



Cast a Moonlit Spell

By

Audrey Godwin

© copyright January 2004, Audrey Godwin
Cover art by Jenny Dixon, © copyright January 2004
New Concepts Publishing
5202 Humphreys Rd.
Lake Park, GA 31636
www.newconceptspublishing.com

A night-shrouded cemetery, fog horns sounding in the distance, sea birds wheeling over choppy waters, and a lone lighthouse sitting high on a ridge with an unearthly light that scans the vaporous sea... these are only a few of the things that make up the little town of Shadow Valley, Maine.

As it sits silent and unobtrusive on the Eastern Shore, the very name seems to invite the unexplained. It fights to stay unnoticed, and yet something dark and mystifying oozes from between the cracks in the asphalt, grows as thick as the weeds along the grassy slopes and drifts lightly on the mist. While the little town sleeps you can hear a high, whipping wind that sings a tune, and crashing waves that pound on jagged rocks making their own eerie music.

On very special nights such as this it becomes steeped in a thick fog, ghostlike as it creeps in from the restless ocean. Making no sound, it swirls mysteriously, crawling along wet sand, creeping over crumbling asphalt, spilling over ragged curbs, and slithering through the leaf-strewn area of Moonlit Park. Hours pass, allowing the town to sleep in hushed silence until suddenly that hush is disturbed by the resonating *bong ... bong ... bong...* of the town clock. In the dark, the giant timepiece crouches like a monolithic monster on the roof of the museum in the town square, the deep, commanding sound informing the town that the witching hour is now upon

them. Within seconds a vaporous light resembling a green fire pulses eerily through the trees and shrubs of the park, only to finally die off, again burying the town beneath a sinister blanket of darkness.

But something has changed.

The green fire leaves a lingering presence to stalk the little town. But what is it? What is the *thing* that haunts the sleeping streets ... gazes in darkened windows ... lingers in doorways ... trudges up hill, and down ... *until at last it finds its victim.*

Not far from the park is a crumbling old building with the words *Shadow Valley Library* carved into the stone over the door. Even in its decrepit condition it preens proudly as it sits upon a rise overlooking the town like a tattered old duchess upon her throne. The front is made up of different shaped stones, but as the years have come and gone, these stones have become shadowed and cracked. The grounds surrounding it have comfortable benches placed beneath old trees with large trunks and wide-spread leafy arms. These leafy arms stretch across the grounds to lend its shade to those who amble along its many paths.

Inside, Gwen Gregory, the town librarian, is sitting at her desk with her nose buried in a romance novel. This is her favorite part of the day ... the part where the shadows begin to lean and pools of darkness gather between the shelves packed with books. It's quiet now, most everyone has

gone home, and she can pull out her latest romance novel and begin to read ... lose herself in her fantasies.

“Make me yours,” she whispered, surrendering herself to her demon lover. As his swollen cock at last thrust into her, she spasmed causing her legs to fall apart, urging him in deeper. She moaned as his plunge became wild and savage, the sensuous push and pull of his hips causing her desire to soar. A wicked scream ripped from her throat as she tumbled into a wondrous world of sinful pleasure. Being controlled by the ever-climbing sensation, she began to rock ... to climb ... to reach for the summit. And then she shattered, becoming sultry-eyed as she melted like the wax of a candle that has been kissed with flame.

The magical words on the page never failed to thrill her, transporting her into the arms of countless handsome men. Tall, blond, dark, muscled, or dimpled she didn't care as long as she could place herself in the shoes of the heroine. Become the woman he loved ... walk in her shoes ... look out of her eyes ... speak her words ... even feel her fear ... her longing ... and cry her tears.

As she sat there, lost in the pictures the graphic words painted in her mind, the late day sun moved in the sky. It felt like warm honey on her skin as it fell through the windows, bathing the dusty book-filled room in fading, golden sunlight.

Gwen had been working in the Shadow Valley Library since the summer after she graduated high school. Many of her class mates had left

to go to college, and Gwen had intended to go as well, but since her parents weren't rich, she took the job in the library to add to her small savings. But when the money didn't seem to grow fast enough, discouragement settled in, and days, months and weeks had slowly stretched into years. And then she realized one day that she was in a rut... that her dream was never going to happen. But there were other ways of getting out, she reasoned with herself. Since college seemed too much to hope for, she began to dream of the day she could just get up and leave the stifling little town ... be part of the excitement of the big city. That would be enough ... it would have to be enough. Yes, she would go. She would definitely go. Someday.

Someday.

There was that word again.

It seemed a fitting epitaph on the tombstone of every dead dream she had ever had. Everything in Gwen's life was always *someday*. *Someday* she would go to college ... *someday* she would leave the stifling little town ... *someday* she would fall in love ... *someday* she would decide what she wanted to do with the rest of her life.

Someday ... someday ... someday!

But sadly, *someday* never came. And now, at the age of twenty-six she was still there and time was slipping away ... her youth was slipping away. She had made one move, though, she had moved out of her parent's house and into a place of her own. It gave her a feeling of independence ... freedom. But it couldn't compare to the dreams she had for her life. Like

the heroines in her novels, she would meet that special man one day, and he would take her away. Away from dusty books and small towns.

Just then the door of the library opened and Mrs. Willoughby came in making apologies for being late.

“Gwen, I’m sorry, honey. I had to keep little Jason after school again.” She chuckled. “I shouldn’t laugh, but he stuck a big wad of bubble gum in poor little Theresa’s hair. Sweet thing’ll probably have to have it all cut off. She has such beautiful hair, too.” She shook her head. “Tsk, ts, it’s such a shame. Jason Wyatt is such a little bully....”

Gwen had stopped listening. The older woman had a habit of mumbling to herself. She’d begin the minute she came in, then ramble on endlessly until she opened the door to go home. Gwen was the only librarian the town had, but the older woman had been hired to keep the library open late on Tuesday and Thursday nights. Gwen couldn’t leave until the woman showed up ... usually at least fifteen minutes late. It didn’t really bother Gwen. She knew that Mrs. Willoughby was a teacher at the town’s elementary school, and sometimes just couldn’t get away. She had many like little Jason Wyatt that drove the older woman to distraction. She was a gentle soul, though, and would laugh about it. For some reason Gwen was almost jealous of the fact that the older woman’s life was so full. She didn’t know if Mrs. Willoughby was aware of it or not, but Gwen knew she was busy building memories, and that someday when there was nothing left she would have those memories to look back on. Not so with Gwen.

