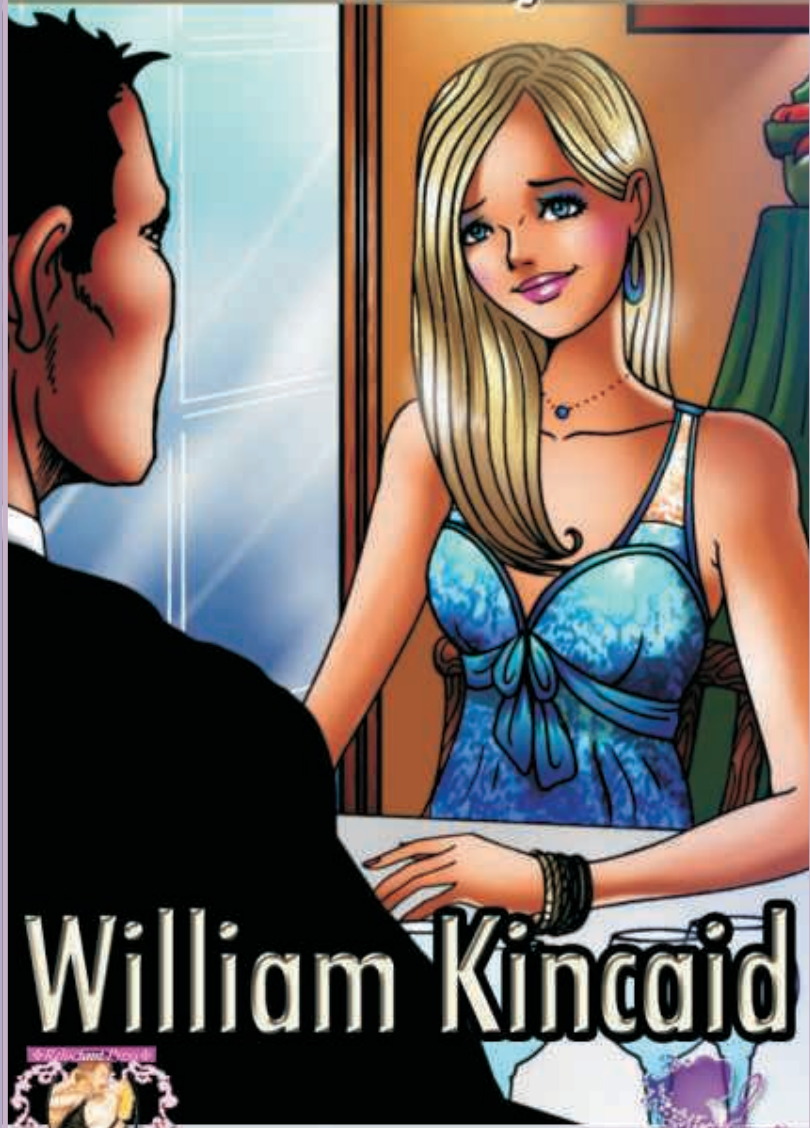


You'll Never Walk Alone

Italian Honeymoon



William Kincaid



An "Adult Tv" Novel



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You'll Never Walk Alone

Italian Honeymoon

By William Kincaid

Jennifer hugged Cindy at the airport and cried, "You have only been my mommy for seventeen hours and forty minutes but I am going to miss you."

Cindy smiled and embraced Jennifer in her arms. "I am going to miss you too, little one. I am very happy to be your mom. I'll be back for good after your dad has taken me to wherever we are going to go on our honeymoon. My only guess is it's not the desert or the Arctic based on his wardrobe recommendations."

"You'll find out soon enough."

Daniel looked like he was about ready to burst into tears when Cindy hugged him. "Now Daniel, you are now the man of the house and in charge, but let me tell you a little secret about being in charge. Always ask Jennifer or Miss Heather what to do before you make a decision. A good man always seeks the advice of a woman before he does anything important. When you do that, you will almost always be right. Can you do that, young man?"

