

The Exchange Student

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“Summer is often a time for awakenings, unfurlings, and that hot Californian summer felt no different. But so often we are poised on the brink of something that will change us forever without knowing. I was unaware then, of a tropical breeze blowing scents of jasmine and cinnamon from afar onto my skin; from well beyond the dry deserts winds of California coming up from the south. I assumed, sitting in the eucalyptus grove at the University, that the scents were nothing but the smells with which I was familiar, the cushion of fragrant bark upon which I sat while studying in this place which I’d made my own.

It was Mid-December of 1983 and I was a freshman at UC Berkeley. Reveling in my time away from home and family as I was not getting along with my new stepmother. I’d chosen to go to art school at CCAC, the California College of Arts and Crafts, but my father wanted me educated at the University so a deal was struck. I could take two courses per term at the art school and four per term at CAL.

Berkeley was a highly prestigious school and it took a high grade point average to enter, but my father was an important man, well known to the University. He had come with me in the fall and had demanded to see the Chancellor of the University. We were shown right in and my father’s first words after introductions were,

“I want my daughter to be admitted to the art history department!”

The immediate response was “Welcome to CAL.”

No transcript, no letter of recommendation, no portfolio of accomplishments, team sport or expertise with a tuba, just a welcome.

As a late arrival I had the good fortune to be given a room in an old Victorian house owned by the school on College Avenue. My room was fit for two but I would be the only resident. There were eight other girls in the house but I decorated the room as if my own and simply had one unused bed. I put up some Beatles posters from Yellow Submarine and my father bought me a little vanity, a cushy chair, and a bookcase at a local thrift shop. I’d brought far too many clothes with me from New York. Walking down Telegraph Avenue with my dad that first day, and I knew I’d be needing little beside jeans and tee shirts. The place was the definition of dress-down, but I kept some girly stuff just in case I met a boy I wanted to impress or was invited to parties. And I kept all my lingerie, underwear and shoes. Those, I would not part with.

My first term was outstanding. In art class at CCAC I was learning to paint in oils and also to pot. I loved handling the clay and also learning to make Greek vases like the ones I had helped to excavate all over the Mediterranean with my archaeologist father. Painting them was an added bonus for I took Greek Pottery at CAL with Professor Reginald Braxton, the most prominent scholar on the subject on the West Coast. He would help me choose my subjects and my aim was to make copies of famous originals, right down to aging them and making them into exact likenesses.

On campus I was very noticeable, alternating between cut-offs and tank tops, button-downs and short skirts. I wore make-up and shaved my legs; that alone tended to set me apart from the earthy types at CAL. But what really did the trick was the fact that I was five feet, eleven inches tall, slender yet busty, and heads turned as I roamed the campus. One year earlier I was hiding my figure beneath shapeless tops and baggy jeans but recently I had begun modeling and my self-image had improved. I wasn't a tease. I had no one to tease. Guys stared at me but no one approached me, I just went about my business. I did have a couple of girlfriends who were study buddies but they were often with boyfriends at mixers on the weekends. That was fine. I enjoyed my own company and usually just retreated to books or took BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) to San Francisco to visit the De Young Museum or sit in Golden Gate Park.

In the second week of December I was asked to the Dean's office about the need to share my room with an incoming upper-classman from Delhi. She was an exchange student in biology, two years older than me and had never been to the United States. Her father was a doctor in India and evidently had close ties with the university.

"We have a couple of other places we could place her Becca, but we thought you would be the best choice."

"Why do you think that Professor?" I asked.

"Well...your familiarity with other cultures, your outstanding grades, your personal style. We just assumed you could be a great host and help her fit in."

I had no objection and asked if I could write to her, to start a conversation before she came. The Dean picked up his phone and dialed an endless number of digits on his Trimline, evidently speaking to her father, a Dr. Patel. The phone was handed to me and the most beautiful musical voice answered. Sarika and I spoke for about ten minutes and the Dean kindly left the room to give us our privacy. She would be starting the winter term on January sixth, but would be coming via New York. I suggested she come a few days early so we could meet in the city and come west together after the holidays. We agreed to meet at JFK. I would be her host for a week and have her stay in a guest room in our Upper West Side brownstone. The Dean smiled when I told him of my plans and said he knew I would be the best person to help Sarika acclimate.

A week later I was home for the holidays and had my house to myself for several days while my father was in Mexico touring pre-Columbian sites with his new wife. This was the first time I hadn't gone to Rome for Christmas, the break being such a short one. I was on the

phone quite a bit with my mom to make up for it. Since my parents' divorce when I was fifteen, I'd been shipped over to Italy each year, every year to be with my mother and Italian family.