Nothing ever happened to her. She would have nothing to look back on except dead dreams.

While gathering her things together, Gwen looked up when Mrs. Willoughby had stopped mumbling and was speaking to her. “Gwen, do you think you could wait a couple of minutes? I need to go downstairs to get some old motion picture magazines someone requested the other night. They’re doing some research on the film industry of the thirties ... writing a book or something. It won’t take a minute.”

“Would you like me to get them for you?” Gwen said, concerned about the older woman being on the stairs.

“No, no, honey. I’ll do it. I know just where they are.”

“Well ... okay,” Gwen mumbled, then watched the woman’s careful movements as she slowly descended each step.

After a few minutes Gwen picked up her things and slowly ambled toward the door while glancing down at her watch. To kill time, she turned and looked at her ghostly reflection in the pane of glass. What she saw was the plain, pale, stereotype town librarian she’d read about in hundreds of novels, and seen in countless films. Unfortunately that picture didn’t add up to a raving beauty. She lifted the novel she’d been reading and looked at the cover. The heroine was slim and curvy, her hair a brilliant red that some fictional wind lifted and blew out behind her. Her eyes shifted to the handsome hero who was leaning over her for a kiss. Dark, he was, and so dangerous looking. She then lifted her eyes to her reflection in the glass and

compared herself to the heroine's beauty. Sadly, her smile wasn't glistening, her hair wasn't a vivid red that flew in the wind, and her eyes weren't a flashing blue ... in fact they were cloudy ... maybe even washed out. She knew she could never catch this hero's eye ... not in a thousand years.

With a helpless sigh, she reached up and tried to smooth the tendrils of hair that had escaped from the bun, then ran her hand along her pale skin and colorless lips. What Gwen didn't see in the glass was a delicate beauty that needed no enhancements.

Just then she heard Mrs. Willoughby's scraping footsteps as she came up the stairs. Not wanting to get caught gazing at her own reflection, she turned around quickly. "Get everything you need?"

"Yes, finally. Hard to find all of them," she said, out of breath. Just then she lifted the paper she had found downstairs. "Have you seen this?"

Gwen looked at the paper the older woman had in her hands. "What is it?"

"Apparently someone brought it in, then left it on one of the tables. Interesting article in there." She nodded toward the park not far away. "You know that statue they have in Moonlit Park? They're removing it."

Gwen's eyes widened as she looked at the woman. "What? Removing ... the statue?"

"Yes. Says so right here." The woman threw the paper down on the table and indicated to the article while Gwen rushed to look at it.

“Being refurbished,” Mrs. Willoughby said while stacking the magazines. “Says they’ll put it back up, but it’ll be several weeks....”

All at once Gwen’s head shot up and she quickly scooted toward the door, not wasting a minute’s time. “See you, Mrs. Willoughby.”

“You know, they need to....” Her voice, sounding hollow in the darkened building, trailed off and she looked around, finding herself talking to no one. “Well, my goodness. She could’ve said goodbye. But that’s the way young people are I suppose. No time to....” And the never ending mumbling started all over again.

* * * *

Gwen had already begun her stroll along the path leading to Moonlit Park when she came to a wall of shrubbery. At the end of the shrubbery was another path she always took to get home. She lived on the other side of the park, and every day instead of going the long way around she would cut through. It was a pleasant enough walk through the trees, benches, fountains ... statues....

...and then she saw him ...

...waiting for her as he did everyday.

She paused for a moment, looking at the manly, rugged form that never failed to take her breath away. His naked body was stunning as he stood tall and magnificent, stretching dramatically upward with a bow and

arrow. He stood on tiptoes, his muscled, well-proportioned legs perfect, his body lean, his buttocks round and inviting. While the falling leaves skittered around his pedestal in the crisp Autumn air, she slowly approached him, then reached down and brushed at the brittle leaves and debris that had gathered on the base so she could read the inscription that she had read a thousand times before....

Eros, god of love

Reigns over erotic, romantic love.

Every time she read the words, they thrilled her. Turning her eyes upward, she looked into his face, then rose and gently lifted her hand and stroked the contours of his arm. It was cold and hard to the touch, so much so that it gave her a chill, but it didn't detract from his carved beauty. While her eyes furtively darted around the park, her hand slowly lowered until she began stroking one thigh. She closed her eyes, slowly making her way toward his rigid cock, longing to feel it's warmth, it's heat... to feel it move... inside her. She looked up then, as if expecting him to speak, but his silence was heavy, his eyes, blank and emotionless. He was looking upward ... away from her as if she didn't even exist. Again her eyes quickly darted around, but the park was vacant due to the late hour, so she hesitantly stepped up on the pedestal and stood in front of him. He was so tall that the top of her head barely came to the edge of his chin. His hair lay in clusters

of curls along the thick nape of his neck, giving him a strong, untamed look. He reminded her of the heroes in her novels. Husky, strong, handsome ... so very handsome!

She reached up and brushed her hand along the rough texture of his cheek, then to his hair and neck, imagining what he might be like if he were mortal. Would his voice be soft, or deep? His eyes blue or brown? And would he look at her as if she were the moon and stars? She could imagine his lips blazing a trail of kisses along her neck, of the soft words he might whisper in her ear, of his strong hands as they wickedly raised her dress, then thrust himself inside her. Her thighs ached as the vivid scene unfurled in her mind. A tingle began in her breasts at the thought of his tongue first suckling her, then lightly teasing her nipples. She blushed to think of it, and felt for all the world like a fallen woman. But she didn't care. These were her thoughts, and they made her feel delicious. He may be nothing more than pale and colorless stone, his body rough to her touch, but he was everything she'd ever dreamed of in a man.

Just then Gwen heard footsteps and quickly jumped off the pedestal and hurriedly continued on toward home. She didn't want to leave him, but knew that when the sun went down she would take another walk. The hour would be late, and the park vacant of prying eyes. That's when she could sit and look at him ... and dream ... dream of being in his arms ... of his kisses ... and so much more!