"I can."

"I love you, Daniel and I'm so proud of you."

"I love you, Mommy."

While Cindy was saying her tearful good-byes to her children, John was obtaining the boarding passes.

"You and your wife are checked through to Rome sir," the attendant smiled. "Have a safe trip."

"Well, since Rome, Georgia is less than a day's drive, I take it we are going to Italy on our honeymoon."

"Could I have taken you anywhere else? So a man should always listen to his woman?"

"Yep. Can you imagine what Hitler would have done if he hadn't hung around with that ditz, Eva Braun? Just consider ourselves lucky that he made bad choices in the fairer sex."

"Well you definitely are the fairer sex."

"I am now," Cindy laughed out of earshot of the children. "How's that for choices?"

"Perfect."

Cindy loved Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck in Roman Holiday and was watching it on her tablet on the airplane. She especially loved the confident, calm masculinity of Gregory Peck when he walked away from the

princess even though he loved her, as it was the right and honorable thing to do. She looked intently at her new husband, who became uncomfortable at her staring.

“You are him, Joe Bradley. It’s you. You have that same basic goodness and quiet masculinity. No wonder I married you. You know, back in the day, I thought if I could be half the man Gregory Peck’s character was in this movie, I would be all right. Look how that worked out.”

“From where I sit, it worked out better than anything else could have.”

John leaned back in the seat and closed his eyes, attempting to sleep while Cindy stared at the fast fading light over the Atlantic Ocean. As an international escort, she had flown across the Atlantic many times, but now life was completely different. Snoring next to her was John Kincaid, and now she was Mrs. John Kincaid, and the mother of his two darling children since his sister and her husband were killed by a drunk driver. Ever since she had started dating Kevin, a minor league baseball player, her life had moved forward at breakneck speed, like when she and Kaitlyn took the Ferrari out for a drive to California from New York. Could she really have been a guy named Tim less than two years ago?

Since then she and her best friend Kaitlyn had amassed a small fortune selling their bodies to the highest bidders around the world, then walked away from that vocation. Both of the partners of C-K Entertainment were now happily married to wonderful men; Kaitlyn to the baseball player Cindy had once dated and Cindy to the strong, intelligent man sitting next to her on their honeymoon flight to Italy. In the whirlwind of her existence, Cindy had never looked to the future, but lay firmly grounded in the present. Now in the fading light aboard

the eastbound flight she felt confronted by the future and was deeply frightened.

How would she measure up as a wife, especially as a shemale? Would she be a good mom for Jennifer and Daniel? What would she do to make a living now that prostitution was behind her? She had risen to great heights of excitement but sooner or later the crash would come. She didn't want to hurt anybody when it did, not herself, and certainly not her new family.

Feigning sleep, John sensed his wife's uneasiness and read her mind. She was guileless and as transparent as the finest crystal. Cindy's brilliant trajectory from international escort to devoted wife would soon come crashing down on her emotionally, but like the loving husband he was, he would cushion the impending fall with firm but gentle kindness. He reached out from under his blanket and took her hand in his. Cindy didn't let go of her husband's hand for the rest of the flight until the attendant announced that they were on their final approach into Rome.

"I may be sleep deprived, but please tell me in my addled state that we didn't just rent a Fiat. This is the land where they make Ferraris, you know."

"Try getting a Ferrari up to speed on any of these Italian roads. You are not tearing along I-80 with Kaitlyn."

"You know we never got a ticket doing that."

"I can't imagine why."

The Fiat nimbly worked its way through the Roman traffic until the two were at their hotel. Cindy looked chagrined as the busboy struggled with her luggage.

"If you told me where we were going, I wouldn't have needed to pack so much."

"If I told you we were coming to Italy, would you have taken any less?"

"Maybe left a couple lipsticks at home."

"Exactly. Now let's get some sleep, darling. You look exhausted."

