

“ Musings”  
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The blow that sent him reeling from his chair was as unexpected as the exasperated yet melodic voice that followed it.

“ Just what the hell do you think you’ re doing?” she demanded.

Dazed, the man rolled over and instinctively cowered in the corner, eyes full of fear. He threw an arm up in a weak attempt to fend off any further blows from his mysterious attacker, visually scanning the room in haste.

One generally didn’ t expect to be assaulted in one’ s study, particularly with no warning whatsoever; no tinkle of broken glass, no battered down door, nothing. Still, given the force with which he had been sent flying, Darren had at least expected to see a sizable steroid-enhanced, pipe-wielding maniac, not the wondrous vision that filled his widening eyes.

Before him stood the most beautiful creature he had ever laid eyes on, save perhaps in the messy dreams that men sometimes have.

Though Darren felt no air moving across his throbbing cheek, the woman’ s kinky golden tresses seemed to glide down her gently sloping neck across her ample breasts, unruly strands floating just off her shoulders. They kissed softly at her exposed nipples, causing the blessed rigidity that men always find so intoxicating. Her skin was flawless, a milky shade of white that served to accentuate the neatly maintained patch of blonde pubic hair that was staring Darren in the face.

Crouching gracefully in front of him, she looked deep into his eyes, and he halted the breath he was drawing for a moment as he gazed into the fury of blue that seemed to look through him. Never had he seen eyes such as hers, those that shouted wordless joy and power. Without knowing her, Darren felt he could love her forever, as long as she hadn’ t come to kill him. Even so, if she was there to kill him, as long as she planned to fuck him to death, he would have died a happy man.

“ You haven’ t answered my question,” she pointed out firmly, taking his chin in her right hand. He breathed her in as she spoke, and was lost in her scent as he tried to understand what she was saying. “ Darren!” she snapped at him, her nails biting into his cheek.

Still unsure if he was dreaming, the words finally came to him. “ What are you talking about? And who are you?” He sounded weak to himself, and though he was reasonably sure he could overpower this gorgeous naked woman who had invaded his home, he was still in a state of shock and unsure of how to proceed. A large part of him wanted her to stay, but he had no idea what her intentions were.

“ Finally, it speaks!” she exclaimed, flicking his chin away and rising. She took a few steps back and leaned against the wall facing him, her arms crossed impatiently. “ You can stop leering, I know you’ ve seen more than your share of naked women in your time.”

Feeling his face flush, Darren cast his eyes toward the wall and scratched at his goatee. He noticed a smear of blood on his fingers as he took his hand away from his face, and was visibly taken aback.

“ Sorry about that, Darren,” she said, a tinge of genuine remorse in her voice. “ Sometimes I play a little rough. You aren’ t giving me much choice these days. Why don’ t you have a seat?” she invited, motioning to the chair in front of his computer desk. Keeping his eyes on her the whole time, Darren cautiously did as she asked. She pulled up a chair herself and sat opposite Darren, sitting backwards in the chair, folding her arms across the backrest. He couldn’ t resist a lingering gaze between her spread legs, and he felt his bluejeans tighten a bit. “ Very subtle, Darren,” she observed dryly. “ I don’ t see why this is such a thrill for you, you’ ve been with me hundreds of times.”

“ Miss,” he said shaking his head, “ I know for a fact that I would never ever *ever* forget someone like you, especially since you’ re sitting here completely naked in my study. I think I would remember something like this if it had happened even once before.”

“ Miss,” she repeated disdainfully. “ Is that any way to address a lover? You will refer to me as Calliope or Cal, or I’ m leaving. I know you’ ve never seen me, but you should still recognize me. I know you humans can be thick, believe me, but usually you can recognize me when it comes to this. Of course, you haven’ t been listening for a long time now, but you’ ve always been one of my favorites, so I thought I’ d give you one last chance.”

His hopes of quick comprehension of the situation shattered, Darren resigned himself to the notion that it was going to take some digging to figure out just what the hell was going on. *At least I have something pleasant to look at*, he mused.

“ I’ m sorry, Cal,” he began, trying to keep his eyes on the floor, “ I just can’ t seem to place you. Um, would you like to borrow a shirt or something? You must be a little cold.”

“ Am I making you uncomfortable, Darren? I’ m sorry, I thought this would be the best way to get your attention. It’ s worked pretty well with you male problem-children throughout the ages, though the look changes from time to time. There, is that better?”

