

The
FLIGHTS OF FANCY
COLLECTION

Imagine Your Story



Because Every Extraordinary Story
BEGINS WITH A FLIGHT OF FANCY.





The
FLIGHTS OF FANCY
C O L L E C T I O N



Imagine Your Story

Every extraordinary story begins somewhere.

Sometimes with a destination.

Sometimes with a dress.

Sometimes with a perfectly timed cocktail,
an invitation that should probably be declined,
or an idea too delicious not to follow.

For fourteen women, it began with a *Flight of Fancy*..

Fourteen destinations.

Fourteen heroines.

Fourteen stories in which reality has been given
just enough imagination to make things interesting.



*Because every extraordinary story
begins with a *Flight of Fancy*.*







LA DOLCE VITA

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Marla Fowler



An Excerpt From

LA DOLCE VITA



By the time the train began its final approach toward Venice, Marla Fowler had accepted two things: someone had completely hijacked her carefully constructed Italian itinerary, and whoever it was had excellent taste.

It had started three days earlier, somewhere over the Atlantic, when a bartender at the Emirates onboard bar slipped a mysterious envelope beneath her perfectly chilled Vesper. Marla had boarded her flight to Milan expecting several days of very serious “work research.” Instead, she was met at the gate by a suited gentleman holding a sign bearing only three words: *La Dolce Vita*. She knew immediately it was meant for her—the same three words, written in the same unmistakable hand as the note she’d received mid-flight.

Without explanation, he escorted her through the airport and into a private car waiting outside. Somewhere between Milan and Rome, her carefully made plans had simply vanished, and by sunset she was drinking Laurent-Perrier in a suite at *La Minerva Rome*, wondering who, exactly, had rewritten her itinerary.

The next morning brought another envelope - impeccably tied to a Louis Vuitton train case—and the invitation that led her here, to the gleaming carriages onboard *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*.

Then came the garment bag. It had appeared in her compartment somewhere south of Rome and contained an ivory voile dress, requiring absolutely no alteration and accompanied by no explanation. She might have been alarmed if the dress hadn’t been so fabulous.





More troubling was the handsome familiar face who appeared in the bar car that evening, looking entirely too comfortable for a man who had definitely not been included in her original itinerary.

Now Venice shimmered beyond the window, and returning to her seat in the lounge car she found another cream envelope perched beside her coupe of bubbles. Inside was a photograph of three enormous white sails rising above the Mediterranean. It was unmistakably the ***Orient Express Corinthian***. Marla stared at the photograph and then her gaze rose across the carriage to the man with the whisky, who was making a spectacularly unsuccessful attempt to look innocent.

What was he up to?

What had begun at 38,000 feet had swept her through Rome, onto the rails and now toward Venice, where apparently a sailing yacht was waiting. Marla certainly wasn't objecting. What she found increasingly irritating was the possibility that someone else might be very good at writing her best adventure stories.

She turned the photograph over. This time, there was a message. Not instructions. Not an address. Just a simple - yet life-changing - question. Marla read it twice, reached for her champagne and looked across the carriage at the one person who suddenly seemed very interested in the view.

Three days ago, she had known exactly how the next several days were supposed to unfold. Now she had absolutely no idea.

And she wasn't the least bit bothered by it.







MID-CENTURY MANHATTAN

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Heidi LeBlanc

An Excerpt From

MID-CENTURY MANHATTAN



By the third morning of her four-night stay at *The Lowell*, Heidi LeBlanc had developed a routine she considered very New York: breakfast delivered precisely when requested, the newspaper opened before the coffee cooled, and absolutely no acknowledgment of the fact that someone had slipped an anonymous photograph beneath her door during the night.

She had come to Manhattan for a little mid-century escapism—cocktail dresses, old-school supper clubs, ladies who lunched and enough Mad Men glamour to justify packing the black dress. Instead, somewhere between her first pale Cosmo at Jacques Bar and yesterday's lunch at The Colony, Heidi had accidentally wandered into the private ecosystem of a group of Upper East Side women who knew everything about one another and admitted almost nothing.

Betsy had been the first to adopt her. Perfect blonde hair, pearls at noon, a husband whose name opened doors and a talent for delivering devastating information as though commenting on the weather. By dessert, Heidi knew who was sleeping separately, who was spending suspicious amounts of time in Palm Beach, and whose supposedly ancestral emeralds had actually been purchased on Madison Avenue six months earlier.

What Betsy hadn't mentioned was the photograph.

It showed Betsy leaving a townhouse on East 61st Street just after midnight. She wasn't alone. The man beside her was unmistakable—and very definitely not her husband. Someone had written only four words across the bottom:

Ask her about Thursday.





Heidi carried the photograph to lunch.

The Colony was already humming when she arrived. Martinis moved through the room with military precision. Women in immaculate suits leaned toward one another beneath the flattering light, trading secrets with the solemnity of diplomats negotiating a treaty. Betsy sat at the center table in winter white, looking like a woman with absolutely nothing to hide.

Heidi had barely taken her seat when Betsy glanced at her handbag. “You brought it?” Not hello. Not what are you drinking? Heidi ordered her Cosmo—light on the cran—and placed the photograph facedown between them.

Betsy didn't touch it.

Instead, she smiled across the room at a woman in enormous sunglasses who had been watching them since Heidi arrived. “Whatever happens next,” she said pleasantly, “don't believe a word Claire tells you.”

That was when Heidi noticed the cream envelope beside her bread plate. Her name was written across the front. Inside were three more photographs. One was Betsy. One was Claire.

And one was Heidi. Taken the night before. At The Lowell.

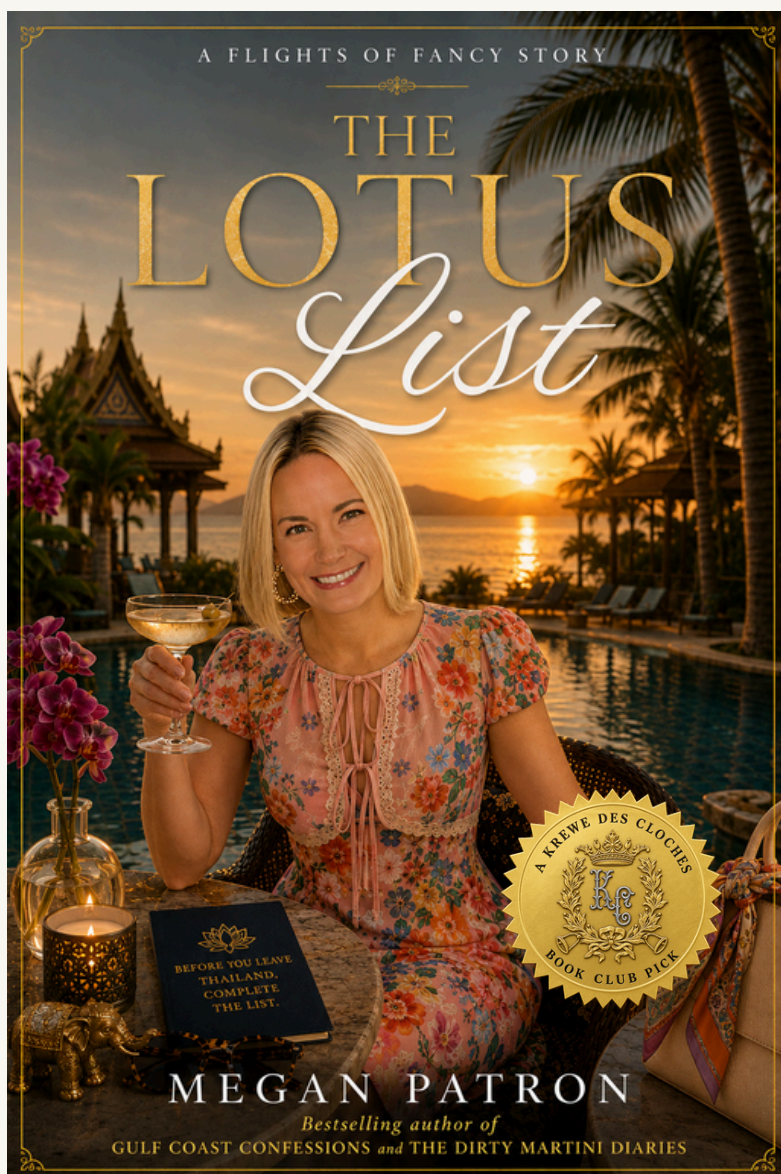
Heidi looked up slowly. Around her, lunch continued as though nothing had happened.