Recovered from their jet lag, the couple sat at a restaurant near their hotel. "A toast to my very own Joe Bradley. I love you, John Kincaid."

John grinned like a sixteen-year-old, "I love you too, Cindy Kincaid. Very much, I have never been happier than when I look into your eyes."

"For real?"

"Yes."

The dinner was superb, followed by dessert and an after-dinner liqueur.

"Darling, now that I am your happily married wife, what am I supposed to do? I don't want to become a candidate for Real Housewives."

John knew this was coming, and smiled to himself. He also knew what the eventual answer would be, but this had to be played out before it was to be revealed.

"You need to follow your heart."

"But the only thing I was really good at was running patrol boats. That and fishing and being a whore. I don't see myself becoming a smelly ass fishing guide in Alaska babysitting rich assholes. I did that enough as a lady of the evening."

"Why not?"

"I would be gone all summer, what about Jennifer and Daniel?"

“They could come with you. You said you would love to take them there.”

For once, Cindy was at a loss for words; her husband was willing to support her on any venture, regardless of its practicality.

“What did you do with all my lingerie?” Cindy shouted from the bedroom of their honeymoon suite. “You have replaced all my favorite ensembles with white, pure-as-the-driven-snow, baby duck innocent kind of stuff.”

“You will look fabulous in it.”

“That’s not the point. I wanted to look hot and sexy for you, now that I have your name and we are together for eternity.”

“I think you would be hot and sexy in anything except maybe in a burlap sack, that’s not the issue. Besides, your stuff is in good hands.”

“Who, Heather?”

“Yep.”

“So what is the issue?”

“You have been a ramped-up sex machine ever since you put on a dress and went public. Now is the time you are going to learn about lovemaking.”

“Well, I could have read a book.”

“Cute. In a year’s time, Heather will release all your stuff. In the meantime it’s white, pure-as-the-driven-snow baby duck innocent for you, darling.”

“What about off-white?”

“Fine, two years. You can wear off-white the second year.”

“I guess I should shut the f up.”

"It's about time you learned to do that."

An hour later, Cindy emerged from the bathroom, looking sweet, demure, and baby duck innocent, staring blissfully at her husband. She had on a pure white bustier with garters, lace stocking, gloves, and a Victorian choker. Accessorizing the ensemble even further, she wore a crystal studded headband with her hair back and pearl earrings. She shyly pranced to her husband like a fawn leaving the protection of her mother for the first time and seeing the outside world. Cindy knew intimately well how the clothes made the mood; they had brought her to this point in less than two years' time.

John smiled and gave his wife a warm embrace. She suddenly knelt before him, looked up and returned the smile, gazing soulfully into his eyes. The headband gave him an unencumbered look into his wife's angelically composed face.

"What are you doing?"

"You're a big boy, you know exactly what I am about to do."

"I think you missed the point of toning it down."

"Al contrario, mi amore. I got the point exactly about lovemaking instead of just sex. Sex with you is always transcendent and a woman like me could never better express her love unselfishly to her lover and husband than what I am about to do."

At that point the conversation ended as it would have been entirely one-sided. John wasn't complaining at all. He quickly took control and all thoughts of moderation fled as he surrendered himself.

"You know, other than fish, I try not to hurt anything and eat only animals that die of natural causes. I would hate to have seen gladiatorial combat back in the day, es-

pecially with animals. Do you know that the Colosseum led to the extinction of the lions north of the Sahara?"

"Nope, didn't know that, but I'm not surprised."

"I would be such a pushover when the gladiators asked for mercy."

"I can see you as an Imperial princess. 'Daddy, please let this man live. He looks kind of cute.'"

"Hey, if you were laying in the sands of the Colosseum bleeding out, I would be the first person you would want to make eye contact with, all pitiful and forlorn. The gladiators would all pass the word around, plead for mercy from the princess. I would have an awful reputation among them as I would seek them out for favors once they heal up."

"Tramp."

