



The Date

By
Sandy Storm

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CHAPTER ONE

It wasn't every day my husband had such a special occasion in his honor.

I planned to arrive at two o'clock, exactly on time. Of course, nothing would happen until I got there, but I wanted everything, even my punctuality, to be perfect for our special date.

I lolled back on the blue satin sheets under the puffy comforter and realized how much I missed Richard already. Less than twenty-four hours apart, and I was near distraction without him.

It was like this whenever he left. It didn't matter whether it was on a long business trip or sometimes just when he went to work in the morning. I would have loved him with me every hour of every day if I could. Of course, even I realized that wasn't possible.

Still, my mind lazily lapsed back to the last time he was inside me. Slowly, my one hand stroked his pillow while I used the other to pleasure myself. After a more than agreeable warm-up, I gently fondled my clitoris, much as he did when our foreplay moved into high gear. Wet and excited, I grabbed his pillow to my chest as I brought myself to climax, inhaling his man-scent and envisioning him on top of me, his rock hard cock thrust deep inside me.

What a pleasant way to begin this special day, I thought, as I lay back panting. It would have been better with my sweetheart. Then again, I was going to see dear Richard soon enough for our afternoon date.

With all the chaos of the day before, I knew I should try to sleep in. Though I was confident I'd taken care of all the major items for our unique rendezvous, dozing was quite difficult.

Whenever I started to nod off again, another detail popped into my head seeking a place on the morning's "TTD" list. Clothing, coiffure, jewelry, perfume, setting, and dozens of other factors needed minor decisions to make things flawless before I saw my darling lover.

Richard always requested that I take extra care in my appearance. He reveled in my enjoyment of beauty treatments at the spa. Unlike so many men, he truly appreciated my efforts in dressing especially for him. Today, more than any other day, I'd do all I could to please my beloved husband.

I rang my Personal Assistant, Candace, at half past six. Before leaving my service late last night, she'd said I should call whenever I felt the need, regardless of the hour. With that in mind, I took advantage of her offer to start our day earlier than originally planned.

I told her to meet me in my changing area after I completed my morning exercises. This modicum of organization and direction was the motivation I needed to throw off the covers and get this day going.

It was so nice of my husband to provide an assistant like Candace for me. With our busy social schedule, the operation of our exquisite home and my own body care program, she was essential for maintaining order. Only a few years older than I, my Personal Assistant was more like a competent older sister than an employee. She knew me so intimately. Indeed, she often met my needs before I could even express them. My darling Richard understood how much I valued the help of someone like Candace to handle the details of my life. He was so considerate it spoiled me.

Hearing me move about, the day maid brought up a nice cup of hot cocoa and my daily Muesli for breakfast. There is something to be said for routine.

After I finished my cereal and gulped down a half-liter of flavored water from the wet bar in our bedroom, I was ready for my morning stretch and run. Before putting on my gear, I looked at myself naked in the full-body dressing mirror.

Not bad, I thought. Twenty-five, and everything still very nicely put together.

I pulled my long ash blond hair into a simple ponytail. I made a little teasing motion with my head. If I tilted to either side and then bent over, my hair fell naturally across my shoulders. When I stood back up, it pointed to one of my large firm breasts like an arrow.

Richard liked this signpost telling him where to begin my pleasuring. First with his hands, and then with his mouth and tongue, he would initiate his "adoration," as he liked to call it, on that expectant tit.

He also knew when I moaned and tickled his earlobe it was time to move his playful tongue away from my taut nipples and onto my hard, flat abdomen. It was so sensuous when he licked my belly button on his way down.

Men are so easy to please. As he reached my treasure cove, I knew it delighted my darling when I wrapped my long, graceful legs over his shoulders and onto his back. There were some

real advantages to being a tall woman and having a robust, six and half foot tall stallion in such great physical shape for a life-long lover. Acrobatics excited him.

His tongue and hands would bring me to orgasm expertly and quickly. After I climaxed a good few times, I would reward his patience by wrapping my legs farther down his body, just below his muscular butt.

With my wet, pulsating pussy spread wide for him, I would draw his rigid erection deep inside and match his rhythm until together we could endure no more. The explosion erupted for him and continued apace for me, going beyond, far beyond.

* * * *

With a start, I realized such lustful reveries only served to entice me back between the sheets. I needed even more incentive to prod me into my exercise on this day's tight schedule. Lots of exercise produced the finely toned body that had helped me get where I was. I wasn't about to backslide.

I pulled on my shorts and sports bra, then slipped into a tee shirt from my most recent half-marathon. Lacing up my training shoes, I set out on my morning run across our acreage.

It was a brisk, sunny day with a high sky. I thought my long fur coat would be just the thing for the cooler afternoon and evening yet to come.

With many things to do and places to go, I cut my run down to forty minutes, banging out six-minute miles.

After a quick cool down and shower, I wrapped myself in my fleece bathrobe and summoned my Personal Assistant to join me and help with a brief toilette.

Candace arrived almost immediately. "Good morning, Mrs. Moran. After all that excitement yesterday, how are you feeling this morning?"

Despite the closeness we'd developed over our years together, my Personal Assistant was strictly formal in public. This included when we were at home, even if there was just the possibility of my house staff overhearing us.

Certainly far more efficient than I, Candace was always very properly put together. This early in the morning, she was already corporately dressed in a charcoal gray skirt suit, set off by a brightly colored cravat tucked into the neck of her crisp white blouse.

As she combed out my hair and quickly fashioned a simple bun, she told me what lay ahead for the morning.

We would head off to my preferred health resort in the gray Lincoln stretch. She had apprised the spa owner, Helena, on the circumstances and the importance of the day.

Helena was a dear and immediately arranged an abbreviated half-day session for me. It was so sweet of her to take the trouble to help make this day exceptional for me. And if it were exceptional for me, then it would be exceptional for my dearest, as well.

My Personal Assistant completed my brief preparation. A touch of blush, a faint pink lip-gloss, and a spray of “eau de stinky water,” as my husband teasingly called it, and I was good to go.

I decided on a pair of sweats for now. To ward off the growing chill, I wore my saucy little silver sable jacket. Oh, and my five carat diamond solitaire engagement ring and simple polished gold wedding band I'd never taken off since my husband placed them there three years earlier.

I would be formally dressing for the occasion later on at the spa. Candace and I considered what I wanted packed. The gorgeous black full-length sable my darling presented to me as an engagement gift would go in the garment bag.

My jewelry would include a pair of diamond ear studs to go along with the matching necklace and bracelet set Richard had given me on our first wedding anniversary.

A lacy white thong with a shiny satin triangle would be all the lingerie I needed. I knew how much my sweetie loved it when I went without a bra.

He said he could always tell when I was *sans soutien*, as we learned to say one Paris weekend together. He looked for the tiny outline of my nipples as they hardened when his hello kiss included a tongue embrace. Sneaky guy! Well, we would just have to see what he thought of my breasts today, *au naturel*.

I wanted to inspect the dress Candace chose for this special date with my stud-bunny. It had to be just the right one for the formality of the occasion.

I strolled into the walk-in closet, more like a moderate size room, really. Candace had already put my selection onto the hanging rack used for the upcoming day's attire. It was a classically designed black Dior creation of velvety crushed wool. The short cap sleeves would decently cover my shoulders, but leave my arms free.

I ran my hands down the length of the fabric; so soft; so smooth. A cowl collar would arc down enough to expose my throat and the diamond necklace I would wear. It would also demurely cover my cleavage. It was perfect for the decorum of the occasion.

The fit was comfortable, not too tight, yet not requiring much imagination for a viewer to see all my femininity within its curves. The hem came just to my knees. The back was cut fashionably low, dipping to within a fingerbreadth of my waistline, tied across the top by a thin spaghetti strap. Loops and the free ends of the tie would drop casually onto the bare skin between my shoulder blades. In the small of my back, the dress closed with a brief column of those wonderful little black cloth-covered buttons.

Candace would have my entire ensemble ready in the garment bags before Charles, the chauffeur, returned with the limo.

Set to go with a few minutes to spare, I sat on the chaise lounge in my reading room and went over my checklist of things to do before this afternoon's soirée. Perfection lay in the details. Feeling satisfied as I ticked off the tasks already accomplished, I heard the day maid announce that the car waited in the drive.

After Charles held the rear door for me, Candace handed him the garment bag.

She sat beside me, notebook open, pen in hand. I stared out the window at the country scenery on our way into town, wondering what my husband was up to right then. Was he thinking of me as I was of him? I doubted it. He would be way too busy. Later, this afternoon when he saw me, it would all change. Of that, I was sure.

