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# Sacred Spots

By Selena Kitt

"Sacred spots." He whispered it like he was revealing something secret. I laughed. "Like polka dots?"

When he turned his face toward the window, I could still see his reflection, how tightly drawn his mouth and brow were now. He was so strange, wearing his three-piece suit and sneakers and carrying an old leather briefcase that he kept tucked between his legs and the seat. I was tempted to end the conversation there, but I had to admit that I was getting bored with this cross-country trek, even armed with a slew of paperbacks and my journal. He was strange, but he was interesting.

"I'm sorry." I put my hand on his arm. He turned at my touch. "I was just kidding. What do you mean, sacred spots?"

"Places of power." His voice was conspiratorial again. "Extraordinary things can happen there."

"Really?" I couldn't help smiling, and all I could do was hope it looked friendly and interested rather than mocking. "So, has anything extraordinary happened to you at one of them?"

"Well, not yet," he admitted.

"Where have you been?"

"So far, the Monk's Mound in Cahokia, Illinois, and the Angel Mounds in Indiana."

"Never heard of them." I slipped a piece of gum out of my purse. "What's next?"

"The Bear Mound in Iowa."

"Iowa has a sacred spot?" I nearly choked on my gum in an effort not to laugh.

"Yes." He looked very earnest. "Most of the sacred spots in the U.S. are actually native in origin."

"You mean they were made by the Indians?"

He laughed, and when he did, there were creases next to his eyes that made them seem even kinder. "Oh, not the Indians you study about in school. Native peoples from far, far back."

I nodded like I knew what he was talking about. "Before Sitting Bull and all those guys?"

He was still smiling at me. "The Effigy Mounds were constructed somewhere around 500 B.C."

"That's a long time ago." I stated the obvious as I offered him a piece of Juicy Fruit.

"They are truly ancient." He eyed the gum for a moment, and then slid a silver-foiled stick carefully out of the pack. "They are the belief system of a whole people built up right there on the landscape."

"So, wait, effigy, that's like a symbol, right?" I watched him carefully unwrap his gum and inspect the beige rectangle before putting it into his mouth.

"Correct." He looked pleased that I knew that. "Effigy mounds often look like certain objects."

"So let me guess, the Bear Mound-"

"Looks like a bear, yes." He nodded, and I watched with interest as he started to fold his little silver wrapper into some shape on his thigh. "Although you might not be able to tell at first glance. The one in Iowa is one hundred and thirtyeight feet long and sixty-five feet wide."

"That's huge!" I tried to figure out what he was doing with the gum wrapper.

"You can see it better in aerial photos." He paused in his origami project to set it on the window ledge and reach under his seat for his briefcase. He unlatched it and pulled out an eight-by-ten photo, handing it to me. I studied it. Someone had outlined the mound with white, and it looked like a child's drawing.

"Are they sure it's a bear?" I handed it back over. "It looks like a bloated coyote to me."

His hand touched mine as he took the photograph. That's when he saw the scars on my arm. It was too late for me to hide them. He frowned and grabbed my wrist, yanking my shirt up to my elbow, revealing even more of them. Shocked at his audacity, I gasped, jerking my arm away, my jaw tightening.

"Excuse me." I pulled my shirtsleeve down and stood. His eyes followed me, concerned, and I cringed at the look of compassion on his face. "I need to use the bathroom."

In the tiny cubicle, I rolled up my sleeves, looking at the scars on my arms that matched the set on my thighs. I never wore shorts or short-sleeves anymore. I hid them fairly well, most of the time. Most folks didn't even ask. I'd seen them

glimpse the angry red marks below my shirt cuffs, but they just looked away. People were too polite, believing it none of their business.

What was he thinking, pulling my sleeve up like that? I wondered. It had surprised me, but the look in his eyes had jolted me more. There was too much honesty there. I pulled my curly brown hair back into a thick ponytail and washed my face in the little sink. I made sure to roll my sleeves down and button the cuffs so they couldn't be pulled up too far.

