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The Retreat



Jojo
Brown

Cups

THE RETREAT

TAROT: 9 OF CUPS

BY

JOJO BROWN

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NINE OF CUPS

An innkeeper sits before nine cups set out for guests. The Nine of cups is otherwise known as 'the wish card.' Whatever you have appetite for, you will find. All your wishes will come true.

Negative:

Be careful what you wish for!

For everyone who ever had a wish...

CHAPTER ONE

Alexandria Hamilton's little grey cubicle in the wall was stuffed full of envelopes. Well, that's what she got for not checking her mail for the week she'd spent moping around, complaining to no one but herself.

So what if she was thirty-two and still had no prospects in sight for a stable future? So what if the man, she thought she would have a chance with, had suddenly walked out on her? Who gave a damn if her tits hung lower than they had in her early twenties, as did her ass and slightly round stomach? Who cared if she hated her mind-numbingly boring job at the only accountant's office in town? What did it matter if her hated apartment had leaky taps and rattling pipes that the superintendent refused to acknowledge, let alone fix? What difference did it make in the grand scheme of things, if she just wanted to curl up in a ball and hide from all of the broken dreams and shattered hopes?

Life still carried on, the world did not come to a

shuddering halt, just because Lexie was having a bad few days — or should that be years?

With the armload of envelopes clasped in both hands, she shuffled towards the elevator. The overly large purple slippers had been a gift, a birthday gift from — Stuart. God it hurt just to think about his name, or the way his wonderful blue eyes, the colour of a crisp winter sky, had shone, as she opened the package containing the ridiculously fluffy slippers.

Her house-coated shoulder slid slightly along the smooth surface of the wall beside the elevator button. Her thumb slammed into the scarred circle, at least five times, before she remembered that she'd had to take the stairs on her way down for the mail. "Damn thing is always broken. Just like everything else in this hell-hole."

The purple fluffiness did nothing to protect her toes, as she kicked the super's door on her way to the stairwell. "Fix something around here, asshole."

Her weird shuffle-limp had almost settled down to a plain old shuffle again by the time she reached the fourth floor. The juggling act to get the key into her door's deadbolt with both hands full of mail would have been comical, if Lexie had been in the mood for a comedy. As the door swung open, the stack in her hand seemed to explode, as the envelopes and flyers tumbled.

"Damn it."

The bright yellow card-sized envelope stuck in the purple fluffiness as she tried futilely to kick the mess through the door. "Oh great. What's this? An invitation to some unnaturally happy couple's wedding? Or a fancy new way to send bills so that they actually get noticed?"

Snatching it out of its perch just above her big toe, she tossed the brilliantly yellow square onto the little table near the door. The rest simply got kicked under the same table.

Cup of tea in hand, she peeled off the housecoat and plopped into her worn spot on the couch. Her nest of used tissues, crumpled magazines and dirty dishes closed in around her as she slouched into position. A pillar of tissue balls fell to the brown carpet, making room on the end table for the steaming cuppa.

She pulled the neckband of her too-big, grey t-shirt over her nose and inhaled deeply. *It still smells like him. I am never going to wash it. I might never even take it off. It's a good thing I was wearing it when he packed or I'd have nothing of his left.*

The voice of her mother lambasted the side of her head, bypassing the need to use her ears. Mother more than likely did cartwheels on the other side of the grave, when she figured out she didn't have to wait for her daughter to actually listen, anymore. *Stop feeling so sorry for yourself. Get*

up, get washed, get dressed and get on with the business of life. You're thirty-two years old; it's about time you grew up a bit.

No.

Well, at least go see what's in the envelope.

No.

What's it gonna do, break your leg to walk over there and get it? You always were a chicken.

Her mother always did have a real finesse when it came to dealing with other people's feelings. More to stop the screeching voice, than anything else, Lexie snatched the envelope up and tore it open.

Bursting out, as if with a will of its own, the certificate of the same 'too happy' yellow landed in her lap.

This certificate entitles the bearer to one week of fantasy fulfillment. Enter The Hermits Retreat and let all your dreams come true.

Hermits Retreat? Yeah, she'd heard of it. It was the newest, most exclusive spa in town. A place where only the painfully wealthy could ever dream of going. Rumours had flown along the town's grapevine of baths in mud from the great palaces of the sunken city of Atlantis; scar reduction with dust gathered in the deepest crevices of the moon and too many other outrageous things for her brain to focus on, in its

addled state.

"Fantasy fulfillment, now wouldn't that be something. I wonder if they can actually give me someone else's life?"

* * * *

Just a little more than an hour later Rufus, the superintendent of the building, stood in his doorway and watched as she hurried, happily, out the door at the bottom of the stairwell, with her blue duffel bag in hand. He noticed that the bag matched her form-fitting jeans and t-shirt, perfectly. Her freshly washed and dried dark brown hair bounced on the back of her head, in a simple ponytail. Her brown eyes glistened with flecks of gold and red. They shone out from her freshly scrubbed, glowing face, clean of makeup and tear-tracks. The soft soles of her running shoes barely made a sound as she practically pranced through the foyer and out the front door. Just before the door closed behind her, she turned back to look at him. "See ya later, Doofus."

Rufus slammed his door as he heard the nickname he hated so much, but it was not thick enough to block out the sound of her girlish laughter. "She musta won the lottery or got the best fuck of her life. I ain't never seen her look that happy or that sexy before. Wonder where she's off

to, she didn't give no notice, so she best be coming back. Rent's due next week." His lazy old bulldog just lay on the kitchen rug and stared up at him as if to remind him that it wasn't any of his business.

CHAPTER TWO

It hadn't been hard to find the spa; everyone in town knew where it was. Most of them, Lexie included, watched with the interest and enthusiasm only found in small towns as the building went up.

The building was even bigger when you were this close to it. It had a very institutional look. The entry door was the only thing that broke the long, white stucco wall facing the road. Even that was white and all but disappeared into the façade. Every other time she had looked at it, on her daily drive, to and from work; she had wondered who would be foolish enough to build a building with no windows. As she stepped out of her car and started towards the doors though, it made perfect sense. She wouldn't want to be on display to all passers-by while she was in the spa.

The exterior belied the bright, airy interior of the reception area. The entire ceiling was glass. It

was like standing in a courtyard. The blueness of the sky, with puffy, cotton ball clouds drifting overhead, was the most serene view imaginable. She couldn't seem to drag her gaze down.

Her neck creaked in contention when she snapped it down, startled by the soothing voice so near her ear. "Welcome to The Hermit's Retreat."

He was ancient. The sparse amount of hair he had was snowy white against his pink scalp; it hung softly to his sloped shoulders. The gold-trimmed, royal blue toga draped around his slight frame almost appeared to be too heavy. Her mind raced as it tried to place his heritage; however, there was nothing within the deep wrinkles to give her a clue.

He stood there, watching her intently through watery grey eyes, as she looked him over from head to toe, before she even realized how rude she must appear. She blinked a few times, as she tried to get herself under control. The certificate crumpled in her suddenly nervous fingers. He was not the firm, fit type she would have expected to act as a greeter in an elite spa, maybe she was in the wrong place. She had to say something – anything. "I have a certificate." *Idiot!*

"Yes." He swept his arm to the side, indicating a group of low sofas, large fluffy pillows and floor mattresses that she hadn't noticed until then.

Where was the reception desk? The perky,

overly attentive airheads that normally came bouncing at you when you walked into a health club or spa? Where were the posters and certificates announcing the miracles of their particular form of healthy living? Where were the shelves of 'better-than-all-the-rest' vitamins and supplements?

Her mind spun with confusion and questions. The little old man in the too-big, too-heavy toga was the only person for her to ask, and he kept gesturing to the cluster of seats. Sitting was the furthest thing from her mind.

She found herself sitting comfortably on a stark white sofa without even being aware she had moved. A cool steel clipboard with a pen and questionnaire clipped to it was in her hands. The black print stood out as if it floated above the surface of the golden yellow paper.

She lifted her gaze to the old man, now standing directly in front of her. He answered her unspoken question. "You can go no farther in The Retreat, until this task has been completed. Be honest — be concise — be detailed. Above all else, be aware that what your heart has your hand write, your mind will have to accept. So, be careful what you wish for."

Speechless, she looked back to the top page. *What is this — some sort of test?* Snapping her head up, so fast her eyeballs rattled, to ask just that and

discovered that she was entirely alone in the glass-topped room. A shiver ran up her spine. Fear? Anticipation? Excitement? Her Granny would've said someone had just walked over her grave, so take care. Lexie just shrugged it off and put pen to paper.

The first set of questions was simple — name, address, age, occupation, marital status. The sort of questions you might answer in a doctor's office questionnaire. After that though, they got a bit more personal and she was almost afraid to answer. Every few minutes she darted a quick glance around, to ensure that no one had snuck into the room to read over her shoulder.

Her hand flew back and forth across the page, describing her idea of the ultimate, sensual hideaway. She put in minute details, such as mauve Egyptian-cotton sheets, claw-foot tub with gold faucets, warmed fluffy towels, lavender and vanilla scented candles, soaps and lotions. As she tapped the final period on the page, she pulled in a deep breath. The air had a definite scent of vanilla, or she had lost her mind.

She glanced around, expecting to discover candles or incense, where she knew damn well there were none. *You have one hell of an imagination, girl.*

The rest of the questions were an odd assortment of the weird and the normal. What is

your deepest desire — biggest regret — favourite way to relax — most sinful food — favourite drink — flower — smell — colour. The list of questions seemed to go on forever. By the time she finally came to the last question, she had a stack of about twenty pages on the sofa beside her. When she took a break to roll some of the tension out of her shoulders and flex her cramped fingers, she felt rather startled and at the same time oddly calm. “This little trick could come in handy for writers and test-takers. A never-ending supply of paper right at the tip of your pen. And, all you have to do is face your fantasies.”

Her soft lilting laugh tinkled in the still air around her as she returned to the task of the final question. *Describe your ultimate fantasy and lover.*

Her mind took flight. She’d already become slightly adventurous in the previous answers and really let her imagination loose on this one. *After all, she reasoned, there is no one I might meet here who will ever acknowledge me in the real world, so what the hell. Go for the gusto.* Boy did she.

By the time she was done, she had her ultimate lover and their sexual fantasy so fully fleshed out that her panties were damp. She closed her soft lips around the end of the pen, actually sucked on it and twirled her tongue around the hard cylinder as she reread what she had just written.

“If even half of that were possible — I’d be a

very happy lady.

With slightly trembling fingers, she gathered the stack of papers together. Sexual tension coursed through her veins in place of blood. The slightest movement and her suddenly tight jeans pressed and rubbed deliciously on her engorged clit. Try as she might, she couldn't get her mind off the man she'd just invented. *I can't wait to be alone in my room. Glad I thought to pack my vibe.*

"Your bag has been taken to your room."

Mister Blue Toga was back and now he had company. The tall blond man at his side wore a white toga. Lexie instantly thought of a frat house toga party. The younger man's eyes were the same soft grey as his older comrade, minus the wateriness of years.

"If you will follow me, I will lead you to your quarters. Leave the papers, they will be seen to."

Without waiting for even a fraction of a second for any kind of response from her, he turned and walked briskly to a door on the other side of the room. Clearly expecting that she should have kept up with him, he stood impatiently to the side, allowing her to pass through first.

After the bright airiness, the long dim hall came as a bit of a shock. The walls were covered in some sort of heavy material — damask perhaps. She stroked her fingers over the golden richness as she walked. "Where is this material from? It's

amazing. It feels like satin and velvet at the same time."

Her escort stopped in his tracks at the sound of her breathless wonder. He looked at her as though she had just asked where plain white paint came from. Clearly, he was accustomed to such extravagance. "The wall coverings were made specifically for the purpose that they serve — as was everything else here at The Retreat."

Thinking it best to keep any further comments to herself, she fell into step behind his flowing toga. Even when her wandering gaze fell on a beautiful gold swan and saw it turn its ruby eyes to her, she kept her mouth tightly shut. If they didn't reach her room soon, she was certain she'd explode. Her lips were going numb from the force she was using to keep them shut.

"Shit." So much for shut lips. The sound exploded from her as she ploughed right into the man's solid back. Grabbing handfuls of his fine toga, she barely kept herself from falling. His arms were around her in a flash. Strong muscles contracted and forced the air from her lungs, in his race to keep her on her feet. His chest, bared by the slipping of his one piece of clothing, was warm beneath her fingers. His hands flattened on her back, relaxed the crushing grip on her and slowly lowered.