I spent some time researching India and found myself captivated with the ancient culture. So many of my generation and the one before had a fascination with eastern religion. Sarika, however, sounded very polished, very English. I had loved her voice and accent on the telephone. *Two years older than me*, I thought. *I hope she doesn't think me silly and superficial. Where would I take her?* I was so excited to show her around New York.

I wondered what she would look like; perhaps short and a little chubby if she was from a wealthy family. I imagined a very conservative woman more than a girl, perhaps veiled, definitely wearing a multi-colored sari, perhaps barefoot...definitely with a third eye painted between her brows. Hmmm, how mystical.

Although I'd travelled the world as a youth and into my teens, India was never on the travel map for us. My father's interests lay in the art of the Mediterranean world and its ancient cultures. I'd grown up in Rome, fortunate to be raised on two continents, and had excavated at ancient sites alongside my father every summer, sometimes in Italy, but also in Greece, Turkey, the Middle East and Egypt.

The big day arrived. Papa and I went to the airport and awaited her flight. We could see into the customs arrivals through a second floor glass window and watch all the passengers pass through passport control. Watching each and every woman who passed, I could not decide which would be my roommate. My eyes darted around at all the women in traditional Indian costumes.

Then suddenly, there was a tap on my shoulder and I turned around and found a stunning, slender, curvy, dark haired girl with cocoa skin, red lips and wicked slanting eye brows. She was nothing like what I had expected. She was exotic, to be sure, but could have been Spanish or Italian, or Lebanese. She wore faded jeans and a button-down shirt. She was so beautiful and gave me the most wondrous smile of white teeth, then hugged me tight and whispered in my ear, "I knew you would be beautiful Rebecca. I just knew you would be."

She smelled of heaven and faraway places, her skin warm and her cheek soft. Her hair came in waves of curly fullness and was so dark it was practically blue. I'd wrapped my arms around her and held her to me and could not believe she was so much taller than I'd expected... and wearing heels.

Our embrace lasted so long that my father had to interrupt and ask that he too could have a chance to meet my friend. She pulled apart and turned to my Papa, held him and brushed her cheeks against his own; first the left and then the right. She might even have been taller than he was, but my father's look of surprise was what I noticed. His eyes opening wide and his handling of her, as if she was a precious jewel made me blush and I felt warm all over. I knew we would be the best of friends. I just knew it.

My dad retrieved her bags from the carousel and the two of them walked side by side as I followed behind and I was stunned. *Look at how she walks! Oh my God.* She swayed, she glided, she floated on air in the most sensuous gait I'd ever seen in a woman. I watched,

transfixed, then found myself trying to copy her pattern. How do her hips do that? *Wow*. Copying her walk became an advantage to my short but burgeoning modeling career. I never walked the same way again.

We had an incredible week in New York; restaurants, museums, concerts, Broadway shows. My father made sure she had the total experience. We were approached by guys, some much older than us, and I was stunned at Sarika's ability to playfully handle them. She was in total control and set the agenda, even with the most testosterone packed predators that came our way. She had a power over all around her, but for me, and with me, she had a different face...a kindness and comradery I'd never had with a girlfriend.

We went to Indian restaurants in the city and I was introduced to curries, tandoori, bhindi and so many other dishes which I absolutely loved. I, in turn, brought her to my own favorite restaurants and reveled in her open mind and palette which seemed to enjoy sampling everything before her. None of my own friends had such open minds towards foods or anything else, for that matter. Everything with her was another adventure.

We spent the morning window shopping, neither of us able to afford to make purchases at the exclusive shops we visited. But trying things on at Henri Bendel and Bergdorf Goodman's was a lot of fun and we each picked things out for the other to model. We used the same dressing room and I was surprised at her total lack of modesty. She felt like an older sister with a world of experience which I admired. I was already learning a lot from her.

"Where to next Becca? You promised to take me to the Metropolitan Museum. Shall we go now?"

"Yes. I think it's the perfect time. It's a cold rainy day and being inside will warm us up, Sarika."

She turned to face me as we walked up Fifth Avenue. "You must call me Sari. It will be my pet name and only for you to use." She smiled a breathtaking smile and held my arm as we walked on through the chilly mist of seasonal winter spray.

We entered the museum and I toured her through the galleries with which I am familiar. Then we strolled the ancient near-east on the second floor.

Standing before a tenth century Apsara statue of an Indian dancer, I was amazed by how voluptuous she was; breasts huge and upright, tiny waist and curvy hips. I'd not come into this gallery before and was awash in admiration for the art and culture of India, a thousand years in the past..

"What a figure she has!" I said. "You won't find any woman depicted like her in Egypt, Greece or Rome. She's a pin-up, don't you think?"

Sari laughed. "Becca, she looks like you."

My eyes opened wide and I blushed. I had a big bust but this was the first time anyone had commented on it.