Apparently, in Manhattan, everyone had a story.

And someone had just decided Heidi belonged in theirs.







THE LOTUS LIST

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Megan Patron

An Excerpt From

THE LOTUS LIST



By sunset on her second night at **Trisara**, Megan Patron had mastered the particular art of doing absolutely nothing while making it look fabulous. Her private pool disappeared into the Andaman Sea, dinner involved more courses than she could count, and the sunset had been so aggressively beautiful that even Megan—who considered herself difficult to impress—had briefly stopped talking.

This was supposed to be the beginning of a very civilized Thai escape: Phuket first, then Chiang Mai. Five-star tasting menus. Wellness. Beautiful hotels. Perhaps enough spiritual enlightenment to justify several new caftans. Kip had kissed her goodbye with instructions to behave herself, which after years of marriage he really should have known better than to say.

The first card appeared after dinner.

It was tucked beneath her cocktail on the terrace, embossed with a tiny gold lotus and a single instruction: ***Before you leave Thailand, complete the list.*** Beneath it were five numbered lines. Four were blank. The first read: ***Watch the Sunset with a Stranger.***

Megan laughed. Obviously.

She assumed one of her friends had arranged it. Probably Marla. Possibly Kip. Less possibly Ollie P., although she wouldn't put anything past her sweet pup if opposable thumbs were ever introduced. Then the man at the next table lifted his glass and smiled at her.

Well. A list was a list.





By the time Megan reached the *Anantara Chiang Mai Resort* two days later, two more instructions had appeared. One had led to a tasting menu she would happily have crossed an ocean to repeat; another to a spa ritual that left her convinced enlightenment was considerably easier to achieve when someone else was carrying your robe.

Her suite overlooked the Ping River, and the next morning she boarded the hotel's river cruise feeling restored, virtuous and only mildly curious about who kept finding her. Waiting on her seat was another gold lotus. This card contained no instruction. Only a photograph.

Megan recognized herself immediately: blonde hair, enormous sunglasses, glass in hand, laughing with the stranger from Phuket beneath a spectacular orange sky. The photograph had been taken from behind them.

Someone had been watching.

She turned it over. Written across the back were six words:

He was never on the list.

That was considerably more interesting.

As the boat rounded a bend in the river, a waiter appeared with champagne and another envelope. Megan accepted both, but opened only the champagne.

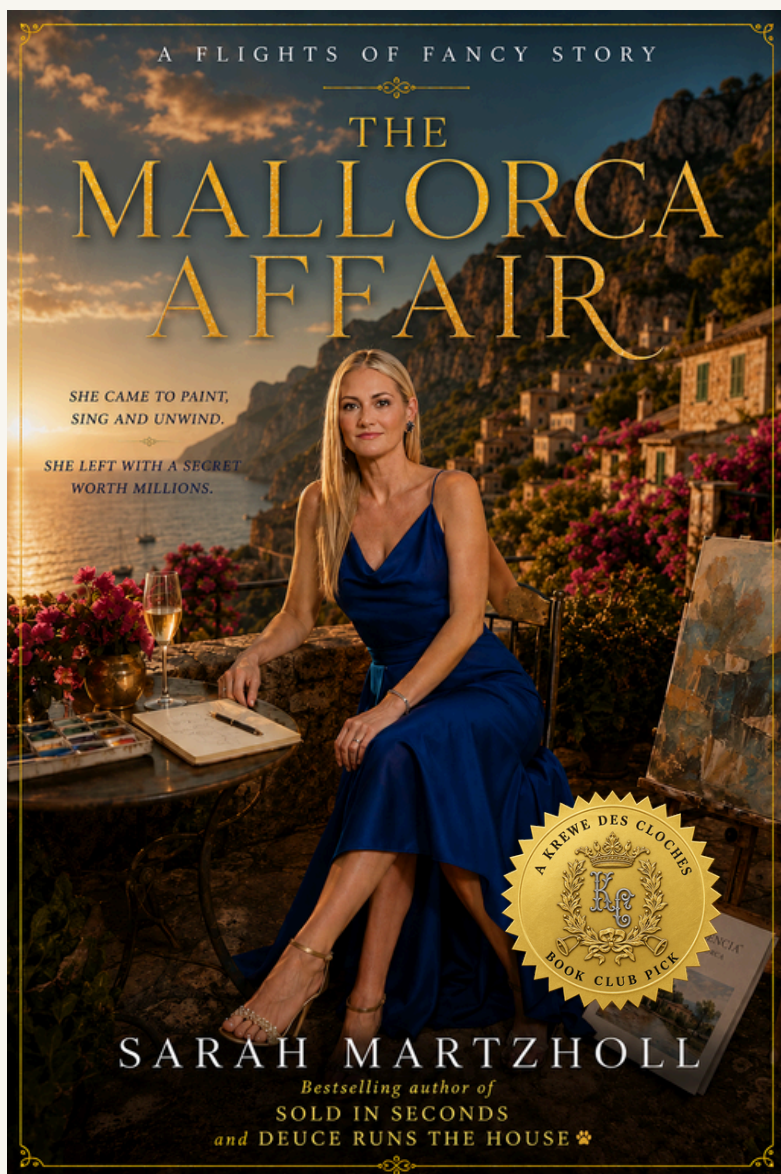
Somewhere between Phuket and Chiang Mai, her luxury wellness escape had become a mystery. Kip was thousands of miles away, Ollie P. was presumably asleep on something he wasn't allowed on, and a handsome stranger had just been removed from a list Megan hadn't known existed three days ago.

She smiled and took a sip.

Kip was definitely going to have questions....







THE MALLORCA AFFAIR

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Sarah Martzholf

An Excerpt From

THE MALLORCA AFFAIR

S arah Martzholl had been in Mallorca for less than twenty-four hours when she accidentally acquired a client, an invitation to sing after dinner and what appeared to be an unauthorized set of keys to a €14 million house.

For Sarah, this constituted a fairly successful first day.

She had checked into *La Residencia, A Belmond Hotel, Mallorca* intending to spend four uncomplicated nights doing precisely what one should do in Deià: drink something cold on a terrace, wander through artists' studios, eat exceptionally well and perhaps paint something beautiful enough to justify shipping home. Real estate was absolutely not on the agenda.

Then she saw the house.

It appeared above the road outside Deià in a tumble of honey-colored stone and bougainvillea, with olive trees spilling toward the Mediterranean and the kind of terrace Sarah could sell before most people finished saying sea view. She asked the driver one innocent question. "Who owns that?" By lunch, she had an answer. By cocktails, she had a name. By dinner, she was seated beside the owner.

These things happened.

The owner was a spectacularly elegant Spanish woman named Isabella who wore enormous emeralds, collected contemporary art and claimed repeatedly that the house was not for sale. Sarah knew this type of conversation. In New Orleans, "Not for sale" frequently meant you haven't asked the right question yet.

So she changed the subject.





The next morning, Sarah followed the winding road into the hills and let herself through the enormous blue door. The house was even better up close. Centuries-old stone, vaulted ceilings, terraces spilling toward the Mediterranean—the sort of place most people walked into and admired.

Sarah walked in and started calculating.

