

Renaissance

Kate shared a modern flat on Putney Hill with her friend Heather, while Peter, Kate's lover of nearly five years, lived across the river in a ground floor conversion, just off the Fulham Palace Road. These separate living arrangements had much to do with the views of her parents. Kate had been strictly brought up.

On the first morning of her summer holiday she was getting ready to travel to Italy. It was uncomfortably hot and Heather was away on a singles weekend. Shedding her usual reserve, Kate stood at the long mirror in her bedroom, making a bold appraisal of her naked body. She turned this way and that, running her hands over her tummy and hips, and decided that at thirty-three she was in good shape, if not quite the shape that had somehow been fixed as today's ideal. She kept fit by cycling to work and by playing netball on Thursday evenings at the Sixth Form College where she was employed as a librarian.

Peter attended an evening class at her college on Thursdays and usually watched the last session of the netball game. When Kate had showered and changed they would cycle across Putney Bridge and have a meal at the Rawalpindi in the New Kings Road. From there it was a five minute ride to Peter's place. In his small room, surrounded by the clutter of the perpetual student, they would make love, a routine facilitated by the absence on Thursdays of Peter's flatmate Rob.

At the mirror Kate exchanged a coy smile with her reflected self and then turned away to put on the new white underwear she had bought for the holiday. After flirting with the sexier Janet Reger range, she had in the end reverted to Marks and Spencer. She slipped a loose-fitting cream linen dress over her head and let it fall into place. Then she left the flat and walked down the hill to East Putney station, towing her small suitcase, on the first stage of the journey to Florence.

Peter, who worked for Wandsworth Council in the Planning Department, had travelled to Florence a few days ahead of Kate. He had recently achieved a degree in History after years of toil at night school and was eager to immerse himself in the world of the Renaissance. His great regret was that all his studies had been carried out in ugly premises in unfashionable parts of South London, while he yearned for the enchanted life of a student at Oxford or Cambridge.

Two years ago, with the idea of adding interest to his personality, he had joined a sculpture class. He discovered a facility for modelling and carving and was soon a man with a driving purpose. Sculpture became his passion.

In Florence he was filled with anticipation as he began to cross the very stones that his heroes had trodden. He would seek out the famous works of sculpture that he had listed, but more than that he would travel in his imagination back to the age of the Medici. For the period of his stay he would be a Florentine.

On his first morning Peter stepped out with the brisk gait of one bent on his daily business; he would not be seen meandering like a tourist. Broad-shouldered and five foot nine in height, he wore navy blue chinos and a white t-shirt. Hanging from his shoulder was a fashionable Italian leather bag in which he had secreted a guide book, a map and a little phrasebook.

His destination was the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, something of a connoisseur's museum which doesn't attract the crowds that throng to the Uffizi. Peter was able to move without hindrance as he began to analyse the marble figures. He circled

them, sometimes crouching down, intent on getting every possible viewpoint. Often he returned to a piece that he had already seen, to satisfy some new curiosity.

He became aware of another visitor, a rugged-looking man of about forty, his trousers and shoes dusted white with clay. He was moving briskly about the rooms, studying a few, particular works. They coincided on the upper floor, in front of Donatello's statue of David.

'Excuse me,' this man said, 'You are English I think. I have noticed how you are looking at the figures – I was thinking you are perhaps a sculptor.'

'That is my ambition. I'm Peter.' He extended his hand.

'My name is Gaston. I am from Switzerland. I came here long ago to visit and I never went home.'

'I envy you,' Peter replied. 'I feel as though I could stay here forever. I'm studying sculpture, but I have to do another job to earn my living.'

'That is my difficulty also. To live I have to make small animals, from clay. There is a gallery in the Via del Corso where they sell very many.' He made a gesture with his hands as if to excuse this commercial side to his art. 'I have a studio not very far from here. You can visit if you like.'

'I would love to.' Peter could not believe his luck in getting to know a true artist. They walked down the stairs together and paused in the centre of the airy courtyard. Gaston pointed to one corner. 'You have seen the exhibition of Pietro da Montese? No? You must. It will inspire you.' He wrote the address of his studio on Peter's guidebook and they separated at the entrance to the special exhibition.