"You have a figure that every woman would love to have, and one which every man dreams of. You should wear it with pride." She slid her hand into the small of my back and her other on my shoulder and gently pushed me further upright. "There, that's better. You tend to

curve your shoulders inward and you should be holding yourself erect when you walk.” She released me and we smiled into each other’s eyes.

“I’ve been embarrassed for years now; ever since they grew so big. Guys stare at my chest and it bothers me when they do.”

She slid her fingers over my cheek and looked deep into my eyes. “Becca, dearest, you are what you are. You cannot hide your beauty. Men our age tend to see women as parts and pieces. Use your face to draw their attention. Your posture proclaims your confidence and a confident woman is always seen as a complete person and not as body parts. In any case, hold yourself tall and dress for your own pleasure without regard to making others uncomfortable. You are blessed with your figure and need not feel anything but happiness in being who you are. It’s what’s inside that truly matters and you are a lovely person; so much more than the superficial shell you carry. And I, my dear, am lucky to be your friend.”

I stood, silent, considering her words; words which had never been spoken to me before. I knew at once I would never slouch again and a tentative smile crossed my lips as I considered how important it was to hear such things; how important it was to have a close friend.

“Sari...I...I don’t know what to say. You’ve made me feel so good about myself. And coming from someone older and so beautiful makes a difference to me. I’ve always been self-conscious about my looks and especially my height. Growing a big bust just made me feel like such an object. I cover it up as best I can but know it’s there and I can see how others focus on it as well.”

She took my arm and we continued our stroll through the gallery.

“Becca, listen to me. Those who stare at your chest are either immature or really do see you as an object, so pay them no mind. Those who approach you as a friend and companion, who speak to your mind and your soul; those are the ones who will love you for what’s inside. And when you permit them an intimate moment, those are the ones who will enjoy the gift given to you by God...your physical being. One day, you will marry and he will be the luckiest man on earth.”

I laughed and she shared in the hilarity of how personal our conversation had become. I gave her a naughty look and answered. “Well, if I ever meet that man you described, he’d better be tall...and kind and gentle, artistic, bright and rich! Well, at least half those things.”

We travelled together back to college and she was very pleased with her new room in the hundred-year-old wooden house that we would call home for the semester.

Our first night back I took her to the local hang-out, a bar on College Avenue where my study buddies would go with their jock boyfriends. I had a beer and she had a ginger ale. The place was loud and rowdy, filled with returning students. Suddenly an arm draped over my shoulder and two huge dudes pressed up against me. These were a couple of football players from the CAL Bears, one tall and trim, shoulders spanning the globe, the other...the one with his arm dangling over my shoulder, the size of a refrigerator. I blanched and Sarika immediately took control. She placed an open hand on the taller guy’s chest and spoke.

“I am so sorry, but you are not my friend’s type so please be a gentleman and leave her alone.” His face dropped and he backed away a step. Then she lifted the other’s hand off my shoulder and said,

“Come here my friend, we need to talk.” Leading him to a chair that I doubted would support his weight, Sarika pushed him down into the seat and then, shockingly, sat in his lap. He too was stunned by her willpower.

“Now didn’t your mother teach you to be a gentleman around a lady? What makes you think it is acceptable behavior to simply cover her shoulder with your arm? Did she invite you to act in such a manner? If you wish to approach such a wonderful woman, you must do so with your mind first or you will never have a chance to tell her that you are worthy of her company. The next time you see her you should smile and say hello, then introduce yourself, don’t you think?”

Other members of the football team had surrounded us and were all smiling ear to ear at this linebacker in the chair, the expression gone from his face, no effort at holding or stroking the total babe in his lap. Sarika looked up and scanned the faces of all those around her and her eyebrows angled down in a frown. All of them, every one of those men...big boys really, suddenly appeared contrite and looked away from her piercing eyes and down to the floor. I was overwhelmed.

She rose, took my arm, said goodbye and we left, a few goodbye’s following us out of the bar. I’d never seen anything like that. I was stunned. As we stepped outside, she broke into mischievous laughter. It was contagious. I’d learned a lot about the power of a woman that night. It was fascinating how fearless and strong willed she was. She was my hero.

Sarika had brought little with her to decorate the room, except for a post-card-sized colored image of the Hindu god Ganesh-a chubby elephant with a crown. The next day we went, at her suggestion, to an army/navy store in Oakland and bought an old parachute. This we hung from the ceiling and draped over the walls and the entirety of the room. She went at it with scissors and made openings for the door and bay windows, making her own tie-backs and a hole in the center for our single center light fixture. We bought lovely textiles and Sari made pillows and bolsters. We removed the bedframes and put our mattresses directly on the floor.

Our room was so exotic; we burned incense, the dorm admin at first assuming we were smoking weed, then realizing we were not. Candles not being permitted, we strung Christmas lights around the room, giving a soft glow and a seductive, feminine atmosphere. We had the best dorm room ever.