* * * *

Later, she sat with her dinner on a folding table in front of her TV. She watched the news first, then a string of sitcoms, talk shows, and millions of commercials until finally a movie came on. Her dinner dishes at last cleared away, she watched as the story slowly progressed and the two main characters finally made it to the bedroom. Curling up on the couch, she watched as the two lay passionately in each other's arms. The moans and kisses, and rustling covers in the shadowy room made her close her eyes. In her mind's eye it wasn't the actress in the bed, but her. The husky form above her was a dark silhouette, and his touch was like fire, his kisses hot and scorching. And then he mounted her, his hands following a silken trail down to her thighs, parting them. Her breath came rapidly while he took his cock in hand and pressed it against her throbbing cunt. Her breath caught in her throat as an electric thrill shot through her. She could feel herself open eagerly ... ready and waiting for him to enter her and begin his ravishment of her body. While waiting in breathless exhilaration, the face of her shadowy handler moved into the light, and she gasped, her passion soaring. The face she saw hovering above her wasn't the handsome face of the actor. The face she saw was Eros... his familiar face not stone, but flesh and blood!

She lunged forward when a commercial blasted the perfect scene, and her eyes flew open. Immediately looking down at her watch, she mumbled,

“Oh, God, it’s almost midnight.” She knew she was late, and it was ridiculous, of course, since no one was expecting her, but still she jumped up from her chair and grabbed at her sweater, swinging it around her shoulders. She quickly slammed out of the door, then hurried down the steps. She rushed along as if she were late for a date. As she expected, the dark streets were vacant. Vaporous street lights formed a circle on every corner, and mist blew into her face, leaving a damp, ghostly kiss. Still her feet hurried, scraping the pavement as she walked.

And then she was there.

Rounding the corner, her eyes fell on him. She stood silently for a moment, her breath caught in her throat. Seeing him bathed in the pale moonlight, he was even more beautiful than she remembered. He didn’t move, didn’t know she was there at all ... but she knew. And she had to see him one more time before they took him away. Walking slowly, she found a bench and sat down. Allowing her eyes to roam over his muscular body, she imagined what he might look like with a living, breathing body of flesh and blood instead of the hard, rigid, unmoving stone. Her eyes again honed in on his generous manhood that lay large and stiff between his muscled legs, and emitted an aching sigh. She could feel the familiar fire begin in her center and travel upward when she looked at him. He was large ... so very large! But wouldn’t the god of love have to be? Wouldn’t he have to be perfect in every way?

What would it feel like to have that perfection inside her ... to have him kiss her ... touch her ... feel her ... every part of her? Without thinking, she rose from the bench and again climbed the pedestal. Putting her arms around his neck, she clung there. The rock was hard and rough, but sturdy, and triggered fantasies of his cock pressing against her stomach. She closed her eyes, and the picture blossomed large and vivid in her mind. Was Eros really a god that lived somewhere in the netherworld? Did he feel, breathe, eat ... make love? Would he make love to her if she wished upon his statue?

Eros, if you do exist, come to me. Make love to me!

The wish cast, she opened her eyes and looked at his perfect features. At that precise moment, the town clock began to bong out the midnight hour, almost shaking the earth with its deep, commanding sound. While it rang out, a sudden dizziness came over her. Stepping off the pedestal, she went back to the bench. All at once her head felt heavy and she leaned it back, finding herself swimming in endless blue waters. She floated. It was so cool. So restful.

While she slept, a picture began to form in her mind, and she found herself in a marble pool filled with blue water. Around her were large round columns, and steps leading up out of the pool. There were people around her. A little girl, not more than ten was standing at the edge of the pool, pouring in more blue water. Gwen stared at the child. Something was wrong. Her strange coloring wasn't pink or brown, but as white as plaster

... like stone might be. Gwen looked around at those coming and going around her. They all had the same look. Their skin ... their clothes ... even their hair was pale, colorless. In an instant she recognized her surroundings. She was in a Roman bath ... among a world of moving stone statues. Was this the netherworld? Was this the world of stone that Eros inhabited? Just then she saw him. He seemed to suddenly appear from behind a white, billowing curtain, and came toward her. He was bare-chested, but a tiny swath of material just barely covered his hips, his feet wearing sandals with straps that wound up his legs, stopping just beneath his knees. With him looking at her she realized that she was naked. She lifted her arms to try and hide herself, but his eyes were sharp, penetrating.

And then he knelt at the edge of the pool, his hand outstretched.
“Come with me, my love.”

She didn't hesitate as she might have. Forgetting her nakedness, she reached out and put her hand in his, then began to climb the marble steps that led her to what seemed to be the end of the world. They stood on a precipice, and looked out. Beyond the stone city full of stone people, was a blue beauty that took her breath away. It surrounded them, and was studded with stars, and a large globe moon that seemed to be so close it might well be within her reach. A cool wind blew against a white, goddess-like gown that somehow had materialized on her body.

He turned to her. “What do you think of my world?”

“Your world?” she asked, looking around. “But where are we?”

“The name is Olympus. It is a utopia ... a region beyond the senses. A kind of heaven.”

“It’s so different ... I’ve never seen....” she began, her eyes darting fearfully. And then she caught a look at herself in a mirror and gasped. What she saw were her features wrapped in stone. Pale, colorless, a rough texture, moving, but still a statue. “Oh, God, no!” she cried out, then threw back her head and emitted a high and terrible scream.

While Gwen was dreaming, a strange green light slowly began to emanate from the statue. It pulsed slowly, reached a peak, then gradually faded. Seconds later the statue began to move ever-so-slightly. At first the movements were slow and laborious, but as time passed cracks began to appear, and chunks of plaster began to fall, revealing the handsome man inside. His eyes immediately fell on Gwen, then stepped down off his pedestal and walked toward her.

He knew who she was.

He’d seen her almost every day since he’d been placed on that pedestal. He’d felt her smooth hands, her warm, fragrant breath, and wanted so much to touch her, to take her in his arms. He knelt now, watching her sleep. How badly he wanted to kiss those lips, but knew he could never have her. His destiny was to stay locked up inside the statue, granting those that were worthy, love and prosperity.

