw the darkness at the edges lighten into a succulent pinkness.

"You may taste me," she said eagerly.

I lifted my 'Chele to my lips. With my tongue I tasted the florid smoothness. I immediately knew that she loved me. From her cavern she emitted fragrant ocean scents. Only love evokes such strong aromas.

I had expected her to taste of salt, but on my palate, her flavor was a rich, succulent honey. I wanted more of this luscious desire that lacquered her cave, and I plunged my tongue further and deeper into her.

“Ohhhhh,” her musical voice chimed. “Grasp my spiral with your lips.”

I withdrew from the depths of her ocean, moving my mouth along her ridge as my tongue trailed behind, wetting the blackness.

The pointed spiral had three tiers. I took the tip in my mouth and gradually, with deliberate procrastination, inched my way down the spiral until her body met my lips. As I sucked, licked, and bit her erection, my sex swelled and filled with wetness.

Her small form quivered in my palms. As she reached the height of her pleasure, rich, thick ocean milk sprayed from her pink grotto.

“Drink me quickly, before my ambrosia evaporates into the air,” ‘Chele said.

I withdrew the spiral from my mouth and placed my lips on the rim of her cave. I swallowed the sweet milk and quenched my lustful thirst. Her nectar flooded my veins, like a hot intoxicating liquid, causing my head to spin.

“What is this magic potion?” I asked, “and why have I not produced such an elixir?”

“For you, I will share the secret of how to churn the sensual ocean deep within us,” she said.

**I hold her to my ear
the echo of my soul I hear**

**I hold her to my ear
the echo of my soul I hear**

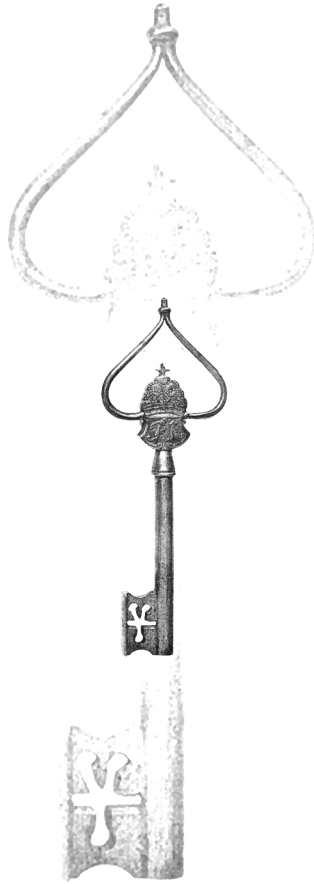
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The Statuophile

Art, Meat, and a Marble Ménage à Trois



The central maiden in Antonio Canova's statue of the *Three Graces* commands the most attention. Her body, modeled in the likeness of a voluptuous Italian soubrette, faces forward, while the bodies of the other two Graces, one on each side, curl themselves shyly around her, concealing their budding white breasts and hairless sexes. She is slightly taller; this height gives her an air of authority. The other two young nymphs shower her with attention, one wrapping an arm around the back of her neck, drawing her face down for a stolen kiss, the other timidly

supporting her youthful breast with a plump adolescent hand. The sheer narrow veil of fabric that entwines the three together drapes downward, hiding the secret sex of the center Grace.

As I stood in Canova's studio in Rome, where his creation was displayed as part of a special exhibit, the American scholar and archaeologist Sophia Archer, who was guiding our intimate group of admirers from the Fashion Institute of Technology, launched into her presentation and interpretation of the art piece.

The air was thick and blistering, and even the cross ventilation created by the opened windows could not dissolve the sultriness floating through the space. I breathed in the hot air, filling my lungs with an invisible lava, as I looked at the girls captured in marble before me. I felt a fever, a fever that almost two hundred years ago had generated a smoldering inferno of passion between them that even time could not cool.

My mind returned to the Canova scholar conducting the lecture. She elaborated on the sculptors' and painters' studios in the Rome of Canova, and how their open studios allowed the artists to view each other's work.

"A collaboration, really," Sophia Archer said. "A group effort for the greater good of the artistic world."

I could not believe this to be true. As I looked at the magnificent creation, its delicate form, its tender sensuality, and its subtle eroticism, I knew that Canova had shielded it from the view of the artists who shared the space with him while he was giving it life.

A delicate breeze glided into the studio through the arched windows, past the fluted columns, over the stuccoed walls and ever so slightly, like little fingers, lifted the skirt of Sophia Archer. She brushed her blonde curls to one side of her head and, under the canopy of her skirt, shifted her legs apart, ever so slightly, encouraging the caress of the wind as it climbed up her slender thighs to reach and tickle her hidden sex.

"Don't you think that Canova would have hidden it from the artists around him?" I asked.

With a piercing glance she said, “No!”

Her curtness wounded me, but did not alter my opinion. I believed that Canova probably draped fabric around his work space, and the only glimpses he could not prevent were those taken by the breeze occasionally blowing through the studio and lifting the fabric, as it had Sophia Archer’s skirt a moment ago.

The scholar continued, “Let me digress and share with you a story that is unconfirmed, but appropriate for this group, about one of Canova’s fellow artists. Arturo Fontaine was a talented sculptor who never enjoyed fame and fortune like his friend, Canova. However, people often spoke in hushed tones about Arturo, and rumors whirled through the Roman artistic community about the strange behavior he would often partake in with his creations.

“It was said that he would tenderize a fresh, small piece of raw meat with a mallet and then would position it over the mouth, in between the legs, across the behind, or under one of the arms of one of his female statues. Aroused by his work, so it seems, he would push his erection into the meat-filled cavities and climax in the folds of the soft flesh.

“While this practice could be considered curious enough even now, it was Fontaine’s behavior with a statue named *Adonis Aroused* that made the sculptor quite infamous in Rome. He had sculpted a statue of the young Greek god with a large erection.

“Legend has it that Fontaine would generously lubricate his own behind with olive oil and, steadying the statue against the stucco wall of the studio, would impale himself on the protruding member of Adonis.”

I wondered if that last story was true, or if she invented it to make the tour more interesting. I thought about beautiful Adonis, favorite of Aphrodite, and chuckled to myself, musing that Fontaine may have met with fame and fortune had Aphrodite’s wrath not scorned him. She was not always the graceful goddess of love and beauty.

Sophia Archer continued speaking of Canova and the inception of the *Three Graces*.

After being divorced by Napoleon, the Empress Josephine commissioned Canova to create the *Three Graces*, a sculpture simultaneously embodying chastity, beauty, and love.

Josephine had always admired the work of Canova, but it was not until his visit to Paris in 1812, to paint a portrait of Napoleon's new wife, the Empress Maria Louisa, that he made a lasting impression in Josephine's mind.

Canova called on Josephine at Malmaison, and as he tenderly kissed her hand, she suddenly collapsed into his arms, overwhelmed with sorrow. He always evoked such dramatic emotions in women. He was neither handsome nor rich, but his touch was gentle, almost childlike, and his tender brown eyes allowed women to glide into them, get lost in them, heal in them. Maybe the women sensed that he wanted nothing from them, nothing but to admire and sculpt them, and it was his lack of desire for them that made them feel very safe.

Canova stroked Josephine, consoled her, and confided in her that he himself had just suffered the loss of his lover, Minette de Bergue, a young, flirtatious Basque woman. It was then that the two, finding a kindred spirit between them, conceived the idea for the sculpture of the *Three Graces*.

I felt that a sudden air of immense mystery whirled around the sculpture. An enigma that could not be solved by any scholar regardless of their esoteric knowledge, and though I would later study many of the art books written about the *Three Graces*, nothing I read ever put my mind at ease.

II

Back in New York City in a small apartment on the Upper West Side, almost two hundred years after the birth of the *Three Graces*, it is Kipp, my roommate's girlfriend, who helps me unravel the mystery surrounding the sculpture.

While on the phone with my lover, I hear a knock on my opened bedroom door. I motion for Kipp to enter, raising my finger to indicate that I will need one more minute to finish my conversation.

"They were beautiful together," I say into the phone. "I preferred the African woman, but the blonde was exquisite." I continue listening to my lover, but eventually interrupt. "Listen, sweetie, I have company . . . female . . . Hope's girlfriend . . . me, too . . . bye."

"Hi, Kipp," I say, hanging up the phone.

Kipp is taller than both Hope and me, with unruly sandy-blonde hair and pale blue eyes. Her face is plump like a cherub's, and her delicate features seem to sink into her face when she unleashes the overbearing side of her personality.

"What beautiful women? You know I love to hear about beautiful women," Kipp inquires.

"I went to a sex club last night and saw two tantalizing creatures — one black, one white," I answer.

"Details, details!" Kipp says exuberantly.

I recount the scenario of my evening, and how I watched the two women unite.

Obviously excited by my description, Kipp says, "That is so hot! Did you know I am packed?"

Kipp reaches down to her crotch and grabs the giant bulge in her jeans.

"Where are you going with that?" I ask.

"On the ocean between your legs, baby," she says.

“Some trip.”

“You know I do have sailors in my family. It has been documented that my great-great-great-aunt, or someone like that, disguised herself as a boy and worked on slave ships,” Kipp says with enthusiasm.

“I guess cross-dressing runs in the family,” I say.

“Or maybe cross-undressing! Anyway, are you ready for my luggage?” Kipp asks.

“Will Hope be assisting me with your luggage?” I tease.

With a deep voice, Kipp yells down the hall, “Hop, get your butt over here!”

To each other, they are known as Hop and Skip. No one else uses these two playful nicknames.

Hope timidly walks down the hall. She is more feminine than Kipp, often wearing makeup and short skirts. Her straight cinnamon-colored hair frames her round face with wispy bangs and a bob, cut into layers.

I never think of Hope as a lesbian; I think of her as a straight woman who fell in love with another woman. When she speaks of Kipp her eyes brighten, and her smile widens. Hope has confided in me about Kipp’s seductive charm and her prowess as a lover, and I found myself envious of the passionate relationship that has developed between them.

As Hope enters my bedroom, I realize that it is Kipp, like the center Grace of Conova’s masterpiece, who commands the most attention among the three of us. It is Hope, like the figure wrapping her arm around the head of the center Grace and questing for a kiss, who attempts to steal Kipp’s affection from me. It is I, like the last Grace, the one holding the breast of the center Grace, who appears the most sexually curious.

Kipp suddenly grabs me around the hips and lifts me up so that my legs straddle her waist. Through her pants, I feel her portable penis poke into my pubic bone. Every time I see her, she is traveling with a metal briefcase stuffed with an array of penises and, among other things, different brands and sizes of condoms.

Once, she opened her case and had me examine her collection of different penetration toys. Protected within foam carved to fit the form of each object, ordered by size, lay the Eager Beaver, the Kangaroo, the Rabbit Pearl, the Prince, and the Great King, all made of surgical latex rubber. The designers had strategically positioned clitoral stimulators in various animal shapes. Some of the toys were to be strapped around her waist. One was specifically designed to strap around her thigh. I was particularly interested in the toy that had two phalluses, one for vaginal and one for anal penetration. Kipp also stored metal anal beads, the size of an eyeball to the size of a pearl, linked together by a nylon string. The Tongue, a red, rubber oscillating instrument powered by four D batteries, could also be used with an electrical adapter. She came prepared with a sealed bag labeled "POWER PACK" with batteries and two backup electrical adapters. I suspected that if she could, she would have stored a small power generator in case of blackouts. I thought she was a traveling sex shop. Ever since, like men who wonder about the mystery of what goes on under women's skirts, I look with curious eyes at women strutting in the West Village while carrying metal briefcases. Tonight I am guessing that she is harnessed with the Great King.

When I think of Kipp and her traveling sex shop, I feel provincial, a bit traditional. I keep my only toy in an ivory box decorated with Egyptian hieroglyphs, a rare treasure that I found hiding under a lamp in the shape of Marilyn Monroe and next to a box of old skeleton keys at the flea market on 26th Street and Sixth Avenue.

She twirls around, forcing me to hold on to her neck.

"Hop, wouldn't it be fun to play this afternoon?" Kipp asks. "Like we have our own sex club," Kipp adds.

"No sex with roommates," Hope says in a shy tone.

"Why not?" Kipp asks.

"We just shouldn't," Hope answers.

Kipp releases me, and as I am regaining my balance, my feet just touching the floor, Kipp thrusts her face forward into my breasts.

"Come on baby. It will be fun," Kipp pleads with Hope.

"Well, maybe she doesn't want to play," Hope says in an expectant voice.

"Tell her you want to play," Kipp says to me.

"I'm not going to get in the middle, literally or figuratively. It is up to Hope," I say with a diplomatic voice.

Hope whispers into Kipp's ear and walks away, down the hall to the living room. Kipp turns to follow her, grabbing my hand and pulling me along with her.

A feather mattress with fluffy, flower-print pillows sprawls across the living room floor. Since Hope has been dating Kipp, they have been sleeping on the floor in the living room as Hope only has a narrow twin bed in her bedroom.

Random pieces of furniture decorate the living room. It is not a well designed space. It holds a collection of pieces that have been bought at flea markets or found on sidewalks, or that are hand-me-downs inherited from our parents. Hope and I have tried to make it comfortable, cozy, but I never would refer to our place as beautiful.

Tonight, however, the space looks dramatically different. As I walk in, the living room is ablaze with tiny tongues of fire, and a soft glow of candlelight veneers the room with warm golden hues.

Candles of all shapes, sizes, and colors are spread throughout the room, a vivid garden of wax and flames, some standing on sconces hanging from the walls; some resting on wrought-iron candelabras, illuminating the corners; and some dripping on holders on the shelves, on the mantle over the carved oak fireplace, on the delicate writing desk, and on the wooden table standing on three legs. The air blown by the wooden ceiling fan, reminiscent of the wide blade ornate types that often cool the rooms of the homes in the French Quarter of New Orleans, slowly sculpts the wax that cascades down each candle.

The air is laden with scents of saffron, rose, and violet, the fragrances of the mythological Three Graces.

The ancient Greeks believed that saffron stimulated the sensual

desires of women, and it was administered to them in small doses for the strengthening of their uteruses. Aphrodite, patroness of courtesans, was bathed in saffron by the Three Graces. Queen Cleopatra aromatically seduced Marc Antony by flooding her bedchamber with a foot of rose petals. The Empress Josephine's signature scent was violet, and when Napoleon opened her fragrance-drenched letters, he was instantly aroused.

The three aromatic aphrodisiacs, twisting together in the air, weaving through the room, are so omnipotent that after taking one breath, my sex begins to swell.

The warm glow from the candles washes our faces, enhancing the smoothness of our skins, matting the highlights in our hair, and transforming us into flawless marble statues.

The evening breeze billows the ivory curtains, animating them into a dance of seduction, and the scented candles fill the air with floral scents of lust.

The room has an aura of drama, and suddenly I feel myself transported back to Rome two hundred years ago, as if I had just stepped into Canova's secret studio: in the middle of the room, the feather mattress, like the platform he used for his models; around it, the candles, like the ones I imagine he used to light his late nights of sculpting; finally, the curtains, like the veil I believe he hung to hide his creation and the three models.

We three are the Graces, standing for the ancient symbol of liberality. Three young women, frolicking in sensuality.

Mythology tells of the Three Graces who were the attendants of Aphrodite. They were sisters, Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia, who respectively embodied the giving, receiving, and returning found in friendship.

When I saw the sculpture in Rome, I believed that Canova's inspiration came from far beyond the reaches of an allegorical friendship, far beyond the commission of Josephine, far beyond the captured sensuality of three young girls posing as his models.

Hope, Kipp, and I gather on the feather bed, Hope with her dis-

arming timidity, Kipp with her combustible energy, and me with my anxiety about just being a sex toy.

I have been a human sex toy before, yet I am always cast back into the toy box and blamed when one of the playmates decides that she or he wants to develop a relationship with me outside the playground. I have been cautious since my last experience, only bestowing my libertine favors on more secure, experienced individuals. Kipp, I trust; Hope, I question.

I know for certain that I am the Grace caressing the breast of the center figure. Her face captures a certain willingness, her pose an unequivocally open sexuality. As if her essence had just seeped into me for the evening, I know her thoughts, how she wants to belong, how she wants the other two to love her, how she wants to be kissed.

Kipp is the first to disrobe. Under her rugged attire, under her masculine mannerisms, under her deep voice, she is a woman. The voluptuous natural curves of her body make her look like a Rubenesque model.

Her breasts, with their raspberry tips, spring from her chest. Her rounded hips and spherical stomach speak of a sensuality favored by another age. Her hairless sex, with plump white flesh parted in the middle, yet concealing her sexual stem, gives her the illusion of youth.

I am astonished by the contrasts within Kipp. Her rugged, gruff, and masculine exterior is countered by the delicate curves of her body and the feminine attention she gives to the grooming of her sex.

Curiosity compels me to ask her about why she shaves or waxes her sex, but as my eyes stare at her smooth skin, and my mouth opens to speak, she says, "Looks good, right, and it makes my orgasms out of this world. Baldness makes it really sensitive."

She grasps the ten-inch phallus that attaches to a leather harness and thrusts her pelvis forward. It is then that I realize Canova had covered the sex of the center Grace with the folds of a veil to hide a similar phallus. He was clever; he did not sculpt a bulge, or protru-

sion, so only an insightful admirer would recognize the presence of a secret penis.