When I got back, I found a folded, silver bear sitting on my seat. It was the gum wrapper. I picked it up and sat down without a word, digging my book out of my pack and opening it.

"I'm sorry."

I looked over at him. His eyes told me he really was sorry. I sighed.

"Thanks for the bear." I rubbed my finger over the shiny surface. "It's really neat."

"Can I ask what happened to your arm?"

I sighed, closing my book. "I happened."

He gave me a puzzled look.

"Do you really want to know?" I asked as I turned the silver bear over and over in my hand.

He nodded. "I don't ask questions that I don't want to know the answers to."

I believed him. Biting my lip, I looked at the bear in my hands. "I cut myself."

He paused. "It clearly wasn't an accident."

Taking a deep breath, I unbuttoned my other sleeve, pulling it up to show him the scars there. Some were still an angry red. Others had faded to a silverypink.

"It must hurt." He touched my arm, fingering a few of the more prominent marks. His touch was gentle, almost a caress. I couldn't remember the last time someone had touched me with such kindness. It made me want to cry, but I swallowed that feeling, putting on a happy face.

Shaking my head, I gave him a smile as I buttoned my cuff. "Not anymore."

"No, I mean the reason you cut yourself in the first place." His eyes were on mine, dark and knowing, and I looked away.

"Yeah." I turned my face to look out the opposite window, watching farms and fields passing by. We were quiet for a while, each of us staring out a window.

Then, he cleared his throat and said softly, "In aboriginal cultures, young girls often cut or burn themselves."

I faced him, frowning. "Really?"

"It's a rite of passage," he explained. "It serves as an adolescent initiation. Sometimes mothers are the ones to do the cutting. Sometimes the girls do it themselves."

I snorted. "Well, my mother didn't do this. but she might as well have." He nodded. "Do you still do it?"

"No." I put my knees up on the seat in front of me. "I've been safe for a year now."

His smile was almost sad. "Is that what they call it?"

"Drunks get sober," I explained. "Cutters get safe."

He shook his head, still smiling that sad smile. "Learn something new every day."

"Yep." I winked at him. "Me and effigy mounds, you and cutting."

He turned toward me a little more, his eyes moving over my face. "So, now that you know where I'm going, where are you headed on this Greyhound, Lexi?"

I hesitated and then realized how stupid that was. I'd already told him the most intimate detail of my life. "I'm going out to California to live with my sister."

"And your mother?" he asked. "Where is she?"

I frowned, shaking my head. "She is definitely not going out to California to live with my sister."

He touched my wrist, right at the edge of my shirtsleeve where my scars were visible. "Would you like to come to the Bear Mound with me?"

"Oh, William, I can't," I said, feeling a little sad. His invitation was sweet, and I found myself really wanting to go. "Iowa isn't my stop."

"You can catch a later bus." He tried again. His tone was earnest, and there was something so completely genuine about him that it made my heart ache.

I shook my head, feeling really regretful. "My sister is expecting me and..."

He smiled, his finger still tracing the edge of my shirtsleeve. His touch sent shivers through me. How long had it been since I let a man touch me? "The phone is an amazing invention."

I frowned at the silver bear in my hand and then slowly pulled my wrist away from him. "I'm sorry."

"That's ok." He crossed his arms and leaned back in his chair. "I just thought, well, extraordinary things can happen in sacred spots."

I sighed, also leaning back in my seat. "I think I've had enough of the extraordinary. What I'd like is a good dose of ordinary."

I slipped the silver bear into the front pocket of my jeans for safekeeping, closed my eyes, and turned my face away from him. It wasn't long before the gentle rumble of the bus's wheels put me to sleep.

\* \* \* \*

When we de-boarded in Dubuque for lunch, William asked me if I wanted to get something to eat with him. There was a McDonald's in the station. He ordered a fish sandwich and a Diet Coke. I got a cherry pie, small fries, and an orange Hi-C. He offered to pay, and I didn't say no.

"There's no food in your food." He stole a fry.

"But it tastes good." I licked cherry pie filling off my fingers. He watched me, drinking his soda and smiling. "So is this your stop then? What now?"