He held her tenderly, his fingers tracing her

curves as if to memorize them. One hand, flat between her shoulder blades, pressed her breasts to his chest. The soft moan from his throat drew her gaze to his face. The tip of his tongue traced over his parched lips, briefly – invitingly.

She rose onto the balls of her feet – her breasts crushed between them as she brushed her lips across his. His touch had ignited the smouldering embers of her desire. He may have only intended to save her from a fall, but her body wanted – no needed – release, *now*. She knew the crotch of her panties, as well as her jeans were soaked, as clearly, as she knew that the hardness jabbing against her stomach was not a flashlight in his pocket.

“Take me.”

With the reflexes of a cat, he reacted instantly. His fingers dug into her shoulders, as he put her away from him. “This is your room. An assistant will be with you shortly.”

“Why?” The word was out, before her brain even had an opportunity to form the question. She couldn’t think clearly, when tearing his toga all the way off was all she seemed to be able to focus on.

“Why what?” His eyes drilled into her, so cold, so distant, so unlike the man who had just moaned against her.

Quick girl, think on the fly. Do you be honest and

ask why he won't finish what they had started – right here and now? Or do you hold on to the last shred of decency you have by taking your cue from him and be as cool and businesslike as he is? "Why do I need an assistant? Why can't you just assist me? After all you are already here."

"Your assistant will help you find your way around, keep you apprised of events and assist you in any way that you need. It is not my task; mine was to see that you made it to this point safely."

"No maps or printed schedules around here, I guess."

The look on his face said it all; he didn't even lower himself to make a comment. He clearly did not appreciate her sarcasm; especially in light of the past few minutes. "This is your key. Enjoy your stay."

Not if everyone around here is like you, I won't. Luckily, her brain engaged before her mouth and she left the snide remark unsaid.

She looked down at the key in her hand and then at the door in front of her. The *key* was a metal rectangle, about the size and shape of a credit card. There did not appear to be any corresponding hole or slot on the surface of the door that she could see. "Great. Mister Big-Tease-Stuck-Up could have at least stuck around long enough to show me how to get into my room."

For lack of a better idea, she slammed the key against the door with the palm of her hand, intending to force the door open. The metal card vibrated softly. The door glowed a warm rosy colour, before swinging in.

She stood there, stunned.

CHAPTER THREE

Her hand still felt the residual tingle of the vibration from the key and door, but that was not what had her so stunned. It was perfect. The room was exactly as she had described it on the questionnaire. Everything she had written down was in that room. How was that possible? Were her sensual fantasies so common place that they already had a room created for it? Or had this one perfect room with the luxuriously thick carpet, billowy sheers, king-sized four-poster bed complete with just the right sheets and mountain-waterfall-view through a window that wasn't visible from outside, really been made just for her? It had to be — it was too perfect to be anything else.

Gliding silently over the softness of the carpet, she bent to the drawer in the bedside table. *Just check this one thing and if my suspicions are correct, then I'll know that this is really all for me.*

Her hand trembled as she reached into the depth of the open drawer to trace her fingers over the contents. It was all there — the silk scarves, the feathers, lotions, powders, and various-sized dildoes and vibrators. Her imagination had soared when she was filling out the form; all of this was a part of her wildest fantasy.

The soft cough behind her, made her breath catch in her throat. For the briefest of moments, she expected to turn and find a growing group of stud-muffins jostling for first position at her doorway. But, she hadn't written that down, had she.

The young, drab woman standing there alone came as a bit of a disappointment as well as a shock. She couldn't be a day over eighteen and she had the look of someone trapped in a b-rated horror movie — bored, but with a slight fear around the edges. The girl's mousy brown hair hung limply over her pale face; her deep-set eyes carried blue-veined bruises of sleeplessness beneath them. She stood there — arms dangling at her sides, bare feet buried in the carpet, shapeless grey tunic hanging from her slight shoulders — and stared at Lexie, clearly waiting for some sign.

Somehow embarrassed under this strange visitor's gaze, Lexie lifted her foot and slid the drawer behind her shut. "Are — are you my assistant, or guide, or whatever?"

"I am here to see to your needs, and guide your steps through your time here. I am yours to make use of in all ways in that I can be anyone you choose, and give you all you desire."

"What do you mean all that I desire and anyone I want you to be? You are who you are, an individual, a person in your own rights. How can I change that?"

"As you see me now — I am simply the clay for you to form. We all start out this way; it is the way of our kind. We are here to bring you greater pleasures than your kind has ever known. We want only for you to be happy, to be fulfilled and satisfied. Answer one question for me."

Lexie shaken by what she suddenly knew to be fact, not so much what her companion had told, but what she knew, sat heavily on the side of the big soft bed. *'We are not in Kansas anymore, Toto.'* *This girl is a part of this place, not an employee or slave; she is a part of this place, as much as the furnishings.* "If I can."

"Are you afraid?"

"No," she wasn't. For some reason she really wasn't afraid, more curious than anything. "I suppose more than anything, I am wondering that you do not look as though you are comfortable here."

"I can help with that."

The girl took a slight step forward, lifted her

hands to the top of her head, raised her face toward the ceiling and slowly slid her hands down the back of her hair. As her hands lowered over the strands, a transformation took place. The mousy lank hair changed; soft waving brown tresses, shot through with ebony and crimson highlights, bounced free of the smoothing fingers. Her legs and arms miraculously lengthened, she slowly became at least four inches taller; her hips filled out, as did her breasts. The small points that had been barely noticeable under her tunic, inflated to two full, pink-tipped globes, as the grey cloth dissolved into a sheer sweep of wispy material. The transparent toga-style outfit did nothing to hide her to-die-for body; even the small neat triangle of trimmed hair between her legs was clearly visible.

Lexie watched transfixed. Somehow, deep inside, she knew this would happen.

As the girl/woman lowered her arms, her face also lowered and her eyes opened to fix Lexie with a soft, loving deep green gaze. The full lips parted to allow the tip of her pink wet tongue to trace over them. "Is this more in line with the person you expected in an assistant?"

"Yes, I — I suppose it is. But how — I don't really understand..."

You don't need to understand our ways or us. You simply need to enjoy yourself. Here at The

Hermit's Retreat, it is about making all of your wishes come true. I hope you kept in mind the old saying 'Be careful what you wish for', when you filled out the questionnaire."

A slight shiver traced up the back of Lexie's neck as she thought about just how outrageous she had gotten with the questionnaire. She could really be in for a very strange and exhausting week, but after the kind of year she'd been having, she was ready just to let loose and get down and dirty with some strangers.

"My name is Ayudante, but if you called me Dante — it may be easier for you. Now if you are ready I shall begin your tour of our facilities. After that we shall return here to your quarters and I shall help you prepare."

"This place is about me getting everything I could ever desire; is that right?"

"Yes."

"Well a tour is not what I desire, at this moment."

Without any visible movement on her part, Dante let her toga open and whisper down to the carpet. "This day has been hard on you. Let me still the tremors that ravage through you."

Fuck, yes. Lexie had her t-shirt and bra off before Dante crossed the small space between them. As the assistant's fingers closed on the button of her jeans, Lexie reached up to press one

hand over the perfect breast and pulled her soft mouth to hers with the other on the back of her head. Her mouth tasted like warm peppermint; and something else — something that was simply her. Their tongues duelled in the urgency to explore and memorize the soft recesses, hidden within their anxious mouths.

As soon as Lexie felt the sodden jeans and panties hit her ankles, she kicked out of them. Dante guided her gently down onto the heavenly softness of the bed and traced soft fingers over her. “You have a beautiful body, Lexie. You should never hide it, or feel that you are any less than what someone would want.”

Enough pillow talk. I need release and I need it now! Lexie grabbed, impatiently at Dante’s hand, but halted when the younger woman took control. She knew what Lexie wanted. She straddled her waist, pressed her arms out, and silently told her to lie there. Her mouth slid across Lexie collarbone and down between her breasts. Lexie’s eyes squeezed closed as the first shiver ran through her. The touch of Dante’s tongue and lips on her painfully hard nipple was exquisite. She rolled it with her tongue, sucked and pulled, precisely the way Lexie needed at that moment.

With the agility of a gymnast, Dante moved to lie beside her, never breaking the contact with her breast. Her hand smoothed over Lexie’s stomach,

to cup the slight rise of her mound. As her nimble fingers pressed between the soaked cleft, Lexie filled her hand with Dante's breast again. The moan that raced up her throat, as soft fingers found and circled her clit, screamed more sexual tension than words could ever say. When Lexie's hand pressed down, past Dante's flat stomach, the girl shifted again. Her fingers pressed into the quivering tunnel, Lexie found hers and probed deeply, as their tongues collided again.

Lexie thrust her hips higher and faster. The feel of Dante's slender fingers fucking her was only made more erotic by the sensation of her pussy clenching her own pounding fingers. Dante moaned softly into her mouth at the first building shudder to rage through Lexie. With the same quick agility, Dante twisted around and added her mouth to the onslaught of her fingers. Lexie screamed as she sucked her engorged clit into her mouth. The instant orgasm that raced through her came in spine-shattering waves. Dante's touch softened and slowed, as she rode the undulating waves. Rather than the crash and burn she was used to, Lexie moaned her way through countless minutes of shuddering ecstasy.

When the final soft shudders eased, Dante slid her fingers out, sucked the moisture from them and looked up at her. "Thank you. That was amazing," Lexie whispered breathlessly. "But, I

feel bad that you did not find the same relief.”

Sitting cross-legged on the bed beside her, Dante stroked feather-touch fingers over Lexie’s body. “Don’t worry about me. To give you pleasure is the greatest joy to me.”

With one more quick kiss, she helped Lexie to her feet. “Your bath is waiting. After you have freshened yourself, I shall give you that promised tour.”

CHAPTER FOUR

The first stop on the tour was a room Dante called the Playroom. As far as Lexie could tell, it was not much more than a large rec room, the likes of which she remembered from her childhood in every parent's basement. Four large soft-looking couches stood in a square in the centre of the room, a cozy meeting area around a large low square table. Piles of oversized pillows were stacked in every corner. A long gleaming bar lined one wall with tall stools before it and a lit mirror positioned behind an open backed shelf lined with bottles. There was no television, stereo or reading material anywhere. She wondered precisely what type of games people played within the soft blue walls.

As their tour continued through countless halls and arched doorways, Lexie realized that she had not seen another guest or attendant, anywhere.

"Where is everyone?" she quietly asked Dante as she bent to trace her fingers through the warm

bubbly 'mud' in one of the ornate baths.

"Whom do you wish to see?"

"Well, no one in particular. I just assumed that there would be other guests wandering about, or enjoying all the wonderful facilities. It just seems eerily quiet, that's all."

"Each guest arrives at their own time, but it is seen to that their time is the right time to allow for a private tour. The rest of the guests are in their personal quarters, being prepared for this evening's festivities. You are luckier than most who come to us. You have arrived at a special time. Tonight is the beginning of the Celebration Moon. You will be a part of the feasts and the excitement. There are not many allowed into the inner circle at this time. You must be a very important person to have been invited."

Dante grew more animated and excited with every word that fell from her lips. Lexie's own excitement grew along with hers. She had no idea what the 'Celebration Moon' was, but clearly, it meant there was going to be some excitement around here. Only one thing puzzled her.

"Why would you think that I am an important person, Dante?"

"Because your invitation brought you here today."

Before she realized where they were, Dante showed Lexie back into her room. "I think there

may have been a mistake of sorts."

The quizzical look on her companion's face made the hairs on the back of Lexie's neck stand up. There was something much more than mere curiosity in that look — it was almost anger. "The Hermit's Retreat never makes a mistake."

"Perhaps not, but I think that I may have. You see, I didn't check my mail for a long time and then I put off opening the coupon, so maybe I am not really supposed to be here right now."

"Oh Alexandria," Dante's laughter wrapped around the room like a growing fog that filled the space and encompassed Lexie in its warmth. "You are not here by happenstance or mistake. You are here because it is meant for you to be. Now come and let me help you prepare to accept the fruits of your wishes."

* * * *

The preparations were nothing like Lexie could have expected. First Dante led her into the bathroom — again, the ornate, gold-footed, deliciously deep tub had been filled with warm, scented water in readiness for her. Dante's fingers against her skin were soft and warm as she stripped her clothes from her.

Lexie stood still as the other woman removed each piece of clothing from her body, without

making a move to assist her or stop her. The memory of the mind-numbing orgasm at the touch of those same fingers, washed over her. She felt the familiar heaviness in her groin and let a soft moan waft from her throat.