"When I fuck, it rides against me and that is how I come. Hope calls it 'The Beast.' Don't you, babe?" Kipp asks.

"Yes, it certainly is a beast," Hope says.

Kipp crawls over to Hope with the phallus dangling between her legs.

Kipp falls onto Hope and begins to nibble on the front of her neck while Hope curls her body, wrapping her arms and legs around Kipp.

In the flickering glow of the candlelight, I watch as Kipp's stubby fingers reach between their two chests and begin unbuttoning Hope's shirt. Once Hope is topless, Kipp skillfully works on undressing the bottom half of her girlfriend.

Hope, a more slender version of Kipp, now lies before me as Kipp mauls and bites her skin. Her breasts fall into teardrops of flesh, with tiny brown buds encircled by bronze rings in the centers. Her waist, smaller than Kipp's, accentuates her hips, making them appear larger and more robust.

I watch Kipp caress, touch, kiss, and stroke Hope, coiling her around and around on a sexual carousel until she agrees to any request that Kipp makes.

As I observe the mingling bodies before me, I imagine Canova standing in our living room. He is uttering commands into the ears of Hope and Kipp, directing them to pose, insisting that they engage in front of me, but without me.

It is when Hope's eyes, spinning with pleasure, roll upward against the fan of her eyelashes, that I feel Kipp's stubby fingers graze my ankle.

She buries her face between Hope's breasts with her mouth gnawing on the overflowing mounds of white flesh, but it is my glance that Kipp searches for, with eyes that linger to the far corners of their sockets.

Her pale blue eyes darken to indigo and penetrate mine, as if she

is plunging her phallus into my sex. I am trapped in her intensity, drawn into her sexual black hole.

I picture the sculptor as he anticipates my reaction, waiting, hoping to capture on his little sketch pad the emotions on my face.

I am thinking that I should resist, but as her fingers climb to my calf, then to my thigh, I feel her heat and know that I am a helpless planet orbiting around a fervent sun.

Kipp pulls me closer, entangling Hope and me. I feel the phallus brush against my stomach and then my thigh. I feel Hope's soft, cushiony breasts on my cheek. I feel the satin, cinnamon-colored hair of Hope's sex as Kipp guides my fingers between Hope's legs. I feel Kipp's hand spread my thighs and move through my own thicket to discover my erection.

I am in the abyss of touch. I can no longer distinguish the feeling of being touched from the one of touching. Is it my thigh, or is it Hope's thigh? Is it Kipp's breast that sweeps across my lips, or is it mine that brushes against Hope's mouth? Is it Hope's erection that I grip between my teeth, or is it mine that Kipp bites into?

A sudden penetration tears me from the sensual chasm, opening the gulf of my sex. Kipp launches into me until the tip of her phallus reaches the deepest part of my womb. She enters me from behind, and with her pointed little fingernails, punctures the flesh on my hips as the rapid movement of her pelvis continues, parting and ripping into my sex like no man has ever done before.

In my ear, in the hushed tone used to pass on a secret, Kipp says, "I told you I'm the Wizard of Orgasm."

A smile rises inside of me that remains trapped in my mouth. I cannot let Hope see my enjoyment for fear that she would be jealous and hurt.

To defuse my smile, I begin to fantasize. I envision the Empress Josephine, her long, dark, rippled hair, her alabaster skin, her round doelike brown eyes, as she waits for Napoleon to return. Obeying the Emperor's command in his last letter, she has not bathed, so his desire will be fueled by her natural aromas. She can smell a strong

scent emanating from her sex, and so can the three girls attending and dressing her.

I imagine her scent to be an aromatic aphrodisiac, and the girls caressing each other's pubescent breasts once they are finished preparing the Empress.

Josephine, aroused by the sight, feels wetness stream down the folds of her sex.

Napoleon has unlocked the secret door to Josephine's boudoir. He has not entered, but has chosen to watch his wife and the nymphs through the keyhole, glimpse at their bodies, longing to inhale their scents. A small key, hanging on a burgundy velvet ribbon, dangles inside his wet palm.

His desire overtakes him, and he turns the oblong porcelain doorknob and slips into the room unnoticed, unheard, and maybe even unwanted.

Napoleon continues to watch the nymphs and his wife. Approaching from behind, he kisses Josephine's neck, and though his touch is light, the hair on his face reddens her skin.

I fantasize that Josephine and Napoleon are now naked. He drops to his knees and explores her sex. He inhales her fragrance and buries his face between her legs. Her aroma drives him mad; his eager tongue glides past her erection, past the pierced fold on which hangs a diamond, until it reaches the pool of her desire. He tastes her.

Napoleon is drowning in sensations. He touches her, tastes her, smells her. Josephine feels the silk of his brown hair, hears his mouth drinking her desire. She watches the three girls fondling and caressing each other.

Napoleon rises and leans Josephine over the back of the settee, draping her over as if she were an exquisite piece of Oriental silk, thrusting himself into her as they watch the young girls before them kissing, touching, tasting each other.

I feel myself joining Josephine in her climb to climax, both feeling the sensation from deep inside our sexes.

I have never had an internal orgasm, the type that begins in the womb, the type that makes you see stars. Kipp has told me that she is the master and that she can make any woman have an internal climax.

Hope lies beneath me, gently stroking my breasts as they sway back and forth in the wake of Kipp's thrusts. I see the two semi-circles of her eyelashes as she clamps her eyes closed. Her mouth curls up, revealing the delightful sensation my fingers create while circling her erection.

It is when the rhythm of Kipp's assaults changes that I fall into a profound state of sexual selfishness, drawing all of my attention back to the phallus filling my sex.

Hope tweaks my nipples with quick pinches as Kipp's bow moves across the strings of my womb, creating deep sensual music that vibrates through my body. She has touched the place that no one has ever touched, making me aware of its existence for the first time.

I now fantasize that Napoleon fills my womb, and that I am Josephine.

The feeling begins as a tiny speck of pleasure, and like a drop of water bleeding through fabric, it grows, intensifies, and overwhelms me until my insides are saturated with liquid heat. For one brief moment, the feeling becomes so unbearable that I find myself leaving the shell of my body and whirling around the room between the threadlike swirls of smoke rising from the candles. I imagine being able to see scents, and a colorful fog of sexual fragrances now clouds the space.

This is one of the mysteries I saw whirling around the statue, this cloud of sex that Canova recorded in marble. I imagine that I feel his eyes on me, freezing me as he sculpts.

What I had known to be climax was only a teasing, tantalizing taste of sensual arousal. I am now going beyond the hood of my erection, beyond the mere penetration, ascending to a height where I no longer know my body. Like a pendulum, my mind sways back

and forth from fantasy, to reality, back to fantasy. I am Josephine, floating high above the nymphs and her husband.

When I return from the beyond, I wake up to a sexual hangover that paralyzes me, and again I picture Canova's probing eyes grazing my body.

As I lay transfixed with the escalated sensations vibrating through my body, Kipp readies herself to enter Hope. She grasps the base of her phallus and pulls off the condom. She discards the latex she has used with me, casting it onto the floor, where it lays empty and lifeless. She rolls another condom over the length of her shaft with the ease of a highly trained technician, or the experience of a skillful player.

Kipp inserts her phallus between Hope's eagerly opened legs. Hope clings to Kipp's hips, pulling her further inside, and in my delirious state, I think that Hope wants to suck Kipp into her womb, trapping her so that she could no longer have any other woman but her, like the Grace who draws the center figure's face with her hand, pleading for a kiss with her eyes.

I picture Canova as he freezes Hope and Kipp. He again sketches on his pad, recording each expression, each gesture, each pose.

As Hope rocks beneath the raging phallus, I see her meek, timid nature transform into intrepid shamelessness.

She curls her hips upward, altering the angle of the penetration, greedily taking the phallus into her sex and increasing her pleasure. She finishes rapidly, consuming Kipp as if she would never have her again.

The room, now laden with the scent of sex, seems to perspire as the wax from the burning candles drips down the shafts and puddles onto the surfaces.

We, the modern Graces, lie on the feather bed welded together like three links on the chain of lust, our arms encircled, our legs entwined, our spirits blended.

Kipp's body, like that of the center Grace, lies between us, and as I look past her softened nipples, her gently parted mouth, her lightly

closed eyes, I see Hope stroking her with the familiarity of a lover, caressing her in a place that only intimacy allows. Kipp soaks up the tender attention that Hope is giving like a thank you for the immense pleasure that was given to her.

A flicker catches my eye, pulling my attention beyond the delicate way Hope is touching Kipp.

A pair of glass hands with upturned palms sits on the table. My perspective is such that I look up and see red wax oozing, seeping from a dying candle, between the glass fingers, over the edges of the palms and down the wrists. The hot, red liquid cannot be contained, and I assume that a puddle of wax is slowly forming on the table. As the last breath of the flame struggles to survive, I surrender to sleep in the arms of the modern Graces.

Behind the darkness of my eyes I see Canova. His brow is heavy, shadowing his dark, almond-shaped eyes. His thick, long nose fills his petite face, and his lips are thin with a hint of pinkness. His brown hair is tousled, and a few locks curl over his forehead.

He wears black trousers, a white high-collared shirt with three buttons, and a light mustard vest under a fur-trimmed velvet coat that fastens at his waist and ends at his knees.

He looks at me with lustful eyes, and the corners of his mouth turn upward into a devious smile. He opens his velvet coat, and rising through the opening of his buttoned trousers, I see his enormous erection.

He is a little man, and the size of his organ dwarfs him even more.

He strokes its length with his tiny fingers and then grasps it in the palm of his hand, vigorously caressing the stretched skin.

He looks at us, the modern Graces, frozen by sleep, as he disgorges his passion in long, white streams over the three of us.

His eyes meet mine, and through the haze of lust, I see love and admiration.

He, like Pygmalion, fell in love with his creation, but unlike the mythical Greek sculptor, Canova was not granted the opportunity to ask Aphrodite to bring them to life.

He had lied to Josephine when he told her that he had also lost a lover. He left Minette because he could never reach as strong a climax with her as he could stroking, stimulating, and releasing his passion alone, while looking at his beautiful, perfect sculptures.

III

It is early morning. On the light yellow rays of the sun, a golden dragonfly hovers over the window pane. Behind the lightness of my eyes and the drowsiness of my mind, I again see Canova.

He is now beautiful. His blue-green eyes are surrounded by black lashes. His chiseled face is framed by thick, black curls. He has grown tall and his body ripples with muscles.

He approaches me.

His organ has not changed. It is still large, thick, and erect. Because of its size and weight, his shaft points downward, and a small transparent bead of wetness clings to its opening.

He brushes the tip against my thigh, leaving a line of wetness. I feel no sensation, as if the blood in my body had frozen in my veins.

I try moving to embrace his touch. My bones thrash inside my skin, but my limbs remain motionless. I want to whisper words of sex into his ear, but my lips are sealed shut. The words bounce around the inside of my mouth and up into my head.

I am trapped inside myself, my body now hardened into exquisite white marble. I watch as his large fingers push a raw piece of meat between my thighs.

I struggle violently inside, but my body lies still. I want to feel his touch, feel his long, probing fingers.

He inserts his organ between my meat-padded thighs, and I see his dilated eyes scour my body, but he does not see me.

He grasps my hips, but his fingers make no indentations in my skin. I desperately want to feel his penetration.

With a long guttural cry, he showers the inside of my thighs with whiteness.

I feel myself shudder inside, striving to draw enough strength at least to reach a mental orgasm, a climax without feeling any touch.

The whiteness of his passion glistens on the raw, red meat. He draws imaginary circles in the wetness as he stares at the curves of my marble body.

He brings his plump, flushed mouth to my cheek. He kisses me, but I do not feel the cushions of his lips press against the surface of my face.

The statuophile loves me . . . me, his perfect female statue.

For

HS,

*A lesbian ménage à trois? An artist with a statue fetish? Did you whisper in my ear after
we . . . or did I hear you on the air?*

My Muse, My Mistress

Men used to pass through me
Enter and leave
Until one night I met
A two-headed Eve

The first of her heads
Was covered with curls
The second was hidden
And not found on girls

Skin smooth as marble
The face of a Venus
The body of a nymph
Except for a penis

"It is never found flaccid"
She said with a smile
"Come with me now
And play for a while"

Her beauty seduced me
Her manner controlled
Her delicate hand
Guided my soul

She covered my body
With a red velvet kiss
She tasted my flower
Blooming with bliss

She parted the petals
A black grotto beneath
She readied her shaft
With a latex sheath

“Can you get me with child?”
I said with a smile
“Diseases, my sweet, afflict
not just a heterophile”

She entered with force
Ripping me apart
Caressing the spot
In my womb’s heart

Escorts to ecstasy
Two heads of a priestess
Aphrodisia their ritual
My Muse, My Mistress

My Other Woman

Austria

His father's chateau embedded in the flesh of the earth, surrounded by jagged snow-capped breasts, the tips licked by the sun, sucked by the moon.

The sound of music.

Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

My lips clamp together like a devoted virgin's plump thighs. He speaks to *her* with loving vocal caresses while my tonsils contract around him. Tiny scrapes against my heart, like pressing a bruise or opening the scab of a kitten's threadlike scratch.

The creak of an opening door. His soundless entrance. One day ago the bedchamber was *hers*. *Her* fragrance still lingers in the linens, a strand of *her* hair still sprawls across the pillow, *her* eyelash still curls on the sheet like a black halfmoon against an alabaster night.

He, my lover.

I, his mistress.

As he descends, I pretend to be *her* and a fountain of desire floods me, spraying his cheeks, his lips, his chin. I open the window. Austria's breath rushes past me in a disapproving gush of frigid air. Snow is falling. *Her* tears frozen. *Her* sex bleeding endlessly.

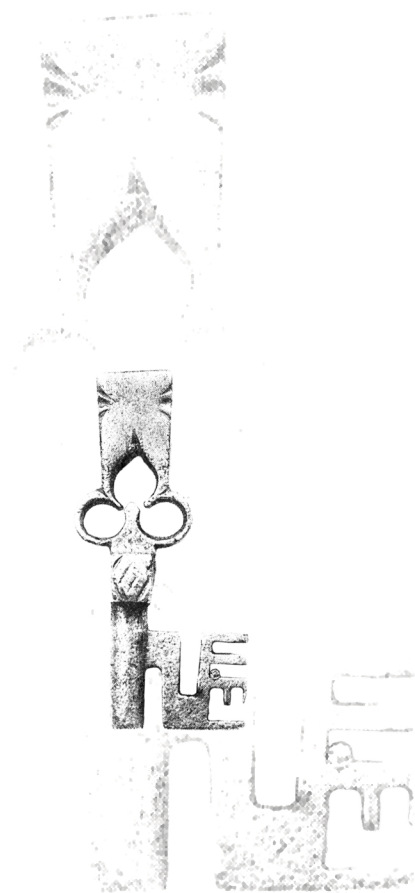
New York

He is distant, my debonair, uncut lover. No matter. I
am me again, painted, scented, decadent.

My Joy spritzes through the air. My scarlet Chanel, unwound, kisses my mouth. I wait with O in my bed, to claw,
mark, bite, and brand my other lover, my other woman.



Madame Dragonfly
of nymphs, globules, and carnivorous ex-lovers



*M*y lover abandoned me on a lovely spring evening, the night after we ran naked, hands entwined, in the chilly April air during a turbulent evening shower. One week later, I *saw* the reason.

We, my ex-lover and I, live in separate apartments in the same cozy brownstone on a tree-lined street near Central Park, he on the fourth floor, and I right below him. What remains of the design of this one-time single-family dwelling is the intricate woodwork and the lofty ceilings. To accomodate for the refurbishing of the new

apartments, spaces were severely reduced. The halls are now so narrow that only one person can pass at a time. It was at the end of one of these narrow hallways that, a week after he shattered my heart, I waited to allow a beautiful woman to pass by me on her way up the staircase.

She was petite, with straight, jet-black hair. Her face was round, and her hooded brown eyes angled slightly upward at the corners. Her pink, fat lips accentuated her wide mouth, and her pink fingernails drew attention to her plump, dimpled hands.

It was only after she sauntered by me, totally ignoring my presence, that I realized my ex-lover was following her. My throat contracted, as if her plump, dimpled hands had grabbed my neck, her pink nails cutting through my skin and her fingers collapsing my windpipe.

Her little, round body must have hidden me from his view, for it was not until she began to climb the steps, leaving me in clear view, that our eyes met. Tears filled mine. Guilt filled his. He lowered his gaze to the floor and continued to trail behind her. As they ascended the stairs to his apartment, I felt nausea climb into my throat.

In spite of the spinning in my head and the sickness in my throat, I managed to stagger back into my apartment.

I was still passionately in love with him. He was exciting and resourceful. He was well-read and intelligent. He was sexually experimental and often encouraged me to play the role of a man, which I enjoy tremendously when I make love. He would allow me to make up his face with mascara, eyeliner, and red lipstick. He would ask me to bring up my sex toys so that I could explore his behind.

He would feast upon my sex, focusing his tongue on my erection for hours. He swallowed my fluid with dying urgency, as if he would dehydrate without my water. He encouraged me to speak about my female lovers, but requested not to hear about any of my male lovers.

His physique was far from flawless. He was gangling, with little

muscle tone in his overly long limbs. The upper half of his body was hairless, while from the waist down his skin was covered with a thicket of dark curls. He was vehemently opposed to exercising, and for him, dieting meant not eating fresh fruits and vegetables.