No time for daydreaming. There was work to be done. I would meet Richard much too late for lunch, so I wanted to stop for something to eat. The date with my dearest would be a long one.

Candace suggested a small, intimate café along our way. "The food is quite good, Mrs. Moran," she said. "And we can have our privacy."

When I agreed, she confirmed the change with Charles and called the restaurant on her cell phone, leaving the message for a table in the back at 12:30.

I also wanted the Bentley for the ride home from this special engagement with my husband. The added opulence would be the perfect way to end the day. Into the notebook and passed along to the chauffeur, this detail was likewise scheduled.

CHAPTER TWO

The first stage on the day's journey wasn't far. The spa team was there to greet us at the door. Helena tut-tutted it was no problem for me to arrive so early. She understood perfectly.

I had my favorites among her staff and, though the notice was short, they were all there, ready to perform. After all, I was one of the spa's best customers.

With Candace at my side, Helena escorted me across the foyer, grandly expansive with her plans for my care. "Actually, I am glad you made it here before your planned appointment. I was having difficulty packing a half-day schedule into the few hours it looked like you could give us. Now with the extra time, that won't be a problem, *ma chéri*," she gushed in her faux *Parisienne* accent that hid a little secret I knew about her. She was from Cleveland.

"I thought a soak and shampoo followed by a leisurely massage would do very well to get you relaxed. A gentle skin treatment, nothing drastic, and, of course, a manicure and pedicure are in order. That should leave plenty of time for your hair and make-up.

"You shall attire here with us, *n'est-ce pas?*"

When I told Helena it would be ever so more convenient to do so, she agreed completely, "You don't want to be hurried for such an important occasion. After all, we will have done so much to insure your serene composure."

By then, we were in the changing suite where attendants helped me undress and put on my white, downy spa robe and fluffy slippers. In minutes, I lay on the cushion in the bathing pool. My head rested in a padded brace, my hair loosened from its functional do and pulled back over the edge of the pool, cradled in a ceramic washing basin.

My bikini-suited bathers collected on both sides of me in the water. They spread the rose petals I liked so much and poured the perfumed bubble bath into the steaming, soothing water.

The one on my left bent down and whispered discreetly, asking if I wanted a "fulfilling" wash today, a spa euphemism for the obvious something more.

I considered it. However, in anticipation of seeing my dear husband, I reluctantly declined.

As the multiple Jacuzzi jets swirled the water and raised the flower petals in a cloud of scented bubbles, Trish, my hairdresser, began washing my hair with her always-sensual technique. On other days, she and I usually would usually banter good-naturedly at this point.

Today, however, she remained silent, sensing how important it was I center myself for the special time ahead with my husband.

During the luxurious rhythms of the massage that followed my ablutions, I let myself go into thoughtless relaxation. Under my masseuse's expert hands, sinking into the padded cushions of my massage table, I melted like butter on a hot, humid day. When she was done with me, I felt as tranquil as a Persian cat sunning on her mistress' sofa cushions.

Much as I wanted to lie forever in that languid luxury, I knew I mustn't tarry. I allowed them to redress me in my robe and slippers and lead me into the beauty parlor. There my cadre of estheticians waited to care for me.

Though I had so often sat in the beauty lounge chair for a complete care treatment, it felt as luxurious this time as it had the first time. Having a crew of gorgeous women accomplish a manicure, pedicure and hair brushing simultaneously while I sat back in complete repose was an incomparably blissful experience.

Before our first date, Richard had arranged a spa day like this for me. I remember it made me feel like a princess as I anticipated his arrival. When the limo stopped at curbside and the driver opened the rear door revealing him, smiling expectantly and gorgeous in his black tuxedo, I was thankful to be so well prepared.

To say he swept me off my feet would be an understatement. We certainly wasted no time. By that evening, we were fated lovers. By the weekend, magically betrothed.

Richard and I were an acutely disparate couple.

He was much older. From conspicuously humble beginnings, he rose by sheer determination to astonishing wealth. My background was blue blood, but the funds to back it up were long gone.

Before I met him, I worked my way through college at the state university in a variety of skilled and unskilled jobs. My summa cum laude degree in Classics was hard earned. My husband, on the other hand, was self-taught, wise not only in the business world where he obviously excelled, but also in the refinements he acquired as a true Renaissance man.

Richard was tall, dark, and strikingly handsome, built with the physique of a Greek god. I was tall, fair, and strikingly beautiful, built with the physique of a Greek goddess. Well, I suppose I must concede there were a few similarities between us.

As the ladies worked on me, I began to feel more animated and able to banter a bit with them as they went about their tasks.

By the time Elaine, my make-up artist, came in, my nails and feet were drying. I elected to go with a very traditional, pale pink polish, though Traci, my manicurist, added the white tips of a French manicure for that subtle touch of style. My toenails were similarly done.

My cosmetician knew my preference for as little make-up as possible, though today she did talk me into a very faint foundation under my favorite rose blush. "You want this beautiful look to last, now don't you, darlin'?" she asked with her faint Georgia inflection.

My hairdresser and I then discussed how I wished my coiffure achieved. She knew I generally wore my hair down, falling in gentle waves upon my shoulders and back.

Today, however, I opted for conservative. She brushed in a finishing cream illuminating my blonde highlights. Then she pulled my hair straight back from my forehead, folding and tethering it into an ornate chignon low on my head. Inspecting her work in the mirror, I thought, perfection! My sweetie would particularly like this stylish appearance.

Like a mother hen, Helena supervised her staff as they helped me into my outfit. My slinky silk panties were divine. The satin of the pubic triangle felt coolly sublime as it slid into position. I absently fingered the frilly strip of lace around the top as they carefully lifted my dress from the hanging garment bag. It wouldn't take much to get these tiny thongs off, I thought, feeling just a delicious little bit slutty.

Two attendants raised my dress over my head, deftly slipping the short cap sleeves onto my shoulders and sliding it past my tight little ass that puckered at the feel of the sensuous cloth.

Another attendant loosely tied the cords between my shoulders and took a moment or two to close the low cut back of the dress with the tiny velvet-covered buttons.

Helena adjusted the cowl and plucked at the shoulders so the front of the dress fit just right.

Soft crushed wool felt exciting against my bare breasts. I looked down to see my taut nipples faintly outlined against the black cloth.

I was eager to see if my lover would be as observant as ever this afternoon.

My Personal Assistant came forward with the jewel case and opened it on the table. She tenderly placed the diamond studs in my earlobes and attached the clasp of my diamond necklace so it hung short, just above the top of my dress. The matching bracelet dangled delicately from my wrist.

They all stepped back from me so I could assess my attire in the multi-angled dressing mirrors.

Just right, I thought. My husband approved the classy, but understated look so much.

When I nodded my approval, Helena came behind to help me into the full sleeves of my black fur coat. Candace tied the strings on the inside of the fur and primped up the collar about my neck and hair. The coat hung luxuriously down to my ankles.

As could only happen from someone who knew me so well, Helena reached for a long, slender box, wrapped in silver paper. "For later," she whispered as she hugged me close for a moment before we parted.

As Charles assisted me into my seat in the limo, I watched Candace complete my business with Helena that included an envelope with hefty personal gratuities for her and her staff. It was the sort of special day for me to be magnanimous all around.

I was ready for some champagne. A touch of bubbly would calm the nerves I felt rising. You would think with all the success we had—the business, the house, the car, the servants, the lifestyle—I wouldn't feel such a need to make a good impression. But, I did.

Great as my husband was to me, he was very particular about appearances and having things done the right way. At an important event like this, he would not want his beautiful young wife to give even the slightest hint of impropriety. I enjoyed the sense of well-being from the small measure of champagne, knowing my assistant would have a breath mint waiting for me when my glass was empty.

Gazing absently out the window, I let my mind wander as the limousine sped across the city heading to our interim stop. I nestled deep into my fur, remembering fondly the magic day of our engagement when I received the coat as my first gift from my fiancé lover.

I couldn't wait to see him. I was sure he would approve of my selections and would love how I looked. But then, he always loved how I looked.

Enough of these idle reflections, I thought. With my Personal Assistant taking notes to make certain all my requests were seen to, I made some slight additions to what I needed to bring our date to the highest levels.

I thought flowers would be nice for me to have. Candace placed the instructions with the florist. Some refreshments, perhaps? Taken care of. She was so efficient. Everything was coming together very nicely.

* * * *

Henri, the maitre d' of L'Enchant, met our car at the curb, opening my door before Charles could make it around. My Personal Assistant trailed a step behind as Henri escorted me through the main room of the café into an isolated niche in the rear overlooking a small waterfall dropping into a briskly running stream.

On our table was a petit bouquet of wild flowers. Pear and spinach salads with small bottles of Perrier already awaited our arrival.