Square footage. Provenance. Views. Potential. And, because she was Sarah, exactly where the piano should go.

Then she saw the painting.

Large, abstract and unmistakably familiar. Sarah knew the brushwork. She knew the colors. She knew the artist.

Herself. It was a painting she'd sold years ago in New Orleans.

Beneath it sat a leather portfolio stamped with her name. Inside were photographs of three extraordinary Mallorcan properties. None was publicly listed. Each had a handwritten price. On the final page were two words: *Choose One.*

Sarah laughed. She had come to Mallorca to paint, sing, drink something fabulous and stay completely out of the real-estate business.

Apparently, Mallorca had other plans.

She looked from the portfolio to her painting. Was she being invited to sell one, buy one—or discover why someone wanted her involved?

Sarah reached for her sunglasses.

Whatever this affair was, she was officially interested.







WHISPERS OF TAHITI

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Stephanie Coln



An Excerpt From

WHISPERS OF TAHITI



By the second afternoon of her stay at *Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora*, Stephanie Coln had decided Eric might be the best husband in the world. Not because he had encouraged the girls' trip—although that certainly helped—but because when she announced she was escaping to French Polynesia without him, her German husband had responded exactly as a German husband should: he made a plan.

There had been lists. Confirmations. Airport instructions. Possibly a spreadsheet. Stephanie had ignored most of it. She had packed the green tropical dress, several bathing suits and enough Prosecco enthusiasm to compensate for whatever she had forgotten. Eric could handle logistics. Stephanie intended to handle fun. And so far, she was doing an excellent job.

Her overwater bungalow floated above a lagoon so impossibly blue it looked edited. Mornings began barefoot over the water; afternoons disappeared somewhere between the spa and another bottle on ice. By sunset, Mount Otemanu turned purple against a peach-colored sky, and Stephanie had begun seriously considering whether four nights constituted sufficient research.

The only complication was the whisper.

She first heard it during dinner—a few words carried across the terrace from the table behind her. Her name. Then Eric's. Stephanie turned around. Three women she had never seen before immediately became fascinated by their menus.

Interesting.





The next morning, another guest stopped her on the dock. “You’re Stephanie, aren’t you?” Stephanie lowered her sunglasses. “Depends.”
The woman laughed, handed her a folded card and walked away.

Inside was a single line: *Your husband said you’d know what to do.*

Of course he did.

By lunchtime, Stephanie had acquired a boat, two new friends and absolutely no idea what she was supposed to be doing with either. The card had led them across the lagoon to a private motu, where lunch was waiting beneath the palms: chilled champagne, grilled lobster and another envelope tucked beneath Stephanie’s napkin.

This one contained no instructions. Just a room number.

Back at the resort, Stephanie stood outside the door for approximately six seconds before knocking. She had never been particularly gifted at leaving well enough alone.

The door opened. Stephanie stared. Then she started laughing.
Because standing inside was the last person she expected to find in Bora Bora—and suddenly Eric’s spreadsheets, the whispered conversations and the suspiciously perfect itinerary began making considerably more sense.

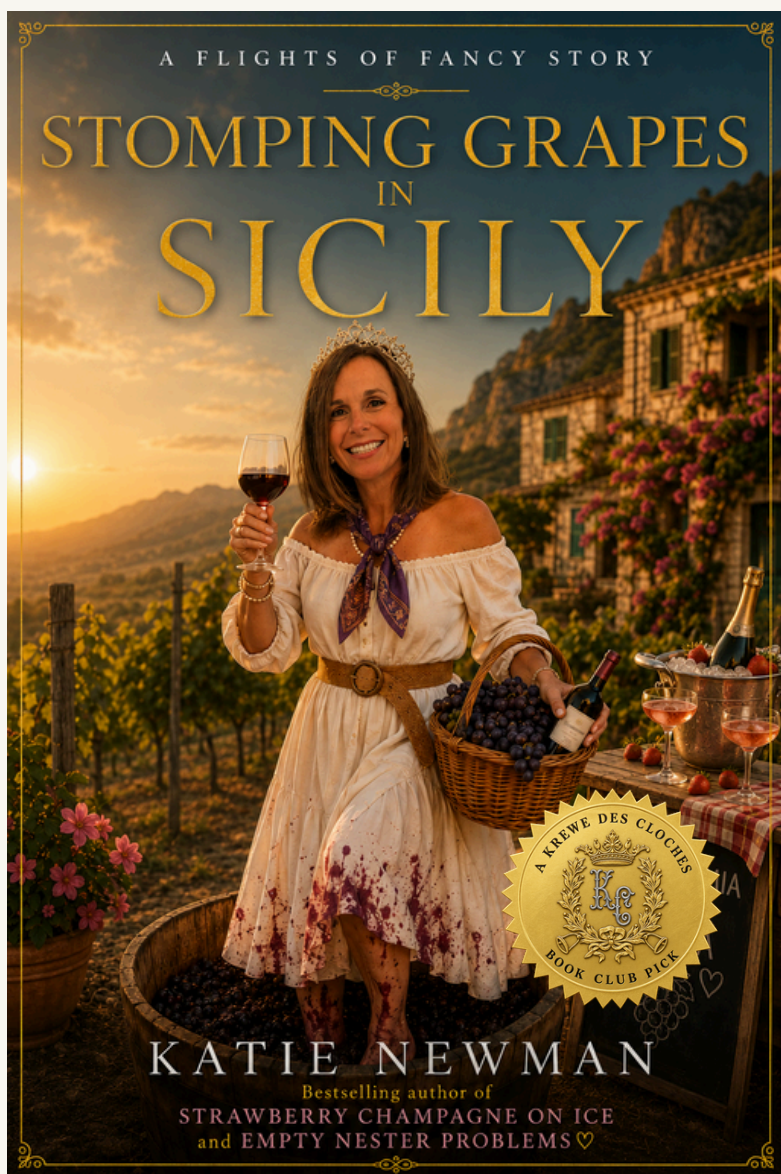
There are husbands who send flowers.
There are husbands who plan surprises.
And then there was Eric.

Stephanie reached for the champagne.

Whatever the German had planned, she was absolutely going to see it through.







STOMPING GRAPES IN SICILY

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Katie Newman

An Excerpt From

STOMPING GRAPES IN SICILY



Katie Newman had been in Sicily for exactly eleven hours when she found herself barefoot in a barrel of grapes, wearing a straw hat she did not own and leading a group of complete strangers in what may—or may not—have been an Italian drinking song.

This was not on the itinerary.

The itinerary had been lovely. Three nights at *Villa Igiea, a Rocco Forte Hotel*, long lunches, beautiful wine, a little sightseeing and precisely enough planned activity to make the trip feel productive without interfering with cocktails. After years of calendars dictated by three children, Katie had recently discovered the particular freedom of an empty nest: she could go anywhere, anytime, for almost any reason. Apparently, “because someone mentioned grape harvest in Sicily” qualified.

That morning, she'd left Palermo for what had been described as a private vineyard visit and harvest lunch. Katie pictured a tasteful tasting beneath the olive trees. Perhaps a tour. Definitely wine. Then someone handed her a basket.

Twenty minutes later she was clipping grapes from the vines beside three Sicilian grandmothers who spoke no English but had already decided Katie needed both feeding and supervision. By noon, she'd been invited to a family lunch, taught an alarming number of Italian hand gestures and volunteered for something she hadn't entirely understood.

Which explained the barrel.





“Just your feet,” the winemaker had assured her.

Katie looked down at the purple splatters climbing well past her knees. That seemed optimistic.

Someone turned up the music. Another bottle opened. Katie’s carefully chosen white dress had officially become a souvenir, and the perfectly planned harvest lunch had crossed that wonderful line between itinerary and incident.

Katie loved it immediately.

Then the winemaker appeared carrying a dusty bottle from the cellar. He brushed the label clean, looked at Katie and said something that made the entire table go silent. Her new Sicilian grandmother translated.