His small apartment had the overwhelming odor of unwashed clothes, and his wardrobe consisted of thrift shop pieces plagued with moth holes, missing buttons, and torn hemlines.

He would tell me stories about his life before he moved to New York City. The tales were laden with toxic relationships, questionable behavior, and devil worshiping. He abused his two pet ferrets, kicking and starving them, and eventually killed his goldfish, Lucifer. While his ferrets amused him, his fish annoyed him. He believed that he had wasted time and money on this worthless little creature that just swam around all day, oblivious. One afternoon, in the middle of the winter, he netted the little fish, put it in a plastic bag full of water, and threw the bag into the garbage.

As I listened to the story I had no reaction. I should have known by that horrifying tale that he was heartless, cold, and bitter. But after having sex with him, I fell in love with the man I hoped he would become. To his cruelty, I was blind. What I also later discovered was that even with the most casual of my lovers, I end up caring enough and quickly, easily turning into a casualty of the heart. Like most women, I know my heart is vulnerable and easily accessible once I have surrendered my sex more than once to the same man.

While he was blessed with a magical mouth and a passionate nature, intercourse with him left me unsatisfied, since his sexual climax was too swift.

But love is a distorted lens, and through this lens I saw him.

Now, feeling rejected, my soul, my ego, and my sex cried out in agony. I wondered why he left me. My mind sifted through our relationship and I convinced myself he left because I am a *salope*, a slut. I felt ashamed of my voracious sexual appetite, which often leads me into the dark corners of sexuality, and I remembered that

after we met, after we made love, after we connected, I wanted to erase my past, sew up my sex, make myself a virgin again. I wanted to visit a plastic surgeon in New Jersey, the one I read about in a magazine, who specializes in restoring virginity. With a needle and thread my tender flesh would be whole again, and then he would love me — me the untouched maiden.

We had been frozen together, like icicles affixed to the ledge of a building. The plump, dimpled hand of the other woman had broken our embrace. As he and I were separated, my heart, which had been frozen to his, ripped out of my chest. My body shattered on the ground below.

After slamming the door of my apartment, enraged, I tore off my clothing, leaving my skin lacerated with scratches. I crawled into bed and smothered my body and face with pillows. I wanted to drown in the fabric, to be entwined in the cotton fiber, to be flattened to nothingness. I wanted to cease existing.

Through the rest of that day and night, I sobbed. The soft cotton pillowcases blotted my tears. Finally, passing out from emotional pain, I plunged into unconsciousness. It was only the distinct sound of high heels crossing the floor above my apartment that burst through my anesthetized sleep. Each footstep drove stakes through my heartless body. The sound of my replacement. The sound of his new lover. My brain started to beat against my skull and my body became numb. I felt no more.

II

Hung over with anguish, I lay in my bed as the morning sun shot needles of light into my eyes. I tried to roll over to escape the intensifying, puncturing sunlight, but I felt a piercing pain jab between my shoulder blades. The pain was so acute that its vibration instantly traveled through my whole body. I rolled back onto my side and the pain subsided.

I turned my head to my right side, and with one hand, reached behind to determine the cause of the pain. When I located the area, I gasped, horrified, realizing that I was fingering the base of paper-thin wings growing out of my spine. Simultaneously, I saw the ends of another pair of beautiful, iridescent wings that had sprouted from my back slightly above the pair I was touching.

Two pairs of wings decorated my back. The bases of the wings welded into the skin of my back, and I admired how the end of each wing tapered beautifully. They were not the wide, expansive wings of a butterfly, nor the short, stocky wings of a bee. They were long, elegant wings, textured with tiny ridges.

Excited to see my new wings, I attempted to get up and look into the mirror. To my great surprise, my legs had fused into one slender elongated shape that swelled slightly into a bulbous tip. Like a mermaid, only the lower half of my body had transformed, but in my case, it was into the long emerald shape of a dragonfly.

I closed my eyes tightly in an attempt to clear my vision, only to open them and refocus on a more terrifying sight. I found myself in a valley of sheets, surrounded by mountains of pillows. Looming, like a moon over a mountain range, were the digital green numbers of my alarm clock. They seemed to be 50 feet high. They read 10:23 a.m.

Everything around me had enlarged. Had I been in a normal state

of mind, I would have been paralyzed with fear and anxiety, but the previous night thrust me into numbness, and I welcomed the diversion of my metamorphosis.

Compelled to see my full body in the mirror, I hopped on the bottom tip of my insect physique to the side of the bed. I peered over the edge and became dizzy looking at the staggering depth separating me from the floor.

Since I would not be able to jump to the floor, I concentrated on operating my new wings. I began, like a child pretending to fly, by flapping my arms in a birdlike manner, in hope that the wings would move in unison. This, however, was futile. I tried contracting the muscles of my back. I tried bending and twisting. I tried rocking my shoulders from left to right. When that didn't work, I tried oscillating them from front to back. The wings remained motionless.

As my frustration increased, my determination dwindled. I suddenly felt weak and helpless. I collapsed onto my side.

Absently, I began touching my lower body. The surface of my new dragonfly skin was cool and wet. The touch of my hand changed the color of my skin. It brightened from a dark green into a ruby red. It remained ruby red for a second then blended back into emerald.

As I explored my lower torso, watching the canvas of my skin alter from green to red and back again, I discovered a small opening on the front of my body below my waist. I cautiously inserted one of my fingers into the hole. While the skin on the outside of my body was cool, the inside flesh was warm and moist.

On the inside ridge of the opening was a small, hooded orb. As my finger slid past it, a vigorous sexual sensation pulsed through my body. I glided my finger beyond my orb until the rest of my hand could not enter. The opening was fleshy and tight. As I rotated my finger to feel the wet spongy texture, the cavity involuntarily began to contract and, like a hungry mouth, tried to swallow my finger. My orb pulsed against the base of my finger and a robust climax shook my body.

As my body propelled into orgasm, my wings began to flutter. When I reached the height of my climax, they sent me into the air, blasting me off like a rocket. An ultimate thrill, of flight and climax combined, exploded inside of me, and I screamed with delight.

As the climax ended, so did my airborne experience. My wings slowly stopped moving, and I crashed face down on the bed, making a tiny dent in the mountain of linens.

After discovering the secret, I erected myself, balancing on my bulbous end, and stimulated my now swollen insect orb. My wings oscillated, gradually lifting me into the air. The more swiftly I rubbed my orb, the more intensely my wings would move.

Now in flight, I learned quickly that my head and left arm were my navigational instruments. The use of only one arm limited my flight patterns. Until I could stimulate myself without touch, I would have to overcompensate for the handicap.

I flew off the bed and high into the air. I touched the ceiling and then kamikazed down to the floor. As I neared the floor, I threw my head back, which directed me back upward.

My stomach swirled with excitement. Preoccupied with my new activity, I completely forgot about my ex-lover and the other woman.

That is, until I heard, with my newly sensitized ears, the moans of desire coming from the apartment above. Fortunately, as the painful sounds punctured my ears, I was flying over my bed. The sounds distracted me, and I lost my desire to stimulate myself. My wings stopped moving, and I crashed down onto the mattress.

I began to cry hysterically, and to my surprise, my wings began to flutter, pulling me up into the air again. The more I cried, the higher I flew. Through my sobs, I began to laugh. My wings continued to beat and I was still moving through the air.

I whizzed over my desk, whirling past the width of my computer screen and up toward my bookshelf. As I flew by, the titles scrolled by me in large, overwhelming letters. *Delta of Venus*. *Crazy Cock*. *Story of O*. *Justine*. *The Metamorphosis* . . . and many, many more, with some of the letters taller than I.

In my flight, I traveled past my ornately carved wall mirror. My reflection was tiny, and a halo of amber light encircled me. On the bottom of the mirror was a shelf. I landed on the surface of the shelf. On my left, a clear glass vase filled with yellow freesias and purple irises towered above me. On my right, a triangular glass structure housing a jagged stone excavated from Cleopatra's tomb reflected the yellow ocher light emitting from my body.

I did not recognize the being who returned my gaze. The metamorphosis had transformed me into an exquisite fusion of woman and insect.

My chiseled face and softly curled hair had an unearthly golden glow. My shoulders and arms remained muscular. My breasts still sat high on my chest, and my nipples puckered into large beads. The skin covering the human half of my body was luminous.

The wings extending behind me were long, elegant, and tapered. At first, their iridescence captured all the colors of light, but now, before the mirror, they were a rich amber. The color was so succulent that I wanted to taste my own wings. I imagined that the paper-thin texture was filled with a honey nectar, and if I were to suck them between my lips, the sweet flavor would slide down my throat.

The light from my wings had cast a hue of amber over my insect body, covering it in a magnificent swirl of emerald and gold. The svelte form of my new body resembled a sparkling magic wand.

I started to laugh in amazement at my metamorphosis, and as the sound projected from my lips, the light around me intensified, saturating my wings with a vibrant amber glow.

A loud noise above me shook the laughter from my body, as I was instantly reminded of my ex-lover.

I started to cry uncontrollably. In the mirror, I saw sapphire tears dangling from my eyelashes. As the tears fell down my cheeks, they left behind a blue trail. Sapphire lines streaked my face and throat.

The more I cried, the more my body turned to sapphire, until it was no longer of a glowing golden hue, but of a serene shade of blue.

When my sobbing subsided, the sapphire drained from my body. The human color of my skin returned. The emerald color of my insect body reemerged. My wings again captured every color in an iridescent shimmer.

I was an emotional chameleon, dependent on the depth of my feelings to fuel my flight.

The mutable color of my being added to the complexity of my transformation. I needed to see my rainbow of moods. Like an actor, I began my emotional exploration, knowing that the key to my physical color wheel was hidden in each extreme, dramatic emotion I could rally from my innermost cache.

Anger was the first that I deliberately pursued. The rage I felt from being rejected burned inside me. Above my left breast, an organic circle, the color of a fire opal, appeared. As my anger mounted, the circle of orange deepened and expanded as if it were eating away the natural flesh color of my human body.

The emerald color of my insect body was also being devoured by the consuming mouth of the orange hue. My wings, now an orange sparkle, beat more quickly than they had when fueled by the emotions of happiness or sadness. They were moving at such a pace that I was lifted from the mirror and began to hover over the bouquet of flowers.

The urge to fly with quick darting motions overtook me. I rapidly flew a few feet, and in mid-flight, changed my direction. I shot through the length of my apartment and flew out through the slightly opened bedroom window.

I extended my arms and tilted my head backward, forcing my course upward. I landed effortlessly on my ex-lover's windowsill.

I peered through the grimy glass, and with the palm of my hand wiped away a small circle of dirt and leered into the apartment. My eyes widened at the view before me.

My ex-lover's small apartment was overflowing with a gigantic globule of flesh. It was in the center of the room, and it oozed over the furniture, leaving little space on the now-sagging floor.

On the top of the globule was a tiny head with straight black hair, and I recognized a distorted, funhouse-mirror travesty of the woman I had seen with my ex-lover, the woman responsible for my pain and anguish. Her eyes, once hooded and angular, were now mere slits. Her cheeks had puffed, and her lips were enormous. Her mouth contorted in and out like the mouth of a blowfish.

To have a clearer vision of the sight before me, I crawled through a small crack in the window. The inside smelled so strongly of stale sex, I could almost see the odor floating through the air.

I circled around the inflated, gigantic figure. The skin cascaded down to the floor in massive folds of flesh. In the center, between two folds, four tiny pink nails slightly protruded. As if reaching for something, the fingertips incessantly clawed the air.

“Where are you? I want you!” the Globule thundered.

The wind from her breath was so forceful, I was blown across the room, and I crashed into the wall. After the impact, my tiny body slid down the wall and landed on the floor.

“Where are you?” the Globule screamed. The floor vibrated with the sound of her voice.

From behind the Globule, a short, stubby, erect penis emerged. The head of the penis was narrow and pointed. Raised blue veins mapped the surface. Two webbed feet replaced the testicles.

The penis wobbled over toward me, like a penguin. I realized that my ex-lover was now reduced to an organ. His body had been transformed into a small human erection without arms, balancing on tiny webbed feet.

His dark eyes and mouth were now located on the narrow head of the penis. He had no ears or nose. Terror was trapped in his eyes, and his lips quivered.

I laughed. My wings began to flutter, and the warm amber glow of laughter saturated my body.

The Penis recognized my laughter and turned his head toward me.

“Look what has happened to me!” the Penis whispered in my

direction. "She is insatiable. All night, she demanded to be penetrated. With each encounter she inflated more and more. You have to help me!"

My laughter increased, and my wings blasted me into the air.

I hovered over the Penis. I do not know whether it was my insect instinct to mate, or my human need to be loved, but I felt a surge of desire drum through me. I looked down at the opening on my insect body. The skin surrounding the cavity was now garnet. The sumptuous red color continued to bleed through my body, changing its hue.

My hidden orb of delight, which had first propelled me into flight as I caressed it, erected out of the opening. It had a more brilliant color, which pulsed from scarlet to almost black.

I lowered my orb directly over the opening on the top of the Penis.

"I want you to suck me," I said.

I inserted my orb into the dark abyss, and the slit on top of the Penis contracted around it. The most electrifying climax followed, sending my body flying through the air with the mouth of the Penis still sucking on my spherical erection.

It was then that my orb retracted back inside of me and suctioned the Penis into my canal. With heightened sensitivity, I felt the hot, thick liquid of reproduction shoot into me.

A garnet halo of light feathered around me.

My orb released the Penis, and it fell to the floor with a thud.

"Where are you?" the Globule said with rage.

"I'm here. I'm here," the wee voice of the Penis replied.

"Into my anus!" the Globule commanded.

The Penis squeezed his eyes closed and revoltingly twisted his mouth. He waddled around to the back of the Globule and pushed his head into the puckered pink opening of her anus. He thrust himself into her rear tube. His tiny webbed feet, anchored in the fleshy folds of her anus, guarded him against being suctioned into her body.

“Ohhhh!” the Globule cooed.

Lust, humor, sorrow, and rage twined together in my head. My carnivorous dragonfly instinct expressed itself by blending all the chameleon emotional colors into a deep black onyx. I became a twinkle of light, swooping down to attack my prey.

The Penis’ flat feet, anchored against the Globule’s body, were my target. Down I plunged, and like a hawk scooping a fish out of the water, I tore my ex-lover’s right foot from his body with my razor-sharp teeth. As I thrust up into the air, I swallowed the foot.

In a quick, darting movement, I altered my direction and again swooped down to fetch the other foot. I severed it from his body.

As I ascended into the air, I heard a muffled cry.

I changed direction to have an aerial view of the Penis as it was being sucked into the Globule’s anus. The puckered aperture of her behind closed, trapping the human shaft within.

Slowly, the bottom portion of the Globule’s body began to shift from side to side. Then, with violent contortions, she bounced from wall to wall. The tremors shook the room, straining the already sagging floor, knocking patches of plaster off the walls and shattering the window.

Groans bellowed from her shuddering lips. She opened her mouth, and the tiny voice of the Penis yelled from her throat.

I flew around to her front. As I peered down her throat, I saw the head of the Penis emerge.

It was drenched in a yellow-green phlegm, reeking of stomach acids.

“Help me!” the Penis pleaded as it squirmed out of her esophagus.

His shaft was now on the bed of her tongue, sticking out of her mouth, while his head lay helpless between her deadly teeth.

The Penis’ head rubbed against the lips of the Globule. His face was dripping with saliva.

As I looked at the mouth of the Globule imprisoning the Penis’ head, a dragonfly legend burst into my mind.

If a dragonfly approaches, escape or she will sew up your lips.

“Help me!” the Penis screamed.

I was deaf to his cry for help as my killer instinct took over. With the skill of a seamstress, I pinched the mouth of the Globule shut and tightly sewed her lips together.

The Globule thrust her small head forward and I heard gagging, guttural noises coming from her throat. A crimson color dotted her face as she tried to open her mouth, and the Penis’ smothered pleas deadened in her oral cavity.

Her crimson face turned gray with a blue cast. Involuntary twitches plagued her mutated body, and before a minute passed, the Globule and the Penis were dead.

Flying high above the Globule’s body, I noticed an onyx net of black light surrounding me. I was a sparkle of blackness whirling through the space.

Killing had evoked an unsurpassed passion in me, giving me power, a sense of control, and a taste for revenge. From the ends of my fingernails to the bulbous tip of my insect body, I tingled with supremacy. It was at the pinnacle of this intense emotion that a stabbing pain in my navel forced me to land on the colossal shoulder of the Globule.

The opening on my navel dilated, and through it passed an immeasurable number of marbled organic spheres. They rolled over the shoulders and down the body of the Globule. They instinctively burrowed into the inflated flesh until they disappeared. The skin was now tumored with tiny eggs waiting to hatch.

I remember resting, maybe even falling asleep, after my intense labor. Time was irrelevant. Relieved of the millions of children borne from my having been inseminated by the Penis, I soared into the air. Through the shattered fragments of glass jutting out of the window frame, like transparent jagged teeth, I glided into the night.

I hovered outside the window just long enough to see millions of tiny nymphs sparkling around the apartment, a jewelry box filled with dazzling garnets, rubies, ambers, sapphires, fire opals, black onyxes, and diamonds.

In a piece of glass from the broken window I saw my reflection. I was stunned, realizing that the once colorful, emotional, chameleonlike creature I had changed into was now a multifaceted, translucent flying diamond.

