

Praise for 'When the Siren Calls - Prequel.'

For a full list of independent reviews of this novel visit:

<http://www.youwriteon.com/books/reviews.aspx?bookguid=8bef9bed-743d-4c27-b0cf-c17102ed1978>

"The story drips with sexual tension, teasing you along with the promise of more to come. This is a book about craving and desire and the narrative has that in abundance..."

"Truly excellent writing and this is clearly a winning example of the genre: sultry and dangerous. The pacing is great - a rollercoaster ride from the beginning, as the neglected Isobel goes from one reckless moment to another."

"The setting is vivid and alive. I could smell the mint tea and the bazaar spices and feel the oppressive sellers."

"It captured my attention immediately and kept me interested. It read well and rolled along nicely. Very readable, which is just what you want in this type of story."

"It flows easily. Attractive, lonely, neglected married woman discovers her own slumbering sexuality and finds it almost insatiable."

"The characters come across as real people with hopes and desires."

"A nicely stylized and provocative piece of writing, well paced with intelligently drawn characters and an excellent setting."

"I became totally engrossed in the story from the start. The build-up of tension is well paced and very real - my adrenaline flowed. This is likely not the book to read last thing at night if one has insomnia."

"This was fantastic. The pace was fabulous,"

"There's a hint of menace and danger from the opening page. The author then skillfully toys with your expectations."

One

Grasping hands tore at Isobel's clothing and scraped her skin as she forced her way forward. She swung round to face the seething pack, the speed of her movement causing her handbag – too oversized, too glittering for these dusty lanes- to sweep with her in a defensive arc. "Go away, allez, allez!" she shouted, trying to sound authoritative as the street urchins began to melt away into the corners.

Her limbs freed from the pressing bodies, she wove deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of endless, identical alleyways, slipping between the sacks and the stalls with an almost serpentine ease that masked her increasing panic. It felt that every eye were upon her, eyes shrouded by swathes of headgear or set within sun-dried faces, all disapproving, some accusing. And every turn revealed idle and cocky gangs of youths who straddled their cycles, observing her distress with knowing smirks.

Isobel looked for an opening, any way out that might lead her back to the square and return her to some kind of safety and normality. But every likely exit from this terrible maze was blocked with the knee-high beggars that had followed the scent of her like sharks, ever since she had taken pity on a tiny girl who, with swimming eyes, had

pleaded her for a dirham. But as they closed in to encircle her, there were no more pleas, only orders–

‘You give dirhams!’ they called at her, chanting their certainty like a mantra.

‘Yes dirhams!’ she cried in a sudden and reckless change of tack.

‘Dirhams for whoever can show me the way back to the square.’

She pulled a single note from her purse and waved it before the outstretched hands. But the sight of money only fed the frenzy and the chorus of orphaned voices grew louder and more demanding, as ragged forms crashed against her legs like waves hitting a rock and threatened to topple her with their combined force.

A barking voice cut through the air and her pursuers leapt back as if scalded. The sound of a wicker cane smacking against flesh was followed by shrieks of pain and the startled waifs scattered like stray cats. Isobel turned towards her saviour, overwhelmed by gratitude and close to tears. She guessed he was in his mid-forties, unmistakably Arabic, clean-shaven, and smartly dressed in Western clothes, his polo sporting one of the many designer labels that seemed to adorn even the cheapest t-shirts.

“They mean no harm, the children,” said the man. “Do not think badly of them, perhaps they already saw you were a kind woman? The children, they see it in the face, if you are kind. So you must be very kind to attract so many children.”

“Thank you,” said Isobel, her breathing easing, “but I think it was the few coins I gave a little girl for sweets that was my mistake.”

“A mistake perhaps, but also the sign of a good heart, no?”

Isobel smiled at the compliment.

“You wish to go to the square I think?” asked the man.

“Yes, yes, I do. Is it near?”

“If you know where it is, it is near, if not...” the man shrugged, “if not it can be very, very far. Perhaps you will let me show you the way. No one will bother you if you are not alone.”