And now it was her turn.

Time to give her to another.

But first he must cast his moonlit spell ... and then love would take wings. Rising from his crouch, he reached out and gently lifted her petite body into his arms. He looked around, seeing a grassy cradle in which to lay her, and hurried toward it. Laying her down gently, he lingered for a moment, puzzled. Since he had first seen her, he had felt sensations he'd never felt before. Even being stone, she'd had the power to penetrate his crusty surface and find his heart. Now, looking down at her, he didn't want to give her to another, he wanted to lift her in his arms and fly into the heavens, and into his world. She would at last be his ... but no. It wasn't allowed. The two of them could never meet in passion. He was made of stone, she flesh and blood. Finally, he rose, lifted his arms and with magic words that opened the heavens, a sudden swirling wind, mixed with sparkling stardust flew around her for a moment, then settled ... the moonlit spell cast at last.

When it came time to get back on his pedestal, he turned, then hesitated. He couldn't leave her. Instead, he dared to lay down beside her. "Just for a moment," he whispered as he reached out and stroked her cheek. Then leaning over her, his lips found hers and gently kissed them open.

"I love you," he whispered as his lips traveled to her neck, then down, kissing her cleavage while daring to unbutton the front of her dress.

"Eros!"

Eros stopped suddenly and looked around at the floating voice.

"You cannot! Leave her and come back immediately!"

“But I cannot ... not now!”

“She belongs to another, Eros ... the spell has been cast.”

“I will not! I cannot leave her ... not yet, please!”

“You will violate her? Infringe upon another man’s property?”

“*Property?*” he repeated, seething. “Is that what is to become of her ... to become some man’s *property*? She is a woman. Warm, giving ... not a mere possession, and certainly too good to be some man’s *property*!”

“Eros ... it was only a figure of speech.”

“Possibly, but closer to the truth than you think!”

“It sounds as if you don’t think much of humans.”

“Some are all right....” He turned and looked at her again. “But this one ... she ... she has stolen my heart. She is everything I’ve ever wanted in a woman.”

“You will find someone at Olympus.”

“No,” Eros said sadly. “I will find no one like her,”

The voice was silent for a moment, the floating presence watching Eros caress the woman tenderly. Eros’ presence had been living inside the statue for centuries, and had never reacted this way to a mere mortal before. Thor had tried to pair him up with other auras, but none ever pleased him. And now he was in love ... in love with a mortal ... a statue’s greatest sin. He knew what it meant. It meant that without her he would die inside that statue. Both of them, alone, lonely, longing for each other through the years. No, he couldn’t let it happen to Eros ... to either of them. He had

loved Eros since his presence had come into existence, and he was distressed to see him like this.

“Eros, she is a woman ... a mortal woman. Don’t you see how impossible this is?”

“I know, of course I know! But she is mine until dawn! Take pity, Thor, I will never see her again ... never kiss her, hold her in my arms. I cannot leave her this way. I must have more ... something to remember while Autumn leaves are whirling around my pedestal ... something to keep me warm when the snow falls.”

Thor could almost feel the pain in Eros’s heart. “Yes ... I was in love with a human once. I know the pain it can bring ... the sorrow ... and also the joy.” The voice was silent, then said, “Very well, I will give you until dawn. But I warn you ... as soon as the cock crows, your time is up, and you will turn to stone.”

“Thank you ... I will obey.”

When the presence faded, Eros turned back to Gwen and began to stroke her. “My love ... my wonderful love. The night is ours, and you are so beautiful.”

* * * *

While these beautiful words were being spoken, Gwen was still whirling within her beautiful dream of Eros at Olympus. All at once she felt

herself being pulled away, her feet leaving the precipice, and being thrust up into a whirling wind. When she looked back the city of stone was getting smaller and smaller, and for several seconds ... minutes ... maybe years, she traveled back through the blue haze until a peace overtook her and she slowly opened her eyes.

But it was short lived.

“Oh, bloody hell!” she cried, seeing him again, this time with his strong husky body leaning over her, stroking her. It can’t be, she told herself, and then a stray moonbeam fell across his handsome face. “Oh, God!” she mumbled while her thoughts began to spin crazily. “You can’t be real,” she whispered. “You can’t ... I’m still sleeping.”

“Shhhhh!” he whispered, and then his mouth covered hers hungrily.

She melted as she felt his mouth drawing on her lips, nibbling at her neck. Then his words, husky and seductive, rose from the sensuous mouth she had so long adored.

“I’ve loved you from afar too long, my Gwen. I cannot stay away. Tonight you will be mine.”

“You ... you’re Eros, the god....” Her words faded and her eyes closed as another melting caress came softly moving up her leg. Trying to compose herself, she finally said, “You can’t be ... things like this just don’t....” The words were quickly muffled in a kiss, but still in her mind she kept denying his presence. She knew of only one way to prove this stranger wasn’t Eros. Slowly she turned her head, her eyes slowly raking across the

trees, shrubbery and narrow paths of the park. Her breath caught in her throat when she began seeing what looked like pieces of stone scattered about. Almost afraid to look further, her gaze continued to crawl along the debris until they finally fell on the short pedestal.

There was no one there!

Beside it were crumbles of stone ... as if someone ... *something* had pounded it and freed the prisoner inside. It couldn't be, she thought, then felt his lips again. Even while being transported into a stratosphere of desire, she refused to believe what was before her very eyes.

"I've come to make love to you ... to grant your wish ... to hold you in my arms."

She shook her head. "No--no, I can't bel--"

"No?" he almost shouted. "Do not say it, my love. You must believe. You must believe that tonight, out of all the eons of time, is special."

Eons of time ... *eons of time*? What the hell had he been smoking? The words were strange ... in fact everything he said, the way he spoke ... it frightened her. "Let me go," she cried, twisting in his arms while looking around in the darkness for someone ... anyone. Suddenly she felt him press her against the soft grass, and her struggles died as she looked up at his handsome features. It looked like him, but it couldn't be. It was someone that had seen her lingering near the statue ... someone trying to make her believe this wild tale ... someone wanting to hurt her! She shouldn't have come to the park so late. When there was no one around to help. She

opened her mouth to scream, but again his mouth found hers. She moaned when his tongue slid inside her mouth. He tasted so good. Like a mixture of exotic fragrances she had never known before. The heat of his kiss was causing her to blaze, and she was melting ... melting. And then the words of her novel came to her. It was true. Inside she had begun to feel like ... oh God ... *melted wax touched with flame!*

“I have waited for this night for years ... do not take it from me.”