“He says this bottle has been waiting twenty-five years for the right occasion.” Katie blinked. “And this is it?”

The old woman shrugged and refilled her glass. “Apparently, you are the occasion.”

Somewhere back at Villa Igiea, Katie’s shoes were still clean, her reservation book remained perfectly organized, and Will probably assumed she was enjoying a quiet afternoon of wine tasting.

Katie raised her glass as the music started again.

There were several things he didn’t need to know just yet.

Exactly how her feet had turned purple was probably one of them...







SECRETS OF THE BLUE GROTTO

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Jennifer Lightl

An Excerpt From

SECRETS OF THE BLUE GROTTO



By 11:15 on her first morning in Capri, Jenn Lichtl had already made friends with the bartender, reorganized the afternoon boat plans and discovered that limoncello tasted perfectly reasonable before lunch if served cold enough.

She had checked into *Hotel La Palma, Capri* promising Daniel this would be a relaxing escape. There would be lunches overlooking the sea, a little shopping, perhaps an afternoon at the beach club. Nothing excessive. Daniel had been married to Jenn long enough to understand that nothing excessive was less a promise than an opening bid.

The boat was waiting after breakfast: polished wood, blue-and-white cushions and enough Champagne on ice to suggest someone had done their research. Jenn arrived in her Amalfi-print sundress, lemon earrings and straw bag looking considerably more prepared for Capri than Capri was for Jenn.

The plan was simple: cruise around the island, swim somewhere beautiful and visit the Blue Grotto.

Then Jenn met Luca.

Luca was the captain's extremely handsome cousin, although Jenn never became entirely clear about why he was aboard. Within twenty minutes, he'd taught her three questionable Italian expressions, opened the second bottle and mentioned a grotto that "tourists don't know."

Jenn lowered her sunglasses.

Obviously, they were going.





Luca hadn't been exaggerating. Ten minutes later, he guided the boat between two limestone cliffs and through an opening Jenn never would have noticed from the water. The grotto beyond glowed an impossible shade of electric blue.

"Oh, THIS is fabulous!" Jenn announced, loudly enough for the grotto to yell it back. Luca laughed. "This isn't even the best part."

That was when she heard the music.

Around the bend, another boat was anchored beneath the rocks, where a dozen beautifully dressed strangers were halfway through a spectacular lunch. Champagne was flowing, someone was dancing and, inexplicably, four women were playing mahjong between platters of seafood.

Jenn stared at Luca. "You brought me to a secret mahjong party?"

"I brought you to a grotto."

"Well, obviously we're meeting these people."

Ten minutes later, she was aboard.

By the time they emerged into the Capri sunshine, Jenn had acquired a limoncello, joined the mahjong game, learned everyone's names and accepted an invitation for herself and Daniel to dinner that evening at a private villa overlooking the Faraglioni.

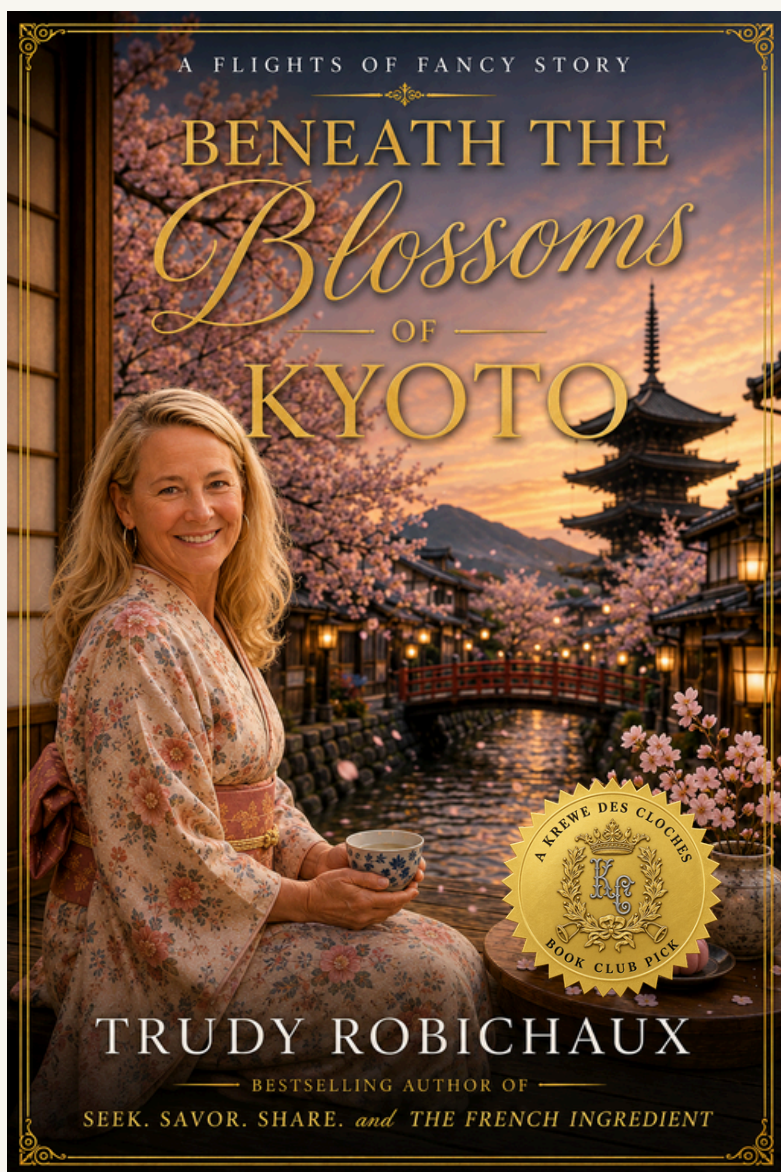
Back at Hotel La Palma, Champagne and a handwritten card were waiting:
Bring Daniel. We need a fourth for Majhong.

Jenn laughed. She'd left that morning for a quiet boat ride and returned with a dozen new friends, dinner plans and a mahjong game.

Honestly, Capri was doing an excellent job of keeping up with her.







BEYOND THE BLOSSOMS OF KYOTO

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Trudy Robichaux



An Excerpt From

BEYOND THE BLOSSOMS OF KYOTO

By her second morning in Kyoto, Trudy Robichaux had already abandoned the itinerary.

Not completely, of course. She had checked into *Four Seasons Hotel Kyoto* intending to wander the temples, explore Gion and catch the cherry blossoms at precisely the right moment. But Trudy had always believed the best way to understand a place was through its people—and preferably through its kitchen.

So when Sachiko, a seventy-six-year-old woman she'd met beneath a cherry tree the afternoon before, invited her to lunch, Trudy said yes. She expected a restaurant. Instead, Sachiko led her through the narrow streets of Gion, opened an unmarked wooden door and handed her an apron.

Inside were three generations of women, an enormous wooden table and enough ingredients to make Trudy immediately forget whatever else she'd planned for the day. They chopped, rolled, tasted and laughed their way through lunch. Trudy's Japanese was enthusiastic at best; Sachiko's English wasn't much better. Food filled in the gaps. So did sake.

After lunch, Sachiko disappeared upstairs and returned carrying an old lacquer box. Inside was a handwritten recipe book, its pages softened with age and filled with notes, pressed blossoms and tiny sketches.

Then Trudy noticed the French.

At the top of one page, faded almost beyond recognition, were four words:
Pour ceux qu'on aime.





For those we love.

Tucked beside it was an old photograph of Sachiko as a young woman standing beneath the cherry blossoms with a handsome French chef.

On the back was a Kyoto address and another line:

La recette n'était que le début.

The recipe was only the beginning.

Trudy looked at Sachiko.

Sachiko smiled.

Apparently, lunch wasn't over.

Hours later, walking back beneath a shower of falling blossoms, Trudy thought about how quickly they came and went—and how that was precisely what made everyone stop to notice them.