Isobel hesitated. “If you are sure you don’t mind. I said I would meet my husband there.”

The man motioned toward the space behind the open shutters.

“Please, wait inside for a few moments. I must get my son for he will mind the store. Please, this way, just a few moments.”

Isobel idly perused the wares as she waited. Her appetite for shopping, if she ever had one, was exhausted. The glimmering trinkets in her bags were useless trifles, bought to justify her

headstrong decision to come to the souk alone, a means to make her point to Peter when she returned. She checked her watch. It was clear that “a few moments” meant something other than what the words implied. Still, this was Marrakech, where life still seemed to follow the movement of the sun rather than the hands of the clock. She brushed her fingers along the reams of intricately adorned fabric with their brilliant shades of orange and blue, savouring the space around her and revelling in the silence broken only by the whining of mosquitoes around the turquoise lamp that was suspended from the ceiling like a pale moon.

Isobel noticed the lengthening shadows, and looked again at her wrist. There was a limit to how long a good deed could be considered a debt. She put aside the cloth she was admiring; she would just have to make her own way to the square. She was confident that her journey from the square had been upward, so the way back must be downward. As she pulled down her sunglasses like a visor to signal that no eye contact would be entertained, the silence was ruptured by the man’s voice; he had returned – a twenty-year-old version of himself in tow.

“I am sorry to keep you, kind lady, but my son, he must close his shop, and before he can close it he must put away his fruit. This is my son, Sharif, and I am Ali.”

Isobel turned to the young man. Putting away his fruit must also have involved boiling the kettle, as he carried a silver tray with a long, curve-spouted silver pot and three glasses hardly bigger than egg cups.

“Please let me offer you a refreshment,” said the older man, “it is our tradition and you are an honored guest.”

Sharif was dressed similarly to his father, except where the older man’s shirt bore the emblem of a crocodile, his son’s bore that of a prancing horse.

“You are in Marrakech for holiday?” asked Ali, who was clearly the talker of the two.

“Just the weekend.”

“So short, so little time. You must not think that all of Marrakech is like the souk, that everyone is like the hungry children. You must return soon. We have much history, beautiful architecture, white, sandy beaches. And you will find the Moroccan people very friendly, very welcoming. It is our tradition. I must give you something, a present, to remind you of Morocco.”

“Really,” said Isobel, keen to bring matters to a close, “you have been too kind already.”

“Sharif, a little gift for the lovely lady.”

Sharif seemed to have anticipated his father’s command. He stepped forward, a ring-sized jewellery box between thumb and forefinger.

“It is only a trinket, of no real value to some, but precious to others.”

Sharif opened the box to reveal a blue ceramic pendant on a silver chain. Isobel smiled and began to say thank you but was cut short by arms encircling her neck.

“Sharif will put it on for you, it is tradition,” proclaimed the older man.

The young man’s hands travelled swiftly behind Isobel’s neck. For what seemed a long time, he stood in front of her, their bodies less than a foot apart, his forearms brushing her shoulders as his fingers worked behind her neck to secure the clasp. Isobel felt the cool stone resting in her cleavage, visible at the opened top of her blouse. She fingered the pendant as she tried to ensure it rested on closed linen.

“I wish that my gift keeps you safe from the evil eye, and that it brings you back to Marrakech,” said Ali, as Sharif retreated to the doorway.

“But you must also choose something from my shop that you wish to

have, something to wear perhaps. I have beautiful cotton and silk blouses. Kaftans also. You choose.”

Isobel wanted to say that the rescue, the tea, the pendant, and the promised escort to the square were more than enough to bring her back to Morocco, but the need to repay a kindness weighed heavier than the need to get away.

“This way,” said Ali, seizing on her hesitation and taking her arm, “you must see my special cloth, the cloth I must keep out of the sun and the dust.” And with that she was whisked behind a draping curtain and her head then guided down through a low opening more like a metal cat-flap than a door, to surface into a dimly lit and cluttered stockroom.

