

"Oh. I thought it depended on who was asking."

"Yeah...well." Kris looked around helplessly as a horse drawn carriage clipclopped past them and a breeze off the river ruffled their hair. The young woman felt a prickling chill as the golden down of her arms was raised by some undefinable something in the moment. Yeah, momentous was what it was. Kris squarely met those deep azure eyes. "Ordinarily, I think I'd pretty much follow you anywhere."

It was Diana's turn to be impressed by something her young companion had said, but she fought to remain outside the emotional timbre of the moment. "Admirable trait for a musician." She nodded, perfunctory, and disappeared into the subway, saying, "See you at rehearsal on Wednesday night," over her shoulder.

Kris watched her descend into the underground station and shook her head. She decided to take herself and her bemusement for a little walk in the park.

She strolled past the Alice bronze with its fanciful, beckoning mushroom, all the way over to the Winged Victory fountain and then doubled back to sit on a bench near the pond by the Delacorte where she'd seen some great Shakespeare last summer. A Midsummer Night's Dream in fact. Unrequited love gone awry. In Fairy mischief. Loves me, loves me not. "Thou hast mistaken quite and laid the love juice on some true love's sight." But everything works out in the end and it's happily ever after. Mm. Wouldn't that be nice? What did she want? What did she expect? From Diana. You had to start with how much Diana was willing to give. The woman was guarded for sure, but there was a...willingness Kris sensed there as well...let someone in...on a trial basis at least. What can you realistically expect from this? And what do you really want? Want? Look at her. How could you be around a woman like that for any length of time and not look at her 'that way'? Unlikely, Kris old girl. So, settle. A good strong friendship, something mutually beneficial for both of them. I think I can handle that. I think she can handle that. Doesn't mean I won't...fantasize about her...or find her in my dreams. You can gaze all you want, she told herself, but don't you dare touch. Besides, you need that hand.

After the third time it happened she thought Diana had indeed taken a particular interest in her, might even be said, in her more fervent imaginings, to be courting her--musically at least. She was, or so it seemed at any rate, deliberately choosing pieces with her new violin virtuoso in mind. She would have thought the concert master should've been gnashing his teeth in envy, but he was very content out of the spotlight and did not mind the loss of a solo here or there at all. And when she stood to play, the woman's full and intense attention was upon her. She could feel the gaze, it enwrapped her as she played, infused her with a dark focused energy and drew, she felt, her best playing ever from somewhere deep within. Why--there were times...it was almost as good as...making love. And if this was all they ever had... It was every bit as exhausting and draining. They'd both stand there afterwards panting and perspiring as if they'd engaged in some other strenuous activity. Diana would expel an audible, to her anyway, sigh at the climax that held as much erotic fervor as if--the images would fairly cascade through Kris's fevered mind. Stepping off the high plateau of the perfect passage, the crescendo lifting her up she'd walk,