Perhaps travel wasn't so different. The richest moments weren't always the ones she'd planned.

They were the conversations, invitations and unexpected connections that somehow changed the story.

Trudy slipped the old photograph carefully into her bag.

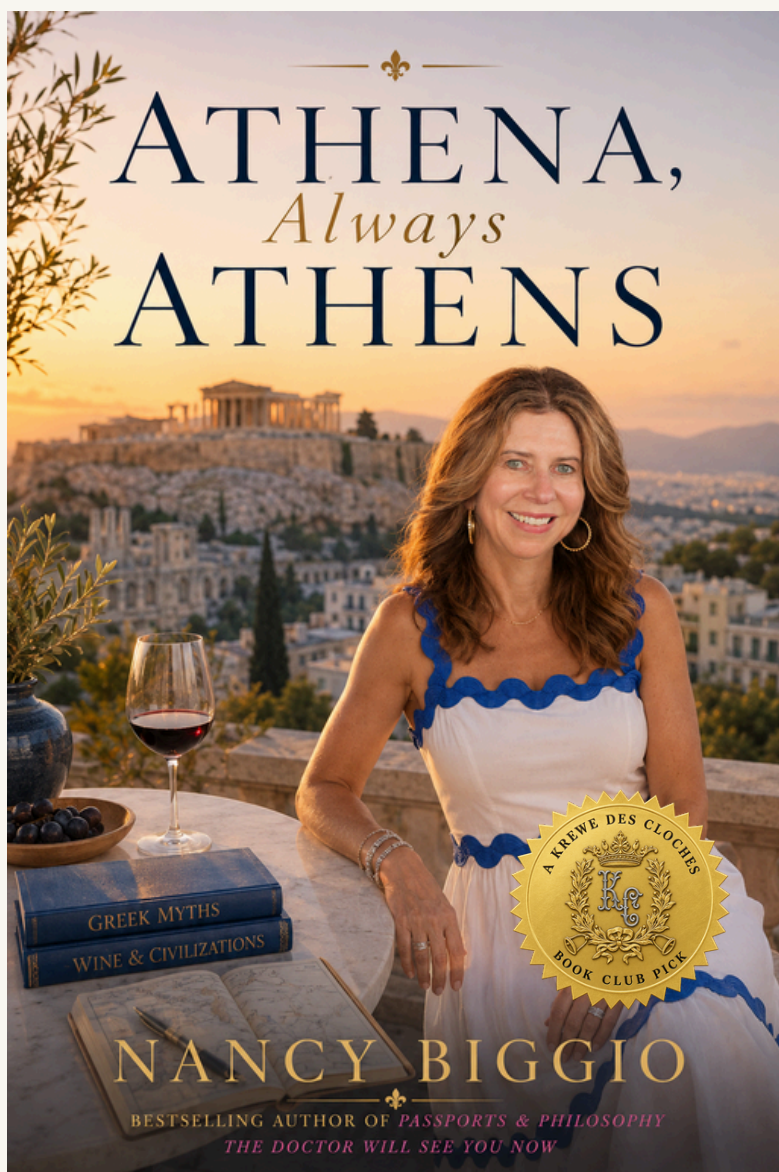
Tomorrow, she would find the address.

After all, the greatest souvenirs weren't the things we carried home.

They were the stories that changed the way we returned.







ATHENA, ALWAYS ATHENS

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Nancy Biggio



An Excerpt From

ATHENA, ALWAYS ATHENS

Nancy Biggio had come to Athens expecting history. She had not expected history to come looking for her.

She checked into *Hotel Grande Bretagne* with four days devoted to the things she loved most: ancient civilizations, exceptional wine and enough unscheduled time to follow whatever caught her curiosity.

By her second afternoon, something had.

Her private guide had taken her beyond the Acropolis and into a tiny antiquarian shop in Plaka, where Nancy noticed an old map of Greece hanging behind the counter. Tiny gold markings traced a route from Athens through the Peloponnese before disappearing into the Aegean.

“What are those?” she asked.

The shopkeeper glanced at the map. Then at Nancy. “Vineyards.”

That was all it took.

That evening, an invitation arrived at Hotel Grande Bretagne directing her to an unmarked blue door in Plaka. Behind it was a candlelit courtyard, six strangers and a table set with unlabeled bottles.

At its head sat an elegant silver-haired woman who introduced herself as Athena.

Of course she did.





The wines came without labels. Santorini. Nemea. Northern Greece. Nancy tasted slowly, recognizing each until Athena poured the final glass. Nancy took a sip, then another.

“I don't know this one.”

Athena smiled. “You shouldn't.”

She reached beneath the table and placed an old leather folio in front of Nancy.

“This wine hasn't officially existed in more than a century.”

Nancy set down her glass. Now she was interested.

Instead, Athena reached beneath the table and produced an old leather folio. Inside was the same map Nancy had seen that afternoon. Only this one was dated 1896. Three vineyards were circled in faded ink. Beside the last was a handwritten symbol Nancy recognized immediately.

Athena. The goddess, not the woman.

The following morning, Nancy canceled her museum tour. By noon, she was aboard a private boat leaving Athens with the map in her bag, a bottle of wine with no label and coordinates to an island her captain insisted had never produced a vineyard.

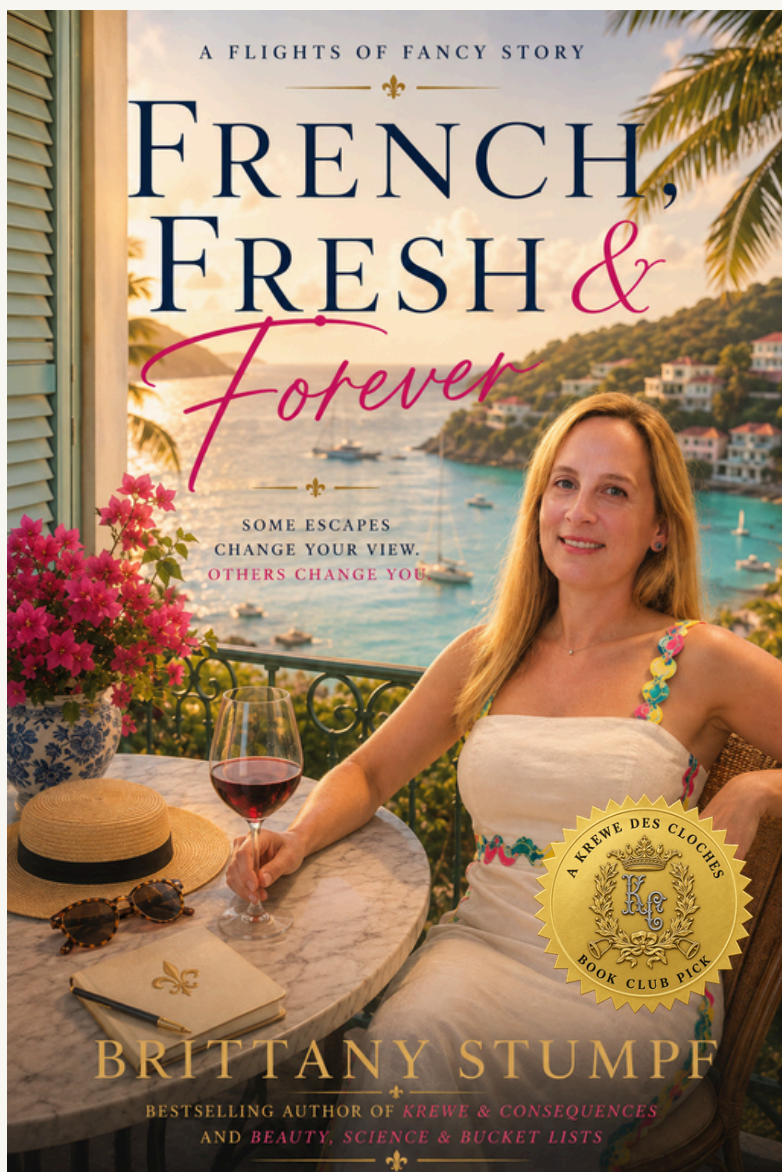
Nancy looked toward the horizon.