Cloth was no longer the dominating commodity. Arranged around the walls and along parallel rows of shelves was a hypermarket-like selection of tourist ware; watches, jewellery, sunglasses, handbags, shoes, clothing, and the household contents of an entire village. All that was obviously missing was a live camel.

The absence of natural light, the more confined space, the silence, and the realization that she was with two strangers, one ahead, one behind, suddenly pressed in on Isobel. She bit down hard on her lower lip.

“Please, you pick something, it is for the memory, no?”

Despite the ambiguity in Ali’s offer, Isobel was now expected to shop; that was clear. The opening she’d come through was closed, and Sharif was standing like a praetorian guard in front of it, his legs apart and arms folded. And for all Ali’s permanent geniality, the atmosphere changed as soon as the door closed behind her. Isobel’s insides fluttered like caged birds. Did they want her money, or did they want more? In the dim light their eyes seemed red and never left her body.

“Do you have blouses?” she asked, desperate to reinforce the pretext of the situation.

“Many, many. What colour you like?”

“Green. Or, or, maybe blue,” she stammered, thinking about the pendant. Ali handed her a selection of cotton tops, each in a clear plastic wrapper.

Isobel sought to give her most positive eager shopper look. “Yes, maybe these, but I need to see them in the light.”

“Here is light,” said Ali, gesturing all around.

“No, I mean natural light.”

“Green is green and blue is blue. Always same.”

“No, I need to see them in natural light.” Isobel held the half dozen blouses, and price had yet to raise its ugly head. Ali looked off-balance.

“I can’t buy without proper light,” she repeated and with that, still clutching the blouses, she made for the door. “Hold these please.” She thrust the merchandise toward Sharif. It was an order and he took them as Isobel pushed her way past and ducked through the opening. She needed to get back into the front of the shop before the two men could recover from the shock of her assertiveness. She looked around but the exit was concealed somewhere behind the realms of hanging drapes. Where was the way out? She thrashed at a few of the curtains that were beginning to envelop her, but was finally through. She resisted the urge to rush headlong to the street. She composed herself as the two men reappeared, their nostrils flaring in anger.

“My husband is waiting for me. I’m sorry, I need to go. I will come back tomorrow.”

Ali held out his arm, stiff like a barrier. “Do you think you can rest from the heat of the day and drink tea in my shop for free? Can you drink tea in shop in London for free? Why you think you can do it here? You steal my time, you steal money. It is same. You buy now. No tomorrow.”

It was the younger man that now grabbed her arm in a determined sandpaper grip.

“I’ll come back tomorrow. Now let go of my arm.”

“You must pay now.”

“Let go of my arm, *now*.”

The older man stepped in between Isobel and the opening to the street. She jerked her arm free and pushed past him, fear closing around her like the Marrakech night.

“You steal my time, you are thief!” Ali shouted again, but louder, thrusting the blouses at her. Others were closing in, drawn by the commotion and once more she found herself hemmed in. Stubbled faces with swarthy complexions were looking at her, joining in the melee. It felt like a hundred eyes were undressing her. She cursed her impetuosity in storming off from Peter, of not changing out of the revealing top and clinging slacks, both now wet from her own perspiration. A hand brushed the inside of her thigh and travelled upwards. She swung around and was met by a shriveled face and a leering grin, a single black and yellow tooth behind the thin, cracked lips. “Don’t you dare touch me!” she shouted. But as she said it she felt more tugging, this time on her bag.

She clasped the bag to her chest with both arms, but in doing so felt her body more exposed, more vulnerable. She steeled herself for a fight, but before she could swivel around again, she sensed the threat dissipating. The hand on her buttock was no longer there, bodies were backing off, parting like the Red Sea, and faces were turning away from her. The crowd shrank to the sides of the stalls and was disappearing; someone was pushing through from behind, shouting. "Everything ok, darling?"

"Peter, thank god!"

But it was not Peter. She turned to see a tall, well-built man forcing his way towards her with the confident assurance of a native. She felt a protective arm around her shoulder as he pulled her still shaking body close to his, her heartbeat slowing as he created a cordon of safety between her and the crowd. Only Ali the storekeeper remained in the confrontation.

