

HOTEL

This hotel has bird chirps in the halls. The walls papered in green vines with perching parrots. Guests are expected to suspend reality and believe the wallpaper parrots are making the chirpy noises. It's strange. The halls are long, narrow, winding. Stuffy and airless for such a fancy hotel. Left-turning right-turning halls. He jogs them to and from the elevator.

Is this a Monte thing? I ask him. Bird noises in the halls?

People who go to Monte Carlo a lot call it Monte. It's an insider thing. This being only my first time but I want to belong.

He's looking across the room at me. I'm still in bed. He's slumped in the deep leather chair near the open balcony doors. A light breeze blows the sheer curtains. We've just finished having before-dinner sex.

Bird sounds? I really don't know, he tells me. I've only stayed in this particular hotel.

But how many times have you been here?

Ten or so, he says.

In the same hotel?

He nods.

Don't you long for a change?

I have a change, he says. You.

Then he comes back to the huge bed and does me again. He's fast but one of the best. He gets you there in half the time most guys take. I tell him and he laughs. It must be the jogging, he says.

Dinner is alfresco on a small stone patio surrounded by dense hedges. He says we can eat inside the restaurant if I prefer.

I look toward the restaurant which also seems lovely. It's nicer out here, I say, it's a beautiful night.

Your dress is beautiful, he says.

Thank you. I bought it in Bombay on a layover.

The purple gauze and gold threads suit you, he says. I like the strapless, you have the shoulders for it. The gold flat sandals are perfect. Did you buy the lizard purse in Bombay?

No, I bought that in New York. I rub my hand across the pale flat lizard purse in my lap. I don't mention I bought it at sixty percent off. I just say I thought it would go well with everything I packed since it's a neutral color.

You're a fashion plate, he says.

This makes me dizzy. Or maybe it's the gin and tonic I drank so quickly. The salty humidity. I feel nervous. I don't feel nervous during sex with him. Only during normal.