Henri gallantly helped me with my wrap and held my chair while I settled before doing the same for my assistant.

During the first course, Candace and I chatted about how well this distinctive occasion for my husband was shaping up.

Knowing our time constraint, the staff delivered the main courses immediately after we finished our salads. My chicken breasts sautéed in white wine with asparagus spears and roasted almonds were simply delicious, so plump and tender. A lemon sorbet cleared my palate.

By the end of our meal, we completed the final details of the preparations. All that remained was to catch up with Richard and begin our magical date.

CHAPTER THREE

Back in the car, I could barely contain my anticipation. Each landmark we passed brought me closer to my dearest.

We rounded a sloping curve on the main road and the place where my darling waited for me loomed at the top of a gentle hill.

It was a mansion with modern styling, and sharp, clean lines. We pulled up to the front door, covered by a wide portico.

My Personal Assistant checked me over to be sure all was in order. She tucked an errant strand back into my chignon and puffed the tiniest amount of extra blush onto my cheeks. With a nod, she indicated I was ready to go.

As Charles came round to open the rear door and assist me from the car, Mr. Chetworth came down from the top step to greet us.

As I had when we first met yesterday, I critiqued his just-too-perfect appearance.

He must have been born in a suit, I thought. It fit flawlessly. The gold collar bar, the four-in-hand tie, the neatly folded, monogrammed handkerchief in the breast pocket, red carnation boutonnière, the crease of his pants that looked as if they could cut like a razor, the mirrored reflection of the sun in the shine of his shoes, all combined to denote a man for whom form mattered. His hair looked like it was freshly cut. His face was clean-shaven, but with a touch too much aftershave for my taste.

“Ah, Mrs. Moran, right on time. Your husband awaits. Won’t you come this way?” He rhetorically inquired in the fawning, overly solicitous tone I had come to expect from him.

We walked into the elegant grand foyer, the crystal chandelier shimmering in the reflection of both the sunlight and its own gracefully curved bulbs. The carpet was plush under foot and the pastel shaded walls were lightly soothing. A Pachelbel canon played softly in the background.

Feeling a bit chilled, I declined the offer to remove my coat just yet. Mr. Chetworth indicated we would be going down the broad arched hallway in front of us. I took his proffered arm as my Personal Assistant fell in behind. Halfway down the hall, we turned and walked through a doorway on the right.

Richard waited for me there on the far side of the room. The anticipation and preparation were all worth it. As I walked across to him, I automatically reflected on the things I found attractive about my sweetheart.

As always, his appearance was manly and meticulous. His hair sat just right, carefully parted and combed, the gray in his sideburns adding a touch of maturity to his otherwise youthful features. The moustache I liked so much, and not only for how it looked, but for how it felt when it went...well, you know where it went that I liked so much...was full and bushy, carefully combed.

His tanned complexion reflected the vigorous, outdoors lifestyle we both enjoyed.

I felt the wonderful definition of his muscular physique under the fitted tailoring of his favorite navy blue suit when I tenderly touched his arms and chest in greeting. It brought a wicked smile to my face.

It was, of course, a bit awkward as I bent over to kiss him gently for a brief hello. I wasn't used to greeting him all dressed up and lying down.

I stepped back to take in the tableau of the beautiful casket I had picked out for him yesterday as it now sat fully opened on its sculpted catafalque.

Mr. Chetworth, our funeral director, was right when he encouraged me to pick the cream interior. It perfectly set off the blue of his suit and the bright red fleur-de-lis on his power tie.

He looked so comfortable, so composed. If by chance he were to wake up and see the things I arranged for him, I thought he'd be pleased. Content, he could return to his eternal slumber.

* * * *

"Is it everything you hoped for?"

Lost in thought for I don't know how long, I reacted with a start.

Marguerite, his mortician, in charge of the technical aspects of his care, had come up silently to stand at my shoulder.

She was a serious, almost somber young woman, perfectly suited for funeral service. Of medium height and nicely proportioned build, she mixed an air of sincere concern with the poise of clinical distance. Professionally dressed, she wore a black slim skirt and tailored jacket. Her ruffled collar, white satin blouse added a feminine touch making the somber gravity of the rest of her outfit seem even more severe. She kept her hands crossed in front of her waist, looking like she was prepared to substitute as a Loved One should the need suddenly arise.

“You’ve done a wonderful job.” I dabbed a tear from the corner of my eye. “He looks so vibrant, so alive. I keep waiting for him to open his eyes and say, ‘Surprise!’ But then, I know that won’t be happening, will it?”

Our mortician considered this for a moment. “No,” she said slowly. “No, that won’t be happening.”

Nor was a sense of irony part of her job description, I thought, momentarily leaving my sadness.

I straightened my shoulders and centered my breathing. Whatever sorrow I felt, I had to maintain my station as the widow of such a prominent man. I had to remain controlled, aloof if necessary, regardless of the cost to me inside.

“Were there any difficulties?” I inquired with a forced detachment I hardly felt.

Yesterday in our at-need conference, Marguerite was forthright in discussing the problems post-mortem examination could have for my husband’s technical preparations. She indicated that the sooner she could begin his care, the better. As she succinctly put it, “Passing time means advancing decay.”

As CEO of a Fortune 500 company pumping millions into the local economy, my husband had accumulated a large number of favors over the years. To facilitate his funeral schedule, I called on some of these for him.

The responsible medical and legal officials stumbled all over themselves, only too eager to help. They promised to perform his autopsy expeditiously to comply with my wish to hold his memorial service as soon as possible. His medical history and the circumstances surrounding his death left little reason to doubt the outcome of the post-mortem examination.

Two nights before, I was in a downtown hotel at a charity fundraiser that ran into the early morning hours. My Personal Assistant and I decided to stay overnight in the company suite.

You can only imagine the shock when we came home in the morning to find my husband lying in our king-size bed, eyes staring wide, and very dead indeed.

With only a glance needed to tell he was gone, my Personal Assistant called our doctor and our attorney who both came over immediately. They set about making arrangements.

We knew my darling had an occasional problem with rapid heartbeat, an intermittent tachycardia. Our doctor had offered various treatment options, but Richard decided the side

effects were more troublesome than the problem itself. He considered his condition more of a nuisance than life threatening.

Well, that assessment was certainly suspect. Our doctor spoke with the medical examiner who agreed to a limited autopsy. If my husband's heart proved to be the fatal problem, they would accept dysrhythmia, his irregular heartbeat, as the cause of his demise and our doctor would sign the death certificate.

I was devastated, as you might expect. Candace was such a dear. With our lawyer, she handled the myriad of details needing my consideration.

By noon, my Personal Assistant determined the best mortuary in the area and we headed out to Chetworth Funeral Home for the at-need arrangements visit. Mr. Chetworth himself took the intake information and personally cared for our needs.

Born so poor, Richard appreciated the finer things his great wealth afforded him. I wanted his memorials to reflect this. I made it clear monetary concerns were not a consideration, so Mr. Chetworth showed me only top of the line items.

The Selection Room held a network of beautiful caskets. I liked the subtle, masculine formality of the wood styles better than the more feminine elegance of the metal ones.

A dark wood model caught my eye. Mr. Chetworth seemed pleased with my interest, whispering the descriptions in his almost British accent. He spoke softly as if he wanted to avoid disturbing his clients sleeping nearby.

"Oh, Mrs. Moran, this is a very special casket, indeed. It is a half-couch model where the foot portion of the lid and the throw drape cover the deceased's body below the waist for the viewing. It is ideal for male Loved Ones.

"The exterior is made of the finest mahogany, hand-rubbed to bring out the refined grain in a high gloss finish," he said, stroking the polished surface in an almost sexual caress.

"Notice the soft velvet interior. The smooth, cream color will coordinate very well with just about any attire you may wish your husband to wear for his visitation.

"As you can see, it is generously tufted throughout; the interior bed, cushions, lid panel and even the blanket that hides the view to the closed end of the casket.

"The pillow is such an important part of the display, since Waiting Ones tend to focus on the Loved One's face, of course. Having the pillow also covered in tufted material gives a final touch of elegance, don't you think?"

I agreed it would be the perfect casket for my beloved.

I ran the back of my hand over the fine velvet. Very soft, very comfortable. Having the most expensive model would please Richard, I thought. It certainly seemed to please Mr. Chetworth.

Many fine points needed decisions in order to have his services the next day. Candace coordinated with our house staff to deliver the clothes I wanted for Richard. As my personal memorial tribute, I made the selection of floral arrays to decorate his casket.

Between Mr. Chetworth's structured organization and the guidance of my Personal Assistant, we had things well under control before they were ready to serve us afternoon tea.