"An Imperial Princess is not a tramp, she just has an untamed spirit. Did you know that Caesar Augustus' daughter, Julia, was like that? Legend has it that she had sex on the Rostra where Augustus made his proclamations and that once she took on all comers as a one day only prostitute by a statue of a satyr in the Forum. How cool is that? That must have been f'in epic."

"A woman after your own heart."

"F'in A-right she was, a true kindred spirit from two thousand years ago. She was also reported to be genuinely nice to everybody, a sweetheart and a smart ass. Her dad, Augustus supposedly wondered aloud, 'Has anybody in Rome not slept with my daughter?' We are so alike in a lot of ways; she slept with all of Rome, I slept with the world's elite. I still have the same sex drive, now it's just focused on a wonderful man that I love with all my heart."

“Julia probably vexed Augustus more than Arminius did at the Teutoberg forest.”

“Probably so. You can always replace three massacred legions, but you can’t replace your beloved, nymphomaniac, sweetheart of a daughter. I would have dug being a princess with you as my handsome, dashing Roman tribune on the Rhine frontier. Of course I would pine for you in my lonely vigil in the palace day and night while you would be whoring with the local tribal girls. Do you know that a woman could be put to death in Ancient Rome for adultery if she slept with anybody but her husband whereas a man could sleep around with prostitutes, concubines, slave girls and barnyard animals and that was okay.”

“Hey, once you have barbarian, you never go back. Your daddy would probably have offered you to a barbarian king to keep the peace. Of course he would return you to him within a week and invade and slaughter thousands all the way to the gates of Rome.”

“Yeah, but Dad would eventually have my ex-husband strangled at the conclusion of the triumph where he was led in chains, then crucified his army. Have you ever thought of going back in the military? I’m here now to take care of Jennifer and Daniel, and I could keep my lonely vigil in our condo in Manhattan. I know that’s what you would have wanted to continue to do if you could.”

John was taken aback; he had never even considered it, but now it was back on the table. “I would be so worried that something would happen to me, now that I have a family.”

“You don’t have to do what you did before. You could be one of those general’s staff types that looks good in a

uniform and can dazzle with BS and Power Point presentations.”

“As lame as that is, I might as well do what I have been doing, working in New York and coming home to you at night.”

John, however, felt incredibly lucky that his wife had peered deep inside him and discerned what he really wanted. He really had to think about his options now that Cindy opened his horizons once more. He took her hand in his as they strolled through the ruins of the Colosseum, then looked in her eyes. “I love you, darling.”

“I love you too, that’s why I brought it up.”

John’s scheme to tone down Cindy’s white-hot sex drive unexpectedly faltered. He had never had a plan fail before but this was failing miserably because of an unintended consequence, it made Cindy love her husband even more.

Primed with thoughts of wanton Imperial princesses and feeling incredibly alluring in her white lingerie, she threw herself at him with reckless abandon, like Julia at the Forum two millennia ago. She danced before him to ‘Rollin’ in the Deep’, then laid him down onto the bed and impaled herself on his spear. Cindy’s eyes burned as hot as the lava deep within Vesuvius and for a moment, John thought he was inside a goddess. He was human, and a man, however, and he gave himself over to frenzied lust, filling his wife with his seed. Within thirty minutes he recovered, maneuvered Cindy onto all fours, and brutally started again where he had let off, like a Barbarian ravaging a Roman captive. John battered away at his wife until her nerves fired throughout her body and she collapsed in a mindless stupor with her husband still thrusting into her limp body. In the consuming passion driving him into

his wife, John failed to realize that a light burns brightest just before it burns out.

“Are you okay?” John asked his wife at dinner the next evening.

“I’m fine.” Cindy faked a smile.

“I don’t think so.”