“But it’s impossible....” she mumbled against his lips.

“No! It is not. You wished for me to make love to you. Standing there on my pedestal, you pressed yourself to me, and told me to take you.”

“But I ... I didn’t....”

“Yes, I know. You didn’t really believe. You were moonstruck ... surrounded with your fantasies of what you think love is. You wanted flesh and blood, so I became flesh and blood. You wanted a moonlit night, so I gave you one. I surrounded you with beautiful blossoms, placed you beside a babbling brook. The setting is perfect, yet you refuse me! Is this not what you wanted? Like everyone else you think love cannot come from a statue ... only a real man.” He kissed her hungrily. “There ... you see? Are not my lips as hot as any living man? My body as strong and virile?” Looking down at her frightened face, he felt a pain cut into his heart. “Gwen, I do not wish to hurt you ... to frighten you. How can I convince you?”

“I just mean it ... it’s like a fairy tale.”

“A fairy tale? For children? Oh, no, my love. Children will not read about this.”

“I only meant....”

“I know what you meant. I am not real, yes? Well, believe what you want. Yes, you will have your real man. The moment this night is over he will be here. But before he comes, you will surrender to me. For I will not stand alone through the years watching you stroll along the path ... watching your children play happily ... watching you with him. Tonight belongs to me. It has been granted, and I will take it!”

A mixture of emotions whirled through Gwen. He was so strong ... dominating. His hands squeezed her, his body heavy. Yes he was frightening, but at the same time thrilling. When she looked into his eyes, the vivid blue strength was softened with love, and the heat from his body melted her, his weight sensuous.

“Do not worry,” he whispered. “You will not remember this night, but I will remember it always ... look back on it when I am standing cold and alone among falling leaves, drifting snow. Year after year, watching while the world changes, and faces grow old.” Then his face softened as he looked at her. “Don’t you see? To you this night means nothing, but to me it will glow like a jewel in the heavens. I will only have to look up at the brightest star to feel the heat of this night and have it warm me.” He leaned over her ... so close ... so very close, whispering in a voice so liquid, his breath scorching her ear. “Let me love you, Gwen, let me love you....”

And then she felt her dress creeping up her thighs.

She stiffened, but all at once his tantalizing lips, his magic words, his hands that sizzled when they touched her, stripped away her reserve, turning her blood to flames. He was sweetly draining her of all her doubts and fears, and she knew this night would belong to both of them. And then as miraculous as it seemed, she felt the last of her strait-laced inhibitions fly away. The moment, the mere second these stifling feelings left, a moan of ecstasy slipped through her lips and she lifted her arms to encircle his neck.

“You *will* be mine ... this night!” he whispered, his breath hot against her ear.

All at once she felt him pulling at the bun at the back of her head. Before she knew what was happening, she felt the weight of her hair fall free.

Burying his face in it, he said, “Such glorious hair. It is a sin to keep it squeezed into a tiny little circle.”

“But it....” she began, but before she could get it out, his lips brushed hers, then spoke against them.

“No, little one,” he said, his hot breath scorching her cheek. “Do not answer. I know you do not realize the extent of your beauty, but believe me when I tell you, your beauty is unlike any I have ever known. You are a goddess of desire. You pull from me something I never knew was there. You make me want to be human. And that is wrong, little one. To make a cold, unfeeling statue wish he were human is wrong.” His hands caressed

her, and his eyes delved deeply into hers. “You make me want to laugh, cry, feel sadness, even anger.”

His magic words warmed her, made her feel as if she were being buffeted by the winds of a savage harmony, this harmony weaving itself in between and around their bodies. Before she knew what was happening, he was stripping her of her dress and her breasts were being suckled by this man of stone. How many times had she caressed his hard, stiff lips? But now they were soft, hot, searching.

She closed her eyes. Oh, God, what his lips did to her. His body, no longer hard like stone, was now firm, his skin smooth, his heavy frame exciting to her. And then she gasped when he mounted her, his knee parting her thighs. She moaned as blood pounded in her brain, leapt from her heart, and made her tremble all over. As she lay beneath him naked, and felt his hand creep down her body until he cupped it between her legs, she shivered. Her prim and proper upbringing that resisted his heated touch was shattered when she felt his finger plunge so deep inside her ... moving fiercely ... while his thumb did something so sinful, yet so wonderful to her quivering little bud that had grown hard and sensitive. Moans and cries were pulled from her throat as she rocked furiously against his hand.

“Your passion ignites my very being,” he whispered in her ear as his finger continued to tantalize her sensitive, swollen bud, causing her to cry out his name.

“Eros! Oh, God, I’ve never felt anything like this!”

“Your fierce cries of joy warm me,” he whispered, his breath wet and hot in her ear. “But you have felt nothing yet. I am the god of love and will take you to heights you have never known.”

All at once she felt as if a sleeping tiger had been roused within her and feelings that had long been buried now came brimming to the surface. Her hands seemed to move of their own volition when they reached down and took his engorged cock in her grasping hand and caressed it. It began to swell in her hands, growing to such a length that the tip burst free and pressed against her stomach. She gasped at its size.

“My love is impatient, no?”

“Eros ... please ... I can’t wait!”

“Yes, it is time. You are dripping with the sweet elixir of love.”

With the fingers he had used to fondle her, he opened her up and tantalized her as he pressed his swollen cock against her throbbing bud. Shocks of electricity jerked her over and over again causing her to sizzle at his every touch. Finally, pushing himself in, he felt her velvety softness surround him, and moaned. While burying his face in the soft crook of her neck, he began a slow movement, his continued moan becoming raspy and guttural.