We studied together, ate together, showered together, and were basically inseparable although, being in different disciplines, our classes were at opposite ends of the campus. We tried on and wore each other’s clothes, and although she was 5’8”, she fit in most of my things. She dressed me up in traditional Indian sari cloth and painted my arms and hands in henna.

Showering separately, getting ready for our day together in the bathroom the first time, I had noticed she was completely shaven, while I was natural with dark curls below. I had never imagined I’d be as comfortable with nudity as I was with her, but she made nothing of it so

neither did I. She practiced yoga on the floor every day in her underwear and taught me to do the same. She educated me the art of flexibility and tranquility so essential to yoga, touching me often as she indicated proper positioning. I loved her as my best friend ever and was already sad at the knowledge that two months had by now passed of the five we would have together.

I introduced her to my favorite books and we read to one another at the end of each day, Sarika often lying beside me on my bed, stroking my hair and braiding it or massaging my shoulders while I read. I'd shied away from men who didn't know how to touch and be gentle, often the target of more forceful types, but Sari was gentle and comforting to the extreme, sharing her touch and her thoughts without question or awkwardness.

On weekends we travelled up to Marin to walk Muir Woods and climb Mount Tam. One time we went to Napa and sampled wines at each of the vineyards. Sari had never tasted anything alcoholic and I was a light-weight drinker. Somehow, we made it home in one piece falling into bed together and passing out.

We shared our passions in learning and I found myself fascinated with her studies in Bio and I took her to my art school and taught her to throw a pot. It was so much fun to sit behind her and glide her hands over the clay while spinning on the wheel. She made the most remarkable vases which resembled pregnant women with modern minimal faces. Her pieces reminded me of Cycladic art of the pre-Minoan cultures of the Aegean. I'd always thought those figurines appeared to be modern and conceptual, even though nearly five thousand years old.

That day, a model came to class to have her torso cast in bronze. The group of students all put on plastic gloves and applied the plaster as she reclined, naked, on a table, all of us laughing with her as she smiled with so many hands passing their way over her bust.

"Professor?"

"Yes Miss Patel."

"May Becca and I do this too...on ourselves?" I looked at her in a bit of shock as my instructor smiled along with the two boys in the class.

"I'm not undressing in public Sari! Are you crazy?"

My teacher looked at us and spoke. "The two of you can use the small studio beside my office if you like. I'll sweep the table clear. Just don't make a mess, okay?"

Her face was smiling from ear to ear and I could not say no. After all, it would be just the two of us and I'd already seen her naked all semester. We walked into the room and she disrobed and lay back on the desk which we had covered in a drop cloth.

"Oh dear, we didn't bring gloves with us. I'll get some and be right back."

"We don't need gloves Becca"

Applying the plaster, I glided my hands over her bust, neck and torso as she smiled at me and giggled. It was wonderful and intimate and I loved doing this, grateful that she'd insisted and I'd acquiesced. Half an hour later the instructor came in to help remove the cast and then left. It was my turn. I undressed and she slopped the several handfuls of cold wet plaster on my chest. I was beside myself at the initial shock of cold on my bust but then her hands began

gliding this way and that. I closed my eyes and let the experience flow over me. It was warm and caring. It was a gentle caress. It was art as life. I loved this and I loved my best friend.

There was a sensuous aspect to her which defied description and I was drawn to her with fascination and affection. I'd never enjoyed the closeness of a sister nor the love of a boy my age who had a touch anything like her own.

We had seen how to remove the cast earlier and I was grateful we did not need the professor to remove it. I was able to stand and put my blouse back on, albeit covered in crunchy white residue.

Returning to the studio, the class poured latex into the molds and when dry, they were removed. I had to endure everyone's observations. Even the comments of the girls were an embarrassment.

"Jeez Becca!" One of the guys said. "You've got the perfect pair of tits. Holy shit!"

"Shut up Greg or I'll never speak to you again." I exploded.

"Sorry. It's just an observation. I'm not hitting on you. Damn. Can I pour some more latex into this mold and have my own cast?" he looked up at the teacher.

"That's up to Becca, I think." He was laughing inwardly and I didn't know how to respond. I thought my bust being kept by anyone on campus as a trophy a bit more than creepy.

Sari looked at him and smiled. "I think the answer is no."

Everyone laughed at Greg's downcast expression.

We painted our busts in flesh tones and hung them in our room; Sari's lovely B-cup and my D's. I'd never have done this without her encouragement and loved that she'd convinced me. Sari's care-free attitude was making me more comfortable with my own body. I was becoming decidedly less self-conscious. It was funny to constantly see our tits on the walls of our dorm room.