I flew away from the apartment building, darting into the air, and as the flutter of my wings propelled me into the night, I painted the ebony sky with white sparkling light.

Jewelry Box of Emotions

Garnet = masturbation

Ruby = coitus

Amber = laughter

Sapphire = sadness

Fire Opal = anger

Black Onyx = death

Diamond = birth/rebirth



The Symphony of Torture

Above me I hear them. My bed is the stage. My mind is the Conductor.

The Sound of her heels suddenly drives invisible stakes into my body. Through my throat, then my stomach, and finally my heart. I am nailed to the stage.

The Sound of the shower punctures my skin with tiny needles.

The Sound of the pounding furniture smashes my head.

The Sound draws no blood. My agony does not stain the sheets. Only dried remnants of our love can be found.

No Sound.

Escape lies in silence, but the noise in my head never ceases. Even without the Sound, I hear them. Absent notes I weave into music. My acute mind conducts the Symphony of Torture.

Maybe if . . .
my tongue was silent
or
my mind was idle

or
my sex was dormant
He would love me
Maybe if . . .
my hair were the color of the night

or
my eyes were slits
or
my feet were bound
He would love me
Maybe if . . .

The Sounds!

China Doll, he dug through my heart to the other side of
the world. Through your heart he will return.

China Doll, can you hear my Symphony playing below
you? Escape while you are still whole and there is still silence in
your mind.

Heartless Woman

My heart has imploded.

As the arteries, the aorta, the ventricles, and the chambers collapse, I wish my heart would have exploded instead, shooting shrapnel of hot flesh, puncturing, lacerating, killing. But it caved into my chest, falling into my stomach, and into my womb, where it died.

My old heart loved as a man.

To love with the heart of a man, I looked up into the sky and snatched a rainbow, prying each color apart and wrapping each strip around my phallus, where I drained the color into my soul until the vibrant hues disappeared. It was safe to love as a man. I could love all of the colors at once, holding them in my hand as a colorful bouquet of light.

My new heart loves as a woman.

To love with the heart of a woman I look up to see a sky full of radiant suns. I pluck one and the day turns to night, obliterating the other garish spheres of fire. I hold my precious Sun to my chest and it becomes a part of me, lighting my body, my being, my soul with love. For me, no other sun exists. But my Sun holds a rainbow in his hand, a dramatic array of colors swooping into a graceful arch.

My heart implodes. Beware of the heartless woman.



Not Born A Virgin

I wait in the dark aqueous orb. A tiny prick of pain. A wound, a rite of passage I will never remember. They have unlocked the thin shackle of skin, imprisoning my sex. No religion binds me. No family pride bridles me. No ignorance restrains me. I am guiltlessly aroused. Ravenous, carnal, lustful. Through the warm fleshy channel I emerge. I proclaim in an echoing screech: "I am not born a virgin!"

The “Opening” Act

When you are rich, unusual foreplay is eccentric.

When you are poor, unusual foreplay is crazy.



*W*hat would I do if women climaxed any faster?

I am a singer, and like most artists in New York City, I struggle to pay my rent and bills. I am always hoping to have a little money left over at the end of each month so that I can afford to go to a movie, or buy a Chanel lipstick, or take a cab instead of riding the subway late at night. My singing career has not yet catapulted me into financial bliss, so I have had to work a succession of ridiculous, crazy jobs.

For a while I used to walk dogs on the Upper East Side, sometimes up to ten at a time. Some New Yorkers love pets, but have little or no time to care for them. So I would pick up the dogs, sometimes twice a day, and take the pampered barking rats for a stroll. The pay was modest, but the hours were flexible. It was a no-stress job, except for the occasional entangled leashes, or the irritating shortage of plastic bags needed to pick up and dispose of the dogs' droppings — you can get fined for not cleaning up after your dog. Imagine the fine for ten!

Being allergic to animals, I lasted as long as I could before I had to quit. I would occasionally suffer from sneezing and red, puffy eyes. But after a while, spending too much time with so many dogs also made me congested, which created problems when I sang.

I thought that I may be able to work with insects, so I interviewed with the American Museum of Natural History. I thought that the spectacular dragonfly exhibit could use my services, but they told me that I was overqualified to uncrate and arrange the different species.

I went on to be a makeup artist. Not for models on photo shoots, or brides at weddings. For that matter, not even for real people. I painted the faces of mannequins, the rigid, emaciated figures posing in store windows, the anorexic type that seem to scream: "No, please, I could not possibly have another cup of air!"

My boss, whose real name was Claude but who preferred to be called Clara, never participated in any of the manual labor when it came to assembling the displays. He would delegate all the work to his assistants.

Clara was tall, wiry, and always dressed in black: black shoes; black plain-front trousers with slim legs; blackturtle necks in the winter; black Armani tee shirts in the summer. Most of the window-display people would wear black, but one could easily distinguish Clara by the brightly colored fan he carried and nervously waved in front of his face when concerned about deadlines.

After the displays were installed, we all would breathe a sigh of

relief, and Clara would stand back and ritually quote Elaine Abelson: "Like love letters . . . windows must arouse in women the desire for more." Clara would sigh while looking at his creations having come to life.

I believed Clara to be a statuophile. Once I accidentally walked in on Clara as he embraced a mannequin. He did not notice my presence, and while I knew that I should have left, I felt compelled to stay, to be a voyeur.

I watched as he caressed the hard curves and small pelvic bulge of the male mannequin. With his right hand Clara reached between his own legs, and his arm began moving back and forth.

My heart pounded as I waited for his climax, waited for him to shower the mannequin with whiteness. But after five minutes of continual stroking, he dropped his hand and whispered, "I guess not tonight, dear. It has been a long day." He zipped up his trousers and left the room.

I never caught a glimpse of Clara and the mannequin again, but every time I saw Clara, the image of the two of them together came to my mind.

It was at this job that I met Miss Missy. She, or rather he, was a stylist who Clara hired to search the city for props to decorate the window displays.

Miss Missy, a slender, heart-faced beauty, had been cross-dressing since the age of twelve. One of his early idols, a Roman Emperor named Heliogabalus, would dress as a woman and evict prostitutes from their bordellos, taking over their clientele. He was later assassinated by his soldiers upon their discovery of his plot to abdicate and make his husband Emperor while declaring himself Empress of Rome.

Miss Missy knew all about fashion, colors, materials, line, shape, garment construction, and Roman period costumes.

His employment as a stylist and mine as a mannequin makeup artist were seasonal, but thanks to his resourcefulness, the two of us secured new jobs. Miss Missy was a chameleon, changing jobs all

the time, scouring the city for unusual ways to make money. Being a stylist was one of his more conservative jobs. He also had a steady job as a towel-girl in the locker room of a swing club on 27th street called the Pendulum.

He recognized my talent as a makeup artist and suggested that we put an advertisement in a free magazine called *HX*:

ARE YOU “*BOB*” GORDON LUSTING TO BE BATGIRL?
CROSS-DRESSING 24 HOURS A DAY.
CALL MISS MISSY AND FRIENDS.

After a week of running the advertisement, we received three calls.

As time went on doctors, lawyers, and even a judge contacted us. We would go to their offices after business hours, or to their homes, me with my little black case full of colorful makeup and my special brushes, which I would wash with aromatherapy shampoo to help the clients relax as I applied the makeup to their faces to make women out of them, and Miss Missy with the clothing, accessories, and wigs.

An incredible thrill shoots through me when I apply makeup to men. It is an intellectual thrill. A man painting his face to look like a woman is so taboo in our society. Taboos excite me.

Men’s faces are more difficult to make up than women’s faces, with the stubble, the bushy eyebrows, but after I overcame these obstacles with foundation and an eyebrow pencil the fun would begin.

I would ask our clients to close their eyes and imagine how beautiful their faces were going to look when I was finished. I would circle my brush in a pot of eye shadow, then veneer their lids with color. I would cover the whole lid, then dive into the creases with a small pointed brush dusted with a dramatic color. Mascara on every lash, and a contour of each cheek with a dark shade of rouge. It was the lips that I craved to paint, and I became known for my lip creations. With a pencil, I would enlarge them, and with a soft,

thin lip brush, I would spread the color out over the pillows of their mouths. Finally, I would add a drop of thick, syrupy lip gloss to the center to make the lips look glazed with a thin shiny layer of sweet sex juice.

Miss Missy would put on the wigs and *voila!* — a beautiful woman.

Miss Missy and I worked well together, the girl and the *real* girl, which is how we referred to each other, but because of a sudden shortage of clients, I was forced to find yet another occupation to support myself.

A couple of our regulars dropped out. The plastic surgeon's wife accused him of having an affair after she found a false eyelash stuck to the inside of his tee shirt. The corporate lawyer moved to Washington, D.C., to work in the cross-dressing department of the International Foundation for Gender Research.

Miss Missy continued with a few remaining clients. For a moment I considered pubic hair sculpturing and dressing. I thought that I could sculpt hearts, triangles, cubes, leaves, zodiac signs, keys, dragonflies, or other animals, depending on the occasion. After all, what woman would not want to see a pair of elegant, tapered wings or pointed, rearing horns sculpted around her man's genitalia? I could decorate my creations with dyes, body paints, glitters, beads, stickers, or just braids for the more conservative clients. Perhaps I could even match the fancy painting and bejeweling some women get done on their nails. I called Brigita, my own Brazilian wax specialist, but neither she nor the owners of the little Korean salons that have sprouted on practically every corner on the Upper West Side thought that there would be any demand for my services.

I finally found my own lucrative niche. It has since allowed me to make a comfortable living while pursuing my art.

My career began a year ago, following a brief conversation I had with one of my cross-dressing clients, Bob. As I whisked the powder brush across his face, I told him that my ideal job would be to sexually service women, and how I wished that someone would start a "girl on girl" escort service, or if one was already in business,

I should interview immediately. I was sure that if it did, in fact, exist it would be an underground business, and I wondered how many lesbians, bisexuals or curious straights would actually pay for sex with a woman.

"Are you a lesbian?" Bob asked.

"Are you?" I teased.

A few weeks later, when I checked my answering service, I retrieved a message from Bob.

"I have a colleague, a very wealthy colleague, who may be interested in your services. Your "girl on girl" services. Call me and I will give you the details."

I phoned him and found out that there was indeed some demand for my services, but not exactly in the way I had imagined. The interested gentleman, my client's colleague, wanted to see and evaluate me before hiring me.

I was then working two days a week in the perfume department at Bergdorf Goodman. I told Bob to send his colleague there, and that it would be up to him to approach me if he felt that I was the proper person for the job he had in mind.

Every day I encountered a plethora of characters only portrayed in the pages of *Town and Country* or *Travel and Leisure*. Besides rich New Yorkers, many wealthy foreign tourists from Brazil and Japan punctuated the mix of elite clients visiting the store.

The Japanese women who approached the perfume counter were always timid, making slow gestures and bowing their heads in appreciation. They usually spoke very little English and thus ended up pointing at the bottles they wanted to purchase. Sometimes they would pick up a tester bottle for a particular brand and hand it to me to indicate that it was the fragrance they wanted.

These beautifully dressed women, with dense, straight black hair framing their smooth skin, full painted lips, and demure dispositions, were helpless, rich fishes in a pool full of ravenous sales sharks. No salespersonship was needed with these women. They knew what they wanted and they bought in bulk. Ten, fifteen, sometimes thirty

bottles at a time, with each bottle ranging from \$50 to \$500. These sales would add up to a very healthy commission.

The Brazilian women, flaunting their rich, smooth skin, exotic eyes, full mouths, and voluptuous bodies, and who I thought were the most beautiful of the various customers shopping at the perfume counter, were not easily sold on the products. They often spoke many languages, Portuguese, French, Spanish, Italian, and sometimes German, and preferred not to speak English. I was at an extreme disadvantage. Raised in the Midwest, I was never exposed to foreigners and never learned other languages. But being the assertive and charming person that I am, this did not stop me from selling copious amounts of perfume to them as well.

I wondered if my potential client for my "girl on girl" services would be a foreigner, or if he would be part of the Manhattan clientele that simultaneously fascinated and repulsed me.

New York City women, impeccably dressed, with Frederic Fekkai hair styles, Chanel makeup on their faces, Kate Spade bags, Calvin Klein cashmere wraps in the winter, Donna Karan sundresses in the summer, and Manolo Blahnik shoes, would most often approach my counter in a condescending manner. Their "fetch me this and fetch me that" attitude, their perfect plastic faces, and their perfect liposuctioned bodies were the bane of my existence. They embodied the life I longed to live, a life of luxury, travel, and abundance.

One of them was nicknamed Bird Lady; she would always talk about her cage full of birds and how the different fragrances she wore influenced the way they sang. Happy whistling with Lancôme's *Tresor*. Romantic chirping with Chanel's *Coco*. Seductive tweets with Yves Saint Laurent's *Opium*. I believed that the peeping little pests were just getting high from the alcohol contained in the perfume.

Another woman I remember vividly was Super Model, who neither looked nor behaved like one, but who always asked what fragrance the models were wearing at the time. She bought whatever we told her whether it was true or not.

“What is Christy Turlington wearing?” she would ask enthusiastically, almost on the verge of desperation.

“A combination. First she puts Annick Goutal’s Vanilla on her pulse points, then she sprays Estée Lauder’s Dazzling Gold over the rest of her body,” we would say.

“Brilliant! Brilliant! Bag it up and send it to my apartment,” Super Model would usually reply.

Few men accompanied these women, and even fewer came by themselves. The men were equally well-dressed — Armani suits, Egyptian cotton custom-made shirts, Fabrice Marlene ties, Bruno Magli wing-tip shoes — but always exhibited a more pleasant attitude.

It was while I was waiting on one of our less-privileged customers nicknamed Band-Aid Lady, an emaciated woman who tacked back her cheeks with round Band-Aids and covered the surface of her skin as well as the Band-Aids with thick pancake makeup — a poor woman’s face lift — that I saw a stately gentleman walk into the department.

His black hair was lined with slivers of silver, and he wore a dark gray double-breasted pin-striped suit. Amidst the perfume counters topped with the numerous bottles of fragrance, he towered over us like a snowcapped mountain.

As I waited on Band-Aid Lady, I watched him and felt drawn to him, engulfed by him. His aura exuded power, passion, poetry, perversion, all hitting me, one after the other, like quick, hot puffs of breath.

He asked for me by name.

“Good afternoon. May I help you?” I asked.

“Good afternoon. I would like a bottle of Joy,” he said. His voice sounded like Clark Gable’s, deep, silky, slightly polished, the kind that makes women melt.

I started my litany of the different sizes and prices, but before I could finish, he said that he wanted the limited edition bottle. I was so excited. This bottle was extremely expensive.

He asked for a gift card and for the bottle to be wrapped. I handed him a small white card and a ballpoint pen. He set the pen on the counter and pulled out a fountain pen from his inner breast pocket. I handed him the gift in a small shopping bag.

"Thank you. I will see you again soon," he said, with a vibrant smile and sparkling black eyes.

It was a great surprise when one week later Mr. Piers Playfair IV returned for a visit to the perfume department. This time it was not to buy a fragrance, it was to offer me a job.

II

I have always known that women need more time than men. That is why he hired me. I am his opening act. He calls me when he is going to be late coming home from the office, delayed by work or an unexpected appointment, or when he just doesn't want to spend the time required to give his wife the necessary physical attention and emotional affection that would excite her body, bring her to the brink of climax, and prepare her for his sex. Too busy, too lazy, or perhaps too rich to bother with foreplay, or simply excited at the idea of a woman arousing his wife.

When on call, I go to their townhouse on East 81st Street. The building is old, late eighteen or early nineteen hundreds, but immaculately preserved. Its white marble steps glow under the splash of light overflowing from the street lamps, and from the top of the steps there is a spectacular view of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I am greeted at the door by Barnabas, an emotionless English butler, a throwback to the time when impeccable manners and the families' honor were the code by which the hired help was bound.

"Good evening. Madame knows the way," he says in his usual flat tone of voice.

“Yes, I know the way,” I remind him in a playful manner and silently remind myself that princesses are always addressed as ‘madame,’ and I should not feel old or spinsterlike because I am no longer addressed as ‘mademoiselle.’

He is anything but playful, and if he even plays with himself he probably practices autopederaasty, the unusual technique a man uses of inserting his own semi-erect penis into his anus. From what I understand it is physically impossible for most men, but somehow Barnabas gives me the impression that he has what it takes to do it.

I bound up the sweeping staircase that cascades down from the second floor. I turn right and quietly walk toward the master suite at the end of the hall. I stop at the gilded oval mirror on the wall and look at my reflection. I inspect my face. My eyes are dramatically madeup, my eyebrows arched and enhanced with pencil, my cheeks natural, and my lips bare and naked. I feel pretty tonight. I would feel beautiful if I had lipstick on, but I must be discreet. My lipstick cannot smear on Mrs. Piers Playfair IV.

I am satisfied with my appearance, and like a performer ready to go on stage, my stomach slightly tenses and I feel a twinge of nervousness. But I am a professional and I take a deep breath, exhale slowly, straighten my shoulders, smile, and walk toward the double set of doors guarding the master suite.

I knock twice, as is the rule, and the door opens. She stands behind it, hiding herself from my view. After I enter, she closes the door, turns her back to me, and saunters toward the bed.

She usually wears the most conservative clothing. I suspect that he insists on it — after all, he seems to be in control of her sex life, why not of her wardrobe.