"Now I rent a car and drive out to the Bear Mound." He stole another fry. "I wish I could go." I sighed. "But we've only got an hour for lunch." "That's okay." He shrugged. "Maybe you'll get back to see it some day."

"Maybe." I was doubtful. I grabbed my last fry before he could, chewing it triumphantly as I crinkled up the bag. He laughed, but his smile faded when I went to toss it at the trash. I saw his eyes darken and realized my sleeve had pulled up again.

"You'd think people who love you wouldn't want to hurt you." William reached for my hand, turning it over and tracing the scar upward from my wrist.

I shrugged. "I think people who love you hurt you the most."

"On purpose?"

"I don't know. I guess she hurt me by accident." He unbuttoned my sleeve and I let him slide it up, his fingers mapping the scars there. "And I did this on purpose."

"So she loved you." His words startled me, and I looked up, meeting his eyes. There was tenderness and understanding there that made everything inside of me go quiet. "But you didn't love you."

"Maybe." I wanted to pull away, but I didn't. I let him stroke the tender skin on the inside of my arm. I let him because it felt good to be touched. It had been a long time since I'd been touched like that. I let him because I didn't want the moment to end. It felt magical, suspended in time, as if there were no one else, nothing else, just me and William watching his fingers wind their way through the path of my scars.

"My mother gave me up for adoption." He didn't stop touching me. I felt his finger and thumb encircling my wrist, his fingertip tracing circles now, new patterns over the old. "Another one of those accidental hurts." It was like we both

were entranced by his words and the slow spirals he was making. "Our first love comes from our personal mother, but she isn't the source of love, you know."

If I had stepped outside of myself in that moment, I would have laughed at our conversation. But I didn't. I was lost in the moment, and so was he.

"Love is universal. It's all around us, all the time."

There was a voice in my head telling me this was silly, stupid, sentimental. There was another voice, William's voice, or maybe it was a voice beneath his voice, low and steady, telling me what he was saying was the truth.

And then he stopped, slowly buttoning the sleeve to my blouse. "Want me to walk you back to the bus?"

"Sure." That was all I trusted myself to say.

William was still carrying his briefcase, and I had my backpack slung over my shoulder. I took his hand when we crossed the street. He looked surprised for a moment, but then he just squeezed.

"Didn't you see the sign?" The bus driver glanced up as I boarded the new bus. "Mechanical difficulties. There's going to be quite a delay."

I stared at him, my mouth open. Glancing back at William, I saw that he was smiling. "Perhaps a sign?" He pointed. I glanced in the front window and could read it, even backwards: Mechanical Delay—New Departure Time 6:00 p.m.

A sign, I thought. Indeed. My eyes met his, and I smiled back at him. "How far is the Bear Mound?" I asked as I hopped off the bus.

He shrugged. "About sixty miles. We can be there and back before six."

I took his hand again. "Okay. Let's go."

\* \* \* \*

"This is it?" I asked as we veered off the trail. It had been a long hike, and my feet hurt. Now I knew why William wore tennis shoes.

"Yes." He pointed to the sign: Great Bear Mound.

I stopped to catch my breath since we'd been hustling down the trail and cocked my head, trying to see any resemblance to a bear. It looked like large grassy knoll to me, surrounded by trees.

"It's nice." I felt a little disappointed.

"Come here." William extended his hand toward me, his briefcase still clutched in the other one. I took his proffered hand and followed. He walked slowly around the mound, leading me and talking all the while. "Native peoples believed that these sites had the power to heal the body, or enlighten the mind, or even awaken a soul to knowing its true purpose in life."

He made a curve right, and I followed him around. "The bear is a powerful symbol, full of primal power and gentle strength."

His words were hypnotizing as we walked around the outline of the bear on the ground. It was like some sort of ritual, a dance, maybe, as we traced the shape with our feet. "Can you feel the power of the bear?"

He turned toward me. I shook my head and shrugged, looking up at him. He wasn't smiling anymore, but his eyes were still kind.