"You pay now," he repeated, pushing his bundle of blouses forward.

The man grabbed the top-most garment; he spoke in Arabic to the storekeeper. From Ali's reaction, Isobel guessed it was something uncompromising. "How much," asked the man; the shopkeeper gave his price in Arabic. The man pulled some crumpled notes from his

pocket and pressed them into Ali's hand. "Not the best time to bargain," he quipped.

With the exchange done, the confrontational manner of the shopkeeper gave way to supplication. Ali returned to the smiling well-wisher that Isobel had first encountered.

Isobel let out a long, audible sigh, her breathing now easier, as the stranger led her towards the fading light. "Where did you come from?" she asked.

"I don't know," said the man as they passed a stall of shining metal-ware, "someone must have made a wish, one minute I'm in this brass lamp and the next..."

She burst out laughing, the tension falling from her body. "So how do we leave this nightmare?" she asked.

"Come on, follow me, it's this way – or at least I think it's this way," he said, smiling encouragement.

Was her rescuer all he seemed? It occurred to Isobel that she had already been deceived that afternoon by one smiling Samaritan. But she had little choice; the man took her by the hand and led her away with quick and purposeful strides, turning this way and that through the narrow alleys as if by instinct, into the spice market with its endless sacks of red saffron, golden curry, and bronze cumin, the

aromas of mint and rose filling her senses and soothing away her fears, before emerging into the square. The sky was darkening to a reddish brown, the orange veil that bathed the square now disappearing as the sun retreated beyond the horizon along with the tourists and those who traded among them. From distant minarets came the wailing sound of the faithful being called to prayer. The tension and seeming danger in the souk, the heroic intervention, the rapid escape, all made for a strange sense of elation in Isobel. She tried not to think of Peter back at the hotel waiting, and no doubt worrying. Right now she wanted to enjoy the moment.

“Who do I have to thank for saving me from Ali and the forty thieves?” she asked, masking the strange importance she placed on knowing his name.

“Jay, Jay Brooke.” He offered his hand and Isobel took it. His blue eyes bore into hers.

“Isobel,” she offered in reply, unsure how to proceed.

“You were quite a fighter back there,” he said.

“Fight or flight, I suppose. You must think me very foolish to have gotten myself into such a mess?”

“These things happen. Probably down to misunderstanding mostly. But a woman, an attractive Western woman, alone in the souk, maybe not the best idea.”

Isobel blushed at the compliment but controlled her instinctive flirtatious response and settled for the simple statement of, “You must let me pay for the blouse.”

“Don’t be silly, you earned it,” he replied before being cut short as a taxi broke from the rank, turned full circle, and pulled alongside them.

Jay opened the rear passenger door. “Where are you staying?”

“La Mamounia.”

Jay grinned. “Great taste. That’s where I’m staying. How long are you there for?”

Isobel felt compelled to break the dream, to make it clear she was accompanied.

“We’re just here for the weekend.”

She expected him to seek clarification on who the “we” was, but he didn’t.

“Me too. Maybe I can save you from drowning in the pool or something next time?”

He made no move to close the door and, taking the hint, Isobel slid across so he could join her.

He lowered his head to follow her movement. "I just need to get a couple of things before everything closes, lovely to have met you. Take care."

And with that, he gave a final smile before pushing the door closed. Was their brief acquaintance to be confined to and immortalised in one fleeting moment of chivalry? He hit the roof of the cab, signaling it to leave with the same confidence that seemed to permeate all his actions. And as the taxi drove away all feelings of elation evaporated, turning to embarrassment at her rejection and shock at her own forwardness. She huddled into a corner and willed herself home, and perhaps not herself at all.

Two

Isobel stared at her reflection in the gilded mirror of reception looking intently at her own face. She fancied it altered from the face of the bathroom that morning, somehow younger and brighter. Her eyes descended her figure and halted in alarm at the still damp linen blouse against her breasts, which revealed her nipples like roses in the mist. Fear and embarrassment flooded over her at the thought of her involuntary immodesty, although if the stranger noticed then he certainly concealed it well. She remembered the way his bright blue eyes held her own with an almost hypnotic gaze and was certain they did not stray to her body.