When Peter entered, his gaze was arrested by the first exhibit, a bas-relief in terra cotta of a mother and child. The design was uncannily similar to a work he had been modelling in his class - the mother looking from above and the child seeming to search her face. As he looked at it his hands repeated in the air the motions that he knew had transformed the raw clay into these two figures. He looked at the description of the artist that was pinned to the wall and learned that Pietro da Montese had died in 1464 at the age of thirty six - Peter's present age. He began to feel there was some significance in this coincidence.

Soon he decided that he had seen as much as he could take in for one morning. He left the museum and made his way to the address that Gaston had written down.

The studio was one of three workshops looking onto a tiny courtyard. Gaston welcomed him and showed him round. There were the clay animals that he had talked about, lined up in different stages of completion, but also, at the back, there were human figures, both male and female, mostly in standing positions. There was an unfinished one of a couple in an embrace but this, like the others, seemed to be gathering dust. Peter was excited by them, but Gaston urged him away, saying, 'Look, Peter - behind that screen is another space for working. For some time it has not been used. Why not come and make something here while you are in Florence?'

Peter gave him a wry smile. 'My girl-friend is coming to join me in three days' time. She will want to see the city. I'm very tempted, though.'

Late that afternoon he visited the Palazzo Pitti. He wandered through the Gardens of Boboli until he stopped before a plinth on which stood two nude female figures. He could see they were both sculpted from the same model and as he walked round it struck him that there should have been a third figure. He looked at the explanatory plaque: '*Le Tre Grazie (opera incompiuta) da Pietro da Montese (1428-1464).*'

'Le Tre Grazie - The Three Graces.' Peter repeated the words out loud. *'Incompiuta - that must mean incomplete.'* The sculptor must have died before finishing the third figure.

Peter was at the station of Santa Maria Novella when Kate arrived from Pisa airport. *'Ciao Caterina,'* he greeted her.

'Ciao Pietro,' she replied. *'God, you look well, Peter. Florence has done you good. I like the t-shirt.'* She was used to seeing him in shirts with collars. He grabbed her case and hurried her from the station.

'Once we turn that corner over there, you're going to step back five hundred years,' he said.

He led her confidently through dark, winding streets, largely deserted, this being the time of the afternoon siesta. Suddenly the Piazza della Signoria opened in front of them, the sunlight dazzling. Kate walked over to look at the sculpture displayed outside the Uffizi gallery - a line-up of giant masculine figures. She gazed at the powerful form of Neptune, his nakedness accentuated by the whiteness of the marble. Peter called her over to look at Michelangelo's David.

'Look at this, Kate, isn't it amazing?' he asked. Kate nodded and walked round to view the figure from the back, shielding her eyes from the sunlight.

'Lovely.'

They escaped from the oppressive heat to the room they had booked for their holiday. It was Heather who had recommended the Pensione Brancaccio. She had had an affair during her stay there, with a middle-aged Italian art historian who was her tour guide. *'You'll like the Brancaccio,'* she said, *'it has a decadent feel to it.'*

Peter lay on the bed watching while Kate began to unpack. Then she gathered up her dress and slipped it over her head. She was combing out her hair with her fingers and moving towards the bathroom when Peter suddenly said, *'Don't move - hold it just there.'* Kate obeyed. His next words would not have caused surprise in many relationships, but Kate was quite taken aback. *'Take off your bra.'* Had something of the amorous Italian ways rubbed off on him, she wondered. In spite of their regular intimacy, Kate had never stood naked before Peter. Now, without hurrying, she removed her underwear and then, turning towards him with a serene expression, she struck a classical pose, lifting her arms above her head.

'Amazing.'

Whatever the cause of this uncharacteristic enthusiasm, Kate wasn't going to take time now to enquire. She crawled onto the bed, picked up the night-dress she had thrown there, and placed it across her eyes in a gesture of submission.

Later, in the evening, they walked past pavement restaurants with tasteful pink tablecloths. To Kate they looked enticing but Peter led her on through narrow streets to a small trattoria, which he seemed to know. There the friendly humour of their waiter and the hubbub of Italian voices induced a glow of well-being in her. As they sat with their coffee she was twirling a strand of her hair between her fingers. Peter could no longer contain his excitement.

'Kate - there's something I want to say.'