In February I caught a cold and stayed in our room, skipping classes. By the evening when Sari returned, I was running a temperature and she gave me tea and some aspirin. I lay in my bed while she slept, shivering through my fever, getting up to use the bathroom and returning with teeth chattering.

"Are you okay Becca? I can hear your teeth chattering, I think." She rose and came to my bedside and stroked my forehead. "Oh dear, you are burning up. I will get you more aspirin." I took the additional two pills and looked up into her face in the shadows of the night and she placed her hand so gently on my forehead again. "Slide over," she said, and she slipped under the covers.

"Roll over," she instructed as she pressed her body against me and spooned her warmth over my shaking frame. Her arms pressed around me and she rubbed them up and down my own, the friction giving a little comfort, but her breath on my neck and the warmth of her torso did the trick and I finally fell asleep in her arms.

I woke and felt the fever had passed, but the glow of being in her arms and spooned by her made me warm all over. She woke too and raised her head a moment to look at me, peering at me over my shoulder.

“Feeling better?” She asked.

“I’ll say. I’ve never slept with someone holding me tight before. That was so nice.”

Her hands swept down from my hip to my leg, then up again and she ran that hand slowly up my tummy and cupped my breast.

“Sari...what are you doing?” I said with a hesitant smile.

“Oh...let’s just say that I’ve wanted to squeeze you here for a long time. Ever since we made your bust in plaster at the art college. That was amazing, don’t you think? I’ve never touched another woman’s breast before and you are so warm and delicate.” She gave another squeeze, gently pinching my nipple, which immediately grew hard between her fingers.

“You have the best breasts ever Becca, and they are so solid and warm. I love your body. You are a gazelle.” She swept her hand up and down my entire body one more time, from my bust to my hip. Then giving me a kiss on the cheek, she was up and out of bed. I lay there, totally transfixed, but not stunned. I had let her into my life in as intimate a way as I could imagine and there was simply nothing other than more closeness to have come my way. I had no problem with her cupping my breast. I loved her closeness, her motherly love in keeping me warm and her sisterly love in sleeping beside me. I could only think of wanting her back.

“Sari.”

“Yes Becca.”

“Get back in my bed...please.”

“Ha-ha. Are you still cold, my dear?”

“Not really, just want you back, that’s all.”

She returned to my bed and resumed her position. She was naked, but I had a thick flannel nighty on.

“Hold on.” I said, rising up and pulling the nightshirt over my head. “Okay, hold me again please.”

“Like this?” She asked while once again cupping my breast.

“Yes, but don’t move. Just hold me.”

I closed my eyes and concentrated on the skin to skin feeling. She called me a gazelle, but that’s exactly what I took her for. Perhaps not; in my mind, I’d decided, she was far more a graceful black panther and definitely feline. Now I moved. I slid my hand down her side behind me and brushed it over her hip. I’d never touched another girl like this but she was behind me and I just had to touch her in some way, if only to give her a signal of sorts that it was okay that she touched me. I loved this woman. She was so feminine yet such a powerful force. She was nature and nurture and I felt a thrill to be so near.

She kissed my neck and held her lips beside my chin, her hand slipping around my breast, circling my erect nipple and again sending an electric shock through me. Then she headed south and glided over my tummy, finally coming to rest over my sex, over my vagina

that had not been touched much except by me over my eighteen years. She placed her hand fully over me, cupping me in my entirety and just held still as I took a deep breath and pushed my backside deeper into the curve of her front. I extended a leg to widen the gap between them but she held still, simply pulling my torso up and into her own.

“Turn around, Becca.”

I turned and she let her hand sweep over my bottom then raised her arm and hand to push my hair from my face. We were inches apart, looking into one another, connecting soul to soul. Oh how I loved her and any thought that this was a woman and I should not be doing this, or that we were lesbians, or that this was taboo simply did not enter my thoughts. This was Sarika...Sari...a part of me. She pushed forward and our lips connected as I parted my own, our tongue tips connecting gently. We probed and kissed in delight.

“I love you, you know.” I said ever so gently.

“And I worship you Becca...my Rebecca. In case you are wondering, I’ve not done this before either. This just feels so right. I hope we become closer and not further apart because of this. I hope you know how deeply I feel. My emotions are scattered to the winds; my heart is racing, but the feelings of love and trust make everything so wonderful.” She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. I looked at her face in its individual parts, her lovely closed eyes and thick lashes, those expressive eyebrows, the vermilion dot on her forehead and those soothing lips which had only a moment ago been pressed against my own. She opened her eyes and looked deep into me and spoke again. “My desire is only to love you and for you to love me back.”

I slid my hand over the side of her face and caressed her, then kissed her forehead and cheeks and eyelids. Sweeping my tongue over her lips, I thought of the kisses I’d received from boys, even my first boyfriend who’d taken my virginity. This felt so different, so gentle and slow, so exploratory and sensitive.