Cindy had been quiet and sullen since they went to the Vatican. Confronted with the majesties of Renaissance sculpture and painting, she seemed to barely register that she was there. She didn’t say a word to John and appeared completely detached. It was as if her eyes didn’t see anything, or had lost connection to her brain. A history nerd like Cindy should have been awe inspired being in front of the altar at Saint Peter, but, again, nothing. Similarly, standing in Saint Peter’s Square would usually have been thrilling for Cindy, who although not Catholic, would have been caught up in the spectacle and the joy of the crowd. She looked down for the most part and did not even see the Pope at his balcony bless the crowd.

At dinner she toyed with her food and drank four glasses of wine. Cindy was a lightweight and John had to guide her as she staggered to the room and collapsed on the bed. The next morning he noticed that her pillow was wet and stained with mascara.

“Damn. Why do I have to be right about this stuff? I just have to soldier on about this one and pray. I hate just soldiering on, I wish I could do something. Maybe get her to therapy, and soon.”

Seeing corpses preserved in plaster at the archaeological excavations of Pompeii certainly didn’t lift Cindy’s spirits. She remained mesmerized in front of a group that was obviously a family; there were several children present, lying in their death throes from almost two thousand years ago. Those children would have been just like

Jennifer and Daniel, smiling, happy, with bright futures snuffed out by the poisonous cloud. Their parents couldn't protect them and they died horribly. How could she be expected to protect Jennifer and Daniel? She wasn't even a real woman, definitely no longer a real man.

John observed his wife for almost ten minutes and saw tears form at the corner of her eye. Well, that's an improvement. At least she is showing some emotion."

Lying in bed that night, John tried to comfort his wife, who pushed him away, then got up, grabbed the comforter, and slept on the couch. John's heart started to ache; he was watching someone very beautiful destroy herself and he was powerless to do anything other than ride the torrent.

The following day, Cindy and John walked through the endless rows of white marble crosses of the American soldiers killed at Anzio. Cindy's mood darkened. Lying under the pristine crosses were the shattered mortal remains of the Greatest Generation, men, real men, who were killed fighting the Germans in one of the most desperate battles of the war. The Germans hit these troops harder than they hit almost anywhere in a fanatical effort to destroy the beachhead and make the Allies think twice about their invasion of Normandy, scheduled for the upcoming summer. These soldiers under the crosses would not have gone home, taken hormones, and become shemales. They would have got a great laugh at the expense of Christine Jorgensen. If they had lived, they would have married their high school sweetheart and had two kids, an older boy and a younger girl, a dog named Spot, a cat named Fluffy, and led a Leave it to Beaver lifestyle. She hated herself at that moment and started to feel herself slipping into an emotional breakdown.

"Are you, OK, darling?" John was sincerely worried as he looked at the anguished face of his beloved.

Cindy's internal loathing found a new target. "Why do you call me darling? Why the fuck did you marry me anyway, when you could have any woman in Manhattan not taken by Derek Jeter? Why do you waste your time cumming in my ass when you can have kids of your own someday, from a real woman? Why don't you go find some accomplished, intelligent lawyer or something and sweep her off her feet rather than hang around with somebody like me? Do you really think Jennifer and Daniel are going to embrace me as their mother when they find out what a prostitute really is? You fell in love with me in two days, how could you? I certainly don't deserve you."

John went to embrace his wife and try to comfort her but she savagely tore herself from his grasp. She ripped off her engagement and wedding rings, flung them into the grass, and sprinted out of the cemetery towards the coast.

John knew this was coming; he had tried to prepare himself mentally for the crash that would occur when Cindy's life finally hit the ground again. He even suspected that the cemetery at Nettuno would be the stimulus that caused the crash, as he sensed a demon deep within her working its way to the surface like a parasite. Now she was expelling it in all its vile existence and he had taken the slime full in the face. He was, however, former Major John Kincaid, and the real life version of Joe Bradley. This time Joe would get the princess.