He nodded toward the mound rising behind us. "The bear is also a symbol of the nurturing mother, the Great Mother. Mother of us all."

I felt a lump in my throat, thinking of my own mother. "Maybe this was a stupid idea." I didn't know what I had expected.

"Come here." He pulled me again. The mound rose gently as we walked uphill, sloping upward. He stopped when we neared the middle. It wasn't the very center. Probably somewhere around the bear's heart, I estimated, looking around from our new vantage point.

His hand squeezed mine, large and strong. "Thousands of years ago, people stood here and performed sacred rituals. Sometimes they spilled their blood on the ground. Sometimes they danced naked under the stars. Sometimes they just sat and chanted and were transported to another place inside themselves."

I looked up at him, my breath caught in my throat. His eyes were staring off into the distance, as if he were seeing the things he was describing. I looked in that direction, as if I too could see them, but all I could see was the trail we had traversed and the trees rustling in the breeze.

Then, I felt it. *What is it?* My heart lurched, my belly tingled. It was like some sort of faint vibration under my feet. I looked up at him in awe, wondering if he felt it, too. He was still looking into the distance, that dreamy look on his face.

Reaching down, I slipped off my shoes and socks, standing barefoot on the mound. The sensation intensified under my feet. It seemed to come up right from the ground, some sort of buzzing heat. I took a deep breath, closing my eyes. It felt like the first time I'd ever really filled my lungs.

"What are you doing?" William stared as I started to unbutton my pants. His face was shocked, and he glanced up and down the trail as I slid my jeans, along with my panties, over my hips. There was no shame in it, no hesitation. The part of me that wanted to hide was simply gone, and I just knew that the sensation I was feeling demanded this kind of unveiling.

"Can't you *feel* it?" I unbuttoned my blouse and unhooked my bra, even pulling my hair free of its ponytail. William's eyes were wide as I stretched out naked on the ground and looked at the sky. He was staring at me like I had gone insane. Part of me felt crazy, but another part of me was humming with a new kind of life.

I saw his eyes move over the criss-cross pattern of scars on my thighs, and I didn't even cringe. His gaze lingered between my legs and moved up my belly, over my breasts, and then he met my eyes.

"I feel... something." He blinked fast, his voice faint.

"Get undressed and lie down," I urged, patting the grassy spot beside me. I was feeling that gentle vibration all through my body now. "You can feel it much better."

"This isn't exactly legal." He pulled at his tie.

"Yes, it is." I threw my arms up over my head. "I'm twenty-one."

He stopped unbuttoning his shirt for a moment, his jaw dropped. He smiled at me, then, bemused. I wondered how old he was. To me, he looked timeless, ageless, as he began to strip.

He cleared his throat. "I meant public nudity..." Folding his shirt neatly, he put it with his jacket on top of his briefcase.

"No one's here." I smiled. "It doesn't seem to be a big tourist attraction." Off came the trousers, folded, and socks, also folded, and the Nikes, lined up next to the briefcase. "Boxers, too." I pointed to them. "Off. Everything off. You have to be naked."

He flushed. "I'm afraid I can't..."

"What, I haven't seen a hard cock before?" I grinned at him, holding out my hand.

He stood staring at me. "I didn't... this isn't... Lexi, what are we doing?" "Something extraordinary." I reached for him again.

He slid his boxers down, and he was hard as a rock as he rested next to me. I could feel it on my thigh when he turned toward me, leaning up on an elbow.

"Do you feel it?" I whispered as his gaze roamed over my body. He nodded, sliding a hand over my belly. I closed my eyes at his touch, just his fingertips brushing lightly over the skin of my ribcage. It gave me goosebumps.

"Isn't it amazing?" I still felt that low resonance, like my body had become a tuning fork that had just been struck.

"Yes."

I opened my eyes to him. We kissed, a soft, tentative thing at first, the newness of our mouths together both strange and exciting. His tongue met mine,

and I groaned, sliding a hand behind his neck to pull him in closer. Wrapping my leg around his, I pulled his body half onto mine, wanting to feel the weight of him.