“Kissing you is divine. Why don’t you lay flat and I’ll help you relax.”

I rolled onto my chest and felt her gentle touch on my shoulders as she pulled my hair to the side. Climbing out of the blankets and straddling my hips I felt the lovely pressure of hands on my waist, then shoulders, then neck as she pressed down from above. But what really had my attention was the feel of her thighs on my hips and her sex laying across my ass. I wiggled my way into her, satisfied when I felt a tighter fit between our hips and smiled to myself.

“You naughty girl. She whispered in my ear, bending low over my ear. Her hands swept over my shoulders and she kissed me again at the nape of my neck, parting her lips and sweeping her tongue over me. Mesmerized by her warm breath on my skin, I reveled in this moment, awash in emotions and the heightened feelings I was experiencing.

“Salty.” She smiled and sighed, after tasting the skin on my neck. “I think we should give you a shower and wash away the effects of your fever.”

We rose and grabbed a couple of towels, tip-toeing our way into the bathroom. It was very early and there was no one else about. The shower was a tight fit for two and she stood behind me, always in contact, always pressing up against me. The warm water felt like heaven

as she massaged the shampoo through my long dark hair, threading her fingers and nails over my scalp. Water cascaded down my head and face as I rinsed away the remainder of soap and she shampooed herself. I reached for the soap-on-a-rope hanging from the faucet and lathered up my hands.

“Oh let me do that.” She spoke.

“Okay Sari.”

Her hands swept their way around my back then curved around me, lathering my sides. I leaned forward and placed my open palms against the tiled wall, up high. She reached around me and washed my torso from behind. I closed my eyes as her hands did their dance over my breasts, into my arm pits, then down, down, down into the depths of me...so personal, so private, and yet so desired. Her fingers slid through my crevice and the tingling through my entire body could be felt from the tips of my toes to the end of my nose.

I knew then and there that she was no longer just my friend. She was my lover. I leaned forward further and placed the side of my face against the tile, spreading my legs further apart and extending my legs back into her while standing on the tips of my toes. She leaned over my back and hugged me tight as her hands continued to fondle my sex, then made their way over my ass to every tightly hidden space. She slid down behind me into a squat and washed each of my legs in long up and down strokes between her hands. I could feel her kiss my rounded cheek.

“Rebecca, there is not a woman in the world with a more lovely body than yours. You are so long and slender. Hold still.”

She pressed her face into my ass and I could feel her motions and the pressure of her tongue seeking me out. I crested almost immediately and felt warm and so in love. Back up to my toes I went as she continued her exploration of my bottom, pushing her way into me and electrifying my entire soul.

We exchanged places and I had the chance to do the same exploratory sudsing back to her. *More curves than me, I thought, and smaller breasts, but not so different. We are both women after all. We know what the other is feeling with an intimate knowledge of our own bodies.*

I loved that she was shaven below. I had a small tuft of hair, never having had the need to trim anything, and liking the contrast of milky skin and soft black curls. But she was hairless and my fingers swept over her mound and I heard her sigh. The height of intimacy for me was gliding my fingers over her little pucker as she pushed back into my hand and moaned. *I'm touching her little asshole, I thought. I'm washing all of her. There is nothing left, nothing unknown, no escalation after this, is there? Well, certainly not in this confining space.* I already knew this would continue beyond the shower and I was anticipating the unknown, hoping we could further enjoy this explorative moment together.

I rose from my knees, she turned to face me, and we maneuvered carefully in the tight space as we faced each other for the first time upright, our breasts pressed up against each other, our legs threaded like scissors, our arms curving around our backs in a tight embrace. I kissed her again and this time her mouth opened wide to receive my tongue.

The teasing was at an end. This was as passionate a kiss as I'd ever had with any boy. Her lips were soft and pliant and her mouth was heaven, a tongue that was flat and wide and silky soft to receive my own. I grabbed the back of her head, directing her this way and that. Her hands came up and cupped my breasts again, their warm and now familiar embrace a feeling I so desired. My nipples had never felt so sensitive, as she manipulated them between thumbs and forefingers.

We separated and looked at each other, into one another. Her eyes were magical, dark black; polished obsidian pebbles drifting in pools of milk. They were the eyes of an ancient, of one who had lived many lives, had many dreams explored and fulfilled. As we searched each other's faces I gave myself over to her embrace totally and completely, without hesitation, or any concern for my own wellbeing. *Sari would care for me. Sari would love me forever*; I knew this to be true.

"How do you feel Rebecca?"

"I'm drifting in space and time Sari. I'm in a wonderful place. How 'bout you?"

"You are my goddess divine. You are everything that matters. You are my best friend and my lover. I have never had a lover, you know."