She watched in a state of bored interest as the last of her clothes disappeared into a hidden hole in the bathroom floor. One of the tiles simply dissolved as the thin material of her favourite panties touched it — as soon as the wisp of silk slipped through the void, the tile reappeared. “Every house should come equipped with that.”

“What, someone to undress you, or the laundry receptacle?”

“Both,” she laughed as she pulled Dante into her arms. The kiss was deep and heated. Dante’s hands soothed down her back, cupped her ass and pulled her close. When their mouths parted, Lexie gasped for breath.

“Step into the tub and relax Lexie, your every need will be taken care of.”

She leaned back into the heavenly warmth, with a sigh. The thought — *I wish I had a pillow to rest against* — had no more formed in her mind when she felt the plump softness of a waterproof pillow behind her head. With her eyes closed, she let the soft motion of the water lull her into a deep state of relaxation. A deep ripple in the water tickled up her side at the same time as another

similar one made its way between her thighs. *God, that feels so good.* As it feathered along the sensitive folds of her pussy, she let her legs float further apart and enjoyed the sensation — so gentle — so unlike any man's touch, or woman's for that matter — so unlike any touch she had ever felt in her life — so perfect.

The same heat she had felt before her tour raced through her, again Lexie could not remember ever being so ready for sex, so quickly before in her life. All she wanted at that moment was to be filled with a wonderful cock and thrown into the abyss of mindless orgasm. With some effort, her eyes fluttered open to discover what was causing the wonderful ripples in the water.

Strangely, she could feel the warm wetness of the water all around her, but there was none in the tub. She was surrounded with tiny pinpoints of blue light. They danced all over her — tickled up and down her sides, over her breasts, along her arms and legs — swirling all around, leaving her feeling refreshed and cleaner than she ever had. The light glowed brightest between her thighs, where the vortex of her heated need sat. Thousands of the pinpoints clustered there — they delved into her folds, brushed, vibrated over and around her sensitive clit, stroked along the length of her moist slit, came together to form a phallus. The penetration was deep, full, fitted to her as

nothing could be. The constant motion of jostling clustered lights found and manipulated every screaming nerve ending in her.

Lexie's eyes drifted shut as her body drifted beneath the swirling blueness. Her fingers gripped the hard edge of the porcelain tub — the only connection to any type of reality as her body raced full steam ahead into the churning waves of ecstasy, brought on by tiny blue lights. Her mouth fell open as she gasped for breath. Her back arched as the clenching intensity of the orgasm shook her to the core. Her hips blurred through the gathering of the lights as they rode the waves with unbelievable vigour. A woman screamed in some far off world, she cried out a man's name with the throaty voice of pure carnal pleasure. She screamed again.

Lexie heard the screams and the name — but never knew they were coming from her own straining throat. She never would, either — the only witnesses to her ultimate release were tiny pinpoints of blue light.

Slowly the pressure deep within her lessened and her body's convulsing eased. She dug her fingers harder against the hardness of the tub and slid back up to the waiting pillow. As she opened her eyes, she found herself covered in steaming water to her throat again. Her hands lowered into the water and closed on her pussy. She felt the soft

thrumming against her gently probing fingers as her body fought to relax and her mind tried to understand what had just happened.

"Did you enjoy your cleansing?" Dante asked meekly from the doorway.

A good amount of water splashed over the side onto the sparkling white tiles as Lexie shot to her feet in mortification and uncertainty. *Where was she during that little fantasy? For surely it had to be simply that, a very intense fantasy...* Lexie wondered as she snatched the offered towel, with a bit more surliness than intended. Dante's face showed no sign that she had witnessed anything or that Lexie's sudden ill temper had hurt her feelings. In fact, she had a look of complete comfort and composure.

Two or three deep breaths and Lexie was able to face Dante and answer her. "I feel wonderful. I don't know what you have in the water around here, but I feel cleaner than I ever have in my life."

"Everyone says the same thing. I think it has something to do with the crystals we add to the water for relaxation baths."

Before following her out to the bedroom, Lexie took a moment to look around the bathroom. The tub was not only empty it was clean and dry. On a small glass shelf above the tub — which she hadn't noticed earlier — stood a glass bottle full of blue crystals. Lexie was sure she saw those

crystals shift as she turned away. *Trick of the light*
– *probably.*

CHAPTER FIVE

Lexie shifted, slightly uncomfortable in the rather revealing garment Dante had given her to wear. Apparently, everyone — not just the attendants — at ‘The Retreat’ wore togas. *So much for the comfort of being able to hide within the bulkiness of a thick sweater or baggy t-shirt.* She was so far out of her comfort zone it was laughable. But, what choice did she have? All of the clothes she had thrown into her hastily packed bag seemed to have disappeared. She hadn’t really had the opportunity to look through the drawers in her room though; Dante was extremely proficient at seeing to all of her needs. When she asked Dante about it, the only answer she got was that she would not need them.

She hadn’t realized how hungry she was until she stepped through the archway into the dining room. The aroma of roast beef dinner with all the trimmings, including her grandmother’s Yorkshire pudding, wafted to her and made her tummy

grumble, loudly.

Dante led her to a small round table, with a crisp white tablecloth, single white candle in a silver candlestick and red rose in a crystal vase at the centre. Every table they passed had the same tablecloth, but each had its own personalized centrepiece to suit the guest seated at it. The strangest, that Lexie saw was the table of a woman two over from her own. Her table was centred with a black cloth with barbed wire around it. In the middle of the cloth stood a fully erect – very real-looking – penis. And jammed into the slit at the top was a very drippy candle. The wax cascaded down the length of the penis, onto the wire and black cloth.

When Dante noticed her startled expression, she whispered, “She really, really didn’t appreciate her husband’s infidelity. I am sure you can guess what her fantasy was.”

Very few of the other guests looked in her direction as she took her seat, they were all clearly too wrapped up in their own worlds to care that there was a newcomer among them. The one who did catch her glance and hold it was an ancient man seated in a throne-type chair, being fed by about half a dozen nymph-like attendants. They fawned over him, slipped peeled grapes between his deeply lined lips, as well as strips of meat from the leg o’ mutton sitting on his table. One

diminutive nymph actually licked the grease from his chin as he ground the meat with his toothless gums. He clearly had a fantasy of being an ancient-times king of some sort.

The one thing Lexie could not understand, though, was the smells. All around her people were eating different meals, mutton, spaghetti and sauce, steak, roast suckling pig — the list went on and on — but all she could smell was her own scrumptious-looking roast beef dinner. As though she heard her thoughts, Dante leaned close to her ear.

“It would never do for your senses to be overwhelmed with the aroma of the meals of others would it?”

It seemed like as good an answer as any, so she tucked in to her first meal at The Retreat. Soon her belly was feeling as satiated as ever and she wondered what else could be in store for her.

“The baths, massage rooms and some others are closed in the evenings, but there is the exercise room as well as the play room available. The choice is entirely yours.”

Lexie hadn’t realized Dante had stayed at her side throughout the meal until that moment. “I don’t think exercising would be very good idea on top of all that I just ate, but maybe I could meet some of the other guests in the party room.”

“Of course, it is by far the most used room for

evening entertainment.”

Walking in at Dante’s side, Lexie was amazed to see so many people in the room. She was sure, somehow, that the room had grown since her tour. It was almost impossible to tell the difference between the guests and the attendants. Everyone was in the same state of near undress as her — after all, togas do not hide much, especially the very flimsy ones — so her discomfort began to ease.

As soon as they entered the room, Dante giggled just like a schoolgirl and grasped her arm. “Would you mind terribly if I let you get accustomed on your own? I will stay at your side if that is what you truly feel you need, of course, but sometimes it is best to learn about the playroom alone.”

With only the slightest of hesitation, she sent Dante on her way. She watched her beautiful hair billow out behind her as Dante literally ran to join a group on one of the sofas. They all clearly knew each other well — almost instantly two of the men had their hands inside Dante’s toga, fondling her breasts. The smile on the young woman’s face told Lexie that she was thoroughly enjoying the attention and looking forward to so much more.

Lexie suddenly felt extremely voyeuristic. She tore her gaze away from the action on the sofa and

slowly looked around the room. Everywhere she looked there were couples, threesomes, foursomes and moresomes. They were all involved in various stages of sex – and didn't seem to care in the least who watched. The air was filled with deep throaty moans, gasps and the aroma of sex.

A loud scream drew Lexie's attention of to her left. There, three rather well endowed young men were servicing the woman from the table with the penis-candle. From her position, Lexie could clearly see the triple ravaging the woman was receiving as well as the look of pure ecstasy on her face. The three men were pounding into her, in every available orifice and all of them were clearly enjoying every thrust and grind, right there in the open where any who were interested could look on.

The most surprising part of it all, to Lexie, was that she didn't feel shocked or surprised. In fact, she felt quite warm and tingly. She was getting turned on by standing there watching. She turned her gaze to the rest of the room and whispered a soft wanting sigh. Everyone in the room was writhing in their own orgasmic delight either at the bar or in a jumble of arms and legs on the sofas. Wherever she looked, people were licked, sucked, fondled and fucked. None of it seemed wrong or dirty it was pure and fresh and precisely the way it should be in the playroom. It was

exactly the way Lexie would have wanted — or wished — it to be.

The heat that was building in her began to insist she acknowledge it. She tried squeezing her thighs together as tightly as she could, but all that did was make it worse. In one fluid movement, she loosed the tie of her thin toga, dropped it to the floor and crossed the room to the bar.

The seats were unlike any barstools she had ever seen; they humped in the middle, with ridges at the front and back. The smooth shiny black leather looked almost slick. Perhaps the ridges were to keep you from falling off, if you drank too much.

“You sit on it, as you would a saddle on the back of a great steed,” the bartender advised. “What can I get you, to take the parched look from your lips?”

Lexie swung herself onto the bar-saddle with as much grace as a naked woman in her thirties can muster, given her state of arousal, before answering him. “Sex on the beach, please.”

“The drink or the act?”

“For now, the drink, but who knows after I’ve had a few of them.”

Putting the cocktail down in front of her a few minutes later, he leaned over the expanse of the bar until he was almost nose-to-nose with her. “Be careful what you wish for,” he whispered and

pressed a small button on the front edge of her saddle.

She had no idea what it was for and wondered how she could have missed noticing it earlier. Clearly, she was too busy watching everything going on around her and trying to get her own libido under control. Lifting the glass to her lips, Lexie wondered — *What did he mean by 'be careful what you wish for'? What I wish for right now is a talented tongue on my clit, to slowly build me to the point of release and perhaps a good hard, thick, long cock to press against all the quivering nerves deep inside.*

No sooner had the thought completed in her mind and she felt the very solidity of the saddle under her begin to shift, ever so slightly. At first, there was a sensation of wonderfully moist warmth on her clit. She could feel it swelling even more at the slight touch. Soon, the unseen intruder separated her lower lips. What felt precisely like a very talented tongue began to rub, flick and press at exactly the right speed and force. Her drink stood, just as forgotten on the bar as the man behind it, as Lexie closed her eyes and humped against the phantom tongue.

“Oh shit. Yes, yes. Oh god, yes, fuck me!” Lexie didn’t even realize that she had cried those words aloud, or that they were actually a conscious thought, until she felt the pressure against the wet

opening crushed onto the saddle-stool. That was no tongue!

The warm bulbous cock head forced its way into her — filling her to absolute perfection. Slowly at first, the oh-so-real erection, protruding from the seat fucked her. She wriggled and squirmed, clinging to the edge of the bar — oblivious to anyone around her.

As the kaleidoscope world, behind her eyelids exploded into millions of tiny points of light, she collapsed against the bar and whimpered softly as the cock slid from her pussy. After a few minutes, she straightened and opened her eyes. For the briefest of moments, she felt shame and fully expected everyone in the playroom would all be staring at her in shock. Instead, when her eyes focussed, she saw that everyone who remained in the room was still thoroughly enjoying their own mind-numbing explosions.

The bartender leaned across the bar once more to hand Lexie a soft fluffy hand-towel. “It’s always nice to see our new guests enjoying themselves so completely.”

His smile lit his eyes.

Lexie used the towel to rub the sheen from her body, slid from her perch, wiped carefully across the swollen folds between her thighs as well as the stool. She thanked the bartender and gave him back the towel. She didn’t even bother to put her

toga back on, as she left the playroom. She just picked it up, flung it over her shoulder and walked out, with her head held high.

I feel freer than I ever have in my life.