Cindy had run on him twice and he was used to the routine. John had also witnessed Cindy orchestrate the catching of seven beautiful salmon in a Lake Ontario tributary in the midst of a downpour and was astounded by the strength and speed of their run. Cindy was running now but he would catch her, just like they did the salmon. He spent twenty minutes on his hands and knees pawing

through the well-manicured grass before he found what he was searching, then started to walk for the Tyrrhenian.

John searched for hours in the seaside resort town, going into bars, restaurants, walking the beach, yelling "Cindy!" at the top of his lungs. He continued to search long after night had fallen and he started to feel an aching in his heart. Cindy was nowhere to be found. She might really be gone, seducing the first man she met out of self-loathing and running off with him. Cindy had the looks, the talent, and spoke fluent Italian. She could be on her way to Rome right now with her face buried in a man's groin.

John felt a twinge of jealousy that he tried to fight down. He had only felt that way once before, after their first date to Lake Ontario when she returned to her job as an international whore. In the evenings he thought of her with some stranger, giving herself over when he wanted so much to have her in his arms. He fought down those feelings of jealousy knowing she didn't love any of those guys, and he now fought back these irrational feelings.

Exasperated with the search, he sat on a bench overlooking the harbor where once the U.S. Navy had frantically tried to keep the troops supplied on the beachhead during continuous air raids and shelling from monstrously sized railroad guns that positioned miles inland.

John smiled; the former naval officer and now shemale wife hadn't run off with some guy. She had run home.

With renewed confidence, John walked out onto a darkened breakwater, barely illuminated by the background lights of the town and the occasional flash of the navigational light on its end. The weather had taken a turn for the worse and was rapidly deteriorating into a full blown storm. The wind howled like a thousand lost souls and heavy waves ominously rolled against the

breakwater. Wind-driven spray lashed over the bulkhead and soon the Tyrrhenian Sea itself would wash over it as well. When he was two-thirds of the way out, John saw a human figure sitting on the concrete, staring at the dark sea. He quietly and slowly walked towards his wife. When he arrived, he saw mascara streaks down her face, indicating a prolonged sobbing.

"I am nothing to them now. Even with everything I did to make them proud, they hate me because I became a woman. They should have been at our wedding. My Dad hates me and my Mom is too fucking chicken shit to do anything about it. I destroyed my family. Your talk in Miami got me this far but there is nothing you can say now."

John didn't say a word but took Cindy's hand in his own, extended her well-manicured index and middle fingers and put it over her jugular vein.

"What are you doing?"

"Feel it?"

"Yeah, so?"

"That's coming from the exact same heart you had before you became Cindy, from the same heart that loved salmon fishing and guarded harbors and made your parents proud. Hormones and surgery didn't change that one bit. If anything, it's purer now than it ever was. They may hate you, but not because of what's in your heart."

Cindy bit her lip and tried to regain control of herself. Then John placed her hand under his shirt and over his own heart.

"It beats for you, stupid. It's not like I didn't have options. You are the most transparent woman, and I do mean woman, I have ever met. I fell in love with you because I could see everything right from the beginning. I knew this was going to happen and kind of figured it

would happen here. Now let's get you inside the car and warm you up, darling. This place is going to be underwater in half an hour."



“I would like to oblige you, but I fucked up my ankle really bad. I can’t f’in walk. I have been walking on breakwaters all my life and I f’in twist it up on this one, wouldn’t you f’in know?”

John laughed. “Just lean on me, sailor. I got you.”

Not quite a year earlier, on a late summer’s day, Cindy drove the partnership’s Ferrari, which she later gave to Kaitlyn as a wedding gift, to her father’s university campus. She stopped at the campus bookstore and purchased several woman’s t-shirts emblazoned with the school’s mascot which she would twist into a provocative knot, then sat on the steps of the library in short shorts, sunglasses, and sandals impersonating a student while she kept her vigil and reading Robert Graves. Cindy had to repeatedly fend off advances from the guys, knowing that once they found out her secret, she would be beaten to a pulp and left for dead behind the dormitories. Nevertheless, you couldn’t keep a good girl down, and she had given a few of the cuter, nicer guys blow jobs in the classical antiquities section of the undergraduate library stacks, Cindy being certain that nobody would disturb them there.

