Karma & Diamonds

Sneak Previews from

Book 3 - Diamond Revealed

26

Sorrento

That evening we sat down for dinner in the restaurant of our hotel which overlooked the curvaceous bay and had a magnificent view of the coastline. This promised to be a memorable evening, what with the hotel's restaurant boasting a celebrated Italian chef and a dining room that was ambient with candle light and soft lighting. The flames of the candles danced with the gentle warm draft coming from the open terrace door, projecting soft flickering shadows on the walls, undulating to the tune of the South Italian music that played softly in the background. The dining room was otherwise quiet, only half full, a couple at each table, men smartly dressed, Italian style, the ladies in the latest Roman and Milanese elegance, holding hands and whispering intimately to each other.

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The waiters moved around almost invisible, discreet but efficient. One came to our table and introduced himself. "*Benvenuti* in our restaurant. My name is Massimo and I will take care of you tonight." He poured olive oil on our side plates and placed a bowl of small black olives on the table, along with three types of *tapenades*.

"Extra virgin oil from our own olive yard, mixed with juice of our home grown lemons. The olives come from the same orchard as the oil and have been left to ripen before being marinated in our cellars during the winter. The crushed salt and pepper and the sun dried tomatoes are all local produce."His pride for the heritage and tradition of this fancy estate for which he worked was obvious.

"I have heard from the Maestro, our *maître d'hôte*, that you are vegetarian," he said, handing us each a menu. "You will see, Signore and Signora, that our menu is full of excellent South Italian dishes that are so succulent they do not need any fish or meat. But, if there is nothing to your liking, please let me know and the chef will make it his pleasure to cook whatever you want. *Uno aperitivo*, perhaps?"

"Two glasses of Champaign, please," James said, "or rather, yourbest Prosecco."

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"Very well, Signore." Massimo bowed and moved away, walking ceremoniously backwards then turning and clicking his heels as he headed for the kitchen.

James and I looked at each other and could not help giggling just a little at the sweet, pompous pride of our waiter, and instinctively reached out across the table until our hands touched. "You look stunning," he said. "More beautiful than I've ever seen you. And I love that perfume of yours. What is it?"

"I am not wearing any." I smiled to myself, thinking of all those times when I would have gotten nauseous from the aftershave or scent of guys with whom I had gone on dates.

"Oh? But how can that be? That scent is so strong," he said. "And I smell it around you all the time."

"No, I assure you. I stopped wearing perfume some time ago. An allergy, so to speak," I said, looking for a diplomatic explanation to avoid talking about my nausea to certain scents, especially those worn by men not meant for me.

"Are you sure you're not pulling my leg?" he asked. "Even your house is permeated by that fragrant scent, it is almost overwhelming when I come in."

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I chortled. “Are you trying to tell me that I have a hygiene problem?”

“No, no, quite to the contrary.” He laughed. “If it’s true that you really don’t wear perfume, it must be that your skin naturally gives a sweet scent. You seem to be oozing the stuff. I always smell it around you and it’s a blend of violets, jasmine, roses, lilac, bluebells, and a hint of sweet mango and honey.”

“Wow! You can pick up all that? You must have been a sniffer dog in your previous incarnation!” I gave an embarrassed, abashed smile, regressing to feeling once again like a seventeen year old on her first grown-up date, who hadn’t quite learned how to receive a genuine compliment. With this very special man, it seemed that I was losing all sense of who I was. Like a snake shedding its skin, the identity I knew myself to be was slithering off in the trust and ease of being with someone who knew me more than I knew myself.

Before I could say anything, Massimo came back with two tall flutes of Prosecco.

James raised his glass and looked into my eyes. “To a beautiful goddess!”

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I smiled, melting. After all, what woman did not love to be acknowledged? I raised my glass to click with his, only to be instantly distracted by something twinkling and flashing at the bottom of my flute as it caught the candlelight. I looked into the flute from the side, and then peered into it from the top and saw that, sure as the sun was bright outside, there was indeed something at the bottom of my glass.

"But wait!" I exclaimed. "There's something in my glass! And we cannot drink bubbles without looking each other deep in the eyes, you know what the consequences are otherwise."

James chuckled. "I know, seven years of bad sex."

"Exactly." I tried to put my fingers into the tall, narrow flute, to take the sparkling object out. It was too deep for my fingers to reach the bottom so instead, I took the fork laid out for the appetisers and tried to pierce the sparkling thing out from the bottom.

It was a ring! A beautiful diamond ring.

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