With him on top of me, I could feel that deep tremor even more. He was kissing my neck, my shoulders, and then the tops of my breasts. When he cupped them in his hands, licking at one pink tip and then the other, I moaned and arched against him, my hands roaming over his back, tugging at his dark hair. His breath was hot against my skin as he kissed his way down my belly, licking lazy circles toward the dark edge of my pubic hair.

"You're so beautiful." He parted my thighs with his hands. I knew he could see my scars. I could feel him tracing them with his fingers. I closed my eyes and for the first time I wasn't afraid of someone being repelled by my wounds. They felt like a part of me, and I felt beautiful under his hands, his gaze, and his mouth.

Oh, God, his mouth! His tongue explored my flesh, moving gently in and out of the sensitive folds, nuzzling my lips apart with his and working his way toward my clit. I groaned when he found it, sucking and nibbling at it with his lips before flicking it with his tongue.

"Yes..." I put hands in his hair to guide him, keep him there, not wanting it to end. The low reverberation moving through my body began to merge with the delicious friction of his tongue, making me feel like I was a conduit for something deep and primal moving through me.

The pulse between my thighs sped up and up at the urging of his tongue, and I groaned and twisted and spread wide when his fingers slipped inside me,

exploring the soft, smooth walls of that passage. I couldn't stop the force of my body, the force moving in and out of me, threatening to overtake me.

"William!" I gasped his name, gripping his hair and rocking, moaning with my climax as it shuddered through me in hot, rhythmic waves. I kept him there for a moment, still riding that gentle swell, and he feathered kisses between my legs, making me shiver.

He kissed his way up over my belly, pausing again at my breasts, making me hiss and gasp when he sucked them, smearing my juices over their tips. I clutched at him, reaching between us and finding his cock, tugging at it. It was his turn to gasp and groan as I stroked it slowly against my wetness. His hips rocked with my rhythm, his eyes on mine.

I could have slipped him inside of me then, but something stopped me. There was a voice telling me not yet, not yet, not yet. Instead, I rolled him over and sank down between his legs, settling myself in the soft grass on my knees and taking him into my mouth. He moaned, low, back in his throat, his hand moving in my hair as I began to suck him. The act had never been my favorite thing in the world. It always seemed like a favor, something quid pro quo, but I'd never felt like this before. Something about the way William moaned and rolled his hips, his eyes searching for mine whenever they flickered away, made me eager to have him in my mouth.

I felt incredibly connected to him in a way I don't remember feeling with any other lover, with anyone, really, ever. I rolled my tongue around the head of his cock, nuzzled and kissed it, my eyes on his all the while, and I felt as if I were

kneeling at some altar, worshipping at the foot of a god. It wasn't William I was worshipping, exactly, although it was him, in part. But, it was bigger than him, bigger than me, bigger than, than anything. I ached for more, and it made me eager, zealous. I felt him swelling in my mouth, his moans growing louder, his hips jerking up harder and harder. I saw his eyes begin to close, lost in the sensation, and knew he must be close.

"Lexi, wait." His hand fisted in my hair, pulling me back. It must have taken all his willpower to stop me. His cock was red and raw, throbbing against my cheek as he grabbed it with his other hand and squeezed, hard. I watched as a thin stream of pre-cum erupted from the tip of his cock and slipped down the shaft. It was the most erotic thing I'd ever seen. He sat up and pulled me to him, cupping my face and kissing my mouth. I could taste myself, and I knew he could taste himself, too, as our tongues and limbs entwined.

"I want you," he murmured against my cheek as the kiss broke. I gasped in his ear as he rolled me to my back. "God, Lexi, I need you, need to be inside you. Please."

It wasn't a question. It had been building to this all along. I wanted, no, needed, him, too. I slid my hand down between us, searching, finding him, squeezing. His eyes found mine, dark and full of lust, but also something else, something deeper, something that was in the air, all around us. I couldn't have named it, but I recognized it, my body knew just what it was and opened to him without a second thought.