The concierge eyed her curiously as she turned from the mirror.

“Welcome back madam. Your afternoon in the bazaar was pleasant I trust?”

Isobel forced a laugh. “Your sellers in the market are very persuasive.”

The concierge simply returned a knowing smile. “Is there something I can help you with madam?” She looked around the foyer and towards the bustling lobby bar with the golden statues at its entrance assuming poses of serenity that contrasted harshly with the harried staff that passed between them.

“Is my husband around, do you know?”

“Yes madam. I believe he is in his suite. He rang down a short while ago.”

“Looking for me?”

“If I remember correctly it was to do with a courier delivery he was expecting. Some papers.” Isobel feigned a look of surprise and nodded, turning her attention to a taxi that swept up outside. She watched in nervous expectation as a strong male figure, broad shouldered and straight-backed, emerged from the darkness of the interior. She craned her neck as the figure turned from her view and reached his hand into the taxi, helping an elderly lady from the vehicle and leading her into the hotel. Isobel blushed as he met her glance, his sandy hair and watery grey eyes worlds away from what she wished for.

She made her way back to the hotel room, choosing the staircase over the elevator, stepping on her anxiety and frustration with each firm footstep as she prepared to face Peter. The image of what this evening should have been - a night of dining under the stars; with music, dancing and horse riding across desert dunes - sat stubbornly before her eyes and Peter’s words, his careless and thoughtless dismissal of her plans in favour of the hotel restaurant and its

internet connection, still rang in her ears.

He was on the phone when she entered the room, papers and files arranged on the coffee table like place settings. “We need to be in the lobby at six-thirty,” she said, hovering by the bed to invite his apology, but he did not rise to greet her, just smiled and gave a thumbs up as he nodded assent.

“Six-thirty,” she repeated, already pulling her blouse over her head as she made towards the bathroom, the beginnings of tears making spots like raindrops in its translucent fabric. She turned on the shower and tried to compose herself as the jet-stream cascaded down her body, allowing her emotions to evaporate as the heat of the water turned the shower door a milky white. She drew a tree on the glass, her finger etching paths through the moisture like a figure skater, as the trunk became branches with fingerprint leaves. As her fingers slid along the glass she followed the passage of time; through fifteen years of marriage, from Peter’s growing infatuation with his work –a drug that fed his ego with a heady cocktail of success- to the missed anniversaries and interrupted holidays. As each year passed things grew worse and now she left the bathroom and Peter was asleep.

Isobel was running again through the winding alleys of Marrakech. Everywhere there were shopkeepers with many heads and many, many more hands. The square buildings grew rounder and rounder until they were crystal balls, filled with the sea and the sky, and great hands hovered above them covered in golden rings. Suddenly the rings started to fall, hitting against the glassy globes with a hollow knocking sound. The swirls of smoke became the damask pattern of the curtains in the half-light, it was 2am and the clicking was the whirring ceiling fan; the dullest of confirmations that she was back in the world of the living. Peter, she sensed, was also awake, his thoughts still no doubt consumed by the late night messages from Tokyo. They were as far apart in the king-size bed as it was possible to be, his straight, firm back repelling hers like a magnet and she felt sure that, if she edged closer, an invisible barrier would brush against her skin, so ingrained were the day's events.

"I'm sorry about this afternoon," she said, conciliation and warmth in her tone as once more she fought against what threatened to be nature's course.

He stayed quiet a few seconds before reaching out and pulling her to him, an increasingly unfamiliar gesture that made her jolt in surprise.

“It was my fault. And the evening too. I behaved unforgivably, sulking like that. I know how much you wanted it to be a success, to be a romantic evening. It was just...” his explanation trailed away. “I will make it up to you,” he promised with a reassuring hug, his thoughts drifting off with his words.