After those brief refreshments, our funeral director turned us over to Marguerite. She explained she would be caring directly for my husband's body, performing his embalming, setting his features, applying any necessary make-up and posing him in his casket. She wanted to make sure her work with him gave the pleasing results I expected.

I brought the formal photograph of Richard she had requested to give her an idea of how I wanted him to look.

At my urging, Marguerite described the steps she would use for my husband's embalming. If an autopsy disrupted the integrity of his vascular system, it would make things more difficult, but our mortician told me she could take care of any eventualities.

I made it clear I wanted only as much make-up for my darling as necessary for a relaxed, natural look. She assured me she would care for him exactly as I wished.

Before leaving Chetworth's, our doctor called with the results of my beloved's post. It was as we suspected, a heart attack, probably brought on by his tachycardia. "It was just too much of a strain for the muscle to handle. There were a number of infarcted areas; it was massive," he said, adding he signed the death certificate out as a fatal occurrence from natural causes. My husband was ready for release to the mortuary.

When I relayed this information to Mr. Chetworth, he said he had already stationed the retrieval car at the morgue in anticipation of this message. Richard was on his way to the funeral home as we spoke. The staff would make sure my sweetie was at his best for his ceremonies the next afternoon.

They accomplished all they promised exactly according to schedule.

* * * *

Initially, I could only stare at Richard, mesmerized by my lover as he lay “in repose.” Mr. Chetworth's creepy vocabulary had me thinking in funeral jargon.

Eventually, I broke from this pleasing focus to take in the full setting of his visitation suite.

It resembled an oversized, formal living room. Pale gray walls adorned with several paintings of pastoral scenes set the soothing tone. Soft lighting and a floral border added to the peaceful ambience. The furnishings included comfortable groupings casually placed throughout the room, each with a sofa, a few chairs, center and end tables.

I had asked Mr. Chetworth for arrangements of various fresh flowers on the tables. They were magnificent.

Candace had put together some photo albums for display as well. Most included a mixture of formal and casual photographs of Richard and me in various settings during our brief years together. Our large gold framed, wedding portrait, wreathed in flowers, sat on an easel just beside where I would stand to receive our guests.

My darling's casket lay in front of a deep blue velvet curtain topped by an abundantly ruffled valance stretched across the entire wall.

Floral tributes in profusion from friends and colleagues lined the passage from the side entry door to the front of the room, covered the front wall and surrounded the casket. There were dozens and dozens of standing sprays, and baskets and vases with sympathy flowers of every hue and type. Candace would certainly have a difficult task thanking all the senders personally in my name.

The funeral home discouraged themed floral displays such as wreaths and crosses and I agreed. Flowers arranged naturally were so much more suitable.

The casket spray of blood red roses I'd selected lay splayed over a table set off to the side, waiting for them to close the foot portion of the casket. I fingered the white satin ribbon draped casually through the lower half of the bouquet. “Beloved Husband” it read. So true.

With a rueful smile, I imagined how uncomfortable my sweetie would have been surrounded by all these flowers; his sinuses were very sensitive to their fragrance. At a similar session for an old partner of his, he jokingly moaned how he felt so stuffed up he wished it were he instead of his colleague lying in the casket. Now he was.

Taking in the entire setting, I was pleased with all the arrangements and thought Richard would have appreciated them, too. For my husband, the corporate giant who rose from next to nothing, it was the proper setting for his departure.

I looked back at our mortician and asked, "Were you able to complete the special enhancement we discussed yesterday?"

Despite her professional demeanor, Marguerite blushed. "Yes, Mrs. Moran. We at Chetworth's try to accomplish for our Loved Ones whatever their Grieving Ones request. I was able to do just as you asked."

"Thank you," I said. "And, now I would like to spend some time with my husband." Marguerite and Mr. Chetworth nodded politely and left us.

Candace stayed, removing my coat and draping it on the chair behind us, readily available should I feel the chill again. She returned to my side and placed her arm around my waist in respectful support.

I played with his hair lovingly. Then, I bent over to kiss him again, this time long and fully. I realized Marguerite had sealed his lips when my tongue would not penetrate. Ah, well, too bad, I thought. I made do with feeling the softness of his moustache and remembering where it had been such a short time ago.

My nipples tingled as wetness began to build in my vagina. I hoped my triangle of satin lingerie would be enough to prevent a visible stain. Though, in a perverse way, I would be proud for everyone to see how much my wonderful lover meant to me.

I moved the flaps of his suit coat aside and eased my fingers down below his belt buckle. His penis was erect and rock hard, the "special enhancement" I requested from our mortician. His post-mortem excitement was hidden under his jacket and, I guessed, would be further covered by the casket throw.

Stroking it ever so gently, I had my tête-à-tête with my darling lover.

"Richard," I whispered softly as I gazed intently at his still features. "I do believe your spirit can hear me. I am so sorry you are dead, my love. You were a wonderful husband and I loved you so, so much.

"I hope you like the arrangements I made for you. You really do look wonderful in your casket; so handsome and serene.

"There are masses of flowers from your friends. A great many called and sent messages of condolence. Wasn't that thoughtful of them?

"Do you like how I dressed for your funeral, my darling? Did you guess I am not wearing a bra? Are you seeing my nipples against my dress? I thought you would find that satisfying. Thinking about our last lovemaking together has me all wet, just as it did when you were alive and inside me.

"I know you enjoy the little favor I asked the mortician to do for you."

I gave his stiff penis a playful squeeze.

"Do you remember how you insisted on being called Richard whenever we were in public? Not Rich or Rickey, and certainly not Dick?

"Then, we became lovers and I showed you all the ways I could change limp Little Dickey into Big Dick, so long and hard and strong. You loved that name we gave your penis. I could get you like this by just whispering those words in your ear.

"Now, you will stay all excited and ready for me when I come to join you in eternity, my dearest." A tear dropped from my cheek onto his make-up.

My assistant's hand on my shoulder discretely signaled me it was three o'clock and the funeral people were returning. I replaced the jacket flaps, pecked his cheek and stood to face them. I was sure I would not need further blush to liven my cheeks and didn't care a bit.

"Mr. Moran's guests are arriving. We should finalize his arrangements," Mr. Chetworth said.

I stepped back as he and Marguerite efficiently set to completing the preparations for my husband's viewing.

The funeral director closed the lower half-lid of the casket. Marguerite placed the casket throw so the tufted portion lay precisely at the edge and carefully draped the smooth portion so it covered the bottom few inches of the suit coat. I was sure I saw a slight smile crease her lips as she did this. I was happy to share this little secret with her.

She looked intently at his face. She saw my tearstain on his cheek and the spot where my lipstick had smeared his. Her smile widened ever so slightly as she reached into her pocket and took out a small make-up kit. She reapplied some natural lip coloring and wiped his cheek before expertly hiding my loving marks under another thin layer of mortuary blush.

In seconds, Richard looked quite good again. The make-up was so perfect, I caught myself wondering which cosmetic line she used.

They swung the casket spray into place. Mr. Chetworth bustled at the floral arrangement, making it sit full and high on the lid with the petals just barely over the brim of the open casket edge. He fixed the ribbon sash so my words of endearment were prominently visible.

He stepped back, satisfied all was in readiness.

When I also indicated my satisfaction, he reached for his cell phone and spoke a few words.

From a side door, a trio of musicians—violin, viola and bass—walked over to a small alcove opposite the entryway and set up to play the selections of peaceful classical music my Personal Assistant had chosen. What a dear she was.

My funeral director guided me to a position by the side of the casket where I could see Richard easily.

Candace stood to my left and slightly behind so she could tactfully whisper the names of our guests as they finished their viewing and came to offer me their condolences. She knew everyone and how they connected with us. I don't know what I would have done without her.

* * * *

When Mr. Chetworth confirmed I was ready, he signaled our mortician who opened the entryway doors and escorted in the first guests to see my husband “lying in state,” as the funeral people so discreetly put it.

Mostly friends and neighbors came early. They stood singly or as couples, gazing down at him for a few moments. We were not particularly religious, so I did not want a *pres-dieu* for kneeling. However, they'd cleared a space among the flowers directly in front of the open portion of the casket so my husband's guests could come quite close to him.

As the hours moved on, it became a blur of "...so sorry...he looks wonderful...we will miss him...I could not believe it when I heard...how are you holding up...if there is anything we can do.”

His tennis partner shook his head as he told me how Richard beat him in straight sets just the day before his death. His secretary for many years was so distraught I wound up comforting her until Candace intervened to assist her outside. Members of our country club briefly related memories of good fellowship they had shared with Richard and then with us as a couple.