For the first time since arriving in Greece, she had absolutely no idea what she was going to find.

And she couldn't have been happier.







FRENCH, FRESH, & FOREVER

A Flights of Fancy Story
by *Brittany Stumpf*

An Excerpt From

FRENCH, FRESH, & FOREVER

A large, ornate initial letter 'B' in a dark blue serif font. The rest of the text is in a smaller, dark blue serif font. The text reads: "Brittany Stumpf had come to St. Barths for the sun. Professionally speaking, this was questionable. Personally, she had packed SPF 50 and decided it was fine."

She and Clancy had checked into *Cheval Blanc St-Barth* with a perfectly respectable plan: beach, long lunches, excellent wine and absolutely nothing requiring an alarm. After years of schedules, patients and New Orleans obligations, Brittany was prepared to take relaxation very seriously.

Then, on their second afternoon, a waiter placed a glass of rosé beside her chaise.

"I didn't order this."

"No," he said. "But apparently you did in 2008."

Brittany lowered her sunglasses.

Attached to the stem was a tiny card embossed with a single address in Gustavia and three words: *You left something.*

There were several problems with this. Brittany had never been to St. Barths in 2008. At least, she was almost certain she hadn't.

An hour later, curiosity had won. The address led her to a tiny parfumerie tucked behind the harbor, where an elderly Frenchwoman took one look at Brittany and disappeared into the back.

She returned carrying a pale blue box.





Inside was a photograph of a New Orleans Mardi Gras ball taken decades before Brittany was born. On the back, someone had written her family name—and beneath it, the name of a villa in St. Barths.

Now that was interesting.

By sunset, Brittany and Clancy were climbing a hillside above Gustavia toward a villa that officially belonged to a French family neither of them had ever heard of.

The door was already open.

Inside, champagne was chilling beside another photograph, this one taken on the very terrace where they were standing.

Brittany picked it up.

Same New Orleans family. Same mysterious French name. And standing in the center was a woman wearing a necklace Brittany had seen hundreds of times. Because it was currently sitting in her jewelry box at home.

Clancy looked at her.

“Do you know who that is?”

Brittany stared at the photograph.

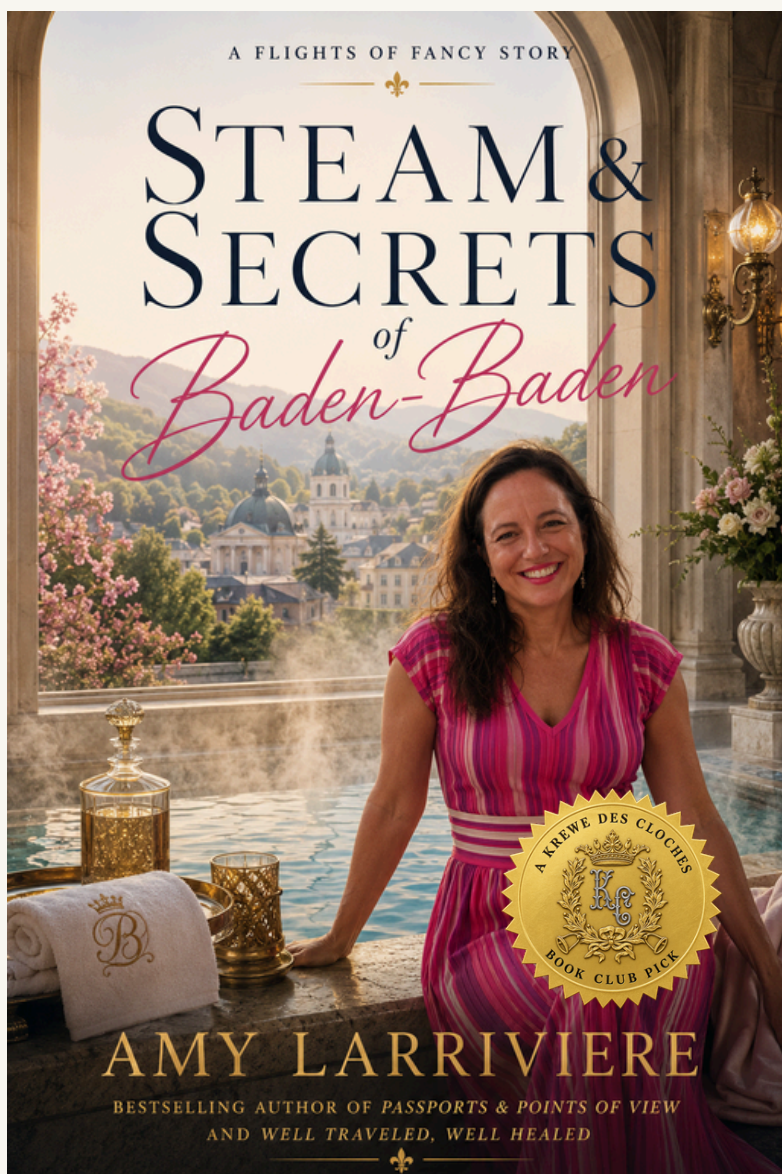
“No.”

She smiled.

But she suddenly had a very good reason to stay in St. Barths a little longer.







STEAM & SECRETS OF BADEN BADEN

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Amy Larriviere



An Excerpt From

STEAM & SECRETS OF BADEN BADEN



Amy Larriviere had come to Europe alone on purpose. That was the point. Her Alps & Ancestry Tour was supposed to be equal parts adventure and reinvention: follow a few family roots, collect a few passport stamps and prove—to absolutely no one but herself—that she could leap into whatever came next without waiting for someone to come along.

She hadn't expected the first leap to be from the side of a Swiss mountain. Thirty minutes after insisting she would absolutely not go hang gliding, Amy was running toward the edge of an Alp strapped to a handsome Swiss pilot named Lukas. Apparently, bravery looked a lot like questionable judgment at 6,000 feet.

By the time she arrived at *Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa in Baden-Baden*, Amy had decided she deserved something considerably less airborne. A massage. A thermal bath. Perhaps an afternoon during which nobody asked her to jump off anything.

The baths seemed safe.

They were not.

Amy had done enough research to know Baden-Baden's famous thermal-bath culture came with certain traditions. She had simply chosen not to dwell on exactly how little fabric some of those traditions involved. Steam curled through the room as she stepped into the warm mineral water, reminding herself that she was a sophisticated European traveler. Then a man's voice behind her said, "We really have to stop meeting like this."

Amy froze. She knew that voice.





Lukas.

Of course it was Lukas.

Because apparently the Alps had followed her to Baden-Baden—and they were wearing considerably less this time.

Amy turned slowly. “Don’t you have a mountain to jump off?”

He smiled. “Tomorrow.”

That should have been the end of it.

Instead, tomorrow became Oktoberfest, where Amy danced on a bench she had absolutely intended only to sit on. Munich became Neuschwanstein. Neuschwanstein became Salzburg, where she sang badly and enthusiastically across a hillside simply because the moment demanded it.

And then came Vienna.

Amy had arrived in Europe wondering whether she was brave enough to travel alone. Standing beneath the chandeliers of a Viennese ballroom, dressed for the waltz and watching a very familiar man cross the room toward her, she realized she’d been asking the wrong question.

Lukas stopped in front of her and held out his hand.