I was shocked. This woman embodied sex. She was all the arts that made up a sexual being. She can't be telling the truth.

"Sari, you're a virgin?" I swallowed hard and wondered if a guy felt anything like I did at this moment, having taken a girl's virginity, for that was exactly what I was doing. Oh my God. It felt like a huge responsibility, but somehow, I felt as if my own was taken too.

"Yes Becca. I have never had a lover."

"I've only had boyfriends...just two." I said.

"Come on, let's go back to our room."

We wrapped ourselves in our towels and retreated quietly to our room across the hall.

"Let's do our yoga Becca. Come sit opposite me in the lotus position."

We sat opposite one another and I smiled again, blown away by her beauty and the mystery of her dark eyes and cocoa skin.

"You know; you are not what I expected an Indian woman to look like. Your facial features are so aquiline-so European. I hope you're not offended. Oh dear."

"Don't be silly, Becca. There are many who have an Anglo aspect to their appearance in India. It is the result of the Raj. An ancestor of mine was taken by an English officer a century ago and the strain comes out every generation or so in our family. Do you like the way I look?"

"Oh God do I. I sometimes wish I was so exotic."

"Oh Becca...you are the most slender, yet womanly girl I've ever met. I wish I looked like you."

"I hate my face. Well not hate, that's too strong a word. I feel I lack character...soul."

"You are crazy to feel so. You look like two women Becca. Depending on your mood, you are both an angel and you are sin."

I smiled. "Never was told that before. Which do I look like now?"

“Now you look like a lover. You gaze upon me with reverence and admiration. Your eyes tell me I am beautiful and appealing to the most important person in my world. That is a wondrous feeling, my dear. It inspires trust and compassion like nothing in my experience.”

“Now, I am going to do my exercises. I feel tight from last night’s sharing of so small a bed. You do your stretches too. It is good for you and we can do them together.”

“Kiss me again first Sari.”

“Yes Becca. I would love to.”

My knowledge of yoga was limited to the easy stuff she’d taught me over the past two months. She would be up first thing in the morning and would stretch and then place her body in the most remarkable positions. I had been taken aback the first time she did this in her panties and bra. Her underwear had been very basic stuff when we had met and nowadays she wore mine. She fit into all of my clothes, although her hips were somewhat wider and my brassieres had a larger cup size. I loved sharing things so private as undies with her and had a great time admiring her figure.

I’d never looked closely at other women until I started modeling the previous year, then in dressing rooms my eyes swept over everything. I compared and contrasted myself to others continually. The guys I was placed with in photo shoots had a singular similarity. They were all gorgeous and they were all gay. That actually made the modeling easier on me, as I lacked experience with men; at least no one was hitting on me on set. For that matter, most of my best guy friends were very effeminate and I loved how comfortable they were in their own skins and how good they made me feel without being a threat.

I had been day-dreaming on these thoughts for some time while Sari went about her contortions and stretches. She was on her hands and knees beside me and lifted up to her finger tips and tippy-toes, her bottom up high in the air. I looked at her, naked, and folded over, eyes closed, hair dragging the carpet in a pool of curls, a length that went down to her ass when standing. I bent towards her and ran my fingers from hip to ankle and she turned her head towards me and smiled upside down. She started to move.

“No, don’t move. Keep that position.” I said.

I slid over to be behind her and marveled at her gorgeous ass. She was fully on display... pucker and closed clam shell, curvy cheeks, air between her thighs, and lovely long legs with perfect definition from thigh to calf to ankle. *She could be modeling too*, I thought. I extended a finger and slid it over her pussy from near her anus to her front. I’d never seen a woman up close before and I’d certainly never touched one other than myself. But up close, and at this angle, I was seeing her genitalia in a way I’d simply never seen before. I got up on my knees and came closer, now using both my hands to caress her. I circled her little pucker and pushed down on it and she sighed. Then separating her labia I pulled her apart and looked at the shiny red flesh within. Mmmm...there was her clitoris. I tapped it a few times and she moaned again, still on her toes and fingertips, holding this position. I leaned forward and extended my tongue and flicked her clit, then placing my hands on either side of her ass, I pressed my entire face into her. She fell to the soles of her feet and the palms of her hands and again moaned.

Oh God, she's delicious. What lucky guys, men are, to enjoy a woman in such a way. I still did not consider myself a lesbian, although the thought of the taboos I was breaking crossed my mind. This wasn't another woman, I told myself. This was my best friend. I'd crossed no boundaries. I would still love men. I would marry and have children. I'd not changed. But now, my lips tight onto her rubbery skin, my tongue making its constant passes over her little button, my hands squeezing her glorious ass; this was wonderful. She pushed back into my face and moaned and for the first time I tasted her, a flow of nectar that started at my tongue and then covered my lips. She moaned again and I felt her shiver. Then she was still, but the shivering came back again and then her moans became constant and I felt her climax against my face. I spread her apart again, backing away from her a moment as a string of saliva mixed with her own juices slid down my chin. Can't leave her like that, I thought, and I went back to her and lapped up all the moisture and remnants of her womanly flow, holding her hips and pulling her ass tight into my face. Then I pulled away again and examined her further. She appeared puffier, as if she had grown in size down here, and reddened. I smiled to myself. *I did that*. I wanted to cheer. I tilted my head forward again and kissed her little asshole, then licked at it. Goodness, I really like this. This is the best.