CHAPTER SIX

The door to her room stood open when Lexie returned, so she didn't have to even think about what she had done with the key card. She accepted it as another perk of The Retreat and drifted in, trailing the toga from limp fingertips. It slipped free to pool on the soft carpet as she climbed onto the turned-down bed. She laid down in the middle of the big bed and stirred against the amazingly soft sheet. As the softness of the top sheet covered her nakedness, she purred her contentment.

The warm evening breeze smelled of lavender as it billowed the soft sheers. Lexie's eyes drifted closed, as she was lulled to sleep by a chorus of chirping crickets, accompanied by a night owl. The last sound she heard was the haunting beauty of soft Celtic flutes, rising and falling on the breeze.

Her dreams were filled with a crazy jumbled assortment of orgasms relived — from her past, as well as that day. Through the mists of those memories, an absolutely gorgeous man stepped forward to simply stand and look at her. She knew him. She never met him, but she knew who he was. He was the man she described on the questionnaire. His ebony hair held natural highlights that appeared almost blue in the sun — his toned, tanned skin glistened with a healthy glow as the well-defined muscles beneath shifted and bunched. Lexie knew that he was naked, but could see nothing of his lower anatomy. The mists of the dream swirled around him, hid that part of him from her. Lifting her gaze back to his eyes, she was drawn into the blue oceans of desire there.

Her nipples tightened, puckered and longed desperately to be touched, as her stomach and pussy grew heavy with want. He stepped forward, bringing the swirling mists with him. His hand on her arm was so warm, almost fevered. The other slipped around her waist and held her close against him. That which she could not see, stood between them — pulsating softly. Her hand closed around its girth, as his mouth descended onto hers.

He tasted like a warm summer day — clean, fresh and inviting.

* * * *

Songbirds, whistling in the bright morning sun, woke her seconds before Dante slipped silently into her room.

“Good morning Alexandria. I trust you had an enjoyable evening and a restful sleep.”

Lexie slid up to lean against the mountain of pillows and watched her assistant flutter around the room. She threw the French doors open and drew in a deep breath of the crisp morning air, before turning herself to the task of making the preparations for the day. Laying the light blue toga over the back of a chair, she turned to Lexie again.

“Is everything all right?”

Lexie wasn’t sure just how to answer that question. Everything was perfect, and yet...

“Have you ever heard the saying that when something seems to be too good to be true, it usually is?”

“Yes, it is a saying I have heard, but fear not Lexie, it has no meaning here. Nothing is too good to be true at The Retreat. Everything here is as good as you wish it to be.”

Lexie made her way into the bathroom mulling that idea over in her mind — *was anything really that simple?*

It didn’t take more than a minute alone in the

small room for Lexie to realize she felt different. Running her hand between her legs, she felt the warm stickiness there. It was more than residual moisture from her own body — there was a man's essence mixed in with it.

Her heart pounded in her chest as she threw the door open, "Would anyone be able to get into this room in the night Dante? Without anyone knowing about it?"

"No, of course not. Our security system is the best to be found anywhere. Only you and I can come in here, without invitation."

A look of real concern creased her beautiful face, "Why? Is something wrong?"

"No. I suppose not," Lexie closed the bathroom door on her concern and stood trembling for a few moments. *It was just a dream. He wasn't really here during the night — but how...*

She decided to mark it up as another mystery of The Retreat and left it at that.

* * * *

Following a scrumptious breakfast, Dante led her to a secluded massage room. The walls and table appeared draped with a rainbow of tulle. Tiny lights glittered in the ceiling — thousands of illuminated points behind thin layers of soft white material. A small waterfall gurgled over rocks in

one corner.

The masseuse seemed simply to appear; Lexie hadn't noticed the door hidden behind the swath of frothy material. She was tall, at least six foot and reminded Lexie of the stories she had heard about Amazon women at school. Without uttering a single word, she walked over and pulled Lexie's single article of clothing from her body.

Startled, Lexie looked to Dante for some sort of reassurance or guidance. Dante didn't show any sign that this was in any way out of the ordinary. In fact, she looked amazed by Lexie's futile attempts to try to shield her nakedness.

With a broad sweep of her hand, the Amazon masseuse indicated that she wanted Lexie on the table. At least she would be able to hide her embarrassment once she was face down, with her head in that little padded horseshoe.

Half an hour later, Lexie was so relaxed she giggled to herself at her earlier shyness. The Amazon had set right in with strong hands, warm stones and some kind of lavender-scented ointment to manipulate every ounce of tension from her body.

Dante's softly whispered words floated to her brain from a place very far away. "I will leave you here in Olga's very capable hands, if that is all right with you. I won't be far and if you should need me, I shall return in a heart's beat."

Lexie couldn't bring herself to use the energy it would take to tell her that was fine; she just hummed and fluttered her fingers in a lazy wave. As soon as Dante exited the small room, Lexie let her eyes drift shut once more. Her mind instantly flew back through the hours to reclaim that moment of absolute pleasure when her dream man had pulled her into his embrace. She may not be able to ever have so perfect a lover in life, but she could sure as hell enjoy him in her fantasies.

Lexie felt a presence at her side, other than the masseuse. Assuming Dante had returned already, she turned her head to smile up at her. The shock she felt wash over her was like a wildfire left unchecked. It wasn't possible and yet...

There he stood. Perfection in a toga. He looked precisely like her dream lover. So exact in fact, she blinked her eyes a few times, sure she was still dreaming.

"I hope you can forgive my intrusion. I was walking past and felt drawn to this room. The moment I saw you I knew I had to take the chance to speak to you or face a life of wondering — what if."

Lexie frantically looked around for some sign of the masseuse or Dante, but she was alone in the room with her dream man. Swallowing past the boulder in her throat, she asked him in a cracked whisper if he would mind turning around.

The smile that lifted the corners of his lips was one of appreciation. His eyes drifted down her length for just the swiftest of moments before he turned away.

Lexie spun herself to sit on the edge of the table; clutching the thin material of the cover to her chest, she searched the area for her garment. Looking down at her hands, she burst into teary laughter. She was wearing her toga — the same one the Amazon woman had torn from her earlier.

She must have dressed me in my sleep before she left.

A feeling of utter foolishness came over Lexie when she turned to see the gorgeous stranger still standing quietly, facing the wall.

“Umm, you can turn around.” Even her voice sounded like it was blushing.

His eyes, the same fathomless pools from her dream, held a look of such understanding she could barely stand it. “You clearly have not been here long enough to get used to the way things work. I apologize again for startling you; I should have made my presence known as soon as I came in, instead of quietly enjoying the view. I hope you can accept my sincerest of apologies.”

Realizing that the ‘how things work’ was in reference to her toga being back in place, Lexie giggled nervously and assured him that she forgave him. “I would like to know who it is exactly that I am forgiving though.”

"Oh, of course. I am Amante Perfeccione and unfortunately, my time here is coming to an end, as yours is just beginning. I'm sure my stay would have been even more thrilling if we had met sooner."

He took her hand lightly in his and held it to his lips. The brush of his warm breath across her skin set her on fire. How could someone she had never met have this kind of affect on her? It was as if she had already been with him — intimately. Well, she had — hadn't she — in her dream.

She still hadn't said another word to him; she was simply drinking him in with her eyes. He didn't back away or seem to be the least uncomfortable under her intent gaze. He just stood there with his hard, chiselled muscles draped with the softness of the toga, surrounded by the billowing sheerness of the wall coverings and watched her eyes as they travelled along his magnificent lines.

"Would you care to take a walk with me?"

His question broke in to her haze of memories of the dream and silent thanks for his reality. "Oh, I was staring — I'm sorry. Yes, I would but I really should let my assistant know that I'm leaving first."

"Dante will understand, I promise."

The warmth of his eyes drew her in more than the extended hand. So much so, she didn't even

question how he knew the name of her assistant.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The moment he ushered Lexie through the door, the view took her breath away. How was this possible? In her sensible brain, she knew she was in a building in the middle of town — but the softness of the needle-covered loam under her feet made it clear that the coniferous forest was very real. It was unlike any she had ever seen before.

Between the towering evergreens, beds of moss spread out, wildflowers of every kind pushed the thick layer of needles aside to raise their faces to the filtering sunlight and ivy looped in haphazard paths. Lexie stood and drew a deep breath of the warm air, delighted in the way it smelled — warm and clean — just the way the man at her side smelled. He must spend a lot of time out here.

Amante took her hand and threaded it through his arm. As he led her along the path, they talked in hushed tones, neither wanting to disturb the small forest creatures they could hear moving

around.

He told her that he'd been a doctor in a big hospital, but walked away from the insanity to join a team of fellow doctors on a mission. They made a point of going to the patients that could not come to them — the tired, the weak, the poor and the lost.

"Don't you ever worry that you could be putting yourself into dangerous situations?"

The laughter rumbled up from his chest. "A lot of people ask the same thing, but I have never felt more like I was doing the right thing before in my life."

Lexie was still trying to get her mind around the fact that once again everything seemed too good to be true, when Amante stopped and bent to the ground. Lexie couldn't see what he was doing until he stood back up and turned to her. In his large hand, he gently held three wild roses.

He handed them to her one at a time. "One for dreams lost — one for dreams realized — one for dreams yet to be known."

Lexie held the delicate flowers on her palm, afraid to grip them too tightly in case she broke them. She knew she would press them between the pages of her thickest book the moment she got back home.

They continued along the path enjoying the quiet simplicity of the woods. Lexie rested her

head on his shoulder, absently stroking the soft petals in her hand with her thumb, lost in the timber of his voice. He talked of his sister's son and the many adventures they'd had together. His love of the boy was evident in every word.

She felt the sudden tension rage through him, before she saw what had caused it.

A small brown chipmunk sat in the middle of the path. The panic in his little red eyes was heartbreaking. It was clear from the way he held his tiny leg there was a problem. Broken in a fall perhaps — or injured by another of the forest animals?

Amante knelt slowly, gently near the cowering creature and held his hand out, palm up. Lexie stood as still as a statue, silently willing the chipmunk to step up. She knew instinctively that he wouldn't hurt the animal.

The breath she had been unconsciously holding, slowly released through her tense lips when it actually did lumber up onto the offered hand. When Amante stood, he had the trembling chipmunk cradled in the security of his large, curled palm. The look of complete tenderness he gave the scared soul, made Lexie's heart melt.

"I'm sorry to have to cut our walk short, but I think we better take this little guy to the infirmary. I know someone there who can fix him up."

* * * *

Lexie held the metal door open for him as he smoothly walked with his precious cargo. The doctor met them as they entered. Amante obviously knew him. "Curador, I have a very small patient for you. We found him out on the long path near the silent woods. I know it is an unusual request, but can he be helped?"

The doctor, she'd heard Amante call Curador took the chipmunk from him and gently placed him on a soft white towel. "The leg is definitely broken, but I am sure we can help him to a comfortable recovery."

He held Amante's gaze as he straightened, "How is it you always seem to find these non-human patients?"

"I think they find me. Thanks for taking a look at him, doc."

* * * *

When they stepped back out into the hallway, Amante took her hand and held it to his lips, as he had done before. "While I would love nothing more than to be able to spend the entire day in your company, I am afraid that I do have some other engagements that I must see to."

Disappointment washed over Lexie, like an icy

shower, her teeth even chattered slightly, "I understand."

"I would hate for the sun to go down on this day without seeing you again, though. May I join you for the evening meal?"

Warmth rushed through her veins again, at his words. "Yes, of course. That would be wonderful."

"Until then, Lady Alexandria. I shall count the moments." He pressed his warm lips to the pulse in her wrist and seemed to breathe in the scent of her. She felt her toes curling at the sensation of lust racing through her entire body, set to flames at the point of contact with his lips.

Lowering her hand, he turned and hurried down the hall. Lexie stood and watched him, breathless, hot and moist between the legs. *Damn, could he be any more perfect?*

CHAPTER EIGHT

Lexie watched until he disappeared around the corner of the hall, before she turned toward her room. She had no trouble finding it, even though she passed through halls she'd never seen before. She simply walked with a purpose and stepped through her own door in no time at all.

Dante turned from the window, with a dreamy expression. "Did you enjoy your morning?"

Lexie gushed excitedly about the miracle of meeting Amante — how incredibly perfect he was — how caring and loving. "It's like he stepped right out of my dream, Dante. Right down to the timber of his voice. And, the tenderness that he showed for that poor little chipmunk, I can only imagine what he would be like with a child."

She stopped pacing around the room and really looked at Dante. She sat perched on the end of the bed, watching Lexie's every move. Something about the expression on her face, told Lexie that

the young woman was thoroughly enjoying the excitement emanating from her.