As the afternoon progressed, people from the firm started to arrive. The senior executives all attended, accompanied by their wives or significant others. These usually articulate men seemed awkward, tongue-tied, not knowing exactly what to say to a grieving widow who could have been their daughter.

Perhaps they were thinking how glad they were it was their boss and not themselves laid out in the opulent casket. Maybe they were plotting who among them would take over the reins of the company now that the old man was dead. Would I have a surprise for them!

Their women came uniformly decked out in expensive black dresses, most just a touch less traditional than mine. They were of an age and social standing where I knew each owned a few of these conservative variants of the little black dress especially set aside for funerals, some for the viewing and some for church.

Like peacocks preening for an audience, many wore their best dark furs and flaunted more glittering pieces of jewelry than the solemnity of the occasion called for. If the king was dead, the former queen would soon be gone. Long live the new queen; each hoped the crown was hers.

Soon I would show them. However, today it was all forced smiles and pro air kisses. Their commiserations were a bit longer, more stilted than their husbands' were, as they watched intently for my reactions. It was as if they were scoring my performance and evaluating how they would improve upon it when their turn came. Bitches!

A small group of the younger secretaries came next. They too wore black, but their dresses were more chic, more stylish. I had been there, living on even less than their salaries. The little black dress had to do duty for many different occasions, including this, the mourning attire for which it was originally intended. I knew, of course, that if one of their compatriots got married this weekend, the same dress would see action in a celebratory role.

Most of these pretty young women went through the viewing line and paid their respects with the perfunctory formulas that office protocol and decent manners required. With the big boss dead, all the underlings needed to make at least a token appearance. We would not see many of them at the evening services.

Several, however, stayed a few moments longer at the casket, touched my husband's arm or even his chest, or gave a backward glance at him before reaching me. These were the brightest, most beautiful ones. What they said was often a little more personal. Occasionally, some even tried to be vaguely profound.

They gazed at my diamond necklace as they spoke, raised their eyes to mine only at the last second and immediately looked away again, leaving as if they had touched a hot stove.

I knew. These were the ones my darling had fucked, was fucking or had been pursuing to fuck. They felt a little bit guilty, perhaps a bit afraid, as they came round to face me.

Little did they know they had nothing to fear from me. To each of them I gave a little extra attention, a slightly longer hug, or at least a rub to the arm, some sign of gratitude. For these were among the many other women who made my dearest happy.

* * * *

At the beginning of our marriage, I realized one of the things attracting me to my husband was his virility. His womanizing was legendary long before he met me and that was part of his allure.

During our whirlwind courtship, spur of the moment marriage and prolonged honeymoon, my feminine charms and sexual appetites enflamed him. As we settled into the inevitable routines of our daily life, however, I could see the tensions building.

I instinctively realized I had a decision to make. I could demand his impossible fidelity, something he would try mightily to uphold. However, I knew this would lead to unhappiness and recrimination for both of us.

My other option was to embrace his voracious and infinitely varied appetites, this fascinating dimension of his sexuality, and potentially make us both extremely satisfied.

When I chose the latter, I needed to find a way to let him know how much I wanted him to be happy in this special way.

I felt the anxiety peaking in the few days before his first scheduled business trip after we returned from our honeymoon yacht cruise in the Virgin Islands. As we anticipated his first overnight as a married man apart from me, I could tell the ambivalence he was having about his unspoken resolve to be faithful.

While he packed, I took some extra care in preparing myself from my morning shower. I came up behind him wearing only the satin chemise I had worn to our nuptial bed.

“Richard,” I said, slowly turning him round into my arms. “I have a present for you.”

He looked a bit surprised when he saw a small, neatly wrapped box with a red ribbon tied in a bow, instead of what he first concluded about the present based on my attire.

Before letting him kiss me, I insisted he open it and see what lay hidden inside. When he lifted off the top and saw a condom unwrapped on the fluffy cotton, his forehead furrowed and he opened his mouth to speak.

I tenderly put my index finger to his lips and handed him the scented letter that had taken me all the previous day to write. I watched intently as he read the words that by then I knew by heart.

My dearest,

What I really want to do is to make you exquisitely, extremely, fully happy.

If I asked you to be mine exclusively, I know how hard you would try. I also know how much the trying would frustrate you.

So, I won't ask you to deny what is so much the essence of who you are, since it is all of you that I love.

When you are away from me, whether it be for a short time or long, I don't want you even trying to be faithful.

While you are the only man I want, I know I am not the only woman you lust after. But, I do want to be the only woman you love.

So long as you know to come back to me, I want your boundless energy to explore and expand wherever it takes you when we are not together.

I ask only two things I know you will do because you love me: first, be discreet, so you never embarrass me, and second, don't bring anything home with you...hence the condom!

Your ever-devoted lover

I know there are not many women who would even consider giving this kind of present and all it entailed to their new husband. But then, no other woman was married to my Richard.

I realized many considered me nothing more than a trophy wife, a term I hated for the limitations it placed as much as for its derision. I knew I was much, much more. And I knew to the depths of my being that giving Richard liberty to enjoy his appetites was to bind my dearest to me absolutely and forever.

When he finished reading this, my lover looked up at me. By then, I was wearing a smile and nothing else.

Needless to say, he never made it to that day's original destination.

When he was happier, I was happier, which made him happier, an endless cycle. Now that he was gone, I could be thankful to the short-term lovers—including those from his office staff—who made him happy, increasing the spiral for us all.

* * * *

Following the office pecking order, the junior executives came last. Many were accompanied by companions, but a fair few were single. All were still young enough to feel invincible. This confrontation with the reality of their ultimate future embarrassed them. While some were overtly ambitious young women, the majority were hard driving men, bold like fighter pilots in the demanding ways of high finance. Some were even bold enough to see me in their future.

Waiting in line before the casket, one of them had the nerve to give me a come-hither look. That might be okay in the jungle of a singles' bar, but this lioness would not put up with it at my lion's funeral.

I could see his mates knew full well about his effrontery. They waited anxiously to see what I would do.

When he stepped up to offer me his condolences, I smiled brightly at him and drew him close as if he were a special friend to my darling and me. Through gritted teeth, I whispered in his ear, "If you looked at me like that before today, my husband would have cut your balls off. Look at me like that again, and I'll be the one to perform the surgery."

I put him back at arms length and sweetly said, "And thank you so much for coming."

His pained expression and hasty departure made it clear to the rest of the young studs there would be no fooling around with the decorum of their boss' memorials by making any advances on his lovely—but venomous—young widow.

This proved the only real hitch in the visitation. In the passing hours, it seemed like hordes of people arrived to pay their respects and by the end of the viewing I felt emotionally spent.

Around six thirty, Mr. Chetworth and Marguerite discreetly requested that our guests adjourn to the chapel in preparation for my husband's services.

When the last had departed, Candace accompanied me back up to the casket to see my lover again.

He fared pretty well through it all, I thought. Marguerite made a few minor adjustments to his hair and face where the mourners touched or stroked him. Some had moved his hands a bit, squeezing them in farewell. She repositioned them, wiping a small smudge off his polished wedding band.

It was time for my husband to get ready for his departure. Though the casket would remain open for the service, this was the last private time I would have with him.

As I gazed down on my dear Richard, I was glad Marguerite had given him such a contented look, including a little upturn at the corners of his lips. I thought he looked pleased with the proceedings.

I straightened his tie, then held his hand for a long, lingering moment.

After maintaining my composure for so long, I couldn't help myself. Tears rolled down my face as if a spigot opened. My assistant comforted me, putting her arm around my shoulders with a sympathetic squeeze. Marguerite tactfully offered a tissue.

This was no way to say farewell. I wanted my dearest to remember me with the most enchanting expression on my face, the one that captivated his heart and his mind, as well as his dick. My eyes should be clear, my demeanor reassuring. I needed him to see I was strong, able to move forward.

I dried my tears and gave him the biggest smile I could possibly muster. My lips quivered as I bent over to provide him a deep and everlasting kiss on his cool, painted lips.

As unobtrusively as I could, I reached my hand under the casket throw to see how well his erection fared. Ah, still stiff as a board. Good, old Big Dick was always the best at hanging hard for the long haul.

Candace eased me back away from the casket and we turned toward the waiting room in the back of the suite. She had things set up to ready me for his services.

A bagel with cream cheese and lox along with a mineral water were just the lifts I needed. A quick fix to my make-up took only a few moments and I looked presentable again. My Personal Assistant worked wonders.

When I indicated I was ready, she helped me back into the luxurious, black folds of my long fur coat.

After making sure my hair was flawless, Candace removed the shiny silver wrapping and opened the gift Helena gave me before I left the spa. She lifted up a fine, ultra sheer black veil.