I hadn't had enough yet, I thought, and maneuvered her onto her back as she looked up at me with reverence and admiration, her eyes soft and lovely. Not a word was spoken. I bent her knees upright and placed myself again over her pussy and just tapped at her clit with my lips. She responded, her hands sliding down to pull herself open and wide below my face. *Mmmm, now we'll see where I can take you*, I thought.

I was adrift in feelings and emotions. There was no effort at doing this. It just felt so natural, unplanned, no pressures; just pure pleasure. I considered the difference between a man and a woman thought of the last blowjob I'd given. I remembered how hesitant I'd been. I kind of liked the guy. He was alright. But I had felt really horny that evening. We'd been drinking and I just felt like crossing a line. The fellow hadn't really interested me, but sucking his dick was, at that moment, at the top of my list of things to do. He'd been a big guy, but had an average sized cock, I thought. How the hell would I know really? No matter; he was clean and nicely shaped, and he wasn't going to be using this thing between my legs in any case.

I'd discovered that I really loved oral sex. I hardly needed to get anything in return at this stage in my life. A cock was unusual, a recently discovered part of male anatomy and I liked them. I liked the taste of them. If they were small enough, six inches or so, I discovered I could swallow them right down to the root and that was fun. Felt like a challenge. But what I really liked was making them cum. Such an accomplishment, such a challenge. It felt like crossing a finish line. It made me feel good looking and sexy and desired. Some guys moaned and let you know it was about to happen. My first boyfriend was like that. He would shout that he was nearing his peak. This guy I was with that night just started spurting in my mouth. It was a surprise of sorts because I wasn't expecting it and suddenly his warm flow was all over my tongue and I was swallowing him down. I suppose I preferred knowing when it would happen. Not that I had to be prepared, but I wanted to focus completely on the moment, and without

warning, it was half over before I knew it had begun. Friends had made such a big deal about semen and how awful it tasted. I didn't get it. I loved bringing a guy to this point. It tasted weird and it was warm and sticky, but who cares. Compared to the elation of the moment, all that worry about taste and texture was a moot point. And the entire physical act of having a stiff penis in my mouth was just wonderful; truly a forbidden fruit.

Both guys had been very tentative about giving back, and I learned then and there that they were deterred by the taste of previous women. *Well, I'd not like that either*, I thought. I'd grown up in Europe with bidets, had always washed myself and couldn't stand the idea of not being a treat down below.

Suddenly I was back in the here and now as Sari grabbed my head and pulled my lips tight to her pussy. Her breath came in small bursts and I looked up from her mound and saw her eyes on me...eyes of fire and power and will and lust. Oh my, how she'd transformed. The breathtaking beauty came forth and I felt elated to have claimed her for my own. I continued munching my way through her, once again thinking how lucky anyone would be to have this opportunity to eat this goddess. I thought she would scream but she bit her lip and raised her hands to her face and moaned into them for the longest time. Finally, through her shakings and jerking's, she opened her eyes. With her feet and hands she physically lifted me into the air and onto her chest, placing me like a specimen on a plate, eyes searching my face as if under a microscope.

I laughed. "That was cool. You just picked me up like I weigh nothing and set me down where you want me. You enjoying your new biology class?" I said with a smirk.

There was a mist in her eyes and a tear, then another spilled down her cheek.

"I am no longer a virgin. You are my first. I am taken. I am fulfilled. I am a woman now."

"Are you crazy? You were a woman before. You're a wet one now...very wet. God Sarika, look at you. You are stunningly dreamy. Magnificent."

The day was spent cutting classes, examining each other's bodies and counting the orgasms over and over again. It was an awakening for both of us and so much more a loss of virginity than my actual one with a boy. We were lovers through the term and did everything together, always with the knowledge of the clock ticking and the finality of what would have to be the end of things. Travelling to Europe was one thing; India was something entirely different. I hoped that she would be back for med school or even another term.

It was not to be.

Sarika had taught me so much of what it meant to be a woman. Whether lesbian or bisexual, however you want to classify this relationship, it was love and devotion and the best learning experience ever.

We carry those we touch within us, Sari had said. I know I carry her within me, even from a distance, even through the passage of time, and will do so till the day that I die.

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