“Dante, surely you know who I’m talking about. He said he was coming to the end of his time here, so he’s been here a while.”

“I don’t get to know everyone, Lexie. Some of the guests come and leave without me ever laying eyes on them. Other’s I know as well as I know myself.”

With a silly schoolgirl giggle, Lexie flopped on to the bed beside Dante and wrapped her arms around her slender waist. “Believe me, if you’d seen him you would remember.”

Dante returned the embrace as well as the laughter. “I’m sure I would remember Lexie, I am sure I would.”

She tightened her arms around Lexie, her hands flattened on her back and her warm laughter softened to gentle mews against her neck. It felt wonderful. The lips against the sensitive skin on her throat were so warm, so tender — the hands on her back, sliding around to stroke the side of her breast were so strong and sure.

The scent of Amante filled Lexie’s nostrils — she felt his firm muscles bunching and flexing under her touch. She turned her face to find his mouth. Behind her tightly closed lids, she saw him press his lips to hers. His tongue tangled and danced with her own searching tongue. He tasted

as wonderful as she knew he would — earthy, warm, clean and fresh.

Lexie trailed her hand around his side, enjoying the way his strong muscles felt. Beneath his arm, she felt the ropes of toned muscle shift over the ridges of his ribcage. Further forward — to the mound of developed chest muscle freed from the loose toga.

His hungry mouth ravished hers, as his hand closed on her breast. She heard and felt the deep, lusty moan rumble in his chest.

She slid her hand farther forward. His chest was so warm, so soft. His hard nipple pressed into her palm as she pressed her fingers into the soft firmness. It felt familiar. She knew it from close experience. It felt exactly like her own breast.

What the hell?

Lexie's eyes flew open.

Dante was soft, aroused and pressed into her. Her breast lay exposed, lovingly clasped in Lexie's own hand. Her moist lips slightly parted, puffy and inviting.

Lexie's mind reeled. She jumped to her feet, leaving Dante in a confused, crumpled lump on the bedspread.

"Oh my God. I am so sorry, Dante. I was still so wrapped up in the thoughts of Amante racing through my mind. I just... I guess... I got caught up in the emotions. I didn't mean to... I just... Oh

shit, Dante, I'm sorry."

Dante gathered herself together with as little fuss as possible. She stood with Lexie, straightening her clothes. "Do not torture yourself over this, Lexie. I am here to help you — in everything."

"Dante, you are a beautiful woman. Don't get me wrong, if I could close my eyes and see you instead of Amante, I would throw you down on that bed, again and spend a few glorious hours getting to know every inch of you, intimately. Unfortunately, he is all I see — all I feel. I have to give myself a chance to find out what it could be like with him."

There didn't seem to be any residual effect on Dante from the few fevered moments on the bed. She simply went back to her duties of seeing to Lexie's enjoyment. As soon as lunch was finished, she led her to the pool area and faded away again.

Lexie slipped into the white swimsuit that waited for her in the change room. As she looked into the full-length mirror, her eyes grew wide in amazement. The thought *I wish it was yellow. I look good in yellow*, flashed through her mind. The reflection she gaped at was her in the suit she had picked up from the chair. The yellow was exactly the brilliant colour she loved so much.

"I love this place — even my ass looks firmer here."

Lexie dove into the deep end of the empty pool and began swimming laps. She was suddenly able to do those perfect flip and kick turns she'd seen Olympic swimmers perform on TV. She could do the butterfly stroke, backstroke, open and all without getting a stomach full of chlorinated water. Sitting on the side of the pool an hour after her first dive, Lexie rang the water from her hair. She didn't give the fact that she wasn't tired or out of breath, a second thought. The lounge on the patio was so inviting, she relaxed onto it with a deep sigh.

Her skin warmed quickly in the sun's rays. She smelled of coconut from the lotion that had not been rubbed all over her, but was there anyway. Her eyes were shaded with the sunglasses she had not put on. The margarita, which was on the small table as soon as she reached for it, was cool perfection.

With her eyes closed, she gently floated into a restful sleep. The breeze blew softly over her, through the solid cement wall, which she no longer saw. The sun beamed down onto her from above the thick ceiling that she had forgotten existed.

CHAPTER NINE

Lexie's stomach grumbled angrily, as she dressed for dinner. Her fingers trembled as she tried to fix her hair. She hadn't felt so hungry in a long time. It was almost as if she had missed a few meals. But, that wasn't possible — she clearly remembered eating lunch, right before heading to the pool. It must be all that exercise and fresh air had given her a healthy appetite.

Dante took the clip from her fumbling fingers and pulled her hair up into a loose tangle of curls at the back of her head. It was precisely the soft, romantic look she'd been going for.

Once she was ready, Dante escorted her to her table in the dining room. Lexie had already asked her to leave once she was seated. She had lowered her eyes and quietly agreed. Lexie felt only slightly guilty. She wanted to be alone with Amante. It was as though she had been looking forward to this for a long time.

While she waited for him to join her, she looked

around the room. A brilliant smile lit Lexie's face. The 'penis lady' was at her table, devouring a large deluxe pizza. Lexie noticed that her three male attendants stood quietly off to the side, waiting patiently for her to finish her hearty meal.

Half a dozen attentive imps serviced the 'wish king'. The lap of his overly long toga moved up and down in a very telling way while they fed and cleaned him. The slender feet peeking out between his own made it obvious that one of his helpers was seeing to it that he would not be bothered by an uncomfortable erection throughout his meal. He certainly appeared to be enjoying the blowjob.

Somehow, Lexie was not able to tear her eyes away from the old man's pleasure at this not-so-unusual public display. After all anything goes at The Retreat.

* * * *

The soft throat clearing at her side brought her back to her own table. Amante stood there, with the vase that had been at the centre of her table, the night before. This time there were three pink roses tucked into its neck — just like the roses he'd given her earlier. He softly set the vase in its rightful place and bent to press his lips to her cheek. "I have been with you all day — in my thoughts and heart. Have you felt me?"

She had to be honest, "Yes. Yes, I have."

They quickly settled in to their delicious meal. The new potatoes cooked with fresh mint complimented the lamb, perfectly. At one point, Lexie leaned over and wiped a drop of sauce from Amante's chin with the corner of her linen napkin.

He asked her about her life, her family and her dreams for the future. He clearly did not just feign interest; he truly hung on her every word. His intent gaze began to make her just a tad uncomfortable — it's not every day you sit across the table from someone who actually does look you in the eye while you talk to them. He didn't seem to ever blink. She really needed to do something to get off the subject of her mundane life before she bored him to tears.

"Other than travelling all over the world to bring desperately needed healthcare to those in dire straits, what do you do?"

That did it — he definitely blinked then.

A look of embarrassment washed over his face before he answered. "I paint. In fact I would love the opportunity to paint you."

"Do you mean paint on me or paint a picture of me?"

He stood, pulled her to her feet and kept her hands trapped within his very large ones. "While I would undoubtedly thoroughly enjoy spending an hour or two covering every inch of your body

with a rainbow, I think a portrait is more what I had in mind."

"Lead the way Rembrandt."

The two of them were still laughing as they walked arm in arm along the hall.

His studio was an amazing assortment of half finished still-life's, covered canvasses, piles of squeezed tubes and tubs of soaking brushes. At the centre of the mess, an area had been cleared. An easel stood with an empty canvas in place. Fresh brushes and paints stood at the ready on the small table beside it.

A beautiful antique chaise lounge sat on a slight rise in front of it, surrounded by palm fronds and urns filled with flowers. Clearly, that was where he wanted Lexie to pose.

"It seems you've thought of everything."

"This seemed to be the only backdrop that could possibly match your beauty. I hope you don't mind, I made the assumption you would agree to this."

"Not at all, it's wonderful. In fact, I can only think of one thing that would make it better." *One thing? Hell no! She wanted so much more than one thing from this man. She wanted it all – his touch, his kisses, his body pressed on and in hers. She wanted to feel him, taste him, truly know every inch of him.*

The heat he had ignited earlier blazed through the pit of her stomach quickly became an ache as

he stepped closer to her. His big hands closed on the sides of her face, lifting it to him. As his mouth closed on hers she heard him whisper softly, *thank you*.

That small statement didn't even come close to what Lexie wanted to say. There was no way to be grateful enough for perfection.

His mouth covered hers. His tongue found hers, coaxed it from its timidity and took her with that intimate touch on a ride of absolute bliss. He held the back of her head with one hand tangled into her soft tendrils — explored the warm interior of her mouth with his urgent tongue — slid the other hand down to the centre of her back and pressed her tighter against him. His toga did nothing to mask his arousal.

He wanted her just as much as she wanted him. Yes, thank you, indeed!

CHAPTER TEN

He manoeuvred her back a couple of steps, until her legs came in contact with the softness of the chaise. Lexie's knees buckled, with very little pressure and she went down onto the seat. Amante balanced her, slowed her lowering process and came down on top of her. His mouth never once broke contact with hers.

He lowered her onto the length of the luxurious seat and finally drew his mouth from hers. She looked into his hooded eyes and found the same lustful want there that she felt burning in her.

Without a word and without lowering his eyes, he deftly undid the tie that held the waist of her toga closed. As the softness slithered over her breasts, a shiver of anticipation ran through her. She wanted to feel his hands, his mouth and every other part of him all over her.

"I feel as though I have waited an eternity to find you."

His breath breezed over her skin as he spoke

softly and lowered his lips to her neck. He nuzzled, kissed and gently sucked. Lexie's eyes drifted closed as the pulses of heat filled her.

She slid her hands down his back, pressed the loose material aside and felt the muscles once again bunch and flex under her touch. Amante was so solid, so warm, so much like...

Her eyes flew open. With one hand on each shoulder, she pushed him away until she could see his face.

"What is it?"

The sudden tension left her body as she felt the smile fill her face. "I just wanted to make sure you were really here."

"Oh, I'm here sweetheart. One hundred percent here and all yours."

As if that shifted him into a higher gear, Amante rose to kneel over her and tore his toga free. The quick glimpse she had of his naked form was magnificent. Before the soft material finished whispering to the marble floor, he'd lowered onto her again.

His mouth captured one nipple, to twirl the hard, puckered nub and pull on it with overheated need. Tiny, hot sparks shot through Lexie from that point of contact directly to her pussy – completely bypassing her brain and any thoughts of what changes the next few minutes could bring about in her life.

His mouth travelled down her, leaving a moist trail from her breast to the neatly trimmed dark hairs between her legs. He pressed her legs wider until she had one foot on the floor on either side of the narrow bed of the chaise. With his hands under her ass, he lifted her, fully exposing her wet pussy.

He hesitated and looked up into her eyes. "Close your eyes and let me take you to places you never thought you could achieve."

The warmth of his whispered words spread over her clit and swollen lips as her eyes drifted closed. The tip of his tongue flicked and teased over the hard nub. Lexie jumped and twitched at the feel of the light touch. She was more than ready. She wanted to feel his mouth devouring her.

He closed on her like a ravenous animal. Every nerve ending in her pussy exploded at once. He sucked — gently at first—he licked and pressed with the flat of his tongue. He forced his tongue into her as the first jarring spasms tore through her. Never had an orgasm shook her that deeply. She had no control over him or her own reactions to him and she loved it.

When he crawled up to cover her body with his, he lowered his mouth and his hips at the same time. The softness of his tongue filled her mouth as the steel-like solidity of his cock forced its way

into her tunnel. With the first, deep thrust she felt the tightening and screamed around his tongue. Her body shook through spasms harder than she had ever known — the convulsion thrust her hips up, opening more of her to him. He was bigger and harder than any man she had ever experienced. He was precisely like she had dreamed a lover could be.

He knew exactly where to touch her and how to manipulate her body to bring her the greatest joy. Before she actually knew that she was thinking it, he pulled out and spun her into her favourite position. She had always loved the feel of a man taking her from behind.

Lexie's eyes glazed as the passion overtook her. Amante held her hips in his large, amazingly strong hands, as he drove into her. He was masterful — powerful — so in control of every movement, she gave herself over to him, as she never had anyone before.

Through the haze, she was sure — just for a moment — that she saw a wavering form near the rear door of the studio. Someone stood there and watched them. She did not give a shit. The violent spasms of yet another mind-blowing orgasm rocketed through her, slamming her eyes shut.

* * * *

Dax stood in the shadows with his hand inside the softness of his toga. The massive rigidity of his cock, forced the material to billow out like a tangled parachute. He had watched them from the moment they walked in. He knew they would be there and what they would be up to. He was an invited audience of one.