When I guided his shaft into me, the steel heat of him spreading me open an inch at a time, I felt an instant spark of something in my belly that made me gasp out loud. I think he sensed it, too, because he stopped to look at me, his eyes a question. We had completed some powerful circuit. I knew it, we both did, as we began rocking to some ancient rhythm.

His breath matched mine, quickening with every thrust. I could hear it in my ear, feel it against my hair. I wrapped myself around him, using my heels to bring him in even deeper, squeezing him and making him moan and slow a little. The slick wet sound of us together kept time against the rustling of the leaves overhead and the call of the birds from tree to tree.

I could see the clouds moving above us, with us, everything a part of us as we met each other over and over in that clearing. His cock was swelling, his belly growing slick with sweat against mine as we moved in harmony. I kissed him, sucking his tongue into my mouth, nibbling on his lips, whispering his name. I was full to bursting again and aching for release.

"Please," I murmured against his cheek, sliding my hands down his strong, solid back. "God, please."

"Yes!" He grunted, driving deeper and faster into me, making me remember something lost, forgotten, something deeply fundamental as we rode the spiral upward. I could almost grasp it. I was almost there. My limbs were tingling with it, on fire, trembling with some held knowledge.

"Oh!" I felt something racing through me, quick and electrifying, a pulse that fluttered through my pelvis. I bucked underneath him, moaning and digging

my nails into his back. He gasped and clutched at me as my muscles squeezed his shaft.

"Oh, God, Lexi," he moaned. "I can't stop."

"Yes," I purred, still quivering with my orgasm. He gritted his teeth, pulling out and back, making me moan with that instant of emptiness. His cock jerked and sputtered against my mound, spilling endless waves of seed over my lips and down onto the ground below.

I sighed deeply as he moved off, collapsing, breathless, onto his back beside me. I grabbed for his hand and found it, squeezing. He squeezed back as our breathing slowed, our hearts beating steady again.

"Well..." I murmured. "That was-"

"Extraordinary," he agreed, rolling toward me and kissing my cheek. I laughed, tracing the outline of his jaw in wonder.

"Lexi!" He sounded alarmed. His hand caught my wrist, turning it.

"What?"

"Look!" His voice was full of doubt, his face incredulous.

I lifted my arms in the sunshine and gasped. They were smooth and soft, all traces of my scars gone! I sat up, touching my thighs. They were gone from there, too. It was as if they had never been there at all. I turned back to him, my eyes wide, my breath caught.

"What--?"

"Extraordinary!" He shook his head.

I stood, turning my hands over in awe. "They're gone. Just gone!"

Laughing, I twirled on the mound until I was dizzy, everything around me a wonderful green blur. William laughed, too, his head thrown back. I felt crazy with joy as I collapsed onto the ground.

"God, you're beautiful!" He watched my chest heave as I laid still giggling on the grass, catching my breath. He stood, sweeping his clothes off of his briefcase and bringing it to me. He knelt, flipping one latch and then the other.

"Come here." He gestured. "I want to show you something."

I crawled over and settled myself beside him, my thigh brushing his, curious.

"Open it." He smiled over at me.

I lifted the lid and gasped. There were no papers, no books, no Palm Pilot or Blackberry. I was looking through his briefcase into an impossible galaxy of stars like jewels on black velvet. I sat in awe, stretching to touch the vast universe below with both hands, within reach of my now unscarred arms.

"It's not possible," I whispered, feeling nothing but cold, empty space, my stomach lurching at the sensation.

"Yes, it is." He grasped my hand as I touched the infinite boundaries of the universe. "Everything is possible."

#### The End

# ABOUT SELENA KITT



Like any feline, Selena Kitt loves the things that make her purr—and wants nothing more than to make others purr right along with her! Pleasure is her middle name, whether it's a short cat nap stretched out in the sun or a long kitty bath. She makes it a priority to explore all the delightful distractions she can find, and follow her vivid and often racy imagination wherever it wants to lead her.

Her writing embodies everything from the spicy to the scandalous, but watch out—this kitty also has sharp claws and her stories often include intriguing edges and twists that take readers to new, thought-provoking depths.