Raising it straight and high into the air, she laid it across my face until it fell down my back and shoulders to rest at elbow length. A wide band of satin kept the edge in place.

This new addition to my attire dropped a filmy haze over my vision that I only recalled from one previous occasion—our wedding. How was that for symmetry?

CHAPTER FOUR

Mr. Chetworth and Marguerite had my husband closed up in his casket to make the short trip into the chapel for his services.

Wordlessly, a squad of handsome, young men attired in uniform black suits appeared. At the funeral director's signal, they smoothly lifted the casket onto the velvet-draped church cart and rolled their burden to the double doors of the visitation suite.

My Personal Assistant brought over the full bouquet of white roses I had her order from the car for me to carry in the funeral procession. She positioned them in the crook of my arm. I thought they looked particularly fine contrasted against the black fur of my coat.

Marguerite took her position fore and I stood aft, with Mr. Chetworth on one side and Candace arm in arm with me on the other. I was thankful for the support as we solemnly brought my darling on his final journey.

Two members of the Chetworth staff stood at the Chapel entrance like silent sentries as our procession advanced down the long corridor toward them. Mr. Chetworth stopped us for a moment to face them. When he was sure that everything was perfect and I was ready, he nodded for his subordinates to open the doors.

The chapel, abuzz with nervous energy, fell silent. Overhead lights dimmed until only the petite fixtures surrounding the walls remained like candles in a cathedral. An organ played a measured prelude as we slowly walked in solemn cadence up the center aisle towards the bier, my husband's final stage. A brace of spotlights focused from the ceiling brightly defined our destination.

All eyes focused on the two objects of paramount interest, the casket and me.

Rows of flower baskets and columns of standing sprays lined the chapel's front and side walls. Ahead lay a faux altar, its wide platform topped with thick carpet and sitting on a skirt of dark blue, ruffled satin. In front of this, the polished wood catafalque inlaid with gold waited to receive the casket.

The minister providing ecclesiastical support for the funeral home stood patiently behind a lectern to one side of a midnight blue velvet curtain.

As they settled my darling on the bier, I turned to sit in the winged back chair isolated from the first row of mourners. I arranged my fur demurely across my knees as I sank back into the soft, cushioned leather to take my consolation from the service. My assistant adjusted my veil and then took her place in the upholstered chair offset behind my aisle seat.

They opened the casket's half-lid so my husband presented a stately appearance just as he had at his viewing. Mr. Chetworth replaced the casket spray over the closed portion of the lid while Marguerite fluffed my sweetheart's pillow. It was such a nice touch.

Organ music came to a smooth halt with a lovely chord poignantly held until the mortuary staff completed their tasks. The funeral director took a moment to survey all the arrangements. Satisfied, he nodded for the minister to begin.

Our funeral director had advised the reverend I did not want a long drawn out affair. His comments were appropriately bland and thankfully short.

I had asked the company's executive vice president to deliver the eulogy. This was not because of any particular close relationship he had with my husband or me. Rather, I knew how much the VP disliked speaking in public, so I had confidence he would keep his formal remarks mercifully brief.

"...here to mourn the passing...knew and respected...raised an industrial empire from an impoverished background...sorely missed...all of us need to be there for his loving wife..."

Like the banalities I'd heard on the receiving line, I counted on the eulogist to produce a litany of clichéd praise for the departed and of sympathetic good wishes for me. I bet that if my darling's spirit still hung around, he would get quite a chuckle out of this morbid display.

As the words of the eulogy droned on, I daydreamed that Richard and I lay in our bed watching his funeral like a movie. I started to get really turned on. He was kissing, licking and then sucking my breasts. His hand caressed between my legs, moving toward the wetness building in my vagina...

My Personal Assistant broke my reverie. She stood in front of me, hand outstretched, offering her assistance for me to stand. I smiled my thanks as I touched a tissue to my suddenly wet cheek, handed her my bouquet and rose to pronounce my public good-bye to my husband.

With Candace at my side, I walked up to the casket with as much gravity and dignity as I could muster.

I ran my hand slowly, lovingly along the polished, smooth mahogany. Though I had touched it before, the sensuality of this centerpiece for his services surprised me. I took in a long breath of the fragrance of the roses atop the casket. How pleasant!

I looked down at my magnificent lover lying there so still. My goodness, he was handsome. I reached over to hold his hand for a moment's encouragement. I didn't want him to go. But, I also knew it was time to lay him to rest.

I left his side and walked steadily over to the podium. You can do this for him, I told myself. Taking in a deep, cleansing breath, holding it momentarily and then letting it go, I began my tribute.

I briefly thanked our guests for coming to honor my dear husband. I spoke wistfully about what a wonderful man my darling was. Barely able to control my tears, I dwelled on how fantastic our married life was together. Then, it was time to conclude.

As I removed my wedding band from my ring finger, I said, "Three short years ago, I stood with Richard before another altar as we pledged our troth. He placed this ring on my finger as a 'sign of fidelity...until death do us part.'

"Now, as a symbol of the fulfillment of that promise, I am returning my wedding band to him. It will soon become part of him forever."

Since my fingers were so much smaller, I placed my ring on his left pinkie. I pressed his fingers together so our wedding bands touched. Bowing into the casket, I kissed each of the rings in turn and then, one last time, I kissed my darling Richard fully on the lips. There would be no need to repair that smudge. It would be his for eternity.

Tears fell again. I could not help it. Candace came forward. She returned my bouquet for me to hold and escorted me to my place just at the side of the altar. Trying to find bravery, I stood crying softly, using up tissues as fast as she supplied them.

Our funeral director and mortician stepped up. Mr. Chetworth stood at the head of the casket and manipulated the controls lowering the pillow back until my husband again lay flat.

Marguerite made her preparations for closure. Like a mother tenderly tucking her sleeping child in for a nice, long nap, she lifted the casket throw from under the floral spray. She carefully laid it across the width of the casket so the tufted half was just below his hands. She flattened it down gently, removing any wrinkles. I thought I could see a slight hump in the cloth in the appropriate place, but maybe this was just wishful thinking.

Next, she lifted the casket cushions overflowing the open sides and tucked them in around his head and body. Looking back to me, she acknowledged my nod and slowly closed the casket lid, barring my Richard from sight forever.

Mr. Chetworth came around and moved the spray of sweet-scented roses back to the center of the casket. On cue, I stepped forward to add my white bouquet to the top. It made for a poignant combination of colors.

I was having my dearest cremated. Somber notes of organ music signaled the final moments had arrived.

The pallbearers returned. They rotated the bier so the head of my husband's casket angled towards us. He was on the brink of leaving us, permanently leaving us.

The lead pair moved back a portion of the satin cloth forming the altar's skirt, revealing two aisles on either side of a low portion of the platform, much like the runway at a fashion show.

They lifted him off the catafalque and onto rollers embedded in the platform leading back toward the curtained rear wall. With military precision, they moved my darling slowly toward the drapery.

As the casket approached, the velvet curtains lifted as if on cue, revealing a steel door also rising in coordinated cadence.

The funeral director and mortician inconspicuously circled the altar, arriving center stage from opposite directions. Marguerite stood in front of the casket at my husband's head. Mr. Chetworth stood beside her, looking towards me, waiting for my signal.

I allowed myself a long pause before I summoned the courage to nod my assent for them to proceed. He silently communicated this to Marguerite, who pushed my husband the final few feet into the crematory.

Mr. Chetworth lowered a small lever by his side. The metal door slid down without a sound, ending with only a barely discernable shudder. The curtains then slowly lowered back into their original position.

Like the calm sea after a torpedoed ship sinks beneath the waves, the chapel looked just as it had when we arrived not a half-hour before.

The funeral director moved to the lectern and said, "This concludes the funeral services for Richard Moran. On behalf of Mrs. Moran, Chetworth Funeral Home would like to thank you for attending his observances.

"As you exit, please note the list of charities Mr. Moran favored. Donations to these worthy causes would honor him."

With that, the organ resumed its low, soothing harmonies and the guests filed back down the long aisle.

A few of our friends came over for some parting words and, most often, reiterated their offers of assistance for the difficult days ahead. They were so nice. I could muster just enough good manners to be gracious, assuring them I would get through this somehow.

When the company vice-president came over with his matronly, over-dressed wife, I thanked him for delivering the eulogy. In a patronizing tone, he said, "Now, Mrs. Moran, we don't want you to worry about a thing. The Executive Committee will manage all the fiscal and operational matters for the company until we sort out your husband's interests and..."

He was about to go on, but I cut him off short.

Every day my husband was home, he and I spent some part of the evening going over his business. He loved his work and I loved him, so I loved his work. All those late nights with spreadsheets and business plans were about to pay off.