Oh, God, she was soft, hot to his touch, and her juices were all over him. He’d wanted to go slow, but now that he was inside her, his hips involuntarily began to rock against her. His thrust became frenzied, his breathing short, but he couldn’t stop. She was clinging to him, her legs clenching him ... climbing him! The erotic thrill of it caused him to spread

her legs further, push in still further ... to the hilt ... to the root of his swollen cock. He was fucking her hard. Would she hold him? Would her small cunt accommodate him, or would he wantonly rip her apart with his lust? He could feel his distended balls slapping against her over and over ... again and again. Sweat covered them both. The night was cool, but their love was hot, and steamy. All at once he felt himself nearing the summit, then suddenly felt her shudder beneath him ... over and over again as she screamed out her pleasure. And then it hit him like a thunderbolt. He soared into ecstasy, spinning into heaven while he spewed into her lustily.

* * * *

While the two loved on the ground of the quaint little park, Thor knew the little city beyond the sense of mortal man would be in an uproar. Boldly, uncaring of what it cost him, Eros had put his own life in danger... his very existence. He had taken a mortal, lay her on the ground and took her. It had never happened before... at least not with love as the motive. A dalliance now and then, perhaps, but never... *never* love! Giving one's heart to a mortal was unheard of... a crime in the eyes of the gods. It was treason! Easily the most horrendous thing Eros could have done ... fall in love with a mortal!

Leaving them, Thor's presence soared upward through the velvety blue heavens until he was there, the cold stone city coming into view.

When his presence entered the atmosphere, he materialized into human form, his skin and clothes pale like that of a statue, as was everyone else's. Without pausing, he turned, making a daring stride into the gates of the stone city. Walking with his head up, he came to the palace of the gods. The round building stood tall and columned, and he entered with his heart fluttering. Along the cold stone corridors, he met and nodded to the other statue creatures until he found the royal room. Many could read determination on his face, and knew something was up. Since the forum tolerated an audience, his quick stride was followed by a curious entourage.

He stormed in, once again beholding the white floors, walls and circle of columns that stood around the room. Without hesitating, he strode up the center and stood before the gods. As always they occupied the dais, each of their bodies languishing on a chaise, partaking of fruit and wine.

"I've come to ask for Eros' freedom," Thor's voice boomed.

"This is a bold move," said Horus, god of the sun and the moon.

"He's in love!"

"Well, it's about time!" Horus, said as he quickly replaced a bunch of grapes in a silver bowl, then clapped for a servant. "We will give his watch to another presence. Who is this fortunate goddess?" He took a wet towel from the servant, then turned and leaned toward the others as if he were sharing a secret. "It must surely be a goddess. A presence with Eros' unusual good looks wouldn't choose anything less."

Thor hesitated. "Well ... it ... it's not exactly ... it's more like...."

Horus' smile vanished, impatience taking its place. "More like what, Thor? Spit it out!"

"It's not with a goddess of the netherworld."

"So. And underling then? She must surely be special to have caught Eros' eye. Tell us who this delicate flower is. I'm sure we can make allowances."

"She is a mortal."

Morrigan, goddess of priestesses and witches lunged forward at his dreadful words.

There was a deadly silence, and then thinking it was a joke, the laughter began ... ringing through the high ceiling while Thor stood there helpless.

Morrigan didn't share their levity. Instead, her fingers clenched her stomach, struggling to bear the pain that made a deadly stab into her already broken heart.

Thor stood looking at them as they continued laughing at him. Laughing!

"Cease this levity!" Thor finally shouted.

The laughter of the gods ceased as quickly as it started, and they looked down at the bold presence as if he'd lost his mind. "You dare to give orders to the gods?"

"I'm sorry, but to Eros this is serious. The love he feels is deep. I'm afraid he will die if kept from this woman."

“Die is a very strong word, Thor. You worry too much. He will forget her in time.”

“You don’t understand,” Thor pleaded. “And I don’t know how to tell you that he has already....” His words trailed off as he looked up at the gods feeling helpless, tongue-tied. How could he tell them? He loved Eros, how could he be the one to pronounce a death sentence upon him?

Horus lifted himself from the pillow of the chaise, concern carved on his pale face. “Are you saying what I think you’re saying? Surely you’re mistaken. This love you speak of is forbidden, you know that.”

“Yes, I know, but....”

“It’s nonsense, no statue can mate with a mortal.”

“He did ... is ... even as we speak.”

There was a gasp. “You allowed this?” Horus said, his voice dead, his impressive stature slowly rising from his chaise and walking toward Thor. “When ... how?”

“Her time came,” Thor said. “He became mortal in order to cast the spell of love ... and it happened.”

“Then it is not a matter of mere love—” Horus rasped. “—it is treason! He is under your dominion, why did you let this happen?”

“I don’t know ... I ... I just couldn’t say no. When I saw his love unbound, I couldn’t refuse.”

“But treason, Thor! Physical love between mortals and statues? It means death!”

“I beg you,” Thor pleaded. “This is Eros we’re talking about. Surely each of you remember when his presence came into existence.”

Morrigan stood, the revelation that he had slept with the mortal... was with her even now, caused her anger to rage. “I do not remember, and I say this Eros should be excommunicated. His presence exiled to a rock in the hot deserts of Egypt!”

An audible gasp came from each of the audience of onlookers.

“Morrigan, haven’t you ever been in love?”

The goddess narrowed her gaze on Thor. “You will not call me by name, you snake!”

“Yes, your majesty,” Thor replied with his head bent low.

“Morrigan,” Horus said. “Thor meant no disrespect. He is our friend. He has served us many years with nothing but undying loyalty. You speak too harshly to him.”

Morrigan flashed Horus a shock-ridden look. “Horus, you know that when you give a slave too much freedom, he becomes aggressive. Is that not written in the scrolls? God loved Lucifer, he became his favorite angel, called him beautiful. As a result Lucifer became full of pride and turned on God, taking a third of the angels of heaven with him before he was cast into the bowels of the earth.”

“You are comparing that to this?” Horus shook his head and chuckled. “My stars Morrigan, you are speaking of the ultimate heaven. Besides, you know God has no slaves.”

“I’m simply saying....”