When she's not pawing away at her keyboard, Selena runs an innovative publishing company (<u>www.excessica.com</u>) and in her spare time, she worships her devoted husband, corrals four kids and a dozen chickens, all while growing an organic garden. She also loves bellydancing and photography.

Her story, *Connections*, was one of the runners-up for the <u>2006 Rauxa Prize</u>, given annually to an erotic short story of "exceptional literary quality," out of over 1,000 nominees, where awards are judged by a select jury and all entries are read "blind" (without author's name available.) She has also been an EPIC Award Finalist two years in a row (2008 and 2009) with <u>EcoErotica</u> and <u>The Real Mother</u> <u>Goose</u>.

She can be reached on her website at <u>www.selenakitt.com</u>.

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#### PAPERBACK ROMANCE

Maya's heart yearns for romance and adventure, so that's what she writes aboutbut James Reardon, her college creative writing professor, insists she's wasting both time and talent. Determined to prove him wrong, Maya stumbles onto the fact that her professor's been keeping secrets--not the least of which is his attraction to her. Faced with a choice, she will have to decide whether or not to reveal his secret to the world--and her own desire for a man nearly twice her age.

Warnings: This title contains graphic language and really hot sex.

#### EXCERPT from PAPERBACK ROMANCE:

She heard him come in, and she found herself hesitating to go back out, staring

at herself in the mirror. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks flushed, and her whole body

tingling, like a limb that had gone to sleep and was just waking up.

What was happening seemed so out of character for both of them-it seemed

too fantastic to be real. Was she really sitting in her Ancient History class right now,

looking out the window, chewing on a pen cap, and dreaming all of this? Part of her thought that must be the case. When she opened the door, he was standing by the open window, looking out at the lake. He smiled at her and held out a hand. She took it, still marveling at his touch, and joined him. The sun was brilliant on the water as it rippled toward shore.

"Look." He pointed toward the mallards that were paddling toward the reeds. As she watched, she saw a mother duck leading her little downy ducklings all in a row for a swim out on the lake.

She watched them in wonder, all too aware of James' body, his hip against her hip, his hand moving around her waist. "I wonder which one is going to grow up to be a swan?"

He smiled down at her, his attention shifting, his eyes falling to her mouth. "This one." He tilted her chin up and kissed her. This wasn't like the tentative kiss in the car. This one was full of passion and an eager longing that matched her own. She whimpered against his lips, seeking his center with her tongue.

He breathed her in—she could feel the expanding of his chest as he pulled her in tight, his hands seeking the bare skin of her back under her t-shirt. The bed seemed miles away as they kissed and touched their way towards it, peeling off clothes and exploring each other as they went. His mouth seemed to want to devour her and she met him like a lifetime of pent-up breath until they were gasping, collapsed, his body pressing her to the floor still five feet short of the bed.

Her t-shirt was pulled up, his jacket off, shirt unbuttoned, and they were pressed belly to belly, but it made the thickness of her jeans too much—she couldn't feel the

heat of him like she wanted. Her fingers fumbled with the snap and zipper, wiggling out, and the writhing of her under him as she exposed her panties and bare thighs brought a growl from his throat that sent a shiver through her.

She toed her jeans the rest of the way off, wrapping her legs around him when they were free, digging her heels into his lower back and arching. He fumbled with the front hook of her bra and she brushed his hands away, impatient, rolling on top of him and sitting. His eyes were full of lust as he looked up at her peeling off her t-shirt, unhooking her bra and letting her breasts spill out into his hands as she leaned forward to kiss him, her mouth hungry.

She rocked her hips, her thin panties rubbing against the material of his trousers, the bite of his belt a shock as he grabbed her sides and slid her up so he could lick and suck at her nipples like a man who had never tasted flesh before. The eagerness of his mouth made her hips rock hard and she wanted more still. She slid up his belly and sat on his chest, pulling her panties aside to show him the red fuzz between her legs. The groan that elicited was so gratifying that she gave him a little more pink, spreading her lips open so she could rub her clit...

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