Everyone thought of me as a lightweight, merely eye candy, or that term I so hated, a trophy wife.

However, I had a sense for seeing to the heart of a problem, the nut of the deal, the unavoidable question needing an answer. More importantly, I had the intuition to know how to answer that question, turn that nut and even cut that heart out of a problem, if need be.

My sweetie loved that hard, ruthless side of me. He soon learned to take my advice, to both our profits.

"That won't be necessary," I told the VP. "I am the sole beneficiary of my husband's estate, including his controlling interest in the company."

My fingers instinctively sought my engagement ring, the intimate symbol of his love I held so close. My darling, give me strength, I prayed.

"Please have the Board of Directors convene on Monday morning, so I may inform them of the new management plan my husband and I were developing. His untimely demise simply necessitates the more rapid implementation of these changes."

"See that your letter of resignation and those of all senior executives are on my late husband's desk, by start of business, Monday. No, that would be on *my* desk now, wouldn't it? I will decide whose I will accept and whose I will be retain."

Noting the stunned look on his pompous face, and the venomous glare on his wife's, I stepped back saying pleasantly, "Thank you both so much for coming. And, of course, you have my special gratitude for your kind words on his behalf. Now, if you will excuse me, some final matters need my attention."

My Personal Assistant nodded her affirmation and stepped forward to escort the flabbergasted couple away. I think the wife seemed even more taken aback than he was.

Tough, it was my show now.

Mr. Chetworth came right behind. He went over a few more details and then we were ready to go.

Walking back up the chapel aisle, I could not help myself. I looked back to the closed curtains behind which my honey lay waiting for the cleansing flames. I knew they would take good care of him.

As a priority client, Richard underwent cremation immediately as I requested. Even if it took a few hours, I was adamant. I would not leave the mortuary without my husband. Now, nothing remained for me to do but pass the time with my own private memorials.

Mr. Chetworth conducted us to a wide, winding stairway leading up to a short corridor on the second floor. He opened the door labeled with a metal plaque, "Closure Chamber." We would wait here for the fire to do its work.

I walked in with my Personal Assistant. She removed first my veil and then my coat.

She guided me onto a chaise lounge in front of a large picture window. It overlooked a moonlit hillside on the rear property of the mortuary, very uplifting. The subdued lighting and the classical harp music added to the tranquility.

Away from public scrutiny, I finally allowed myself a serious drink, a single malt Scotch from my sweetheart's personal stock. Candace had insured it was waiting there for me.

I took a healthy pull, feeling the burn from my throat to my toes. I poured two fingers in another glass, inviting my Personal Assistant to share in this personal tribute.

She joined me in toasting my husband, my great friend, my passionate stud's passing.

For a while, we sat in silence. Then gradually I could talk about him, recalling the good times, the best times with my dear, sweet lover.

Candace listened intently and then offered her own reflections on the ardent devotion she witnessed flowing between my sweet Richard and me. Her solace made the seemingly endless time pass more quickly. I needed that loving comfort to make sense of all that had happened so very quickly.

A discrete knock on the door heralded the closing act in this tragic play, the one I anticipated, yet truly dreaded.

Marguerite came in first with Mr. Chetworth behind her. Like a votive offering, she held an urn made of twenty-four carat gold. It had a rounded body tapering into a narrow neck perched on a circular base.

I knew exactly what it contained, but waited patiently until our mortician made the formal presentation.

She said in her solemnly professional voice, “Mrs. Moran, these are the remains of your late husband. His cremation followed upon conclusion of his services. I am delivering him to you immediately after his rendering, as requested.”

I took the precious jar from her. It still felt faintly warm to the touch. Though weighty, it was still lighter than I expected. So much of a man reduced to so light a load.

I asked, “And were my instructions carried out?”

“To the letter,” she replied. “As soon as the casket cleared the threshold into the crematory area and the curtains closed, our staff began their work with him. They removed him from his casket and laid him on the table for undressing. With great care, they removed his clothes.”

“All of them?” I asked.

“All of them,” she responded. “Completely naked, as you directed. By then, I had finished my responsibilities with your guests and was there to supervise the cremation proceedings personally.

“I washed off his make-up—”

“Except?” I anticipated.

“Except his lips where you kissed him before closure. You wanted that area retained intact for his cremation. Your lipstick mark and both your wedding bands were the only external things going into the crematory with him.”

“You prepared the oven as I asked?” I continued.

“It was fully cleaned and then minutely detailed before your husband was cremated. These cremains are his and his alone,” she said, indicating the urn.

“Did the procedure go as you said it would?”

“Everything went according to protocol. Our superheated oven reduced Mr. Moran's body efficiently and I brought his ashes up to you as soon as they cooled sufficiently.”

I thanked our mortician and funeral director for the extra attention Chetworth's took with my husband's care. In response to Marguerite's offer for aftercare services, grief counseling, support groups and the like, I demurred, saying I would consider it if I felt the need.

Candace stepped in politely, saying, “The car is ready, Mrs. Moran.”

She slipped the fur onto my shoulders. We left, sorrowful burden in hand.

As I settled into the rear seat of the Bentley, I placed my darling politely on the seat between my Personal Assistant and myself. I stroked him gently all the way home.

CHAPTER FIVE

Candace guided me up the front steps of the house and into the formal living room. She gently lifted the urn from my arms and placed it on the coffee table in front of us. It seemed as good a temporary resting place as any.

The servants had been sent off, so my Personal Assistant set about pampering me.

In the adjacent powder suite, it was out of my funeral garb and into white, satin lounging attire: wide, flowing pants, long-sleeve, open neck top and hooded robe. She brought me back to lie on the long couch in the living room and tucked an over-sized white mink comforter around me. I stretched out exhausted on the soft, velvet-covered cushions.

She let out the chignon that had kept my coiffure perfect through the day and reached over for a hairbrush from her traveling kit. With long strokes, she slowly swept the updo from my hair.

Her tender care opened the floodgates. I turned into her shoulder sobbing, grieving the loss I felt for my husband.

My Personal Assistant held me in a tight embrace for the longest time, rhythmically rubbing my back and shoulders.

When my tears finally subsided, she tenderly pushed me back onto the cushions of the sofa. She slipped out of her suit jacket, carefully unbuttoned her silk blouse and undid the clasp of her bra, letting it fall to the ground.

I rested my head on her beautiful breasts, now freed from their restraints. Perhaps I imagined that her soft globes had become engorged, but the tightening of her nipples and her sighs as I licked and then suckled them were certainly real.

I stared up into her deep blue eyes. "Candi, darling," I asked. "We did the right thing, didn't we? Tell me we did the right thing."

She didn't answer immediately. Instead, she silently finished undressing and then, with slow, excruciating care, she did the same for me. At each step of the process, we paused to feel, to touch, to taste.

It was delightful, maddening; just as it had been the first time Richard actually did go on a business trip...and every trip of his thereafter. What was a horny girl like me to do home alone all day? I was dying for someone to love me whenever my darling was away.

Now, however, that was mercifully all behind us.

Naked, Candi and I crawled back under our fur cocoon.

Emotionally spent, I was content to snuggle quietly in her arms. She said she considered giving me the simple answer to my question. But, she knew saying only "...yes, we did the right thing..." wouldn't be enough. She stroked my hair and angled my face down toward her breast again.

It had been so hectic. Since finding Richard dead in our bed, this was the first chance Candi and I had to be alone and to talk without fear of our conversation being overheard.

She reached over to pull the fur closer around our entwined bodies. "You know there was no choice, don't you? We had to do it.

"You promised your husband you would give yourself to no man other than him. You were faithful to that promise."

I looked up into her eyes. "I was faithful to that, wasn't I? I promised my darling Richard I would never give myself to another man. And I never, never did, *m'amoureux*, did I?"

Candi returned my gaze intently. Her index finger's long, lacquered nail teasingly traced down the line of my jaw and onto the far side of my neck. "How could your husband know a woman would come between you two? And how could he know that I was that woman?"

Her hand settled tantalizingly on my breast. "It was too bad. Things were going along so well for all of us. Your relationship with him was so sweet and your intimacies with me were, well..."

Candi bent over to my breast, giving it a long, full kiss that ended with her tongue licking my nipple before parting in a long, sweet suck. I could feel my desires rise and the wetness build between my legs.

"Then, when he started hitting on me, you couldn't help but see how it put us in an absolutely untenable position," she continued, with that little pout in her voice I just adored.

She licked my ear lobe and whispered, "You know what he was like. He was not a man to take 'no' for an answer."

Of course, she was right. I wanted to thank her so, so much. I turned to kiss her lightly all about her face, forehead, cheeks, eyelids, nose, and finally lips. I felt so grateful for her insights, her caring, her love.