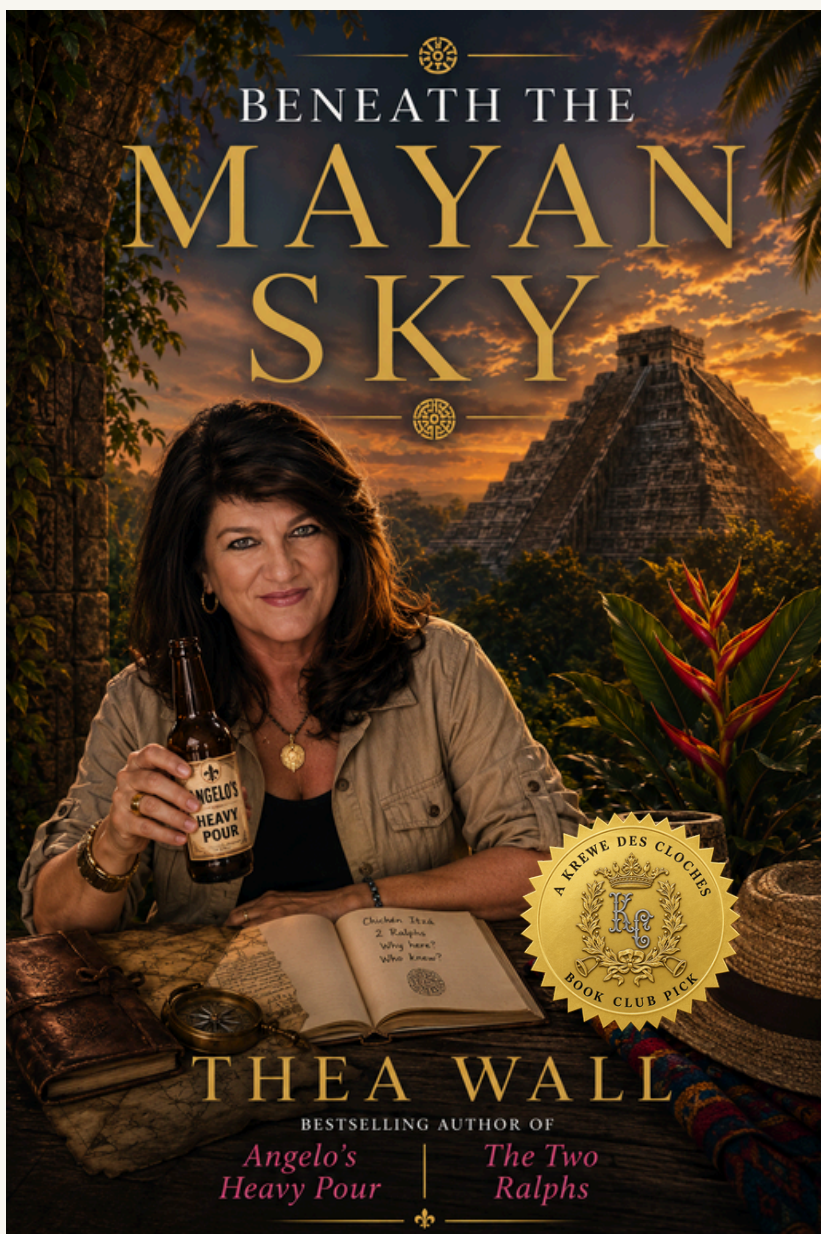
Amy looked at it.

She’d already jumped off the mountain.

How dangerous could one dance possibly be?







BENEATH THE MAYAN SKY

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Thea Wall



An Excerpt From

BENEATH THE MAYAN SKY

—•—

Thea Wall had never met a hotel bar she couldn't close. It was a matter of professional pride. Which was why, shortly after midnight on her second night in Mexico, she was still sitting at the bar at *Rosewood Mayakoba* while everyone else had sensibly gone to bed.

Everyone except the bartender.

"Another?" he asked. Thea looked at him. There was something familiar about that voice.

"Angelo?"

He grinned. It was Angelo. From Club Privé at Bellagio. In Mexico. Behind her bar.

"What the hell are you doing here?"

"Vacation."

Thea looked pointedly at his uniform.

"I got bored." Fair enough. Thea understood this completely.

Angelo slid another beer toward her, but beneath it was a faded photograph of a Mayan ruin. "I found this behind the bar tonight."

On the back, someone had written three words: *Ask the Greek*.

"I'm thinking this was meant for you." Angelo said, smiling curiously.

—•—



The photograph showed a stone doorway carved with a symbol Thea recognized from a ruin she'd visited that afternoon—one supposedly closed to visitors. Suddenly, going to bed seemed ridiculous.

By 1:00 a.m., she and Angelo had acquired a flashlight, two road beers and directions from a night manager who preferred to remain anonymous. At 1:45, they found the doorway. It was already open.

Inside, a passage descended to a candlelit room containing two chairs, two cold beers and a hotel guest ledger dated 1978.

Thea opened it.

Halfway down the page was a name she recognized. Someone from New Orleans.

Her phone buzzed.

Ralph #1: Where are you?

Then again.

Ralph #2: Have you seen my email?

Angelo glanced at the screen.

“Which one's which?”

“One's my husband. One's my boss.”

“And?”

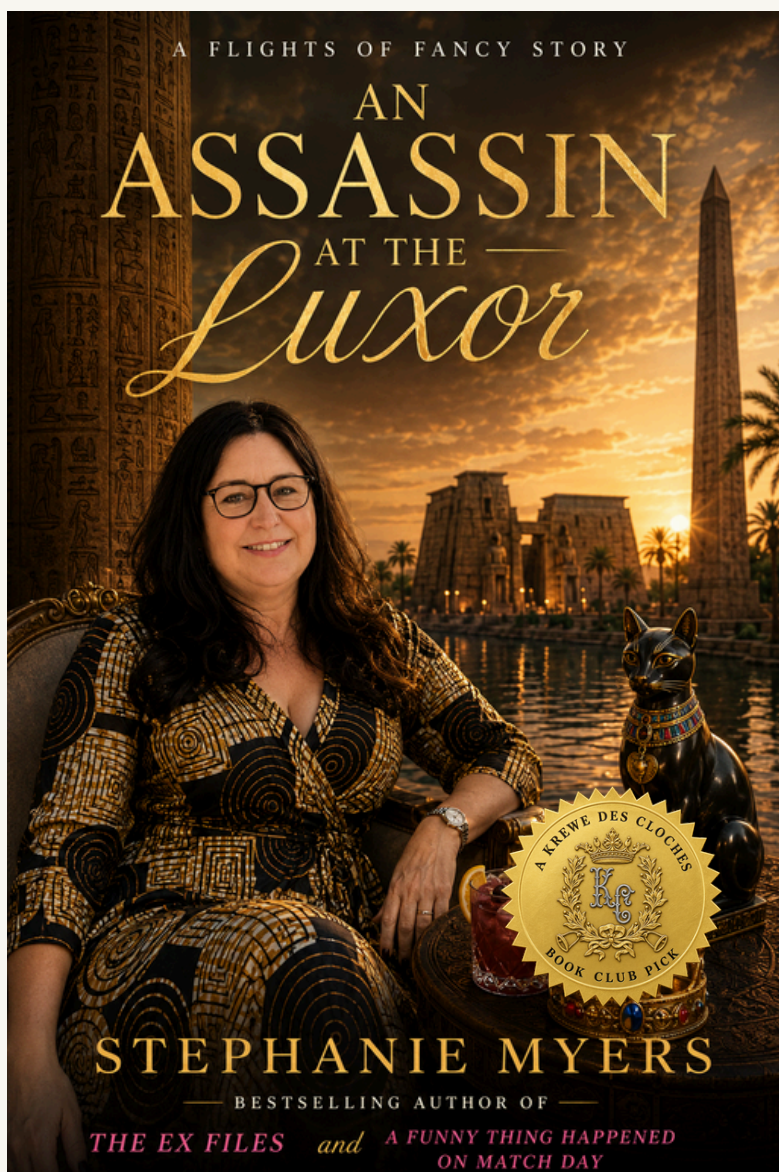
Thea slipped the phone into her pocket. “At this hour? Does it matter?”