When Amante had speared Lexie's hot, wet pussy, she hadn't seemed to notice that his eyes were not as focussed on her as his cock was. She didn't see him glance to the shadows. She didn't know that he had found Dax's eyes and held his gaze. Amante's expression of overwhelming lust had quickly shifted to one of complete love before his wonderfully glistening eyes lowered.

Dax moved the shielding material aside and exposed his throbbing cock to his lover. As he closed his fist around the throbbing shaft, he heard Amante's deep, grumbling moan. With swifter movements than Dax would have thought possible or safe — Amante positioned Lexie on her hands and knees. Grasping her hips, he'd rammed every inch of his thick cock into her, forcing a startled and yet happy scream from her lips. The beautiful woman relaxed and writhed under him. Her spine undulated like a snake as she met him thrust for thrust. Her dripping pussy swallowed everything he had to offer.

Dax knew that Amante was filling her to

perfection. His cock slid through their combined juices and pressed on her hidden g-spot shooting her to higher levels of release than anyone ever had. He knew that her pussy would explode around that solid shaft numerous times before the night was done and that it would be a fuck that she would remember for the rest of her life. He knew all of that, because that was how it was meant to be at The Retreat – every wish fulfilled. The guests always had to be pleased.

Dax was certain Lexie had seen him there jerking off, just before her eyes lost all focus and she lowered her face to the softness of the cushion on the chaise.

Not once did she try to turn from her position and look back at the man who was driving her to those glorious heights. Thank the stars for that. If she had glanced back, even for the briefest of moments, it may very well have ruined everything. The vision that Dax gloried in was so unbelievably amazing, there was no way Lexie would be able to understand or accept it.

Amante's powerful legs pressed against the insides of her softer ones, where they knelt on the chaise. His masculine, firm ass flexed and relaxed with the speed and force of his thrusts as his cock filled Lexie to the hilt and pulled back, nearly exposing the bulbous head, with each stroke. His large manly hands held her soft hips – his fingers

dug in to her sides and ass and kept her rhythm matching his.

Every part of him that came into contact with her remained rock solid and very, very masculine.

Just above the wiry hairs that surrounded the base of his cock, it started. Like trying to see a reflection on the surface of a rippling stream, Amante wavered. He faded in and out of focus, before settling and catching Dax's gaze again.

Dante's face was flushed with the force it took for her to hold the half-transformation and the lust that was surging through her. Her hair clung to her beautiful, heart-shaped face in damp curls. Her breasts bounced freely on her chest as she continued to pound Amante's cock into Lexie.

Dax fought the enormous urge to run to her, pull her free of Lexie and bury his cock in her own sweet pussy. He knew the spell must not be broken — he could not do anything to interfere with the wishes as they played out. His demotion to being a mere greeter was the final step before being sent back and completely shunned. If he wanted to be able to steal the few moments he could with Dante he had to stay where he was — in the shadows.

She spoke — to him — but it was Amante's voice that came out between those perfect pink lips. "I love you. I want to feel you explode deep inside me. Don't do anything to spoil what we

have.”

Luckily, Lexie was too busy racing through the throes of another orgasm to hear him/her.

Dax’s fist slammed along the length of his shaft as he watched her. He knew that neither of them was far from explosion. The proof of this was all too clear.

Lowering his gaze, Dax saw the sparks. Clustered in a bright array where the dark curls had been, he saw the tiny blue pinpoints racing and firing wildly. He could almost see the light through Lexie and knew that the heat inside her must be intense. By now Amante’s cock would be nothing more than a shaft of blue living light. At that concentration the heat always rose. As his moans grew louder, the sparks sped up even more, clustered together tighter, until they appeared white.

Dax emptied his load onto the floor in five powerful blasts — the first crossing half the distance between he and Dante to slide on the glossy marble. At the same time Lexie felt Amante’s sac emptying into her with such violent spurts she feared for a moment that he might tear her in two. The heat and the power coming from him sent her reeling through another set of orgasmic spasms.

Lexie collapsed onto the lounge and fought to get her breath back. Soon she felt Amante’s weight

on her back. He was breathing just as hard as she was. They stayed still until the life-sustaining oxygen was finally able to fill their lungs. When he finally stirred, Lexie turned over on the chaise. He looked at her with such dreamy eyes, she was sure he had enjoyed their coupling just as much as she had.

Even though she would have loved to go for another round, it was clear from the heavy coat of sweat on him that he needed some time to recover. So, rather than curl her fingers around his cock where it rested on her thigh and stroke it back to life, she smiled up at him. "I thought you said something about a painting?"

He jumped to his feet, completely unashamed of his nakedness and held out a hand to her. With the finesse of a master, he soon had her posed, as he wanted her.

Her toga became a swath of soft material to float around her body, covering everything but not hiding the fact that she was naked. He stood at the easel, behind and slightly to the side of her. She could hear the scraping of charcoal on canvas and tried to relax but hold the pose.

"If you're not going to breathe we are going to call it quits. I don't want you passing out on me, at least not from holding yourself so stiff."

Lexie hadn't even realized she was holding her breath until then. His silly — and somewhat

arousing — comment made her relax and giggle softly. Time flew as she sat there. The tops of her thighs were moist and sticky from their lovemaking and she knew that the thin material would stick when she stood up. She simply didn't care and knew that Amante wouldn't either.

Before it seemed as though enough time to even draw a stick figure had passed, he gently stroked both of her shoulders. With his mouth lowered to her neck, he stood bent over behind her and whispered across her skin. "I don't want to tire you out. I think we should get dressed and I will return you to your quarters."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

With one hand on the door to her room, Lexie turned to look at Amante. “Do you have to be anywhere important, right now?”

“No where more important than right here. Why do you ask?”

A momentary embarrassment flashed through her like a blinding lightening strike — gone as quickly as it came. “I really don’t want this evening to end. I had hoped we could enjoy a warm cleansing bath together.”

Amante slid the key card from her fingers and pressed it to the door. As it opened he ushered her in with one warm hand against her spine. Neither of them spoke as they walked together to the side of the tub. Nor were words exchanged as it filled and steamed. They didn’t need to — they said everything necessary with their eyes and the touch of their fingers as they undressed each other.

The two togas lay in a pile on the floor as they lowered into the blue water as one.

Lexie ran her hands down his firm chest and abdomen, revelling in the way he felt. His warmth and solidity amazed her. The fact that he was here with her, making all of her lust-filled dreams come true astonished her; the size of his cock astounded her. How she had been able to accommodate him was beyond her comprehension — but she had and it was wonderful. As she wrapped her fingers around the shaft, she saw that her fingers did not meet. The old saying — more than a handful is a waste came to mind and she laughed softly, knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that that was not at all true. The feel of him stiffening in her grasp, turned her innards to jelly. All she could think about was the way it felt to have him deep inside her and how much she wanted him there again. This time though, she wanted to be able to look in his eyes as he pushed her beyond the realm of reality. She wanted him to see the glassy expression of pure animalistic pleasure on her face.

His large hands massaged her breasts, pinched and twisted her hard nipples in fantastic torture. Her breath came in short gasps. Every touch was perfect — he knew exactly how to draw the deepest spine jarring shudders from her.

His hands closed on her ass and he lifted her onto his lap. As the mass of his cock forced its way into her, the water around them turned into

millions of blue sparks, dancing around them — slicing across their skin leaving trails of electricity. As their hips ground against each other, the heat built, the speed of their thrusting grew, the volume of their moans of delight increased and the sparks raced faster. When Lexie's orgasm exploded out of her on a gasped scream, the sparks exploded from the tub. They raced around the two of them in a wild cyclone of cold heat.

In years to come Lexie would remember that strange feeling — the heat of Amante's body pressed against and in her mixed with the near-icy pinpricks of those blue sparks.

As, yet another orgasm raged through her, Lexie threw her head back and almost howled her pleasure. Amante drove deeper and faster, his fingers dug into her shoulders slamming her down onto his cock with unimaginable force. Through their joined gasps, she heard his voice. "Look at me Lexie. Don't hide your eyes from me. I want to see how I fill your heart as my cum fills your cunt."

She'd always thought that word dirty and unnecessary — until then. It was right; it was the perfect word for how she was feeling right then.

As his sac emptied into her, just as violently as in the studio, she forced herself to keep her eyes open. She saw the expression on his face — the moment of strain followed closely with one of

complete relief and knew that her expression must be very similar.

She also saw that at the precise moment that the first punishing jet erupted within her, the sparks exploded away from them. They danced around the room in a blur and then they were gone.

His sac finally emptied, Lexie watched as Amante's eyes fluttered shut. The small smile that played across his lips told her more about his pleasure than a thousand words could have.

With a strength that she could not believe, he stood with her still impaled on his slowly softening rod. When he had found his footing, he lifted her by the hips, slowly, easing his cock from her and turned her in his arms to cradle her as a child. His mouth covered hers as he carried her to the edge of the bed and lowered her to its softness.

The thought that being able to fall asleep cuddled into him would be too much to wish for, flitted through her mind moments before he slid between the sheets with her.

Held protectively in his embrace, Lexie drifted into a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The rising of the morning sun saw Lexie startled awake. She was alone in the big bed and felt a sudden sadness fill her heart and mind. She wondered if it had been Amante's sneaking departure that had ended her sleep. It didn't take long to determine what it had been that had woken her. There was a great deal of commotion in the hall right outside her door.

Dante burst in, without any ceremony or apology. She rushed to the bedside and threw back the blankets. "You must rise."

She was clearly distracted — not at all her regular attentive self. Before Lexie could focus enough to sit and place her feet on the floor, Dante had already slipped her daytime slippers on and was holding out a remarkable gold trimmed toga. Lexie had never seen that particular garment before and was amazed at its beauty. She stood and ran gentle fingers along the fine embroidery. "This is beautiful, Dante. Are you sure..."

"We don't have time for you to be amazed, or to examine anything too closely right now. We must hurry."

Shocked at the other woman's abruptness, Lexie grew quiet and stood looking at her as if she were a stranger. Dante stopped suddenly in her efforts to dress Lexie and looked at her expression. With a heavy sigh, she let her arms drop to her sides and lowered her face. "I am sorry, you should have been prepared before now, I suppose. But it really is not my fault, at least not entirely. He arrived early — I thought I would have more time and I did not want to take you away from your enjoyment."

Lexie finished dressing herself and held Dante by the shoulders. "Slow down, Dante. Who is here? What did I need to be prepared for?"

"I wish I could take the time to sit and quietly explain it all to you, but we really must go. They are waiting. You may brush your hair out, but don't apply any make up, scent or deodorant. You have but a minute left and then we will escort you to his hall."

Lexie knew she would get no more information from Dante, so she simply pulled a brush through her flowing locks quickly and turned to let her know she was ready to go.

Dante opened the door and ushered her out. Ten women in togas that matched Dante's were

waiting for them in the hall. They surrounded Lexie and with Dante leading the way, they swept her along unfamiliar hallways, to stop at a huge ornately carved door.

For some unknown reason, Lexie felt a strong sense of excitement and anticipation build in her with each step she took. Something big was going on and somehow it all involved her. In fact, she got the feeling that she was the centre of it all. That mixed up feeling of fear and giddiness had to be the way a bride felt as her feet carried her down the aisle to her waiting groom.

The double doors were thrown open by two hooded sentries and Lexie was able to glimpse a magnificent hall, between the heads of her escorts. Columns rose to the vaulted ceiling, painted to appear as if they simply disappeared into the infinity of the sky above them. It was a breathtaking visual effect. It was so realistic; Lexie was sure she saw a lone dove fly across the expanse of periwinkle studded with cotton balls.

Seated on a raised dais at the other end of the hall, was a figure. His seat was a throne, magnificent in its simplicity – nothing like the ornate sprawling of deep carvings the Wish King held in the dining room. This throne was more like a large chair, something that one might see in a Victorian-age home.

Without question, Lexie knew that this cloaked

and hidden man was older than any she had ever met. She knew he was the founder and overseer of The Retreat — she also knew that he knew everything there was to know about her.

He was swathed in layer upon layer of the same flimsy material of the attendants. His face, hidden from view — not that she would have been able to see him clearly from the great distance between them — but she knew that she was looking directly into his eyes. She felt a great sense of warmth and comfort coming to her across the void.

Soft lilting music filled the air. It sounded as though a whole orchestra was hidden somewhere within the hall. The attendants surrounding Lexie began to swirl and dance all around her. The long swaths of material floated around them creating a sort of traveling cloud around her. Their movements slowly led her to the foot of the hidden man. Dante came to her side and gently pressed her to her knees.

“You need not fear me, child,” the voice floated out to her from deep within the soft hood.

