

*warm, yielding sand, draws me, and my fingers sink into ebony silk, entangle there to press, caress as we bend and sway, play the chords of this conjoined instrument, ancient and resonant, which we have made anew. The deep notes, the vibrant strokes. Powerful current of sound and sensation arising from the profound connection between us. Soft into softness, wet into wet, heat into heat, the most divine sensation on earth. My lover's tongue, she thought, before all rational thought left her. How she circumnavigates my delicate soft terrain, the peaks and valleys, rainforest and tundra and right there(!) at the apex of the peak she helps me climb the mountain to the true cerulean blue and I see it in her azure eyes as I meet them across the dark forest of the night as she feeds herself on the nectar sweet honey that flows freely now from the source of the river's head, the delta, open and gushing forth into the open mouth of the mother ocean, coming home, coming to her.*

Kris was left standing, panting, alone in the spotlight, sweat pouring from her temples, golden hair creating a damp halo within the halo of the spot, bathing her face, raining down in a glistening shower of accomplishment and only then, after a deep well of isolation fell away from her, did her normal hearing return and the thunder resolved itself into enthusiastic applause. Wildly enthusiastic she noted with some satisfaction as she met Diana's gaze.

*There. How was that, maestro? Was it as good for you as for me?* Never taking her eyes from the unreadable ice blue gaze, she watched in fascination as Diana swallowed, hard, and inclined her head...in homage? ...or shame, humility or sorrow... Whether to the musician or the composer, all the same in this oneness of purpose, and turning slightly towards the audience, she gently and very deliberately broke her baton.

And surrendered the pieces to Kris. The audience went wild and the rest of the orchestra lightly beat their bows to strings or murmured approval. Looking out past the footlights, Kris dimly noted the audience, a collective roaring animal, was on its feet. Diana graciously motioned towards her and stepped aside, gracefully disappearing into the wings.

Kris basked for a moment more--so this is it--that peak experience. Might as well break my bow too, she thought, I'll never play any better than that. On the rare occasions you felt that power sweep over you in a passionate rain of fire, you just stood in the middle of it and tried not to be consumed.

Diana never returned to the stage and Kris left more out of curiosity to find her than any proper decorum. But she was nowhere to be seen backstage and Kris allowed herself, at the urging of several pairs of hands, to be drawn back by the continuing ovation. She bowed again, basked momentarily, then bowed out, handing off her violin to David.

Having one overwhelming need just now she left the stage this time on the opposite side to avoid any managerial handling and gave herself over to the pull of the moonlit night outside the arena.

And she knew with certain clarity where Diana had gone. That beauty spot from earlier in the day, just as lovely now, though otherworldly, dressed in ghostly luminescence. Kris noted the darker profile against the tree and thought with a rush of primitive abandon