“Why don’t we make it up now?” She slipped her hand inside his pyjamas. “It can still be a romantic evening.” It had been many months, perhaps six, since she last prompted lovemaking, since she last responded fully to his initiations. At times when the mood of martyrdom most gripped her, she would try to convince herself that she was content to lie beneath him and wait, until finally rolling away to let sleep envelop her.

She squeezed and massaged him, but he was slow to respond to her coaxing. As she stroked and caressed she pushed the guilt of her straying imagination aside, picturing herself the confused heroine in an epic romance. She felt again the adrenaline of the souk, and an unfamiliar lust coursing through her veins, her frustration rising at the lack of progress her efforts were instilling. At last she felt his readiness and rose to straddle him, gently helping him inside her with a mix of almost platonic affection and stifled fear.

But his surprise at her initiation was almost comical, a jarring note of

humour in her serious romantic drama. Yet she pursued her cravings nonetheless, strangely aroused by her experience with the man from the market and spurred on by fear, needing to reassure herself about her marriage. But his familiarity was crushing, she felt no possibility in Peter's embrace – only his inevitable climax and her seemingly eternal disappointment.

Three

Strange feelings of guilt surged and ebbed within Isobel as she sat with Peter at the breakfast table; she pushed her food round the plate with her fork, eyeing it listlessly and eating nothing. She had lost almost a stone in the past six months, the weight falling from her like autumn leaves as Peter's absorption in his latest client reached its peak. He, of course, failed to notice. Failed to feel the hip bones against his as they lay together, remained oblivious to the wedding ring that now slid loosely up her finger and back to the knuckle with a dull thud.

She studied him as he prodded his mushroom omelet, his attention temporarily distracted from the business section of the newspaper. His face and body were as lean and athletic as the day they met, but the vitality within him was so changed from the man she married. And without knowing why, she found herself resenting that he was the same, yet different.

"Peter, about yesterday..."

But her words were drowned by the quiet bleep of his phone, the 'please stay quiet bleep' as she once called it; it was late afternoon in Tokyo, and his eyes and mind went to the message on the screen instead of the anxiety on her face. She reached across and put her

palm over the phone; he looked at her with impatience, perhaps even anger, in his eyes.

“I had quite a fright in the medina. At one point one of the sellers grabbed my arm, you know, really grabbed it, and a crowd gathered.”

“Those guys don’t take no for an answer. If you had just waited half an hour we could have gone together,” he said, failing to sense any impending drama as he removed her hand from the screen. “Can I just deal with this, and then I’m all yours.” But he was not and she feared never would be.

She rose and stood for a moment in exasperation. “I’m going to the room to pack, then I’m off to the pool.”

He gestured to the phone pressed to his ear and batted off her words with a flick of his hand.

All guilt dissolved as she made the short walk to the elevator, her vision narrowed by rage she focused only on the shining doors ahead.

A man leapt up from a chair to her left but she did not see him. He threw down his newspaper and ran up behind her, pressing his hand playfully to her back.

“Going my way,” he said, as she almost jumped out of her skin, whirling round as the last of her tired nerves snapped.

“Oh my god, don’t do that,” she said, trying to disguise the contortion of emotions on her face.

He laughed a boyish laugh. “Sorry, I just can’t seem to help myself jumping out of nowhere to rescue damsels in distress.”

“I’m not in distress,” she said smiling, “and the lift only goes one way.”

The lift came and went as they exchanged pleasantries, Isobel offering her thanks once more for his heroics and he convivially dismissing them, his humour as pleasant and energetic as the day before. He seemed content to chat idly as the doors opened and closed, but Isobel found her eye straying to the breakfast room entrance. He seemed to sense her discomfort and stepped into the elevator at the next opportunity, silently beckoning her to follow him with his smile.

She looked at her watch.

“We’re leaving in a couple of hours,” she said, to which he muttered a nonchalant “uh um,” obliging her to continue. “I thought I’d spend the last hour around the pool... just while Peter makes his calls.”

“Sounds good, I was thinking about doing the same.”

Isobel had to stop herself from running as she stepped out to the corridor and made for her room. Once there she threw her clothes

haphazardly into the suitcase, rehearsing her reasoning as she went.