“I don’t. Fear is something that has found no home in my heart since I walked through the doors of this Retreat.”

“Have you enjoyed your time among us, so far?”

“Greatly.”

"Have all of your wishes been met and fulfilled?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"We want only to please you. I feel that there is more that you have not revealed. A greater wish. A dream so beyond your concept of the realm of possibilities that you may not even realize it yet, but it is there in your heart of hearts. I will give you a gift that is only held for a few special travellers. I give you the gift of choice. You may change your list of wishes at anytime. You may add or delete whenever you wish. In this way, when you do eventually come to realize what it is that you truly desire, all you need do is ask for it and it shall be granted you."

Gauging by the surprised expressions in the crowd gathered around, Lexie understood this was an unusual and greatly sought after gift indeed.

"Thank you," her whispered gratitude hardly seemed enough, but it was all she had to give.

The old man slid carefully from his seat and came to kneel on the edge of the dais, reaching down he cupped her face. "Listen to your heart and you will know the truth. Listen with your heart and follow where it leads you."

With that, he stood and walked through a small door at the rear of the dais.

Lexie got to her feet as the door closed in the

hermit's wake. She stood staring at it for quite a long time. She didn't notice as the rest of the crowd dispersed quietly through numerous doors.

What could he have meant by that? What more could there be for me to wish for? I am sure I have realized all that I could possibly dream of while I've been here. I have Amante now; doesn't the rest of it follow now that I have found my perfect mate? Doesn't it make sense that the house, the white picket fence, the children and the lazy old dog are just a part of that package? What more could there be?

Dante startled her out of her musing with a light touch on the arm.

"If you are ready, we can go to breakfast now."

Lexie had to blink a few times, before her eyes would focus — once again, her brain had to play catch-up with what she was seeing. Rather than the beautiful great hall, with the raised dais and multiple doors, she was standing in the hallway between her room and the dining room. Instead of the amazing, intricately embroidered toga, she was in her simple swath of material that she had worn every day.

One look at Dante and she knew that the questions she so desperately wanted to ask would not be answered — so why waste the time or energy? She followed the back of Dante's head to the deserted dining room and took her place at her table. In stunned silence, Lexie sat and ate her

poached eggs, pea meal bacon and toast. She was once again ravenous. It seemed she always was lately. Every meal at The Retreat, devoured with complete abandon.

Dante seemed to know instinctively that she wanted to be alone, so she simply backed out of the room silently as soon as Lexie was seated.

* * * *

Lexie sat with her head supported on her fist as she leaned on the table and chased the toast crumbs through the drying egg yolk around her plate. Through the fog in her brain, she felt someone watching her, just as strongly as she would have felt a steel blade thrust into her back.

She straightened her spine and turned to look toward the doorway. Amante stood there, leaning on the frame, nonchalantly watching her.

"How long have you been there, watching me eat?"

"Not long. I could watch you for years and it would not be long enough."

He slowly walked between the scattered tables over to hers. "You looked to be in deep contemplation. Surely there is nothing here that could warrant that kind of intent thought process."

"I was just wondering what this place is really

all about.”

“From all I have seen and heard, it seems to be about making the guests happy. Simply that.”

Lexie felt her frustration build again. “Yes, but how? How precisely do they make all these wishes come true? They know what I am going to wish for before I do. It is all rather discomfiting.”

Amante’s deep, warm chuckle eased some of her tension as it rumbled over her. “Perhaps they have some sort of master computer somewhere and they inserted probes into your brain while you slept so they can read your brainwaves as soon as a thought enters your mind.”

Her laughter joined his as she stood to wrap her arms around his neck. “Yeah, or maybe they’re aliens.”

The instant stiffening of every muscle in him and the strangled gasp was so quick, Lexie didn’t consciously notice it; she just lifted her face to have his mouth claim hers again.

“I missed you this morning. My bed felt very big and very cold, when I opened my eyes.”

“I do apologize, but I didn’t think it would do for your attendant to find me there, all warm and pliable in the early morning light. I only left so you would be able to face her without any tingle of embarrassment.”

“Well, I suppose I should thank you then, shouldn’t I?”

"You can thank me by sitting for me, again. I would really like to finish that portrait."

"Of course."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In very short order, they were ensconced in his personal studio again. It was exactly as they had left it the day before. Amante confessed that he had come here after leaving her bed and worked on the piece. He had filled a lot of it in working from the sketch and his memory. All he needed to do was to put in the delicate details that he could only truly see with her there in the flesh.

He set her up in the same pose and started to work, with the tunnel vision of a true artist. So focussed was he on the work at hand that Lexie started to worry she would be expected to sit stock-still all day. Just as her muscles really started to protest, she felt him behind her. Amante bent over right behind her again, just as he had the night before. His mouth and tongue traced a hot path along her shoulders, up her neck and around to claim her mouth. He turned and lowered her onto the narrow bed beside her, his mouth still covered hers as his tongue danced with hers,

teasing and promising so much.

His big hands pushed the scrap of material away and they clung to each other, happy and comfortable in the mutual nakedness. As his hands traced along her curves, Lexie squirmed and sighed deeply. He moved down her body, his mouth close enough that she felt his breath, but not touching until he reached her feet. His tongue stroked over, around and between her toes. She almost lost all control right then. No man had ever sucked on or kissed her feet before. Now she found herself thinking that this was something she would want every day.

Amante's hands massaged her calves as his mouth worked its way up her legs. Not one inch of leg was left un-kissed, un-licked or untouched. When his tongue moved between her trembling legs and he licked the smooth flesh of her inner thighs, Lexie let out a long shaky moan. She arched her hips up and pressed on the back of his head — desperate to feel his mouth on her heated pussy.

Amante clearly had other plans though. He avoided making actual contact with her pussy and started a slow, torturous path up her body. He circled the tip of his tongue around her navel before delving into it. His tongue left a wet trail on her fevered flesh as he moved to her breasts. First one then the other mound was licked, sucked and

massaged. He had to know how wet she was — how ready she was to have him buried in her as deep as possible — he was driving her insane with his slow, patient attention. In reality though, Lexie wouldn't have had it any other way. Sometimes it's a good thing when someone else takes control.

Just as she thought, she could not stand another second he slid his left hand between her already damp thighs. His strong middle finger slid easily in and began to stroke her slowly. At the same time, he pressed the pad of his thumb onto her hard clit and started performing a slow dance around it. Lexie's cry filled the small room and she bucked onto his hand. There was no holding the climax back any more than you could hold the tide back with a child's bucket. Amante continued suckling her nipple and manipulating her pussy as she began to relax through the end of the orgasm.

He moved to cover her mouth with his again. He whispered against her lips, "You feel so good. So wet. So hot and always ready for me. I am so glad I have this time with you."

Lexie moaned in disappointment as he moved off the bed and went to the wall. As he struck a match to kiss it to the wick of a white taper, the lights dimmed and she relaxed. In fact she thoroughly enjoyed the sight of him walking around, lighting until then unnoticed candles. He was magnificent. His eyes held her transfixed

every time she looked at them — they seemed to change with the light and his mood. He was exactly the height she'd always dreamed of her lover being and he was so fit — not big and bulky like a football player or weight lifter — firmed, toned and sculpted. His massive, hard cock stood out in front of him as though it was leading him around the room and he was helpless to do anything but follow. With each soft step he took, it bounced slightly. Lexie licked her lips at the sight of the drop of moisture on its tip.

Apparently content with the mood he had set in the room, Amante stood at the end of the chaise and motioned to her with one finger. "Come here, Alexandria."

The need to be submissive to Amante overwhelmed her and Lexie swivelled to crawl to him. With gentle hands, he stroked down her shoulders and over her back. His hands tightened on her as he pulled her up against his chest.

"You're so beautiful, Lexie, so much more than just beautiful. Now, I want you to touch me. Touch my body; show me again how good you can make me feel."

Lexie's slight nod might have gone unnoticed by some, but she saw the smile fill Amante's face and knew that he had seen the small show of submission. She pulled back enough that she could see him and traced her fingers down his

chest. As her fingernails scratched him lightly, he jerked and moaned. Her fingertips found his erect nipples, followed closely with her tongue.

As her hand slid down his abdomen, Lexie heard his moan deepen. Her hand wrapped around his solid shaft and began slowly stroking along the length. The feel of his moist, thick head on her thumb was too much for her and she lowered her mouth to his cock.

In one quick motion, she had the head captured against her wriggling tongue. Amante's gasp filled her ears and fed her need to taste him even more than the feel of his hands tangling in her hair did. She slid her mouth along him deeper and deeper — her tongue in constant motion — she wanted to force all of his unknown inches in and taste his sweet cum as it hit the back of her throat.

"Oh Lexie, that feels so damn good, your mouth feels so fucking incredible. Your tongue is like a snake wrapping around me. I am so glad you like sucking my cock, baby."

Lexie purred deep in her throat, around his cock and picked up speed. Amante grasped her hair harder and started guiding her mouth along his length. His hips thrust forward. He filled her as deeply as possible.

Just as her throat muscles relaxed enough to gain him access, he pulled out of her mouth. Lexie almost lost her balance in the sudden loss. She

wanted to suck him until he came and tried to pull him back to her mouth.

With a hand on either side of her face, he lifted her to press against him again. "Not yet, baby. I don't want to cum yet. I have much too much pleasure to give you first."

In one fluid motion, he had her on her back on the chaise again and was between her thighs. Without any warning, he lowered his face to her wet pussy. Her cry filled the air again as he began licking over her clit. Lexie's moans grew louder and faster as she was unable to lay still under him. His mouth and tongue did things to her pussy that she'd never felt, or expected, before. His fingers slid into her pussy as he sucked on the rigid clit. Her orgasm was building again. She knew he had to be able to feel it on his mouth and fingers. Amante held her legs and pushed them upward, holding them behind her knees with his free hand. She was spread wide open for him.

"Oh, God, Amante! I'm going to cum again, I'm going — oooh, God, mmmmmm, baby, I'm going to, I'm going — aaahhh."

The climax washed over her in massive shaking waves. Her pussy soaked his face and hand as she came harder than before.

"That's it baby, that's it Lexie, come in my mouth, let me taste you baby, mmmm, you taste sweet, Lexie, so sweet."

His murmured words sounded wet, as he stayed pressed to her pussy, his tongue still moving over her clitoris and his two fingers still sliding in and out.

Her thighs relaxed and fell open, as he continued to kiss and lick. As she stopped shivering, he slipped up her body. He immediately slid his thick cock into her. Lexie gasped as he filled her completely. She was becoming addicted to the way it felt to have him buried in her.

Amante grasped behind her knees and pressed her thighs against her chest. With slow purposeful strokes he slid in and out. Soon he started to pound into her faster and faster. Her full breasts bounced as their matched thrusts increased in speed and power.

Lexie slid her hand between their slick bodies and began stroking her clit as he fucked her roughly.

“Lexie, your pussy is so good and tight. It fits me perfectly. I want it to be mine — tell me how you want my cock, and how good it feels.”

Lexie’s teeth dug into her bottom lip as he continued pumping harder and harder into her. Her need to cum with his cock deep inside her was all she could think about. When she failed to answer him, he stopped and held himself very stiff at her entrance.

She writhed and squirmed under him, desperate to feel him moving inside of her.

"Say it, now, Lexie. Tell me you want my cock or I'll leave. I will leave right now, and you'll never feel this cock you enjoy so much, ever again."

"I want your cock, dammit, Amante. I love how it feels, deep in me. Please, don't stop, let me cum again, I want your dick inside of me, you can have me when you want, just fuck me, please, please, Amante — fuck me hard."

He started driving into her again, his balls slapping against her ass as his cock filled her over and over again. She played with her clit, and lifted her hips to meet his cock as he pushed its full length into her. She could feel his cock throbbing inside of her, and the telltale tremors started again.

"Oh shit, yes Amante, you're going to make me cum again. Oooh baby, oh, God, shit, mmmmmm!"

As the climax raged through her, a red haze glossed her vision. Her pussy pulsed around his cock, as she came. Through the haze, she could have sworn she saw Dante's face where Amante's should have been, just before her eyes closed.

"Oh Lexie, I can feel you cum. It feels like heaven on my shaft. That's going to make me cum too. No holding back now — I'm gonna cum girl,

I'm — oooh shit!"

Amante's cock spasmed and jumped in her as he filled her with one hot spurt after the other. He moaned deeply and bit her shoulder as he filled her still throbbing pussy with his juices.