“I know what you’re saying, Morrigan,” Horus said, his voice deep and somber, “but I think you’re hiding something.” Horus paced for a few moments, his hand rubbing his chin, then he looked up at her, his eyes narrowing. “Tell me. What is Eros to you? Why do you suddenly want to see him trapped in a moldering sphinx in the hot deserts of Egypt? This is a fate worse even than death.”

Suddenly Sinn, the god of destiny, rose and raised his hand toward her. “Horus, let me open your eyes to what’s really bothering Morrigan. The beautiful goddess is in love. And with the mighty Eros. It is eating at her that he loves another.”

“You lie, Sinn,” she spat. “I hate the marbled ground he walks on.”

“Yes, I’m sure you do ... at least that’s what you tell yourself.” Sinn quickly turned to the others. “You will rue the day you listen to her. Love between a statue and mortal should be regarded as a miracle, not a crime. Don’t you see what has happened here? Eros, in his natural state has fallen in love. Forbidden, yes, but it is love nonetheless.” He looked in each of their eyes, beseeching those that listened. “Do not take it from him. Haven’t any of you loved before? And more times than we wish to count, it was with mortals. Don’t deny it. I myself have dabbled with the forbidden. But with me it was a mere dalliance ... nothing serious as it is with Eros.” He turned and beheld Morrigan once more, glaring at her as he spoke. “This witch awaits his return, hoping he will give her any indication that he

cares. If he so much as looked her way, she would go running to him. She is as transparent as the wind, and now that she knows he loves another she has only the killing of his spirit in mind. If you take this love away and exile him to the deserts of Egypt, it will not be for his indiscretion, it will be to satisfy her evil lusts!”

“Yes,” Horus mumbled then looked at the others. “As a matter of fact he knew it would be death to admit to loving a mortal, yet he told....” His words faded as he looked around for Thor, and saw him resting against a column watching the four of them argue. “When he told you, Thor. Did he not realize that you would tell us?”

“Of course he knew.” Thor replied. “Eros is not stupid. That’s how I knew his love was so deep. He had only moments with her, yet he risked death. Any one of us here knows that death is preferable to not being with the one you love.” He looked around. “Do we not?”

Morrigan sat on her chaise looking away, pretending to be uninterested, but listening to every word. “Words ... just words!”

“Your maj--”

Horus lifted his hand to stop Thor’s words, then turned to Morrigan. “It is more truth than you wish to admit. I can see it in your face, Morrigan. You are a dead creature ... as dead as these stones here.”

Morrigan quickly turned to answer, a bitter reply on the tip of her tongue, but was interrupted by a small voice.

“You have not asked me.”

“Ahhh, Selene,” Horus said, taking in her beauty. He knew that Pan, the woodland god had fallen in love with Selene ... another forbidden love. Selene was a fixture in the mighty palace of the gods. For a woodland god to want her was sheer lunacy. Selene was goddess of the dance and her graceful movements had mesmerized many men in many worlds. “What tidbit of wisdom have you to give us?”

“Only that Eros has a right to pick and choose whom he wishes to love.”

Horus looked at her closely, and like Morrigan he knew her words had come out of her own embittered soul. Yes, she’d loved Pan too, but was forbidden to go to him. She was destined, poor soul, to live in the cold palace for the rest of her existence. As with the other gods, love would never touch her. In the mortal world she was considered a cold statue, but to those who knew, she was an impassioned flower, with the soul, mind and heart of a dancer. To surround one such as herself in cold marble was a sin. But it wasn’t as bad as it seemed. The gods ‘dallied’ with those outside their realm as Sinn had said, but not often. That is how Selene became enamored of Pan, and he of her. The leafy floor where Pan lived had many times bore the impressions of their writhing bodies.

“I would suggest you look back through the records,” Selene said. “You will see that Eros has been bound for centuries. Surely he has served his time in this cold loveless place. Therefore, I agree with Sinn. Love,

whether it is with a mortal or among our own kind, is still love. It is not a crime, but a miracle, and cause for celebration ... shouts of joy.”

Books were brought into the great white hall, and they searched through them while the soft wind fluttered the white hangings, and the blue sky beyond the walls became deep, beautifying the palace with glittering stars.

“It is here,” Horus finally said as he lifted himself from the tomes. Then he looked over at Morrigan. “After having listened to the others, do you change your vote? As you are plainly aware, you are the only one that is against Eros being unshackled from the cold statue he has inhabited year after year.”

“I am not against it,” Morrigan said haughtily.

“Oh, yes, I remember now. You wish to exile him to the barren deserts of Egypt where he will languish beneath the legendary hot suns. Are you not afraid he will fall in love with some dark Egyptian woman?”

“You mock me!” she cried, then turned her back to him. “His sentence is only fitting.”

“Yes, to you, I suppose. But those of us who know Eros wish only happiness for him. For our sakes, if not for Eros’s, I implore you to change your mind.”

She turned, looking at Horus, and then at the others. Each pair of eyes were trained on her making her feel small and cruel. “Don’t you see?” she said, waving her arms. “You’re forcing him to become an earth-bound

clod that doesn't have more than perhaps sixty years left to live if he's not hit by one of those contraptions called ... ugh ... buses. Here he could live for an eternity."

"But you do not wish him here—" Horus said, purposely ridiculing her, "—burning Egypt is to be his home ... don't you remember?"

"Huumpf," she said, tossing her head, then turned to pace, her chin raised haughtily.

"Give him his reward," Sinn urged her.

"No!" she spat. "I will not be the one guilty of turning him to some frail human thing that is 90% water!"

"No?" Horus interjected, his sarcasm continuing. "It's better than having rocks in your head." He smiled a weak smile. "No pun intended."

Morrigan hissed, and whirled toward Horus, her clawed hand lifted as if to cast a spell. "Why you...."

"Uh, uh, uh, Morrigan," Horus said, "you do not want to get into a duel of powers with me. I could turn you into a porcelain doll and place you in Eros' bedroom, dooming you to watch him making love to this woman for the rest of your eternal life."

His words painted a picture in her mind that had her choking, and her hand fluttered down, powerless. Just then she heard Sinn snickering and cast him a look that sent spurts of fire to singe his tunic.

"Ohhh, ohhh, ohhh," Sinn said, jumping around while slapping at the flames. Over the smoke he said, "That was uncalled for you...."