She is an exquisite modern woman caught in an old-fashioned world. She is like a beautiful piece of modern architecture that is covered and constrained by the ivy that creeps up medieval facades. The ivy entangles them in a forest of traditions, and under those lush, green, pointed leaves, structures often crumble. I feel her stifled by this world and by her husband’s paternal control.

I imagined that before she married him she was wild and carefree. She might have been a club kid wearing untamed ink-black hair streaked with red and purple dyes and pieces from the Jean Paul Gaultier Jr. collection that she bought for half price at the Barneys New York warehouse sale. Perhaps she never began her night before 10:00 p.m., popped ecstasy, and danced until the early morning, stepping over the *New York Times* on the stoop of her apartment building as she stumbled up the steps into her tiny studio. Maybe she went to the Fashion Institute of Technology and studied Fashion Buying and Merchandising, dreaming of a life as a representative for the French designer Thierry Mugler.

When she met her husband, he seduced her with a life of private jets, secluded island vacations, and homes in New York, Geneva, and London. Or maybe it was the imported rare French wines, the oysters, and the *crème brûlées* that she never experienced growing up.

Whatever it was that seduced her, she traded her untamed spirit, her wild nature, her uncertain lifestyle for a life of ease and luxury, but a life that was certain to devour her soul, sedating her and lobotomizing her until she would no longer remember that she was once a free, exotic bird.

Tonight, however, remnants of her past emerge as she sheds her crimson velvet Valentino wrap clasped at the waist with a diamond button, a wrap she may have purchased at a vintage boutique on 26th Street. It drops to the floor, lying like a carpet for me to walk over.

I follow the slender back that lowers into a tiny waist, which swells to a rounded heart-shaped behind. Her long, blonde hair, cut in the shape of a V, falls to the middle of her back, pointing like an arrowhead to the thin line dividing her bottom.

I follow her slim legs as she moves across the floor to the echoing sound of her favorite Manolo Blahnik black mules, the pair she wears when she is really in the mood, the kind propped with ostrich feathers sprouting from their soft velvet tops, their hard heels beat-

ing the highly polished marble floors in which I catch a blurry reflection of the lower half of her naked body.

She stops at the edge of the bed and twists her diamond wedding ring off her finger, dropping it on the night table. The spectacular stone twinkles in the light and is soon joined by the two watches she wears on her left wrist: one a magnificent Piaget in white gold, and the other a delicate antique with a faded red face, running fifteen minutes faster than the first.

She gracefully turns around and falls onto their king-size bed as the silk-encased down comforter balloons up around her. It slowly settles, and after I join her, it rises again, cocooning us together like twin dragonflies.

I always begin the same way. She likes it from her head down to her toes.

I entwine my fingers in her golden hair and gently pull her head to one side. I gaze at her goddesslike profile, her long, white elegant neck, the hollow of her throat in which floats a small gold locket hanging on a thin chain, and the curve of her sculpted shoulder. I kiss the corner of her mouth and I feel her breath on my lips. She doesn't kiss me back. She never kisses me back. I let my mouth trail to her neck, and as if on a long slippery slide, my lips slip to her collarbone. She is thin. The kind of thin that only the very wealthy or the very disciplined or Kate Moss achieves. I hungrily suck on her protruding collarbone.

Her fragrance overwhelms me. Tonight, she is wearing Joy again, the exotic perfume of the upper class. On her body, the expensive *parfum* retains its true, extravagant floral bouquet, with rich notes of jasmine and Rose de Mai, yet it is clearly punctuated with her natural aroma. It unravels me.

Suddenly, the image of her husband purchasing a bottle from me at the Bergdorf Goodman's perfume counter intrudes into my mind. Who wants to think about the overbearing husband when one is in the arms of the now-receptive wife? I see him as he decided on the limited edition Baccarat crystal bottle. In the illuminated case, the

multifaceted bottle filled with the amber fragrance caught each ray of light and projected a sparkling net of white light laced with amber highlights. The one-ounce bottle was \$730.

At the time, I wondered who he was buying it for, his wife or his mistress. Men should make sure that their wives and mistresses wear the same perfume. Then I wondered about *her*, the wife, and *her*, the mistress. I thought about the way they looked, whether they worked. I wondered if they were interesting. Maybe one of them had her hair styled in the salon upstairs . . . maybe one of them shopped at this counter . . . maybe both . . .

Now, my hand is entwined in Mrs. Playfair's hair, tightening its grip and pulling her head backward. I hear her gasp. She almost never makes noise, only an occasional sigh.

My other hand cups one of the breasts that stand high on her chest. I tweak the engorged pink nipple, first with the soft pads of my fingertips, then with my sharp claws. I lower my mouth to her now blushing breast, releasing her hair as I descend. I feel a long strand wrap around my fingers as my lips brush the soft skin of her breast. I open my mouth to touch the tip of my tongue to the tip of her nipple. The taste slowly trickles into my mouth, and when it reaches the part of my tongue that registers sweets, her delicious flavor floods me. I could savor the taste, teasing her with small flicks of my tongue, but I want to devour her, to eat her and swallow her, filling my stomach with her sweetness.

I bite into her breast, clamping my teeth around the dark ring of her nipple, sucking the hard candy tip. Her back arches, thrusting more of her into my mouth. My hand cups her other breast as I squeeze its tip between my fingers.

I lower my mouth to her flat navel, the flat navel of a very wealthy and disciplined person. It sinks slightly between her hipbones, her stomach resembling a delicate Haviland saucer. I linger in her dish for a moment, then my lips saunter down to her garden.

Her blonde pubic hair is long, luxurious, well-manicured, and waxed into the shape of a perfect narrow V. Oh! What creations I

could have sculpted, painted, and glittered in this beautiful fleece garden. Elegant, little braids, with golden ribbons woven through each plait, is the design I would have given to her.

I cover her V with tiny kisses before I plunge my tongue into the crease where her sex begins. My face opens her legs as my tongue follows the line of her sex, passing her erection, passing the folds of her inner lips, passing her flooded grotto, stopping at the puckered folds of her behind. All the while, her sexual scent spritzes through the air, forming a cloud of lust that engulfs the both of us.

Her thin legs part like a pair of scissors, dull and weak blades that I feel could still slice my neck if I did not please her.

I travel back to her erection. Peaking in the region between complete shadow and complete light, it launches up from her body like the spiral-shaped horn of a unicorn. I want to kiss this spiral, to pull back its hood, to lick its round tip.

I have never pulled back its hood before. I have only licked and sucked the swollen tip through the thin blanket of flesh, but tonight I venture forth and, with my thumbs, I glide back the protective skin, exposing its cusp. It is larger than I imagined and not round, like others I have explored, but oblong. I thoughtfully caress it with the end of my tongue.

She writhes, lifting her hips and pelvis. Her body language encourages my exploration, and with rapid rhythmic flips of my tongue, I lick her erection. Her grotto radiates a heat that I feel burning my chin.

I continue licking her tip, and with all of her strength, she grasps the sides of my head, pulling me deeper into her sex. I want her to swallow me inside her cavern, to let me crawl into her womb, but it is only my finger that disappears into her grotto.

I feel the curves and the folds of her interior contract around the phallus my finger has become. I neither plunge farther in nor pull out, but remain inside her with my lips glued to her erection. I feel a small orb, the secret key, on the front wall of her womb. I circle it, gently at first, then vigorously while my mouth still sucks, licks,

and stimulates her bead. Her body grows rigid and she splashes me, showers me, drenches me with a spray of sweet, wet heat.

She is not supposed to climax. That is the rule. Her husband is the one who is supposed to bring her to ecstasy. I am only the opening act. We have obeyed . . . until tonight.

She closes her scissorlike legs, pulling them up to her body. She grasps a small down pillow to her breasts and, with her red lacquered nails, clutches it as she would a life preserver if she were lost at sea.

Her body now curls in a fetal position. Her blonde hair sweeps over the pillows supporting her head.

Her fevered eyes meet mine, and in the blackness of her dilated pupils, I see into the soul of a woman intoxicated with the drug of continuous climax. Though I have never seen myself when I reached such heights, I know the feeling and I can see the way her body quivers, the effect of this ecstatic kind of pleasure.

As always I remain quiet and distant. I want to embrace her, gather her in my arms, cuddle her to my breasts, but I cannot touch her. I must leave. I stand up and adjust my clothing while looking down at the elegant creature framed in a cloud of fabric.

It is when a teardrop, clinging to the tip of her bottom eyelash, falls on her cheek that I turn to leave. As I walk to the door, her cry floats across the room, and it seems that I can hear every one of her tears hit the pillow.

I know *that* feeling. Someone takes you so high that delirium enters your mind, and you are paralyzed, you cannot move, you cannot speak. Twinkling stars blur your sight, and you are caught in their overwhelming brightness.

As I descend the stairs, Barnabas silently crosses the marble foyer with a silver tray, on which sits a bulbous glass of Calvados. Her husband has finally arrived and is preparing himself for the main act, preparing to end what I have started.

Like an eighth-century Japanese aristocrat practicing the art of *tsutsumi*, he is probably wrapping his member with silk and ribbons

in complex and intricate designs. He will enter their bedchamber offering her his gift, enjoying the physical sensations as she carefully unwraps her prize.

What he does not know is that she is beyond ready. She is finished, and he may have to untie the ribbons himself.

Will she pretend to be satisfied as he lunges into her, expecting her to climax? Or will she expose our secret, sending him into a rage? Will he berate her? Will he fire me? Will she ask me to visit her during the day when he is not home nor expected to arrive anytime soon?

All of these questions race through my mind and I am expectedly anxious. I know myself, and I will incessantly check my answering service for a message from either one of them. I enjoy my job and I love the luxuries it affords me, but I have learned to be resourceful when it comes to finding work in New York City. If this job falls through, I will find another. In fact, I may have a potential job at a magazine interviewing writers.

I glide through the foyer and let myself out without waiting for Barnabas to open the intricately decorated, heavy wrought-iron door. I stand at the top of the marble stairs. A light mist begins to fall, spritzing the row of impeccably maintained townhouses. Each one different in character, but all strung together by the people who reside in them.

I would love to have been born into American royalty, but as this was not to be my fate, I dismiss the thought quickly from my mind, convincing myself that even if I were now offered that life, I would not trade my free-spirited soul for one confined in traditions.

I look at my watch on my left wrist. I am late by my standards, so I decide to run to Fifth Avenue and hail a cab.

“15 West Fourth Street. The Bottom Line,” I tell the driver.

The window is open, the seat is worn out, and I sink into its wet vinyl cover. As I grab the seat belt, I hear the purring voice of Eartha Kitt: “Cats have nine lives, but you only have one. Buckle up!”

The "Opening" Act

I have a show tonight. I will be singing. I am to perform another kind of opening act. I close my eyes and try to meditate, but I am distracted. I can still taste her on my lips, smell her on my hand, see the single strand of blonde hair entwined in my fingers, and hear her tears hit her pillow.

A thought comes to my mind. What if he never has brought her to climax? What if she had been faking her pleasure, faking her orgasms with him as I have with some of my lovers? Men's egos are so fragile. Will I hear from her again? No doubt. I will.

*For
The "D",*

What would I do if you weren't so generous with your . . . estate!



The Singer

I have a secret.

I have always wanted to be a singer. An artist who creates with sounds. It was a dream, a quest, a burning desire that died when I opened my mouth and thrust air through the harp in my throat. A horrible screech! Why do we feel dreams that can never come true?

I have a secret. I am a thief.

Before me stood a female Apollo, her long red hair illuminated by a hundred thousand tiny white lights dangling from disks of steel. Her niveous face sparkled. Her red mouth was the bow on her gift to the world, and when she untied the ribbon, a sound so enchanting, so seraphic, was released. I was forever bewitched. She stood in the center of the world, the center of the modern marble amphitheater. A musical Narcissus, she sang into the polished steps, which cast her beautiful voice back into her ears.

I have a secret. I am a thief. I took her voice.

She allowed me to approach, and as she exhaled her last note, I stole a kiss from her opened mouth. That singular note, so pure and precise, flew onto my tongue, and it tasted of sweet gold. I swallowed, and my throat was gilded with sound. She, the musical Narcissus, looked at me, and in the halfmoon of her eyes, I saw Mercury.

I have a secret. I am a thief. I took her voice. I stole her soul.

As I sang with my new voice, as I listened to the notes dance forth from my lips, I heard another sound, the sound of harmony drifting up to my ears. From her parted legs, her mouth sang. She sprawled on the steps, spreading a soft blanket of red hair over the marble. As I neared, our voices blended, creating a thick, rich music that chimed through the theater. As the harmonic notes gushed forth from her glistening mouth, I kissed her swollen lips and erect tongue. I swallowed the musical nectar that tasted of sapid platinum, and I became a singer.

Kisses of a Courtesan

On the grounds of the palace of Vincennes, where the graceful ghosts of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette have been known to frolic in the red ocher light of October sunsets, a spy, regally poised in a black laced corset hiding her nippleless breasts and other lies that sentenced her to death, courageously greeted her execution.

Twelve stripeless tin soldiers aimed at their target.

The fantasy she created — elegance, mystery, seduction — forbade her from wrapping her face with a black blindfold and binding her hands with iron shackles.

She lifted her hand to her bare mouth, a mouth uncolored, unrouged, untouched, and kisses ripened on her fingertips. She thrust her arm into the air, and on the breath of innocence, the kisses floated through the red ocher mist, above the hissing silver bullets, between the tortured sobs.

As eleven bullets punctured her body, one after the other, gathering in the same shredded hole in her heart, the twelfth was hidden deep in the pocket of one quivering boy soldier, the tip of his rifle trembling in the air as his lips were glazed with the kisses of a courtesan.

Pisces

In a halo of violet light circling the rising planet Neptune, the Archangel Raphael, endowed with honeysuckle wings, which spread a delicious fragrance through the air, and wrapped in a loincloth of laced seaweed hiding his tridentlike member, delicately held in the palm of each hand a glass sphere, each trapping an ocean and a fish.

The indigo light of a Venusian diamond sparkled in his eyes, and in between his plump lips, he embraced the stem of a rose. The pointed thorns tore little wounds in his mouth, and tears of yellow blood rolled onto his skin, dripping off his chin.

He smiled and blew the rose into the air, where its bud opened and set free shimmery red petals that floated down, kissing my lips. I was drowned in his charm and showered in his golden blood.

"Go to the Blue Grotto off the Latin foot," he whispered on the mist of his jasmine breath.

A dove's wings on my ankles, I glided across the world, plunged into the sunlight-licked blue sea, and passed through the mouth of the grotto.

The sea sirens, who frolicked at the entrance, had stolen the red rays of the sun, entwining them in their long, curly tresses.

A spray of beryl-blue light colored the womb of the cave, and azure, cyan, sapphire, and turquoise rays danced over the rippling water.

The Archangel Raphael suspended in the air, I in the translucent water below, and with a tilt of his fingers, one glass sphere emptied onto the sea.

An elegant, sensuous, red angelfish, with black, playful eyes swam around me, brushing my wet flesh with its silky fins. On a bed of water under a blanket of ripples, the angelfish opened its oval mouth and pressed between its soft lips my painted toe. In the warm cavern of its mouth, I felt the pressure of passion as the angelfish sucked and caressed me.

Its tail nudged open my legs, and as it released my toe, I felt its slippery body travel up my leg to my sex, where the angelfish bubbled streams of heliotrope water over my pearl. I surrendered to the most sublime pleasure.

The Archangel Raphael watched through glassy eyes as his trident grew through the seaweed of his loincloth, and as the colors of the rainbow erupted from the three prongs of his spear, the angelfish jumped out of the sea, striking a graceful, elegant arch in the air, kissed the Archangel's mouth and evaporated into the mist.

Again, the Archangel Raphael tilted his fingers and emptied the second sphere into the water.

A bulbous, prickly piranha with large pointed fangs swam over me, scraping my skin with its scales. I struggled to escape, but invisible shackles bound me under the water.

The piranha severed my toe with its carnivorous jaws, and shreds of my bloody flesh floated on the turbulent surface of the water.

It frayed the skin on my calf and thigh as it ventured up between my legs, and with one swift bite, turned my sex into a gaping halfmoon of jagged teeth marks. My indigo blood poured into the sea, turning it blue-black.

The piranha darted into a rapid aquatic dance, blew a bubbly kiss to the Archangel Raphael, and dissolved into the water.

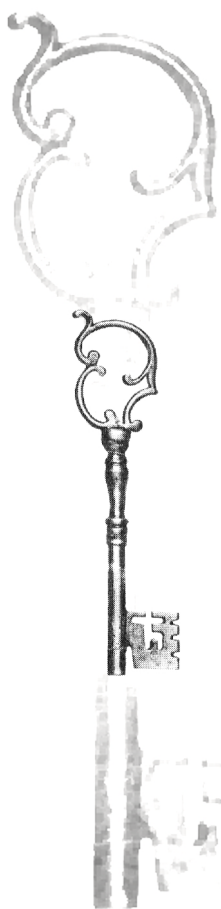
My body, tattered and torn, surrounded by an organic circle of thick indigo blood, sank to the bottom, landing in a soft coffin of sand, joining Poseidon and Triton.

Through a blur of blue ripples, I saw the Archangel Raphael. As he launched into the sky, determined to warm himself on the molten surface of Mercury and lust after the Venusian nymphs basking in the sunlight, one yellow tear sprang from his black lashes, crashed into the sea, and sank, like a golden bullet, into my heart.