The quiet moments in his arms afterwards were blissful until a hard rap on the door cut them short. Amante jumped to his feet and flung his toga around him as he strode to the door.

She didn't hear the conversation, but Lexie could tell from the tone of his voice that Amante was not pleased with the interruption. When he came back to her, she rose from her seat on the edge of the chaise — her toga neatly back in place. "Is everything okay?"

He pulled her to him, almost crushing her in his embrace. "I'm afraid I have to go and see to something. I hate that I have to leave you like this, but unfortunately, it cannot be avoided. I'll take you to your room."

She convinced him that she would be fine on her own and pressed her mouth to his once more, before stepping toward the door.

"Remember your promise."

He'd said it so quietly; she'd almost missed it. "My promise?"

"You're mine."

Her only answer came in the form of a small smile, right before she slipped through the door.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Her mind raced faster than her feet on the way back to her room. *Something had shifted – things were different now, more so than they had been when she first arrived. She was different. Amante was different. Even Dante had changed. What was it about this place that had such a strange effect on people – maybe it was the water – maybe it was the place itself. Some buildings can have effects on people, and after all is it really natural to be shut up inside a building for a whole week?*

The decision to just step outside, into the parking lot for a few minutes was not so much of a conscious one as it was spiritual. For some reason her inner-being needed to feel good old-fashioned Ontario pollution on her face again. She needed to get away and have a chance to think clearly.

As she drew closer to the door that she was certain would lead her to the large foyer where she had filled out the questionnaire, her heart started pounding in her chest. She was afraid. So

afraid in fact that she broke into a trot and then a run. She had to get to that door, before anyone could stop her.

Just as she slid around the final corner, she nearly barrelled right into Dante and the man who had shown her to her room. Her sudden appearance had startled them both and they nearly fell out of the embrace they'd been sharing. His arousal showed clearly in the prominent erection tenting his toga. Dante's flushed cheeks and glistening eyes, told of hers.

As they tried to compose themselves, Lexie skidded to a halt mere inches from the two of them. Her breath came in short, painful gasps. During her race through the hall, the niggling fear had turned into an all-consuming panic.

Dante was the first to find her voice. "Lexie, what's wrong? Where are you going in such a hurry?"

She looked from one to the other. Neither of them looked quite so sweet or caring any more – something had shifted. "I just thought I would step outside for a minute or two."

"If you want some fresh air, there are suitable paths and seating areas in the wooded space near the rear of The Retreat." Dante's companion – Lexie's arrival escort – informed her, sternly.

"Yes, I know that, I've been there, thank you. I just wanted to get something from my car," Lexie

lied

With a gentle hand on her elbow, Dante turned Lexie back the way she'd come. "Everything you could ever want or need is right here at The Retreat."

Lexie's fear deepened, as she turned, multiplied with shock. The hall was full of Retreat attendants. Some of them were glaring at her with something akin to hatred. She was sure she saw a few of their eyes glowed a horrible red, before they blinked and seemed to shrink. Her mind really was playing tricks on her now.

She let Dante lead her back to her room. The twisting hall seemed much shorter, now that she wasn't racing along it in a blind panic.

Sitting on the edge of the bed together, Dante took Lexie's trembling hand in hers. "I know what you saw in the hall, and I know that this is not the right time — but I have to ask you to not tell anyone. Dax and I have broken the rules. We have fallen in love and if they find out we will be harshly punished."

"What? What are you talking about?" Lexie could not think clearly about anything in her state, let alone comprehend how falling in love with anyone could be a bad thing.

"Dax is on his last chance. If they find out about us, they will send him away. He will have to go back home and the stars alone know what he will

end up doing then — he will be lost to me and without him I will be lost.”

Slowly, Lexie’s senses started to return. She really could not clearly remember what it was that she had been so afraid of. The thought that Dante needed her help was all that thrummed through her mind. “But if he is your greatest wish, shouldn’t you easily be able to have him — especially here.”

“The Retreat is about us making your wishes come true. The same cannot be said for those of us who are here to assist.”

“I won’t tell anyone about your secret, Dante. But I do have a question for you. What is this place?”

Dante looked perplexed at the simple question. She stared at Lexie as though no one had ever had the audacity to ask such a question before. “This is The Hermit’s Retreat. A place where all of your wishes can and do come true. Surely, you have been here long enough to know that. You have even met Him for yourself. You can’t possibly say that you have had to go without while you’ve been here.”

“No, of course not. You have all done a wonderful job of making my every wish come true — except the one where I want to walk out the front door and go to my car.”

“I can get whatever it is you need so

desperately from your little car.”

“Sometimes people need to just do something for themselves.”

“Lexie, you signed some papers when you arrived, did you not?”

“Yes. I signed the agreement and filled out the questionnaire – why?”

“Perhaps you didn’t read them as closely as you should have, but one of those papers you signed was an agreement to stay here, until your allotted time was finished.”

Lexie got up and went to the window. The scene was the same; the breeze was still the precise same strength as it always had been. Even the chirping birds sang the same songs as always. They had done an excellent job putting all of this together, but there was no natural flow to any of it. Nothing was ever random, not even the breeze fluttering the sheers.

They’re all changelings. They’re from some far off world with an impossible-to-pronounce name and this building is actually a portal to their ship.

Without turning to her companion, Lexie asked the question that she hadn’t realized had been nagging at her since she arrived. “Who are you and where are you from?”

When Dante didn’t answer right away, Lexie turned to face her. “I don’t mean what is your name and what cute little made up town are you

from, either. I mean — what species are you and what solar system did you fall out of?”

“You ask too many questions Alexandria. Just live out your wishes and enjoy the time you have left.”

The door burst open, shattering it from its hinges as three large men charged into the room. Two of them grabbed Dante roughly, lifting her off the floor. In her struggle to escape them, her shields dropped one by one. To Lexie’s horror, she watched the beautiful woman change first back into the timid young girl she had met her first day, then devastatingly she saw the men holding Amante and finally the third man threw a silver bag over a cluster of blue light.

Lexie fell to her knees and let the tears of frustration, fear and heartbreak course down her cheeks. None of the guards spoke a single word — not to her — not to Dante/Amante — not to each other. The one voice she did hear came from the sack of sparks.

“I did as I was asked. I won her over, she made the promise, gave herself to be mine, to be ours.”

As the group stomped out her doorway, the broken door dissolved where it lay on the floor and a new solid one appeared. The random thought — I wonder if my key card will work on the new one — flitted through her mind. The idea was so mundane amidst everything that had

happened; she couldn't control the laughter that bubbled up her throat.

Emotional exhaustion took over and she crawled onto the softness of her bed. Deep sleep wrapped her in its arms almost instantly.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Somewhere far off, in the blackness of the night, she could hear screams of anger and frustration. As she fought to gain consciousness, her brain felt fuzzy and drugged. It felt the same way it did when she came around after having her appendix removed a few years earlier. Her head and limbs felt so heavy. What had they done to her now? Had they drugged her in her sleep? Sent some sleeping agent through the air system? Whatever it was, she had to fight her way out of it.

The voices were a good distance away, but they were still somehow quite loud. There was a major fight going on. Someone was bound to end up severely injured — if not dead.

Most of the voices were unknown, but there was something familiar and comforting about one of them. God, she hadn't thought about him even once since she arrived.

Stuart.

Stuart was here, at The Retreat, he was fighting

with the guards. He would never stand a chance against those massive brutes.

She bolted from her bed and slammed her door open. A poor replica of Dante's timid beginning fell from the chair set in the hall for her use in guarding the door. The slamming door jarred her awake.

"Oh, Miss Alexandria you have risen. You missed your evening meal, but I didn't want to disturb you. I have a tray here for you."

Lexie stopped in mid stride and glared at the woman on the floor. "Yeah I bet you do. Is it nicely laced with whatever poison you've been feeding me all week?"

"You really should eat."

"Shove it up your ass, or whatever replica you have of said orifice." Lexie was on the move again in the span of a heartbeat. Her bare feet beat a hard thumping path down the hall. From behind her the high screeching alarm sounded. In her mind, she pictured the creature she had left behind with its head thrown back, mouth wide as it screamed its warning of her escape.

Lovers did not bar the door this time, and she threw her shoulder against it. She stumbled into the room in time to see Stuart barely holding his ground against the three toga-clad guards that had carried Dante off.

The scream that issued from her throat sounded

more animalistic than human to her ears. In surreal slowness, everyone in the room turned to look at her.

Stuart, still held by the guards — battered and bruised — was the most welcome sight she had ever seen. “Let him go! Leave him alone!”

She took a step toward Stuart and found herself grabbed from behind. The alarm had brought attendants from all corners of The Retreat running and as they poured through the door, they all made a grab for her. She had to fight against them just as hard as Stuart was fighting the guards.

Unseen to any of them, a large figure swathed in layer upon layer of flimsy material entered into the midst of the melee. The booming voice filled the entire space, rattled the windows and actually knocked a few of the late arrivals to their knees in the doorway.

“STOP!”

Every eye turned to him. Every foot stopped. Every mouth closed as they all waited to see what would happen next.

The Hermit spoke so quietly, so lovingly that everyone visibly relaxed. “Violence is not our way. Have you all forgotten that? There is no need to be over-zealous. Hold the intruder with kindness and let him speak.”

Stuart’s eyes bored into Lexie’s heart, his tears streamed down to drip from his chin, as the relief

flooded through him and showed clearly on his face. "I went to your apartment and the super said you had left the day before. Lexie, I have been searching for you ever since."

She shrugged off the women that held her arms and stepped closer to him. Stuart's obvious panic confused her. "It's only been a few days, Stuart. Why are you acting like I am a missing person or something?"

"Lexie, you left your apartment a month ago. The police are looking for you. Your friends and co-workers are all searching. We found your car burned out in the middle of a field about thirty kilometres from town. Everyone thought you were dead, but I never gave up. I could still feel you, I knew you were alive, somewhere."

Lexie stood stock-still trying to comprehend everything he had just told her. How could it have been a month? She could clearly remember every day, every meal — but that would explain her ravenous appetite at each meal. When she turned to look to the Hermit for some sort of guidance, she saw Dante standing in his place.

"He was not among your wishes Lexie. In fact, one of your wishes was to get over him, to forget about him. Therefore he must be disposed of." With a flick of her hand in their direction, Dante instructed the guards to take Stuart away.

The realization that he is her one true deepest

desire filled Lexie with a comfortable warmth, the likes of which she had never known. *He had come looking for her. He had searched even when everyone thought she was lost forever. He had never given up. He loved her and she loved him. White picket fence here I come!*

Blinking two or three times she was finally able to focus her eyes on Stuart as he was dragged, kicking and screaming toward a dark door set into a recess of the hall.

"Stop! Wait a minute! You can't do this. You can't take him away. I love him! I didn't realize how much until right now, but I do — I love you Stuart, with all my heart and soul.

"The Hermit gave me the gift, himself. I'm allowed to change my list at anytime. Well I want to change it."

Taking a deep breath, she turned to Dante and looked around at everyone gathered. "My deepest desire is to be with him; to let life play out the way it will even if that means I will be faced with disappointments sometimes. I want to go back to the lousy job that I thought I hated; I want to be at home in my cute little apartment — complete with the drippy taps, rattling pipes, nosy neighbours and useless superintendent. I want my regular old life back, with all of its quiriness and hardships."

Dante transformed into Amante, right before her eyes and lifted a hand to stroke down her tear

stained cheek. "Are you certain that this is truly what you want, Alexandria?"

"Yes, I am certain. Please tell them to let him go."

Amante pulled her into his embrace briefly. "Sometimes in life you are handed an opportunity, but with it there is always the chance that you will miss out on something else good if you take it. You could stay here and your every wish would be fulfilled for the rest of your life."

Stuart's arm slipped around her waist and she rested her head on his shoulder as he steered her to the exit. Just before turning away from Amante, she flashed him one more grateful smile. "It will be. My every wish will come true — in the real world, right where I belong."

* * * *

The land where The Hermit's Retreat stood is now a strip mall. No one can really remember it ever being anything else. No one that is, except Lexie. She will never forget the lessons she learned in that windowless building.

'Be careful what you wish for.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

"We all have fantasies, I just write them out!"

Jojo was born in London, England in 1961 and brought to Ontario, Canada at the age of three. She has been an army wife, in Oromocto, New Brunswick, during her first marriage. She's also been a farm girl all over southern Ontario, a waitress, seamstress, party planner, wedding coordinator and videographer, personal care worker and costume designer. Now happily settled with husband number two and three daughters, she enjoys the small town life. With so much quiet time to devote to her writing, she lets the muses take her where they may.