Without thinking, Darren shifted his eyes from the floor to where he expected Cal’ s breasts to be (he had always been a breast man) and was shocked to find her sitting in front of him wearing a tailored black business suit. Beneath the double-breasted jacket she wore a white silk blouse open at the neck, and her bare feet now sported a pair of decidedly saucy black stiletto heels. Hard as it was to believe, he found himself more shocked by the fact that she was suddenly dressed than he was when she appeared out of nowhere to crack him in the face.

Cal noticed his confusion and headed the question off before he could ask it, deciding to just get on with the reason for her visit. “ Are you familiar with concept of muses, Darren?” Presented with a blank stare, Cal drew her own conclusion and went on.

“ The ancient Greeks believed that there were nine sisters that served to inspire mankind in the arts and sciences. There were different muses for different disciplines, and the greatest artists worshipped their muses by heeding their songs and channeling their energy into art or science or whatever.” Turning the computer on, she quickly found the last piece Darren had been working on and began printing it.

“ You used to heed those songs, Darren,” she pointed out softly, “ but you never listen to me any more.”

Beginning to understand where Cal was going, mild amusement replaced the look of fear and confusion on Darren’ s face. “ Oh, I get it, so you’ re telling me that you’ re my muse, and now you’ re disappointed that I’ m not writing anymore? Who put you up to this? Was it Steve? You could have thought up a more plausible story, though if you were just here to strip, you didn’ t really need a story...”

Cal landed a swift kick on Darren’ s good cheek, gouging a hole with the heel of her right shoe. Shaking her head in response to Darren’ s howls of pain, Cal wiped the blood off her heel and dabbed it on the tip of her tongue, wrinkling her nose up at the metallic aftertaste.

“ What the FUCK is your problem, lady?!” he screamed, blood flowing down his cheek and onto the carpet. He tried to cover the wound with his hand, but it immediately spurting between his fingers. Recalling the little Dutch boy and the leaky dam, Darren plugged the hole in his cheek with his index finger, and though painful, the blood slowed to a trickle.

Cal regarded him with an almost predatory look, one that despite his obvious discomfort, caused that familiar swelling in his pants again. “ What am I gonna do with you, Darren? Apollo is all over me to move along, I’ m falling way behind in my quota by sticking with you. You’ re just not pulling your weight...” She eased down to sit

cross-legged next to him, and he cringed at her approach, fearing broken bones this time. “ You’ ve been spending way too much time with my sister lately. She’ s just toying with you, you know. You’ ll never be a great musician.”

Cal gently laid her head on Darren’ s shoulder, and the scent of her hair seemed to take away the pain that pulsed in his face. “ I’ m bleeding in your hair,” he mumbled, doing his best to enunciate without ripping his face open.

“ Oh, I’ m sorry, Darren,” she soothed, sounding genuinely penitent. “ I really don’ t want to hurt you, it’ s not why I came here.” Gently pulling Darren’ s finger from his cheek, Cal caressed his face with both hands, sending shivers up his spine. He noticed her hands were clean when she drew them away, and touched the spot where the hole should have been to find only perfect skin.

“ What... ?” he stuttered in disbelief, pulling away from her.

“ You know, for a brilliant man, you can be awfully thick sometimes,” Calliope pointed out, exasperated. “ Do you believe me now? I should have thought that the instant suit would have given you enough proof. Father was right, you humans really are growing desensitized to the unusual. I mean really, check it out. Don’ t blink.” His attention locked instinctively on her breasts, Calliope was instantly naked again, nipples still fully erect. “ Is it just me, or is it cold in here?” she quipped, batting her eyelashes.

Swirls of terror, wonder, joy, and lust flowed through Darren in that single, thin slice of time, and it was a mixture he would never experience again or forget until he died. While he wasn’ t exactly sure why, tears began trickling down his cheeks. “ I’ m sorry, I never knew. I sometimes felt you, but I never knew. I never knew...” He cupped his face in his hands, murmuring. “ I never knew, never...”

Still naked, Cal cradled Darren to her breast in a gesture that was at once both sensual and maternal. “ Shhhh, shhhh, shhhh...” she whispered into his ear. “ It’ s not too late, sweetie. I came to try to patch things up. You’ ve always been one of my favorites, and I just couldn’ t let you go without one last try. I’ ve haven’ t done this since Shakespeare, so you should feel honored. In most cases, I just turn my attentions elsewhere.”