“Don’t,” she said, lifting her clawed hand toward him. “Maybe Horus is too much for me, but one more word and I will smear the floor of hell with your blood, Sinn.”

Sinn’s eyes opened wide and a gulp from his throat sounded noisily. A sheepish look covered his pale face, and he quickly clamped his mouth shut, his fingers tapping his lips lightly.

“Morrigan,” Selene said, interrupting the two, “think of the way you felt ... still feel about him. If you truly love him you will want him to be happy. Free yourself from this bitterness that eats you up inside.” Selene’s eyes became cloudy with memories. “Look at me, I am no longer bitter. I can never have Pan, but that doesn’t mean I can never be happy. Perhaps one day I will love again.” She beseeched Morrigan with her eyes. “Oh, Morrigan, give yourself that chance. Otherwise this bitterness will turn your heart to stone. Don’t you see that Horus is right? If you continue this way, this awful anger will kill you and you will be as unfeeling as these walls. When that happens you will become an ugly old woman, denouncing love when it knocks on your door.”

Morrigan was silent for a few heartbeats. She stood perfectly still, straight and tall, clothed in her bitterness. And while the forum stood in heavy silence, waiting for her answer, she broke and seemed to wilt before them, her answer coming out in a raspy voice. “Apparently it is happening already,” Morrigan sobbed, tears edging from beneath her thick lashes.

“Yes,” she whispered. “You are right. I do love him ... enough to free him. Eros will be with the one he loves ... even if it is not me.”

A thunderous applause burst from those that had gathered to watch the debate.

Morrigan looked up in surprise. All at once her heart opened up and the sun came shining in once more. A big smile stretched along her lips, and the sullen face that had become strained and carved with hostility, now softened with the beauty she had once known before her heart had been broken.

Horus, a look of triumph on his face, turned and strode to the center of the dais. “Yes!” he called out above the voices of the thunderous crowd. “Eros will have his reward. From this moment on he will live as a mortal man. I declare that he is free!”

* * * *

The next morning, while the birds chirped and sang, and a soft breeze ruffled her dress, Gwen woke to find herself lying in a cradle of soft grass beneath a tree. How had she gotten here? She remembered coming to the park, but everything after that seemed so cloudy in her mind. She sat up quickly, finding that her hair had come out of its bun. She looked around, but her chignon and pins were hopelessly lost in the grass and brush. The mark of her humiliation rose to her cheeks as she realized the top of her

dress was unbuttoned and raised over her knees. She quickly got to her feet, smoothing her dress, and trying to tame her hair that flew around her head as the wind blew it. She looked around, thankful that the park was empty.

Her thoughts whirled through her head as she hurried toward the path that would take her home. All at once she looked up and saw him standing on his pedestal straight and tall ... as handsome as ever. Feeling a little embarrassed, she ducked her head and turned quickly, running into someone coming up the path.

“Oh, excuse me,” she said, and tried to duck by.

“No, it’s all right. Actually I was....” His words suddenly halted when he recognized the beautiful creature he had come to love. The wind blew her white-blond hair, lifting its curls and waves with its cool fingers while it molded her thin, light dress to her curves. He remembered the night before and how she had felt beneath him. Now, standing there, with the sun at her back, its orange rays blazing through her hair, she looked like a goddess, or a beautiful wanton ... free and wild.

“You ... you’re....” She looked at the man, then at Eros. “You’re....” She felt stupid. She couldn’t speak, and finally lifted her hand and pointed at the statue.

“Oh ... yes.” he said, smiling. “You see the resemblance. My name is Michael Eros, I modeled for the statue there. I’m a male model ... been living in New York. I came back because the statue is going to be refurbished.”

“You mean without anything....” She indicated to the naked form.

“Yes,” he said, then with a little devilment in his eyes, he added, “would you like to watch?”

She gulped, her eyes widening. “Watch?”

Merriment still dancing in his eyes, he watched her closely as he said, “Sure, you might enjoy it.”

Enjoy it? She had enjoyed looking at him for years now. And all at once she was faced with the walking, talking, breathing, likeness of the statue. What did he say his name was? Michael ... who? Michael ... *Eros*? Oh, my God! The name ... it is him! It's the statue come to life!

“Say,” he said, picking up his suitcase. “I just got into town. Could you recommend a good hotel?”

“Uh ... yes ... uh....” she tried to say, pointing toward the center of town. She couldn't talk to him! He was standing before him in all his handsome glory, and she couldn't talk to him!

“It's okay,” he said, a soft chuckle in his voice. “Come with me and show me. By the way, I'm famished. Haven't had any breakfast yet this morning, have you? I tell you what. First a good café, then a hotel, what do you say?”

She quickly looked down, a red flush rising in her face. His mention of a hotel after the café sounded as if they would both be there. Now, slowly lifting her eyes, they widened in surprise. She had wondered for so long, and now she knew ... his eyes were an electric blue, his skin swarthy,

and his voice deep and warm. His sultry beauty made her yearn for a night on black satin. Now looking into the eyes that had stunned her she tried to force her shyness away and simply nodded and smiled.

Thor watched the two as they walked along the path, his presence arrowing about, peeking from behind trees, fluttering up over hedges and popping up out of flower beds. He soared around their bodies, in and out, feeling the love they shared. He languished in it as long as he could, his own bittersweet memories bringing tears to his invisible eyes. Finally, he melted into the statue.

Their hands just naturally joined as the two continued on down the path toward the street, Gwen feeling as giddy as a child. Happiness she hadn't felt for a long time filled her inside. Was she dreaming? Had she taken leave of her senses? She could hardly believe that she was here with him, her heart near bursting with joy as she felt his strong, warm hand holding hers. And then, just as they were leaving the park, she slowed, turned her head slightly to take one last lingering look at the statue. "Goodbye," she whispered, "and thanks." Lifting her fingers to her lips, she blew him a kiss. And then just as she was about to look away she saw a slight movement and her eyes snapped back, doing a doubletake.

But when her eyes fastened on him there was nothing ... only the statue standing there, cold, unfeeling, and silent. But she thought ... no she was sure that she had seen him ... *wink!*