Interview with
Anaïs Nin

*A reverential conversation that could have taken
place with the number one lady of erotica . . . if the
interviewer had not become starstruck.*



Docked on a small pier between the monstrous battleship the *Intrepid*, now a museum, and the Circle Line sightseeing yachts that tourists board to cruise around the island of Manhattan, my friend's boat, the *Garçonnière*, seemed to be the perfect location for an interview with my idol, Anaïs Nin. My friend lives on the *Garçonnière* and supports himself by chartering his luxury motorboat to intimate groups of people for short outings on the Hudson River. He is proud of his boat, so when I asked him if I could host an interview on its beautiful wooden deck, he was

thrilled. I told him that the *rencontre* would be scheduled for the following Thursday, late in the evening.

The location and time arranged, it was time to prepare myself. Anaïs Nin's words whirled in my head as I thought about the questions I would be asking her, the secrets she would be revealing to me, the lies she may choose to weave.

"A startlingly white face, burning eyes. June Mansfield, Henry's wife. As she came towards me from the darkness of my garden into the light of the doorway I saw for the first time the most beautiful woman on earth," Anaïs Nin, the erotica writer described in her famous diary, *Journal of Love*.

I wanted her to be entranced by me, for, as every woman knows, to seduce another woman with your own looks and charm is a prowess as great as seducing God.

I went home and studied her *Journal of Love* and her description of June. "Blond hair, pallid face, demonic peaked eyebrows, a cruel smile with a disarming dimple. Perfidious, infinitely desirable, drawing me to her as towards death."

On the morning of the interview, I had an appointment at the beauty salon around the corner from my Upper West Side studio apartment.

"Blonde," I told the colorist, and after the bleaching, the rinsing, the depositing of color, the shampoo, and the set, I emerged as a blonde, my head and shoulders encircled with soft vanilla curls.

I stared at myself in the mirror. I was not June, the *femme fatale*, but a softer, childlike version of her, before June matured into her infamous cruel persona. My stomach dropped, and I wanted to cry, for it was that cruelty that I felt Anaïs Nin was attracted to, that she coveted and desired in June.

"Why can't I be cruel?! I want to be cruel!" I said out loud as I looked at myself in the mirror, trying to imagine the cruelest act I could perform on someone. "I don't know? What is a cruel act? Once, I phoned my ex-lover's new girlfriend. I was going to be cruel. I was going to tell her that he was mine, but I didn't. Instead,

we talked about all of his inadequacies and compared notes on his lack of lovemaking skills. That was cruel to him. No. That was deserved. The girlfriend appreciated it!”

I went back to my apartment and put on my mask of makeup, hoping that with color I could create the illusion of cruelty. I carefully penciled in arched, demonic eyebrows. I coated my lashes with three layers of mascara and I painted my lips blood-red. As I looked in the mirror, I saw June, a sliver of her, but my eyes were deceiving me and my gentle smile unraveled the fabricated cruelty.

I hurried to the pier. I did not want to be late.

I waited there for Anaïs Nin’s arrival. A long, thin cigar resting between my fingers, I watched the smoke spiral up, dissolving into the night air.

Through the white veil of smoke from my diminishing Romeo and Julietta, I suddenly noticed a black figure at the entrance of the pier, dwarfed by the backdrop of the Manhattan skyline. The figure moved closer until I saw before me the delicate frame of the erotic literary giant.

She was frail, dainty, and I immediately felt that I had to protect her.

“Ms. Nin?” I asked.

“Yes,” she responded. Her voice caressed me, as if tiny invisible rose petals, plucked from the flower in her throat, floated through the evening air, kissing my cheeks, lips, and neck.

“Mariell from Halfmoon,” I said nervously, holding out my hand with my palm turned slightly upward.

“*Enchantée*,” she said, slipping her hand into mine, looking at me through her thick, black lashes. Her palm felt soft, and her fingers thin, yet not bony.

“*Enchantée*,” I said.

I was compelled to offer her my arm, and when I did, she slid hers through it. I escorted her to the *Garçonnière*, leading the way across the metal gangplank, bouncing to the rhythm of the waves. She followed me closely, holding onto the cold metal rail.

I led her to the outdoor deck where my friend, as instructed, had set a table with a bottle of champagne, *Veuve Clicquot Rosé*, a bowl of grapes and strawberries, and a platter of various imported French cheeses.

I was spellbound as she unwrapped herself, dancing slowly, seductively, stripping the sheer, black veil entwined around her neck. Her hair was black, almost blue, down to her chin — a blunt cut, parted on the right side, with a small, pewter-colored clip holding it back away from her eyes. Set in the middle of her heart-shaped face, her gray eyes, the eyes of a child, innocent yet worldly, dominated her other features, intensely absorbing and processing the surroundings.

As she proceeded with her unveiling dance, the long, black, sheer material fell on the deck, and she stood in the middle of a black puddle of fabric. Her midnight-blue lace dress contrasted with her pale flesh. The vintage piece hid her figure, which I had read resembled the body of a young boy. It was the dress of a seductress, a woman of glamour, who knew how much to show and when to show it.

I pulled out a chair for her and she sat down, crossing her thin legs and elegantly setting her hands in her lap.

I poured the champagne, careful not to let the bubbles overflow, and handed her a flute. Her hand brushed against mine, electrifying me with overpowering sensuality, unnerving me, making my hand shake and my voice quiver as I spoke.

MARIËLL: Ms. Nin . . .

ANAÏS NIN: Please, call me Anaïs.

She had drawn me into her; she had eliminated the formal and insisted on the intimate.

M: Anaïs, you were the first author I read in the genre of erotica, thus setting a standard. You write so beautifully, and your words flow into each other in a way that no one has ever been able to match.

AN: Thank you.

M: I . . . I . . . I . . .

I could not speak. I froze. I could not even ask my first question.
Starstruck.

To be continued . . .

Interview with Henry Miller

*An abusive conversation with the greatest sans
finesse writer of the twentieth century, turning a
cunt-writer into a smart piece of ass.*



*H*enry Miller frightens me! So when my editor told me that I had to interview him, I was distraught. I had not read much of this incredibly controversial icon's work. *Aller-Retour New York* and *Under the Roofs of Paris* were the only two books I had read, both well-written and both disturbing. Disturbing writing. Mean. Unflattering ways of depicting people. Consistent use of the word *cunt* when referring to women.

Mr. Miller would only meet me at a time and in a place of his choosing.

The time: Friday, 2:23 p.m.

The place: A bench in Battery Park, overlooking the water and facing the Statue of Liberty, prime real estate for a homeless person. Perhaps one of his favorites from his younger days.

I was nervous, not sure I would recognize him among the many people who frequent Battery Park and not knowing which of the many benches along the waterfront he would be sitting on, but because it was a weekday, in the middle of the afternoon, only a few college students reading books, mothers pushing strollers, and senior citizens abusing their attendants enjoyed the park.

I recognized him immediately. He was sitting on a bench with his long legs stretched out before him, his arms crossed over his chest, choking a book underneath them, his head resting on the back of the bench, his hat pulled over the top half of his face to block the sunlight. His bicycle was propped behind the bench, and I guess he didn't care if someone tried to steal it.

I took a deep breath and approached him with as much confidence as I could muster.

"Mr. Miller?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, without removing his hat from its resting place.

"I am Mariëll from Halfmoon," I said.

"My interviewer for today," he said, sitting up and catching his hat in his hand. His Brooklyn accent was strong. I wondered for a moment if the Parisians thought such an accent was cute, very American.

He looked directly into my eyes.

"Your interviewer for the next hour," I said.

I looked into his clear blue eyes and I saw the soul of a person who had seen the world, who deeply felt injustice, and who wanted to escape, as I did.

HENRY MILLER: Why do you women wear pants? (He grumbled.)

MARIËLL: The same reason men do.

HM: Do you have a cock between your legs?

M: Sometimes.

HM: (Laughs.) Would you like a drink? (He pulled a silver flask from the pocket of his jacket.)

M: Sure. (He handed me the flask, and I took a swallow. The liquor was warm on my tongue and burned as it slid down my throat.)

HM: This is the good stuff. In my day, only lesbians wore pants. What do you call them — dykes?

M: If you want to be derogatory.

HM: Yep, in my day, only dykes wore pants.

M: My mother has a saying: “Only times change; people don’t.”

HM: Smart woman. I bet she doesn’t wear pants?

M: (Laughs.) Mr. Miller, you were the first author I read in the genre of erotica, thus setting a standard.

HM: Bullshit! You seem like the type of dame who would read . . . what do they call them? . . . Feminist books!

M: My, my, Mr. Miller, aren’t we critical today? Well, I haven’t read much of your work . . .

HM: (Interrupting.) I’ve read yours.

M: Really? But I haven’t been published yet . . .

HM: I know people.

M: (Trying to change the subject.) As I said, I haven’t read much of your work, but I am truly impressed by your ability to describe people and places.

HM: It’s not the ability, it’s choosing the right people and places. They describe themselves.

M: In *Aller-Retour New York*, the way you depict the prostitutes on Broadway — the images are so vivid, I felt their youth jumping off the page . . .

HM: (Interrupting again.) I like them young, fresh, tight skin, unused, untouched . . . Have you been on Broadway lately?

M: Yes, but I haven’t seen any prostitutes. Our mayor, you know, Giuliani, has been cleaning up New York . . .

HM: (Interrupting again.) Damned politicians. The best thing

about New York are the peep shows and the prostitutes, which is not saying much. They are so mediocre compared to what I can get in Europe. (He took another drink out of his flask and offered me one. I shook my head.)

M: (I pulled a piece of paper out of my bag.) Tell me about European women. You wrote, “There is only one look the American woman can turn on, be she a whore or a duchess. European women have a thousand looks.” Can you tell me about those looks?

HM: We’ll use you as an example.

M: No, no, not me!

HM: Give me a sensual look. Go on! Here, take another swallow of this. (He handed me the flask, and this time I took a huge gulp.) Now, go on, give me that look. Seduce me.

M: Maybe I’m bashful.

HM: Bullshit! Any European woman, especially a Parisian, given the opportunity to seduce a man, would do it. You see, the problem with this goddamned country is that the women don’t use their femininity. It’s all about competing with men. Now, give me a look. Seduce me!

I took a deep breath, and as I exhaled to let my body release the tension that had mounted since the beginning of this assignment, I lowered my eyes and looked at his shoes. One of his shoelaces was untied, and it reminded me that he was only a man — a literary genius, but still a man.

I summoned the spirit of Anaïs Nin, a woman who truly bewitched him, and I asked how she seduced Henry Miller. She did not answer in words, but I felt her enter my body.

I slowly opened my eyes and tilted my head down to my chest. I looked into his piercing blue eyes, hoping to mirror their intensity, and slightly drew up the corners of my mouth into a smile.

I had pinned my hair back with a barrette, and while looking into his eyes, I lifted my hands and reached around my head to unsnap my clip. I shook my hair loose, running my fingers through my thick, red ringlets, all the while staring into his eyes. As my hair

cascaded over my shoulders, I slipped my hand into my blouse and caressed the curve of my shoulder.

M: How was that? (I whispered.)

Henry Miller's pupils dilated, leaving only a small ring of blue around the edges of his irises. He raised his eyebrows, pressed his lips together, and crinkled his mouth, thrusting it to the right side of his face, and nodded his head once.

HM: Only nine hundred ninety-nine and a half to go.

M: Well . . . We've got a few more minutes.

To be continued . . .

*Interview with
Pauline Reage*

*A mysterious conversation with a potent storyteller
who persuaded "M" to confess her story.*



I arrived early at St. Patrick's Cathedral for my interview with Pauline Reage. The exterior of the cathedral is dwarfed by the surrounding high-rise buildings. Once inside, one is dwarfed by the columns, the high stained-glass windows, and the vaulted ceilings.

Leading the eye to the main altar, the main aisle is flanked with a series of fluted columns topped with intricate carved rosettes out of which thrust pointed arches. The light fixtures that dangle from the ceiling on long black cords cast a crepuscular golden light: a light

that falls onto the Gothic architecture, onto the curve of each fold, the vault of each crevice, the dome of each groove, intensifying the dark shadows, exposing edges; a light that drops onto the arc of each cheek, the bow of each chest, the billow of each garment on the stone statues of the saints overlooking passing sinners.

It was this dramatic light that drew me forward, toward the altar. As I walked down the center aisle, listening to my heels echoing on the marble floor in harmony with whispers of scattered parishioners immersed in prayer, their gentle swaying making the wooden pews creak, I inhaled the combined aroma of holy candles, incense, and polished wood. I was reminded of the much smaller, plainer version of St. Patrick's Cathedral I attended in my youth full of the same sounds and smells all Catholic churches seem to cloister.

I did not stop in reverence when I reached the crimson carpeted stairs leading up to the sprawling main altar, but turned left and proceeded to the intimate Lady's Chapel hidden behind it. With the chapel in view, out of the corner of my eye I saw an arched doorway covered with a crimson velvet curtain. It lured me, tempted me, and altered my path. I looked around nervously to see if anyone was watching me. I saw people praying in pews, tourists photographing each other in front of statues, and a security guard in a green blazer walking swiftly toward the front of the Cathedral. None of them noticed my presence.

I slipped behind the curtain and through the doorway and found myself in a small room that I recognized as a confessional. This is not the one where I was to meet Ms. Reage, but a hidden one that I believed was no longer in use. On the right wooden wall opened a small grated window, with a kneeler directly beneath it and a wooden crucifix hanging to its right. I had never been in a confessional this large.

I suddenly heard the sound of people passing close by, and a naughty thrill whirled in my stomach while a decadent thought entered my mind. I dropped my fur coat onto the floor, the coat that my devout Catholic grandmother wore to Mass, and ran my

hands over the length of my body, touching every curve, every hollow. I raised my skirt beyond the band of my thigh-high stockings and over my black panties, and thrust my fingers down to my sex. I leaned against the back stone wall, which felt cold, while resting my right foot on the kneeler. I opened myself, and my fingers felt warmth: the fever of desire; the heat of blood. They glided and circled my erection, stirring in me a climax so intense that I wanted to scream. I could not bellow like I would have in the safety of my lover's lair, and the sound that was captured in my throat was thrust down into my radiating sex.

A moment later, I emerged from behind the crimson curtain ready to find Pauline Reage, who had granted me a special interview, an interview that was to be held inside the secret compartment of one of the confessionals.

St. Patrick's Cathedral has three confessionals, two on the left side of the main aisle and one on the right side. The two on the left are visible from the main aisle and, like well-developed breasts, command attention. The confessional on the right is found between the altar of St. Anthony and the altar of St. John the Evangelist, and is discreetly hidden behind one of the robust stone columns. It was this confessional, hidden in the folds of the cathedral, that Ms. Reage chose for the interview.

The wooden confessional is square, with one center door on which twin arches are carved, a cross thrusting up between them. This is a place where the priest hears and forgives the sins of the confessor. Extending horizontally from both sides at the top of the structure, a long crimson velvet curtain wraps around the rectangular shape. This is the place where the sinner confesses.

I was instructed to wait in the place where the priest sits, with the door closed. I sat in the chair, which had a soft cushion and a hard back, waiting for the arrival of Ms. Reage. A fixture on the back wall over my head cast a very thin veneer of red light, yet not enough to see the hands on my two watches, a fashion statement I stole from a delicious muse.

On my right and left in the center of each wall were openings covered by sliding wooden panels with small brass handles affixed to them. I raised the one on the right to reveal a tiny opening guarded by a beautiful iron grate designed with pointed arches connected by thin vines punctuated by leaves of ivy. Even as I peered through the largest opening in the grate, I could not see the velvet curtain, which I knew wrapped around the outside of the confessional.

I closed the sliding panel, opened my bag, and pulled out a copy of Ms. Reage's book *Story of O*, admiring its stark white cover and simple black title. The book's pages had yellowed with time, and many were bent back, marking a passage or an idea that I really loved. I was entranced by the story and even more so by its mysterious author.

A sudden soft knock on the left panel startled me. I slowly raised the wooden divider separating me from Ms. Pauline Reage.

I was compelled to look into the grate, to examine through the intricate metalwork the face on the other side, to catch the look in her eyes, to gaze at her lips, her cheeks, but instead, I kept staring at the carved wooden door in front of me.

MARIËLL: Madame Reage?

PAULINE REAGE: *Bonjour*.

M: *Bonjour*. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me.

PR: I am thrilled. After so many years of silence, of anonymity, of absence from the limelight. I love it. *Merci*.

The voice had a French accent, but because it was a soft, deep voice I could not tell whether it was the voice of a woman, or a man.

M: (Hesitantly.) But you were interviewed in the *New Yorker* a few years ago.

PR: Hmm? The interview with Dominique Aury? (Laughs.) Was that really me?

Her voice, charming, baiting, almost challenging.

M: Was it? An author with a pen name. A woman veiling herself with a life name.

PR: A life name?

M: A name other than the one you were given at birth. Haven't we all followed a long tradition of women who have adopted other names for the sake of their art. George Sand, who had to choose a man's name or else not get published; Colette, who first published her work under her husband's name. Even today, writers, especially in the genre of erotica, prefer to use pen names as opposed to their birth names. Why do you suppose that is?