“ Why should I avoid someone who did such a chivalrous thing, if Peter’s going to ignore me?”

She paused to consider her clothing options, dallying only seconds over the idea of travel clothes before opting for a swimming costume.

Modesty and disquiet compelled her to choose the one-piece over a bikini but it was a striking black number, with a lace effect around the neck and midriff that allowed a veiled glimpse of both cleavage and waistline. She stood before the mirror touching up her lipstick; the woman looking back at her was strikingly attractive. Although her skin no longer shone with the dewy freshness of youth it was firm and polished, taut across her fine bone structure. Taller than average she was a sculpture of a woman, viewing herself in the mirror like looking at art behind glass. She subconsciously nodded her approval and moved to the door, grabbing a bathrobe as she went.

Jay was already there, his suit jacket draped over the lounge at his side, when she reached the pool. He looked effortlessly smart, his attractions in no way dulled by his unexposed flesh. Isobel broke her stride, now feeling foolish in her swimsuit and hating herself for her lack of subtlety. She pulled the bathrobe belt even tighter and made

the walk across to him. She wanted to take the lounge next to his but her nerve failed her.

“Shall we talk at the table,” she suggested, as she hung her bag decisively on the nearest chair.

He was charming but professional as they chatted, and with every sentence struck another crack in her fragile, still almost unconscious, hopes and imaginings.

“Your husband not joining us then?” he asked.

“He’s busy making calls to save the world,” she said, reproaching herself for her bitterness.

“Ah yes, you said. What does he do, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“He flies from boardroom to boardroom making fat cats look good.”

She tried to make her tone blasé, even amused, as she discreetly loosened the bathrobe. “You know, strategy. Buy this, sell that.”

“So he travels a lot I guess?”

“All the time. One luxury hotel to the next, like this place.”

“That must be great for you?” He smiled and raked his fingers through his hair before continuing. “The opportunity to travel with him I mean.”

“I used to think so. But after ten years it can get nauseating. Talking trivia with pampered spouses in the same bland function rooms all

over the world.”

“While the boys swig their brandy and swing their dicks?” His crudity should have shocked her and she blushed when it didn’t.

“It sounds like you know the game he’s in,” she said, the bathrobe slipping from her shoulders as she put down her drink. His eyes lingered for a moment on her torso as curved black materialized from the soft, shapeless white.

“A little bit, maybe. But what brought you both to Marrakech, if he’s so busy?”

She could not resist the invitation for disclosure. “My dreams I suppose. You know, the romance of the place. But I did have to drag Peter here kicking and screaming.”

“And you’ve found it?” His eyes burnt into her, seeming to see everything, to know everything.

“It hasn’t been the right time, there’s a lot going on.”

She felt all of a sudden afraid of being quizzed further and drew herself up to become the questioner.

“And you, what brings you here?”

“Business. I’m checking out an investment possibility. A tourist development.”

“And that’s what you do all the time?”

“Some of the time. Right now I’m spending most of my time in Italy, in Tuscany; it’s a new concept – a luxury hotel and spa, an idyllic retreat in the hills - somewhere for a romantic getaway, or just to get some ‘me-time,’ while being pampered like a princess. If you visit you’d love it I’m sure, and if you didn’t, then I’d know we were getting it wrong.”

She smiled at the compliment. “Maybe I will,” she said brazenly, taking a sip of iced tea through the straw, molding her lips round it into a soft pink ‘o’.

He laughed, and pulled a card from his wallet. “Here’s my details, and there’s a link on the back to a website, it will show you what we’re up to much better than I can describe.”

She tucked it away in the pocket of her robe as he stood up to say his goodbyes. As she rose to receive them, the bathrobe fell fully to the floor.

End

Like to know what happens next?

Coming soon “When the Siren Calls..”The complete story.

Follow headstrong Isobel’s descent into a world of

seduction, deception and betrayal as her sexual cravings
carry her to Tuscany in pursuit of Jay. For regular news and
updates contact me or visit me at:

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