She turned the page. Her smile disappeared. Thea looked at Angelo.

“How heavy exactly is your pour?”







AN ASSASSIN AT THE LUXOR

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Stephanie Myers



An Excerpt From

AN ASSASSIN AT THE LUXOR

S

tephanie Myers had not flown to Egypt to commit murder.

She felt this was important to establish.

She had come to Luxor for history, culture and several uninterrupted days at the *Sofitel Winter Palace Luxor*, where she intended to sit beside the Nile with a Crown Press and contemplate absolutely nothing more dangerous than whether to order another one.

Then she remembered Match Day.

Years earlier, her daughter had survived medical school and finally arrived at Match Day—one of those enormous family moments everyone knew mattered. Everyone, apparently, except her father, who had chosen that particular week to go gallivanting through Egypt.

Stephanie had forgiven many things since the divorce. She was evolved. Well-adjusted. Delightful at parties. She genuinely wished everyone happiness. She had not, apparently, forgiven Egypt.

The realization struck during her private tour of Karnak Temple. Her guide was explaining something historically significant about pharaohs and divine retribution when Stephanie stopped beneath an enormous stone column.

“Divine retribution,” she repeated.

The guide nodded. Stephanie smiled.

Interesting.





By sunset, she had developed what she considered a perfectly reasonable itinerary: Valley of the Kings at nine, lunch beside the Nile at one, Crown Press at five and symbolic revenge whenever scheduling permitted.

No actual violence, obviously. Stephanie had standards.

But Egypt had possibilities.

At dinner that evening, a waiter placed her Crown Press beside a small gold envelope. Inside was an old photograph taken in front of Luxor Temple. Stephanie recognized the date immediately.

Match Day.

She turned it over. Written across the back were six words:

There's more to this story. Interested?

Stephanie stared at it for several seconds.

"Well," she murmured, reaching for her drink. "Now you have my attention."

The next morning, she canceled the spa and followed an address written beneath the photograph to a tiny antiques shop beyond the souk. The proprietor took one look at the photograph, then at Stephanie, and disappeared into the back. He returned carrying a small wooden box. Inside was another photograph. Stephanie lowered her glasses.

"Oh, you have GOT to be kidding me."

Stephanie looked at the photograph again.

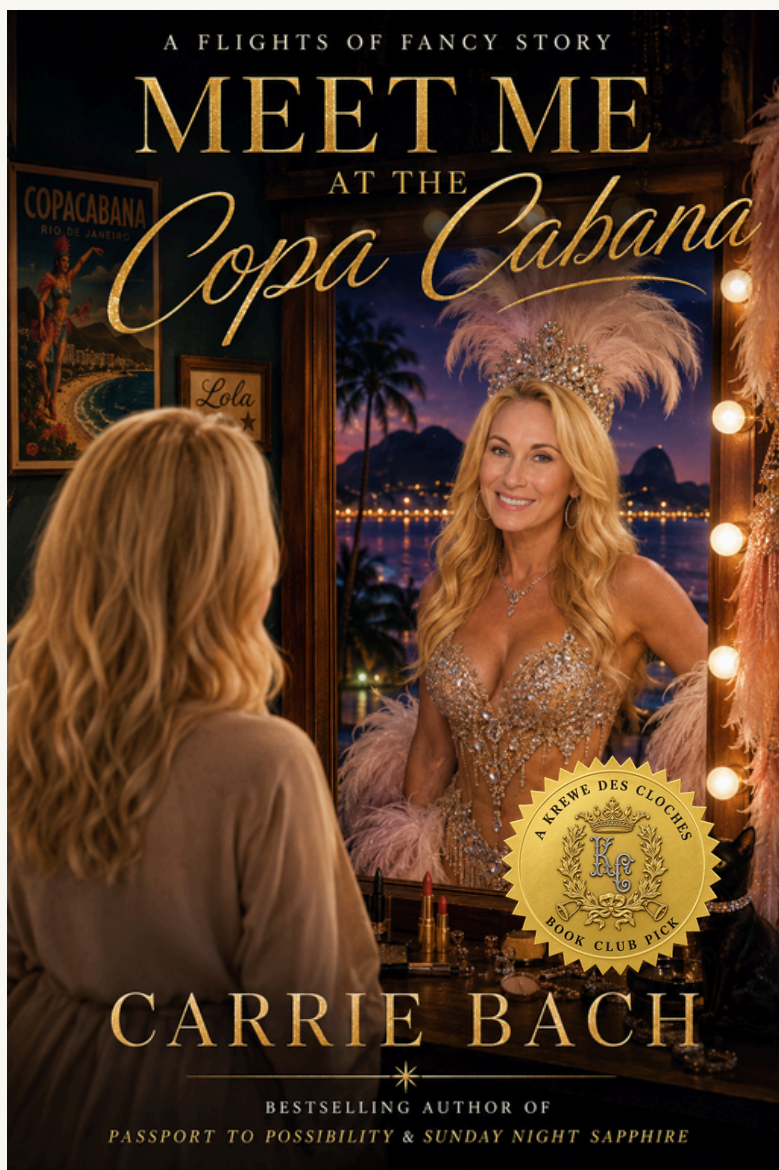
This time, she noticed what she'd missed before.

She slowly lowered her glasses.

Ok, this was going to be fun...







MEET ME AT THE COPA CABANA

A Flights of Fancy Story
by Carrie Bach



An Excerpt From

MEET ME AT THE COPA CABANA

—❧—

Carrie Bach had been in Rio for less than six hours when a man she'd never met kissed her on both cheeks, called her Lola, and told her the diamonds were missing.

She probably should have corrected him.

Instead, Carrie took a sip of her caipirinha and said, "Which diamonds?"

This was how these things happened.

She had checked into *Copacabana Palace, A Belmond Hotel, Rio de Janeiro* that afternoon intending to spend four perfectly civilized nights enjoying Rio. Cocktails by the pool. Dinner somewhere fabulous. A little samba. Perhaps enough sequins to justify an entirely unreasonable purchase.

Then she'd found the note beneath her room key.
Lola. Dressing Room. Nine O'Clock. Come alone.

Carrie was not Lola.

She was a luxury travel advisor, dental hygienist, former performer, wife to Mike and mother to two cats who were almost certainly sleeping on something forbidden back home.

But Carrie had also spent enough of her life onstage to recognize an entrance when she saw one.

At 9:03, she opened the dressing-room door.

—❧—



Inside hung a showgirl costume covered in crystals and pale feathers. On the vanity sat red lipstick, a photograph of an impossibly handsome man and a diamond necklace that looked expensive enough to require both security and paperwork.

Carrie picked it up. The lights went out. When they came back on, the necklace was gone—and someone was pounding on the dressing-room door. “Lola! Two minutes!”

Carrie looked at the door. Then at the costume. She could explain that she wasn’t Lola. Or...

Less than two minutes later, wearing several thousand crystals, an unreasonable number of feathers and absolutely no business being there, “Lola” walked onto the stage at the Copacabana.

Carrie hadn’t planned to perform that night. But she’d never been particularly good at ignoring a cue. The band started, muscle memory took over and by midnight she’d sung two songs, danced with three strangers and spotted the handsome man from the photograph watching from the bar.

He approached as the applause faded. “You have something that belongs to me.” Carrie smiled. “Unless you’re looking for sensible shoes, I really don’t.” His eyes dropped to her wrist. Carrie followed them. Fastened around it was a diamond bracelet she absolutely had not put there.

Well. That complicated things.

Back at Copacabana Palace, the missing necklace was waiting in her suite beside champagne and a note: *Lola knows what she did.*

Carrie’s phone rang. It was Mike.

She considered answering, then looked from the necklace to the note and poured the champagne instead.

Carrie could call him back. Lola had a scandal to solve.







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