PR: As you said, in the past it was necessary to do so in order to get published. Nowadays I believe that some still do this to protect themselves. It takes a great deal of courage to emerge with one's sexuality in hand, displaying it to the world. The future? I feel a strong undertow, a current so powerful, filled with the gushing voices of strong young women writers.

In the past it was men who owned literature, men's voices, men's views, men's sensibilities. Whoever owns literature shapes the society, influences the culture. Women, however, are emerging as the new literary leaders. I believe that in today's society women read more than men do. Women are taking ownership of literature. While the men are traipsing through Silicon Valley, bustling up and down Silicon Alley, women are beginning to take control of literary fields, especially the erotica genre. They are well on their way to emancipating their sexuality.

M: Recently, I went to a reading by Inga Muscio, who wrote the book *Cunt*. She strongly urges women to support other women by only reading women authors, only seeing movies that are directed by women, only listening to female recording artists. The voices of women are getting louder and more thunderous, so maybe we will not be afraid anymore and will not need to hide behind the veil of a name.

PR: If I were to write an erotic book today, I may still use a pen name. Sometimes aliases are chosen to create an air of mystery.

M: Let us discuss your first book. A few years ago, a friend of mine suggested that I read *Story of O*. I immediately went to the

bookstore. Madame Reage, you were the first author I read in the genre of erotica, thus setting a standard. I remember being enraptured by your use of language and by the character O, but I winced at the brutal whippings, the welts, the blood. I've had many fantasies, but I can't say that being whipped was ever among them. Why do you suppose some women like to be flogged?

PR: Before I answer your question, may I ask if you ever had a lover? Not a boyfriend, or girlfriend, husband, or wife, but a lover?

M: Yes, I have.

PR: Did your lover ever ask you to do things that you ordinarily would never have considered?

M: Yes.

PR: May I ask what?

M: One night, my lover and I were out with a group of people at a restaurant called Felix in Soho. I had been blatantly flirting with one of his colleagues, who asked me to join him when he felt the pressing need to retreat to the men's room. My lover and I have always had an open relationship, so I embraced the opportunity to follow this man.

We entered the one-room restroom, and once inside, after the door was locked, the man withdrew his sex from his pants. It was large and engorged, with a bulbous scarlet tip. He tried to kiss me and rub his sex against me, but I recoiled away from him. He proceeded to relieve himself, and we returned to the table.

Unbeknownst to me, my lover had watched our departure from the table and return in a mirror that ran the length of the restaurant and reflected the entrance to the restroom. I thought nothing of this event until we arrived at my lover's uptown apartment hours later.

He tenderly stroked my hair, and covering my cheek with tiny kisses, he whispered in my ear, "What did you do in the restroom?" I answered him, telling him everything that had occurred.

He led me to a chair, and then left for the kitchen. He returned with two large bottles of Evian water.

"I want you to drink this water. You must finish both bottles." I twisted off the tops and clasped my lips around the opening of the first bottle, filling my belly with the cold water until I thought it would burst.

"I cannot drink any more," I said.

"Please, keep drinking," he said in a charming tone of voice.

My belly was bloated with liquid, but I managed to finish the first bottle.

"I have to run to the ladies' room," I said.

"No, not yet," he said.

He left the room again and returned with a large silver bowl.

"Take off your panties," he ordered.

I did as he commanded, feeling self-conscious about my convex stomach.

"Squat over the bowl," he said.

I obeyed.

"Now, show me how you relieve yourself."

The pressure on my loins was unbearable, so I released the fluid into the bowl. As the stream of liquid hit the bowl, it composed a beautiful symphony of musical chimes. My lover passed his forefinger through the cascading water. I felt a few drops splash against my legs, onto the top of my feet and my toes.

It was when his finger grazed against the rounded ball of my sex that I was suspended between the feelings of being a lowly animal and an exalted goddess. I wanted to die of shame, for it is unladylike to relieve yourself in the presence of a man, yet the sensations pulsing through me entwined my feelings of lust and decadence, and made me realize that my lover could have asked anything of me.

PR: (Reciting from what I presumed was memory.) "She did not wish to die, but if torture was the price she had to pay to keep her lover's love, then she only hoped he was pleased that she had endured." What else have you endured for love?

M: I have endured his wife, his girlfriend, his other mistresses. I have endured watching his lips caress and suckle the body of my

female lover as I laid watching them. I have endured his charm, which is, by far, worse than any whip that could lash my behind.

PR: Have you endured being whipped?

M: No, but I have looked for his marks.

PR: His marks?

M: One morning, I came home after a night with my lover to find my arms, hips, buttocks, and thighs covered with bruises. They were a beautiful shade of purple with a yellowish-green hue swirling around the edges.

I found myself admiring them in the mirror and I realized that I had been marked by him. These were the marks of our love. After that, every time we made love, I would rush home to look in the mirror, hoping that he had marked me again.

PR: What if there were no marks?

M: I felt disappointed.

PR: You would enjoy being whipped by your lover.

M: I don't like pain. Whipping sounds so excruciating. I don't ever remember feeling pain where he bruised me.

PR: You will remember being whipped and you will want to endure it for the pleasure of your lover, and it will give you pleasure.

M: Have you ever been whipped?

No answer.

M: Madame Reage? Madame Reage?

After a moment I slowly twisted the doorknob, and the door fell open.

M: Madame Reage?

I cautiously pulled back the crimson velvet curtain. The confessional was empty except for a yellow-jacketed book that was set on the seat of the wooden chair. It was a memorable first edition of her book. The yellow cover with the title, *Histoire d'O*, in black, was immaculate without any trace of age or abuse.

I opened it to the title page, which was embellished with a small medallion-sized engraving by Hans Bellmer, the Surrealist painter.

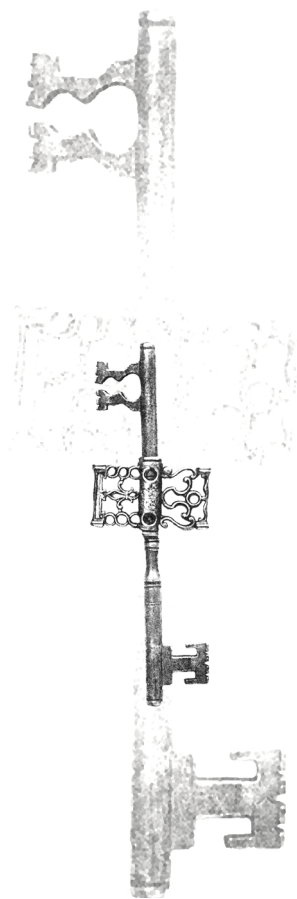
Looping around the engraving, in exquisite penmanship, was a simple note:

*Chère Mariell,
Merci,
P.R.*

To be continued . . .

Interview with the Marquis de Sade

A bizarre, interactive conversation with the most misunderstood, charming deviant who captured the heart of this libertine.



I was to meet the Marquis de Sade inside the Strand Book Store, which proudly sits on the corner of Broadway and 12th Street, its huge red banner swinging in the wind.

The Strand Book Store is a reader's haven, its atmosphere embracing book lovers, its wide, wooden-planked floors creaking under their footsteps, its globe lamps casting sprays of golden light, its thirty-foot ceiling covered with intricate crown moldings darkened by a thin layer of grime, its fluted columns topped with Ionic capitals into which dirt has crept over time, and its endless aisles of

fifteen-foot-high bookshelves, storing books ranging in categories from literature, to history, to film, to poetry, to art, to erotica.

The store is fragrant with the scent of old books, of crusted glue binding their senescent pages, of wasting spines, and with the occasional aroma of aging leather covers. It exudes the smell of libraries, the smell of knowledge.

The main aisle is divided by tables of discounted books and Strand's bestsellers. The sales help is knowledgeable but condescending, which gives the store a true New York flavor. It is the type of bookstore that you never visit looking for something specific, but where you always magically end up finding an unexpected treasure.

It was here in one of the cozy aisles dividing the literature section, under D, that I waited for the Marquis de Sade. I was instructed by him, via my editor, that I was to be holding a copy of his book *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, and since I knew that it was unlikely that I would find a copy on any of the shelves, I brought my own.

I propped myself against the shelf, and with my bag over my shoulder, I thumbed through the book, occasionally looking up in extreme anticipation of meeting the man whose works have both inspired and repulsed me, works that have seduced and debauched me, and that have so often driven me into the arms of my lover and enticed me to surrender to my own fingers.

Our meeting was scheduled for 10:23 p.m. The large clock on the wall read 10:22, and as the finger of the large hand moved to mark 10:23, the end of a long black feather emerged through the shelf I was leaning against and over the top of a book that stood at my eye level. The feather slowly rotated, dancing in the air like a graceful probing tongue, and as it disappeared into the bookshelf, I followed its form through a sliver of light between the top of the books and the bottom of the upper shelf. I saw a pair of delicate, lush lips framed with tiny dots of black hair.

The feather disappeared, replaced by a hand in a shiny black leather glove holding a sealed ivory envelope and slipping it through the opening and setting it on top of the books. I lifted my hand and

took the envelope to find on its back a wax seal in which the letter “S” was impressed. I carefully opened it at the crease, as I did not want to break the seal. The ivory letter it contained was blank with the exception of the brushed gold letterhead: Marquis de Sade.

I quickly looked back through the sliver of light to find that he had gone, soundlessly evaporating into the night.

One month passed before I would hear from him again.

Our next meeting took place at a peep show on 42nd Street near Times Square.

As I entered the dark lobby illuminated by red neon lights, a portly man approached me.

“You Mariell?” he said.

“Yes,” I answered.

“Follow me,” he said.

I followed him to a door that he unlocked with one of the numerous keys dangling from his key chain. We continued down a dark hallway, at the end of which three steps led up to another closed door.

“When you’re ready, get in. The door is not locked,” he said.

“Ready for what?” I asked.

“To dance,” he said in an annoyed voice.

“Dance?”

“Listen, lady, that’s what the faggy-looking guy said. So when you’re ready, go in and dance.”

I heard the man’s keys jingle as he walked back down the hallway.

I turned the doorknob, pulled the door open, and peeked through the slender crack.

A stream of light blinded me, and as my eyes adjusted, I saw a brightly lit dance floor with a series of closed windows on the surrounding walls and heard the sound of thunderous dance music pulsing through the space.

I was terrified, and hoped that all of the dancing I did, naked, in front of the window in my studio apartment was now going to pay off.

I opened the door farther and stepped onto the dance floor. All of the windows were closed, and I wondered when I was supposed to start dancing.

The hot space smelled of sex and the walls and floors were covered with a thin layer of dirt.

It was when a popular hit song began to play that I decided to dance and move to its rhythm. The music seeped into my body, into my head, into my sex, and I started to strip.

First I took off my skirt, a black wrap skirt with two long strings that encircled my waist three times. Once I untied the strings, which fell off my waist, the piece dropped to the floor.

The panel covering the center window was slowly raised.

A startlingly beautiful face, almost feminine in composition, appeared on the other side of the glass. The full mouth that I remembered seeing at Strand was now complemented by the refined features of an elegant aristocrat: a pointed chin, a small, straight nose, and chiseled cheekbones framed with tidy, blond hair, the ends tilting upward in soft, delicate curls. But it was the sparkle in his black, almond-shaped eyes that aroused me, a playful, decadent light that shattered the glass and punctured my heart.

The gleam in his eyes, the curve of his smile, the arch of his eyebrow provoked me, stimulated me, and inflamed me to perform an erotic dance.

As I twisted, turned, and rotated, my clothes, one piece after another, decorated the floor, until my body was clad only in black thigh-high stockings, black platform shoes, and a skin-tight sheath of hot white light.

I touched myself. I allowed my hands to slide over my sweat-covered skin, beginning with my face, down the slope of my neck, to the top of my breasts, to the tips of my nipples that I pinched to erection.

As my hands continued to travel down the length of my body, the window began to close, covering his hair, his eyes, his nose, his mouth, his neck, and finally his chest.

He was gone, replaced by a black rectangle, and I again wondered what I was supposed to do.

After a few moments, when I realized that the window was not going to open again, I gathered my clothes, dressed, and left the room. I walked down the dark hallway to be greeted by the proprietor.

“He left this for you,” he said, handing me another letter sealed with wax showing the imprint of the recognizable letter “S.”

I opened it. On the Marquis’ letterhead, penned in a flowing, swirling script, I read the following message:

*I request the honor of your presence at the Charenton
Gallery a week from tonight at 10:23 p.m.*

*Respectfully,
Le Marquis de Sade*

II

I selected my outfit for the meeting carefully, choosing a Marc Bouwer creation, a black knit dress cut straight across my chest at the top, tapered at my waist, and dropping three inches below my knees. The slit up the left side exposed my thigh and knee-length black leather boots, designed with pointed, elongated toes and spiked heels. I wore a black leather shrug which tightly cupped the curves of my shoulders, fitted across my back and ended below my shoulder blades, clinging to my arms and tapering into gloves.

I dramatically created my face with theater makeup, as I had read that while incarcerated the Marquis had written and performed in many plays. My burgundy hair, tousled and curled, tumbled over my shoulders in a sensational sweep.

The Charenton Gallery, on the 23rd floor of a Broadway building in Soho, is a venue that houses an impressive collection of

alternative exhibits, including sexually explicit torture pieces dating from the seventeenth-century to the present.

It is a private gallery where admission is by invitation only. I had read about it in obscure, underground papers and magazines, but had never received an invitation to visit.

As the elevator ushered me higher and higher to the 23rd floor, my stomach dropped lower and lower. The anticipation. The anxiety. The fear. What was I ready to endure, to do, to get my interview?

The elevator stopped, the doors slid open to the left, and I stepped out to see a startling display. The room was pitch-black, with the exception of one huge ring of light illuminating the center of the space.

Dropping from the darkness into the top portion of the beam of light hung two chains, on the ends of which metal shackles were attached. Secured to the floor, another set of shackles lay in the center of the circle of light.

Mozart's delicate and charming *Concerto for Flute, Harp, and Orchestra in C Major*, coupled with the lingering scent of roses, cast a spell into the air.

"*Bonsoir*, Mademoiselle Mariell."

I had read that already as a young boy the Marquis de Sade had developed a dangerous voice, so enchanting that it pierced into the hearts of women and, coupled with his feminine charm, that voice inspired an undeniable devotion among them.

I felt that I was no different from these eighteenth-century women. I listened to his flavorful French accent and knew, as he cast the words into the air, that I was caught by the sound of his seductive, almost feminine voice.

"*Bonsoir*," I responded.

"Please," he paused, "move into the light."

I walked into the light and around the circumference of the white circle, proceeding into its center, the shackles dangling on each side of my body.

MARIËLL: Monsieur le Marquis de Sade?

MARQUIS DE SADE: *Oui*, but I would prefer if Mademoiselle would please call me Louis.

He still had not stepped into the light, and I strained to locate the provenance of his voice due to the slight echo that resounded through the gallery.

M: Louis, you were the first author I read in the genre of erotica, thus setting a standard.

MdS: *Vilaine menteuse!* You are lying to me. (He said in a taunting, playful voice.)

M: (Pause.) Yes. (I cooed.)

MdS: Charming girl.

M: Louis, what do you think about your name being used to refer to those individuals who derive pleasure from inflicting physical or emotional pain on others?

MdS: Sadism?

M: Yes.

MdS: Flattering. I find the other derivations from my name entirely amusing.

M: What other derivations?

MdS: *Cheri*, you must read more. Mastix — a female sadist. Sapphosadism — a lesbian sadist. And of course, the best, leptosadism — a mild form of sadism. When was I ever mild? *Dites-moi, ma petite salope?*

M: No, mild is a term that I would not use to describe you.

MdS: How would you describe me?

M: Feminist.

MdS: Why?

I reached into my bag and pulled out my notebook in which I wrote questions, points, passages, and references for my interview.

M: In *Juliette* you write: "The embryo is to be considered the woman's exclusive property; as the sole owner of this fruit rather jestingly called precious, she can dispose of it as she likes. She can destroy it in the depths of her womb if it proves a nuisance to her."

In 2001 we call this being pro-choice. Many women and men

have been fighting for abortion rights. It is an important issue among feminists.

MdS: An issue that would not exist if sodomy were to replace coitus.

M: You often write about anal intercourse. Why are you so fascinated with this practice?

MdS: (In a soft voice.) Have you ever enjoyed the pleasures of ass-fucking?

M: Yes.

MdS: So you will agree that it is a question of refined taste. *Non?*

M: Certainly, but I must add that it is a practice I only enjoy within the confine of a great love affair.

MdS: Then you need to take more of those lovers.

M: Who needs a string of lovers when one with an active imagination will do just fine?

MdS: Lovers, even the most devoted, will stray. It is the nature of man.

M: Who said that my lover is a man?

Without warning, I suddenly felt an arm encircling me from behind, diagonally crossing in front my body, falling into the cavern between my breasts, a soft hand resting against my neck, and fingers grasping my jaw and cheek. I felt his warm breath tickling my ear.

MdS: A woman, as well, is capable of ass-fuckery.

I melted in the cradle of his body, which was neither strong nor forceful. He had a gentle touch and one that felt void of violence. He slid his hand across my neck and down my arm to my wrist, which he raised to one of the shackles. I heard the clanking of the metal as he clasped it around my arm. He did the same with my other wrist.

I felt the slight touch of his fingers between my thighs, which involuntarily parted. I heard and felt the shackles being snapped around my ankles.