She thoroughly enjoyed playing the campus slut while basking in the late summer sun, and considered enrolling in a master’s program. She could be a whore by night and a slut by day, and somewhere find the time to study.

Finally, late on the second day, her vigil paid off and she saw what she was waiting for. Her father left his building and walked towards the cafeteria, not recognizing the person who had once been his son sitting on the steps not ten feet from where he passed. Cindy’s heart wrenched as she saw the distraught expression on her father’s face. He looked like someone close to him had just died and that expression had haunted her since then.

Tears streamed down her face for the entire drive back to New York.

Thankfully, her ankle wasn't broken, but it was seriously sprained and swelled to twice its size. The doctor in the hospital in Nettuno joked about no high heels for her and she scornfully looked at him. Finally, early the next morning, the couple returned to their hotel in Rome with Cindy's ankle heavily bandaged and her walking with crutches. The hotel manager expressed his sincere concern for the honeymooners. Their Italian trip would be ruined if she couldn't get around in Florence and Genoa as they had planned. John, however, was used to contingency planning.

"Do you know an inexpensive place in either Lombardy or Tuscany where my wife can just have some quiet time recuperating? Her life has been a whirlwind for a long time and she needs some quiet time for reflection."

"I have a sister who runs a small inn, the Bella Donna, in a town named San Luca in the Tuscan hills near Ortona. It's beautiful, and it's before high season so she is probably not booked. I will call her right away and convince her to have you stay for a very modest price. Signore, it has been a true pleasure having you and your wife stay here. She brightens up the day with her smile."

"Thank you. It has been a pleasure staying here as well. Hopefully some day we can return with our children when they are ready to appreciate Rome." John held out his smart phone to show a wedding picture of himself, Cindy, Jennifer and Daniel.

"You have a lovely family, now let me make the call. I will ask my sister to give you the best possible price."

Ten minutes later, the manager called Cindy and John's room. "Wonderful news, my sister has an opening and will let you stay two weeks for your wife to recuper-

ate. Her inn is lovely. You would like it even more than Genoa or Florence. It's in wine country and the views are spectacular."

"Thank you, you have been most gracious."

"As have you and your wife. I look forward to your family coming to Rome."

John helped a limping Cindy into the car and she smiled her sincere gratitude. The Fiat fought its way through the Rome traffic on the way to the inn in Tuscany. An hour after leaving Rome, Cindy noticed a sign for Viterbo and asked her husband if they could head into the small city.

"Please, I know it's off our route, but I would really like to go there."

Entering the outskirts of the city, they stopped at a gas station. Cindy hobbled over to the proprietor and conversed in rapid fire Italian. Ten minutes later the car stopped in front of a small, Romanesque Church, the Chiesa Di San Silvestro.

"Do you know that Guy de Montfort, son of Simon de Montfort who led the Baron's Revolt, was consigned by Dante to one of the lowest levels of hell for murdering a friend in front of the altar of this church? This altar, right here."

"Do you know," John thought to himself. "She is coming back around."

"Nope, didn't know that."

"And do you know that my great great whatever fought for Simon De Montfort and was in charge of the defense of Kenilworth Castle, the longest siege in English history? I don't approve of him cutting off the hand of Prince Edward's messenger asking them to surrender,

though, I think just the medieval version of 'Nuts' would have worked."

"Is that the same Edward who had Mel Gibson drawn and quartered?"

"I wish. Somebody should have done that to Mel Gibson a long time ago. To think, I actually loved him in Gallipoli."

A few hours later they left the main highway and were driving through a pastoral landscape on the back roads of Tuscany.

"You are an amazing woman, Cindy Kincaid, considering all that has passed in your life these past couple of years and what you have done."