She accepted my unspoken gratitude, then pulled back just a bit to continue going through the rationale we'd reviewed so many times before. "If I turned down his advances, I would've been like all the others who didn't succumb to his charms. You know he would have summarily discharged me."

In slow, graceful strokes and swirls, she began to fondle my breast. "Then where would we have been? If, on the other hand, I became his lover, you and I couldn't have continued. Three is an odd number Richard would never have tolerated.

"For us to be together, your dear husband had to go. We both saw that, didn't we, my pet."

She needed to know I understood we were on the same page. I turned my head up to face her and pulled her to my lips. My tongue spread her kiss. She sucked me in deep and, in a tease, bit down before letting me pull away.

I took up on a piece of the story I already knew. "His problem with rapid heartbeat proved fortunate, didn't it? When he found out I was staying overnight at the hotel after the benefit show, he made all the clandestine arrangements for you to meet him at the house."

Candi let her fingers slide down my chest and abdomen until they made their way down to my pussy, by then aching with desire.

"After I arrived," she said. "He worked his enticing magic on me until he had me in your bed."

I could not help myself. I had to know. "Was it like this for him? Did you kiss him like you just kissed me? Were your hands as loving on his prick? Did you make him feel this good?" I moaned.

She did not answer immediately. After some wonderful caresses, she spread my labia and slipped in her index finger with infinite care and slowness. When she found my fondling spot, she played me like a maestro, allowing passion to build, getting me exactly where she wanted.

"Our foreplay was exquisite. Just as you, he went quickly to peak desire. You should be proud of how elegantly you refined him as a lover." She began sensuously stroking me, varying her rhythm to my response.

I nearly came.

But, Candi would not let me release. She stopped her strokes, held her finger steady and brought her lips down to my breast again. Nibbling down on my tit with just enough pain to regain control, she waited until I returned from the edge before picking up again.

"I rolled us over so Richard was on top. I spread wide to bring him deep inside me. His fervor was building to a crescendo, as you were just now, my love.

"I reached for the syringe we had taped to the back ledge of headboard on your side of the bed knowing this opportunity would eventually come to us. As he started his thrusting, I clasped my hands together behind his neck, pulling him onto me. That also gave me the chance to slip the cap off the needle."

She brought her middle finger in to join in my pleasuring. "Just as we planned, when he was closing in on climax, I grabbed his butt with one hand, using the other to inject the massive dose of adrenaline. It was enough to kill five men. He was so engrossed in fucking me, I don't think he even felt the needle stick him in the ass."

She started her rhythm again inside me. Hard then soft, quick then slow, to and fro, all around until I thought I could stand it no longer.

"What happened then?" I cried, in a plaintive wail. "Ohhhh, please, please tell me what happened then!"

For all our obsession with one another, Candi could be so wonderfully cruel sometimes. She waited until I was almost ready to plead again before continuing the story. "He stood on that sweet precipice of climax just as the overdose completed its circulation throughout his body. He had this look of ecstasy on his face. It glowed with a radiance just like yours is now, my lamb."

I moaned in anticipation.

"It was like this for him, wasn't it? Oh, please, please tell me it was," I begged.

"He was right on the threshold, as you are now," she replied huskily as my pleasure and her recall raised her excitement too.

Her thumb found my clit and tenderly began my end game, circling, stroking, teasing, polishing.

"My ear was on his chest. I could hear his heartbeat take off like a racehorse."

In between gasping breaths and pelvic thrusts urging my girlfriend for more, I managed to think how my pulse galloped as fast as his was in his last moments before the fatal strokes. Thank goodness, I was younger and in better shape.

"Then, his glorious orgasm and the drug's effects hit home together. His heart took off like the staccato of a telegraph."

Her thumb found the perfect rhythm and pressure. Then she administered the *coup de grace*, bringing her top finger forward to fire up my passion spot, pounding from me any semblance of control.

"Then it stopped. Just like that."

I could not stop. I came in grinding, exquisitely painful pleasure. As the sweeping orgasm engulfed me like a tsunami's pummeling waves, I only hoped my dear husband had some semblance of this bliss at the climax of his life.

Time stopped through volleys of passion, until, totally expended, I could only lie gasping, released back into Candi's consoling embrace.

I have no idea how long we were there, speechless, panting, sweating, until I finally collected my thoughts again.

"So, that was how he died?" I asked.

Candi sighed. "Yes. One minute he was pumping away. He hit the peak and came. Then, he had this puzzled expression, right before he collapsed on top of me."

I had to know. "There was no suffering? He was always so good to me. I never wanted my dearest to have any pain in his passing."

"That was all that happened. Pleasure? Ah, most certainly. But, no pain, certainly no suffering. In the throes of ecstasy one moment and then...just gone."

"You're sure?"

She paused, clearly savoring the recall of that vital moment. "I'm sure."

I gave her a long, soulful kiss acknowledging how difficult this must have been for her. She had done her very best to give my darling such a splendid demise, dying while fully engaged in what he most enjoyed.

"Getting him out from inside me and rolling him over were the only real problems I had. He stayed hard right through the end.

"As we planned, I carefully washed your husband's crotch, removing any trace of my secretions. Then I placed his hands around Big Dick at his very best, pulled the covers up and tucked him into bed."

Candi held my hands and gazed at me intently, sealing us in this together.

"I returned by the same clandestine route I came. You are my witness. I stayed with you in the hotel suite all night until we returned to the house together in the morning to find that dreadful surprise...right?"

I only needed to nod my agreement. Candi always saw things more practically, more objectively than I could. She continued like a teacher to her pupil. "We knew if we carried out the steps as planned, the police and the coroner would be only too happy to accept the simplest explanation. They would assume your husband had pleased himself and the excitement was too much for him, triggering his tachycardia.

"And that was just what happened," she sighed with relief and satisfaction.

I still needed more reassurance. "We're safe now, darling, aren't we?" I asked with a twinge of anxiety in my voice.

"Of course, we're safe, silly. With his death officially attributed to natural causes and his body cremated, what evidence is there of any crime? No, there is not a snowball's chance in hell they could ever catch us.

"Besides, my very lovely, very rich, and oh, so very, very grateful, newly widowed employer, we are the only ones who know the truth about the murder, now aren't we?" She gave a squeeze to my breast that ended in a pinch for my nipple just ever so slightly too hard.

There was no doubt about it. We were in this all the way together. We both knew neither of us could give up the other without implicating ourselves. In more ways than one, we remained tied at the hip, forever. For Candi and me, as it was with my husband, we were bound "...until death do us part."

I was so thankful for my wondrous partner's meticulous planning that secured our future with one another. That she executed a euphoric departure for my darling husband as well was a comforting bonus.

I adored Richard, but I agreed he could not come between my Candi and me. When it reached the inevitable moment of choice, there was only one way to go. Too bad for my dear husband. Wonderful as he was, and much as I truly loved him, how could I loose my darling Candi, my Sapphic affection?

I eased myself out from our embrace. Taking a throw pillow from the couch, I knelt in front of my now exclusive lover. I gently, slowly spread her thighs and lowered my face to her sopping wet cunt.

She was already so excited from pleasuring me, foreplay was barely necessary. My tongue took only seconds to find her pleasure sites. It certainly knew the way, having successfully accomplished this pursuit so many times since a week after dear Candi became my Personal Assistant. Our practice took the loneliness out of so many of Richard's long nights away.

From my angle, I could just see over my one darling's leg to gaze at my other darling in his urn. I felt content I'd done my best to put on a lovely funeral for him. You surely see this showed how much I loved him. It was a lovely last date, don't you think? I do so hope he understood.

Now, however, I had to move on. Too bad, dear husband, priorities you know.

In minutes, I had Candi coming in perfect ecstasy as only I so skillfully could.

"Oh my, oh my, ohmigawwwwd..." she cried out as I found the target we cherished, racking her in wave upon wave of sweet agony, ending in our blissful rapture.

Before I fell off to sleep, cuddled back in my darling lover's caring arms, I had unexpected trouble with some disturbing thoughts. Maybe the standing my co-conspirator thought she had was not really in my long-term best interests.

I inherited the money, the company, the position, the power. It was all mine and mine alone. For this to work, everyone had to continue seeing her as nothing more than my Personal Assistant. Of course, she would want much more. I realized, though, without me, Candi had nothing.

However, did I really need her any more? Would I ever be fully secure with her always lurking as a potential threat?

When I wake up, I thought, I'll have to deliberate this more thoroughly. Young women had rapid heartbeats, too, didn't they? After all, how hard would it be to get more adrenaline and another syringe?