

"Oh...did you...oh my, did you...insult her, or something?"

"She was being very...nice and I...I..."

"What did you do?" he asked, in an amused conspiratorial whisper.

Kris swallowed hard and fessed up. "Told her she was, uh, beautiful."

David's face went from confused scowl to fascination to near horror and ended on a strangled laugh. "I'll tell Ralphie you felt ill all of a sudden," as he opened the door for her.

She grimaced and said, "It's the truth" as she made her exit.

"Where's your adoring--and adorable, don't you think--public?"

Calla asked as she returned to the bar, Ralph in tow. "Did you frighten her off--as usual?"

Diana reflected with a slight smirk. "I rather expect she frightened herself."

"Oh. You do have that effect on people."

"Never stopped you."

"Mm. I never give up. You know that, darling. I just keep coming...and coming." She shamelessly ran her tongue over already moist lips.

Kris looked for a cab, but the opera had just gotten out and the subway was... unappealing at this time of the night. And would probably take forever anyway. So she decided to walk. It was a comfortable spring evening and a surprising number of people were strolling in Riverside Park, or just sitting on benches and watching the Hudson roll by. City that never sleeps, huh?

Kris found herself sitting for awhile and meditating on what had just transpired. Maybe she could join whoever else was down there in the dark water, floating out to sea with the other sopranos who crossed the line. Never to be seen again. Or...she could slam a car door on her hand. She winced. Oh god. Professor Tanner always told her it was her mouth that would surely get her into trouble. Why did she say it?! She was thinking it, sure. Who wouldn't? Diana was gorgeous. She wondered if the conductor thought she was flirting? Awfully clumsy attempt at it. Kris sighed.

I mean...first of all--what would a woman like that ever see in me? Second of all, where did that come from?! Third of all, what was I thinking?!

You weren't thinking, her better angel told her from its frequent perch over her shoulder, just feeling and reacting. That's gotta change. That's just gotta change. Right now. You are a professional. It's a job. Only a job. You are making beautiful music together...for one reason only. That's foremost. Always. Keep it in mind. Stop assuming and presuming. Projecting and...fantasizing. It will get you exactly nowhere. Nowhere. And where was that? Sir Thomas More, he who lost his head, called it Utopia. Which, of course, is nowhere, afterall, since it doesn't exist. Not in this world. Not unless you make it for yourself. As she had always tried to do. Okay, it's just a setback. Maybe she won't hold it against you. Tomorrow. Clean slate. Face your fear. No running.

Taking a deep breath of the night air she glanced over the path