MdS: Do you like being cunt-sucked?

M: Yes.

MdS: Do you prefer a woman or a man?

M: Women, but few of the ones I have been with have satisfied me, which forces me to use men.

From behind, I felt my dress being slid up my thighs, and with one stroke, my panties were ripped from my body.

It is then that I saw, standing in front of me, the bottom half of a long white dress illuminated by the light. The top half of the person in the white dress was still cloaked in blackness.

MdS: She will cunt-suck you.

She stepped into the light, a petite young girl robed in the veil and dress of a novice nun. Her large, doelike eyes were framed by two unarched, untouched black eyebrows. Her cheeks were full, still holding the plumpness of youth. Her mouth, pink and glossy, parted in trepidation, slightly trembling in anticipation.

He grabbed me from behind, pressing his hips into my behind and his chest into my back, reaching down and opening the lips of my sex.

She knelt before me, resting her tiny hands on the inside of my thighs, burying her mouth in my sex.

At first she breathed on me, her warm breath erecting my sex. After a moment, her tongue slowly flicked my erection, teasing me, exciting me. She quickened her pace, and I felt the bed of her tongue lick and cover my entire sex.

His fingernails dug into the lips of my hairless sex, but the pain was numbed by the intensity of the novice's tongue. I felt the heat of his flaccid organ grow into a powerful erection against my skin, threatening to impale me behind.

My legs began to quiver, my fingers grasped the chains that imprisoned me, and as I threw my head back against his shoulder, my cry of orgasm echoed through the gallery.

I raised my head in a drunken state of ecstasy and realized she was gone. I felt the Marquis disengage himself from my body.

MdS: The girls raised in convent schools are always the most experienced.

In front of me, on the line between darkness and lightness, the tips of his black, leather, square-toed shoes appeared. He slowly moved into the circle, revealing himself as if a smooth black curtain was being raised. But he stopped, leaving his face in the darkness.

He was dressed in a black suit, under which he wore a cobalt silk shirt. His three-button suit coat with a mandarin collar tapered slightly at the waist, the hem grazing against his calves. His narrow trousers adorned with large cuffs brushed against the top of his shoes.

His fingernails were long, pointed, and painted with a sheer coat of white polish that occasionally sparkled when caught in the light.

MdS: I have a gift for you.

M: A gift?

MdS: May I put it on you?

M: Yes.

I was drowned in flattery that this literary figure was bestowing a present on me.

As he moved, the curtain of blackness raised, and his beautiful, exquisite face was finally illuminated. His black eyes were lined with green eyeliner, and his long, blond eyelashes, accented with green mascara, swept upward, curling, almost touching his arched eyebrows.

I have always been skeptical about love at first sight, but for a fleeting moment, I fell in love with the Marquis de Sade.

He gracefully approached me and, kneeling before me, spread the lips of my sex.

I felt something made of metal clamp around each lip, like the clasp of a clip-on earring. I felt my clitoris pulled through a ring which I assumed was connected to the clamps. I shifted slightly and felt a small, hard rock dangling from the ring. Could it be a diamond? Small pricks of pain vibrated through me as he began to rub my clitoris to erection.

He rose, still encircling my erection with the tip of his finger, and brushed my cheek with his lips.

MdS: When you are aroused you will always think of me. Are

you familiar with the book *The Lusts of the Libertines*?

M: (Breathlessly) The 447 lusts of the libertines?

MdS: *Oui*, my darling. Which one of those 447 do you think I shall inflict on you?

M: (Whispering fearfully.) I am unsure.

He stopped rubbing me, kissed me lightly on the mouth and returned into the blackness behind me.

I heard the squeaking sound of scissors opening and I felt my hair being pulled off my shoulders and gathered in his hands at the base of my neck, his fingers lightly touching my sensitive skin.

It was then that I vaguely remembered the passage in *The Lust of the Libertines* about a woman with beautiful hair who is brought to the Marquis. He examines the tresses, cuts them off and then discharges when she begins to cry.

Shouldn't I have been enraged? Shouldn't I have felt violated? Yet, as I heard the whiz of the blades slicing through my curls, as I felt my scalp lighten as my tresses were freed into his hand, I knew that I had been bewitched by him, that I had surrendered to his magic.

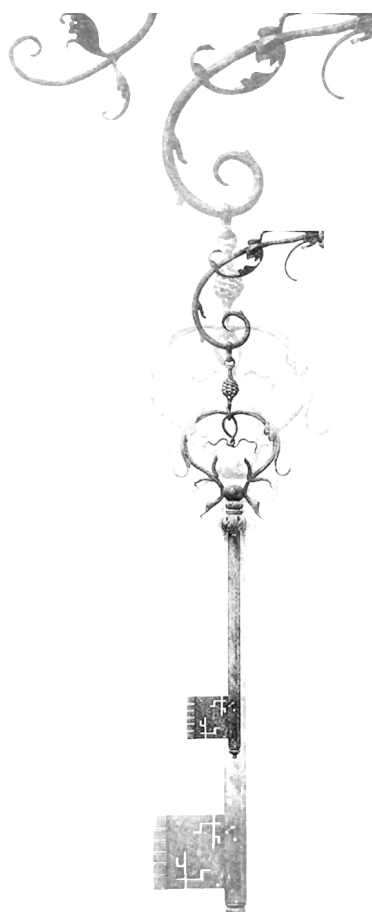
Unlike the victim of the libertine, not one tear trickled down my cheek. Yet this did not stop the Marquis from showering the back of my thigh with his warm, wet desire. It pelted my leg. As I felt his love drip down into the curve of my knee, into the top of my boot, I heard a door creak open, saw a flash of light, and knew he was gone, gone with a handful of my burgundy curls.

M: (I whispered to myself.) Louis? . . . Louis? . . .

To be continued . . .

Interview with Myself

*A narcissistic conversation with a starstruck, smart
piece of ass, confessor, and libertine, who exposes
herself to herself.*



I have one last interview to complete for my publisher, and I dare say that it is the most challenging of all.

I met *Myself* at the Cafe des Artistes, which has been a gathering place for artists, musicians, writers, and actors since the early 1900s.

The cafe is on the ground floor of the Hotel des Artistes on 67th street near Central Park West. Like the Chelsea Hotel on 23rd Street, the Hotel des Artistes did not accommodate people in the traditional sense.

The cafe is hidden behind the Gothic facade of the hotel, but peeking through the glass and mullions of its windows are the leaves, vines, and feathers that decorate the interior.

Seated in the café amidst the lush foliage and brightly colored peacock feathers sprouting between the tables, I gaze at the famous murals.

In 1932, Howard Chandler Christy ignited an incredible scandal when he dipped the fine tip of his brush into the thick paint on his palate and lifted it to the walls of the cafe to create thirty-six images of pert, seductive nymphs in suggestive, naughty poses.

The rumor circulated that the charming Christy, a drunken womanizer who spent his days painting, chose models among his neighbors in the building.

He selected each young girl on the merit of her performance in bed with him, using it as an initiation before they could pose for him.

The lucky girls now immortalized on the walls of the infamous cafe have youthful breasts with pink, budding nipples, rounded bellies, and curved hips.

They live on forever, flirtatious and playful, laughing, their rouged mouths ready to kiss. Their wide eyes smile and invite. Christy hid their sexes with the watery swirl of his brush.

They frolic together in a forest, swinging from vines and lounging in grassy meadows, and I find myself bewitched by these watery nymphs.

As I wait for *Myself* to arrive, I feel ignited by their presence and a flame burns between my legs. They have seduced me, excited me, drawn me into their forbidden female Eden.

It is then that *Myself* appears. On the other side of the table, *Myself* sits, staring back at me, eyes heavily made up, with perfectly arched eyebrows, a thick line of kohl across the top of the upper lids, oxblood eye shadow lingering in the creases, and lashes coated, elongated with black mascara.

But behind the color and artifice, the dilated black pupils expose

her, reveal her, open her. The lips are red, the deep blood-red a 1930s movie star could have used. Like the nymphs on the walls, frolicking in their forest, *Myself* is completely naked.

My palms are wet, my belly aflame with nervousness, and I wonder why I am suddenly afraid of *Myself*.

MARIËLL: I am afraid of you.

MYSELF: Why?

Her voice is soft, seductive, almost fake.

M1: Have you ever had to interview yourself, to see yourself as everyone else sees you?

M2: No. But maybe you can pretend that I am just one of the other writers that you have interviewed so brilliantly, becoming a starstruck, smart piece of ass, confessor, and libertine. (Laughs.)

M1: Good idea. As you know, I have had a series of interviews with the most famous writers in the genre of erotic literature. Given the fact that you are the only living writer amongst them, will you tell me how old you are?

M2: I am timeless.

M1: (I thumb through my pocket dictionary looking for the word “timeless.”) The dictionary definition of “timeless” is “independent of time, eternal, unaffected by time, ageless.” Which one?

M2: Either ageless, or independent of time.

M1: Your writing spans through many time periods. Why?

M2: I am unexplainably drawn to certain time periods in history, perhaps because I lived during those times.

M1: Do you think you were Cleopatra?

M2: No, I was probably the snake.

M1: When did you begin writing erotica?

M2: At age nine.

M1: Nine!?

M2: That is when I discovered myself and some of the amazing experiences I could have with my body.

M1: But when did you start writing about it?

M2: Being a writer, singer, painter, or actor begins when you

start to feel like one, not necessarily when you actually express yourself like one. I started to feel erotic at nine.

M1: Did you have sex at nine years old?

M2: Yes.

M1: Who did you have sex with?

M2: Myself.

M1: It is rumored that you are bisexual. Is this true?

M2: I'm sexual.

M1: Have you had sex with women?

M2: Have you?

M1: *Touché!* Have you physically experienced every sexual encounter that you write about?

M2: That is a very common question, and one often asked by heterosexual men. Sophia Loren once said, "Sex appeal is 50% what you've got and 50% what people think you've got." My writing material is 99% what I've done and 1% what people think I've done.

M1: Well, I don't remember you being intimate with a snake.

M2: My brother's fraternity mascot was a snake. He brought it home during the summer breaks. Where I grew up, summers were very uneventful.

M1: With such uneventful summers, did you read much?

M2: Yes.

M1: Mariell, you were the first author I read in the genre of erotica, thus setting a standard.

M2: Oh, I believe you say that to every writer you interview! One would think you are putting me on the same level as these literary geniuses.

M1: Well, you are associating yourself with the great giants of erotica.

M2: An old cliché — I have stood on the shoulders of giants. Of course, I hope they were all looking up my dress.

M1: Who is your favorite author?

M2: Anaïs Nin. Henry Miller. Pauline Reage. The Marquis de Sade.

M1: I have interviewed all of them.

M2: I am so jealous. How were they?

M1: You will get to speak to them yourself.

M2: I am breathless. When?

M1: My magazine, *Halfmoon*, is throwing a lavish gala, a masquerade ball in your honor, you being the only one masked. They will all be invited.

M2: I am enraptured. It will be a delightful event.

M1: Each of these authors had their own compelling reasons for writing erotica. Anaïs Nin and Henry Miller began writing for money. Pauline Reage wrote her book on a dare from her lover. The Marquis de Sade wrote to express his political, religious, and personal views. What is your reason for writing erotica?

M2: I write erotica for two simple reasons. The first is that it entertains me. The second, and by far the most compelling reason, is that I have an overwhelming need to help other women. Erotica for women is the equivalent of pornography for men. Women need to take control of their bodies and their sexuality. Women are responsible for their own pleasure. That pleasure begins in each woman's mind. Women need to move beyond restrictions, and reading enlightens the mind, frees the spirit.

I believe that even in our oversexed American culture there is still a huge cry for help, a colossal need for women to feel free from the bindings of our society. American sexuality is microwaved, ready in two minutes. We could learn from our European friends, whose sexuality simmers, bakes, marinates over time.

A famous erotic jewelry designer named Paulo Spalla said, "Women need to be freed of all the traumas of religion, of family education, of ignorance. I often wonder why with such a natural case comes that mental block, why the most natural thing in the world leads to neurosis."

I believe that as a rite of passage, as a coming of age, a girl should be given a vibrator. When she begins her moon cycle, she should be encouraged to explore the pleasures her body can bring her. Well,

actually, she should be encouraged to masturbate from birth, but at the time when her body has the ability to conceive, she should feel free to discover, explore, and find the key to the treasure that is her sexuality.

M1: What do you think erotica brings to women?

M2: Women need to take control of their own sexuality. When a woman embraces her own sexual nature, explores her own desires, her own portals of eroticism, she opens a new world, leaving behind the patriarchal expectations, the religious convictions, and the social mores that govern her sexuality. She will be able to look at a *Playboy*, *Penthouse* or *Hustler* without envy, jealousy, or disgust for what she is not, and she will be able to look inside herself and realize that these magazines are tools that she can use to stimulate and arouse herself.

Erotica pries open those sealed doors and allows her to experience sexuality in the privacy of her own mind, in the sanctity of her own bedroom. No one watches, no one knows. Erotica offers a safe haven to explore her nature and thus expand her sexuality.

I read my first erotic passage at the age of fifteen. The book now forgotten, the title blurred in my mind, the characters, strangers entwined in a ghost story, but the message, the detailed passages of forbidden sex, aroused my young mind, drenching my young sex.

The vivid memories of basking on the beach, my mother lying next to me, my brothers and sisters playfully frolicking in the sun while I, clasped in the grip of an erotically charged ghost story, felt my sex flood my bikini, wondering if anyone noticed. But no one suspected the decadent budding of my erotic mind; no one knew that a fever blew through me filling my sails with lust, sending me on an erotic voyage.

Every girl, every woman should embark on this voyage, and when she returns she will want to go again and again to other ports, to other lands, always a little farther into the unknown, discovering her lusts, her desires. Erotica is the vessel in which she sails, a ship

that shelters her from the wicked sea, a deck where she can stand, looking out onto the horizon of arousal.

My work is beyond an expression of myself. It is a ship that I ask women to board for a voyage that I invite women to embrace. And once they have sailed on the sea of erotica, whisking over the lustful waves, skimming across the turbulent sea, it is then that a sexual confidence blooms and they may wander out stronger, healthier, and pleased that they have begun the journey of mastering their own sexuality.

Reading erotica is a precious little secret. Between the covers, hidden behind the binding, is a plush, decadent boudoir that no one knows you have entered. Every woman needs secrets. If not a lover or a naughty little deed, it should be an erotic book, the cover in between her hands, the content in between her ears, the meaning in between her legs.

M1: (I ponder the thoughts *Myself* has just revealed to me, and scribble a few notes on my pad. I look up to see that *Myself* has disappeared, evaporated into the dim light.) Where are you? *Myself*, where have you gone?

I gaze at the laughing young girls on the murals. Suddenly I see *Myself* near the most playful of them. *Myself* is smiling, giggling, staring out into the dining room, and if I know *Myself*, she is gloriously entranced as she watches the patrons' lingering eyes as they muse over the newest addition to the murals.

To be continued . . .



Watch Me

He loves to watch me kiss the girls
He loves to watch my lips lock in their curls
From behind he sees our mouths meet
Arched is my back, spread are her feet

He loves to peek at their pink little lips
He loves to peek as their clear glass drips
In the light of candles my mouth shines
I look at him, our smiles entwine

Tastes of berries, tastes of the sea
While I taste flavors, he tastes me

He loves to gaze at the tips of our hair
He loves to gaze at us wet and bare
Sitting behind, feeling our wake
Our eyes meet, love we make

He loves to spy with a camera of love
He loves to spy while I am above
The click of his eye, a secret index
Watching me kiss her wet sex

Love Letters from my Boudoir

My Dearest MdS_____,

It began in my heart, an amazing tingle that spread through my chest, filled my breasts, and gathered in the tips of my nipples. It did not stop there but dropped into my stomach, down between my hips, where the soul of my sex dwells. It erupted through my body, into my throat, up into my head, and into my eyes, where it sprung out in the form of tears and, finally, I called it by name — true love.

Love,

Juliette de Sade

Dear R_____,

Wet my lips with your mouth, my love.

To feel you inside of me, in my decadent place, is my dream. To keep you tightly squeezed between the flesh of my moons, to always have you inside of me, would be divine. To taste the syrup of another woman while you explore my behind would be unimaginable ecstasy.

And then after we have united, after we have joined, after you have left your warm, white love with me, we would entwine our limbs and stroll together into the unconscious night.

All my love,

M

My Dearest R_____,

I am forever your courtesan, forever your mistress, forever your lover.

It is you who snatched away my black — and — white photograph of love. You, who painted a canvas of love with vivid colors, dynamic textures, and riveting shapes. You, who hung love in my heart.

Thank you, my darling.

Always,

M

My Dear Love,

It was Sunday morning, May 23. A stranger in my bed? Who was this exquisite man — passionate, expressive, tender, uncut — that blew into my heart, inflated it until it exploded, filling the air with the sounds, the scents, the sights of love? I have known him before. I know him now. He is my soul.

Love,

M

About the Author

Mariell began her career acting and performing her own erotic plays at private parties for patrons of the arts in Manhattan. Her underground reputation as a storyteller grew, and she was invited to read and perform at the *Musée de l' Erotisme*, *A La Marquise Gallery*, and at *Le Château* in Paris.

Mariell's body resides in New York City. When her soul longs to travel, it dwells in France, Egypt, Italy, and deep under the waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

Her heart lives in all of her characters. Read with care.



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