“ You see, Darren,” she explained, running her fingers through his hair, “ everyone is born with the same amount of potential, though they tend to channel it in different ways. Some people try to spread it out and do many things the best they can, though they usually wind up barely achieving mediocrity, while some focus on one thing and excel at it. Most artists tend to focus, and they may do well enough to amuse their friends, but so very few actually make a real cultural dent. Why do you suppose that is?”

“ I don’ t know...” he sniffled, wiping his eyes. “ They don’ t listen to your song?”

“ Some, yes. That’ s why I’ m here today. The real reason most writers go nowhere is that I simply don’ t sing to them, Darren. You have no idea how special you are, and that’ s why it tears me up inside when you ignore me. It feels like someone is sweeping out my insides using a broom tipped with razors.”

“ I was going to use that metaphor in a story!” Darren exclaimed.

“ Duhhhh, where do you think it came from, doofus?” she giggled. “ I’ m glad you remember at least some of what I showed you. The reason you haven’ t been happy for so long is that you’ ve been denying your destiny, and it hurts, right?”

“ I’ m not sure I know what you mean,” he replied cautiously, trying to fool her.

“ Darren, I’ m always with you,” she chided. “ I’ ve seen you ask yourself in the mirror a thousand times why you’ re afraid to face your destiny, and I can tell you why.”

“ Well, please enlighten me, Mistress,” he said with mock cordiality, rolling his eyes.

“ The reason, Darren,” she began sharply, “ is that you’ re afraid to fail at the one thing that ever really meant anything to you. I know how much pride the writing brought you while you were growing up. It set you apart from everyone else, it made you special. Over time, you got scared that you wouldn’ t be good enough to play with the Big Boys

and you stopped listening. There' s no shame in failing, Darren," she finished softly, " though there is in never trying."

" So what do I do? Tell me, please," he pleaded. " I' m tired of living like this, hopping from job to job, putting up with everyone' s shit. I want to be what I' m supposed to be, and I most of all, I want to be happy. Where do I go from here? You' re not leaving me, are you?"

" Darren, honey..." she smiled, " you' re so cute when you' re panicky." The next time Darren blinked, Cal was clothed again, this time in a comfortable looking pair of Levi' s and a white tank top. " Now, pay attention, young man," she said, taking him firmly by the shoulders, gazing deep into his eyes. " I won' t be able to visit you again, so this is your absolute last chance. Father is already having a fit about me being here to begin with, so I hope you' re worth my aggravation."

" What do you want me to do?" Darren asked, suddenly calm. His mind was swimming in the oceans of her eyes, but he knew precisely what she was saying to him, and he knew that she meant it.

" I just want you to come play with me again, Darren, that' s all. We can do this together, you and I. We can bring joy to the others, and it will make you happy in the process. Besides, maybe we can make enough money to buy you some decent clothes and a good haircut," she finished with a quick examination and a wink . " You' ll have to handle the discipline issue on your own, though. I can' t help you there, not my realm. You, sir... are a lazy bastard, and if we' re going to get anywhere, you need to focus a little and get moving, because I can' t wait forever. There' s a little boy in Walla Walla that seems to hear my song almost as clearly as you used to, and he' s been playing with me a lot lately. I' m not threatening you, just pointing out that I have other mediums to work through, and I can' t waste time on you if you don' t have the balls to move forward. So that' s all. Any questions you may have on what to do next may be directed to the mirror the next time you shave."

She moved in closer to him and enveloped him in her arms, pressing her hips against his as she kissed him deeper than he had ever imagined possible. Taking a step back, she gazed at him with a look of love in her eyes, still holding his hand. " Take care of yourself, Darren. Do as you must. You only have so long on this earth; don' t waste what little time you' ve been given being miserable. It' s not too late."

" I won' t let you down," he breathed, eyes wide. " I..." She cut him short by laying a delicate finger across his lips.

" That' s all I want to hear. I love you, Darren," she whispered, fading into nothing as the last sound escaped her lips.

Left standing alone in his study, Darren didn' t move for a long time. Had he been dreaming? The only thing telling him he hadn' t been hallucinating was the copy of his unfinished story sitting in the printer and the screen saver twitching madly on his computer.

" Sometimes," he said aloud, " reality is overrated." He thought he could still taste her, and it was enough for him.

Picking up the papers, he began where they had left off and did what he was meant to do.