"I'm sorry, it all piled up at once; being married, a new mother, trying to decide what I wanted to do with my life, worrying that you would tire of me and look for a real woman."

"That's a lot on anybody's plate, becoming a woman full-time, being a lady of the evening, then walking away from it all to becoming a loving wife and mother. Please don't take this as patronizing or condescending, but I am incredibly proud of you, darling, and I am proud to be your husband. I figured you were going to crash, but what at Nettuno set you off, as if I couldn't guess?"

"My opprobrium before dead heroes. They would all look on me with disgust, or as a joke. As a shemale who has spent the greater amount of her time as a prostitute, I felt unworthy standing there, and all my demons came back in an instant to haunt me."

"You don't know what those soldiers would say if they could rise again. Maybe in Heaven they learned a better understanding of the human condition. I will tell you one thing, the quality you admire about the men un-

der those crosses, you have plenty of. It takes an incredible amount of bravery to do what you did. I know you were never in combat and I was, but I know courage when I see it. I could sense your fear the moment I laid eyes on you when you were rigging the rods for salmon fishing up at the lake. I saw it the next day on our abbreviated date and again at Heather's wedding. But you overcame those fears. You looked so incredibly confident and strong in the Bahamas and beneath your bridal veil.

Bravery isn't the absence of fear, it's overcoming it. You are just going to have to do it again. We all wish we didn't have to be brave, but we have to on a daily basis. Show those guys buried at Nettuno that you have a real heart and they would have respected you. It's like my Dad. He will never like you and there is nothing you can do about it, but you earned his respect. Maybe you should use that as a model for your own parents."

Cindy just looked at her husband and said nothing, finding some measure of peace in her soul. She was truly a lucky woman to have found John.

An increased measure of peace would be impossible to avoid than at the Bella Donna at San Luca. The sun had started to set behind the hills and smoke from the chimney greeted the couple. An elderly man greeted John and Cindy and moved to take their luggage, but John insisted on carrying Cindy's carload inside.

"Next time we get a moving van."

Cindy would typically have smarted off to her husband, but she stood on her crutches and laughed at herself.

Mrs. Pontelandolfo, the sister of the hotel proprietor in Rome, greeted the newlyweds, giving Cindy an embrace like she was a long lost daughter which nearly toppled her. She insisted that the two have a seat for dinner as it

was ready, bringing out a huge bowl of wild boar stew and uncorking a bottle of red from a local vineyard.

The exhausted couple retired to their room with John helping his lame wife up the steep stairs. Exhausted, she just took off her jeans and shirt and crawled under the covers and comforter in her bra and panties. John took a shower down the hall as there was no shower in the room, then, refreshed, crawled into bed next to his wife.

“This inn was built in 1505 and renovated since then over the years? Imagine all the loving couples who slept in this room. I may be the first shemale, so I guess I am kind of a pioneer,” Cindy observed before falling into a deep sleep.

John woke up early while Cindy slept soundly, had a breakfast of fresh fruit and farina, then went to explore the surroundings. The town had a traditional farmers’ market where he bought a block of parmesan, some bread and prosciutto, plus strawberries. He also purchased a bouquet of flowers, then silently crept up the ancient wooden stairs and placed the flowers on the night stand. Remembering Cindy’s unrealized wish that she could wear a flower in her hair every day, he plucked a flower from its stem and delicately placed it behind his sleeping wife’s right ear.

Embarrassed at sleeping into the afternoon, Cindy limped down the stairs and sheepishly looked at her husband and Mrs. Pontelandolfo who was setting the table for lunch. She had placed the flower back in her hair after her bath and proudly wore it at the table. Cindy and Mrs. Pontelandolfo engaged in a vigorous conversation in Italian in which Cindy gushed about the wonderfully historic inn and her hostess’ superlative cuisine. Observing the interchange, John just smiled. His wife was becoming a true lady right before his eyes. The sprained ankle had apparently been a godsend.