She looked up, surprised. Could this be leading up to the classic holiday proposal? The proposal her parents were always hoping for and hinting at? The setting could have been chosen for it; an accordion was playing romantic music somewhere nearby. She waited uneasily.

She did love Peter, but at the back of her mind there always lurked a memory - a summer at Tenby, in Wales, when she was nearly seventeen. She was staying with her aunt and uncle, over their chemist's shop. Huw was twenty, her cousin's friend, a student of the classical guitar which he played for her at the window of his room, across the street from hers. The memory was not so much of Huw, as of the depth of her feelings for him. Must she give up hope of knowing feelings like that again?

Peter looked her in the eye and began: 'I met a Swiss sculptor named Gaston, and I've got to know him quite well. He's got a studio just near here and there's an offer to use the place. Anyway, the thing is this - Gaston pointed me to the work of a Florentine sculptor called Pietro da Montese. He lived in the fifteenth century and he died at my age - thirty-six. I've got this strange feeling I'm meant to carry on his work.'

Kate looked at him in astonishment. This was her Peter, her usually predictable Peter, a man whose character had always carried an underlying discontent. Today that seemed to have been lifted. She waited to hear more.

'Montese was working on a group called "The Three Graces." At his death he had only completed two of the figures. If I had a model I'd like to have a shot at making the third one.'

The questions that were on Kate's lips seemed unkind, so she sat fingering the stem of her wineglass and kept them to herself. Peter took her silence for understanding and said, 'I want you to meet my friend. We'll go in the morning. He lives at the studio.'

The city looked bright and clean in the morning sunlight, the smell of freshly ground coffee in the air. Peter took Kate to a bar where he greeted the patron: '*Ciao Franco. Due cappuccini e due cornetti con marmellata per favore.*' Kate was impressed, though she knew the words came straight from his phrasebook. With his build and colouring Peter could be taken for a local.

When they finished their coffee he was impatient to get to the studio. Kate paused at the entrance to a grocery store, breathing in the rich smells of cheese, olives and cured meats. 'Hang on, Peter,' she said, 'I want to have a look in here.'

She needed time to think, to catch up with herself. How foolish she had been to imagine that a proposal of marriage was in Peter's mind; he was much too wrapped up in Florence and his new-found destiny. Yesterday afternoon was nice, but she suspected that it was not the librarian, the steady girl-friend that he had made love to. It was a fantasy figure of some kind, his muse probably.

Perhaps her brief, spontaneous pose in the bedroom had convinced him that she would be prepared, even eager, to see her body cast in stone, or bronze, or whatever. Perhaps - the thought insinuated itself - he would be right. She had a nice body and it wouldn't always look this good. More than once at the National Gallery she had seen a painting and thought 'I could have been the model for that'. Some of those masters of the past would surely have appreciated her full hips, her nicely rounded tummy and high, firm breasts. Clothes never did justice to her kind of figure.

Gaston greeted Kate at the door with a smile, wiping his hands on a rag. He held her eye with a steady gaze as he introduced himself. She felt that this was a man with his feet on the ground. He wore work trousers of a faded rust colour, a navy T-shirt hanging loose and canvas shoes. If I was a sculptor, she thought, I would be excited by that strong, handsome head with its shock of wiry, greying hair.

She looked around her. The workshop was a single-storey building, lit only by a skylight window, the interior painted white. A kiln stood in one corner, its chimney rising to the roof. At the back was a gathering of sculpted figures, facing in all directions and

looking abandoned. There was a table against the wall and on it she saw two rabbits, modelled in clay, whitening as they dried out.

‘When they are finished I cast them in fibreglass, to look just like bronze,’ he told her. ‘Rabbits are very popular.’

He turned to Peter. ‘What you want to do – the third Grace - is not easy. In your place I would do first a small maquette. I have an armature here; it will do you very well. The clay is no problem; use what you need.’

Kate wandered across the studio, attracted by Gaston’s embracing couple. She ran her fingers down the back of the female figure. ‘This is so beautiful,’ she said. Gaston grunted and led her away, saying, ‘Peter will work in the other space, behind that screen. You must be his model.’

Peter turned to her, expectantly. She looked at the floor in panic. Gaston said, ‘Come.’ She followed him meekly around the makeshift partition. ‘Please, stand in the centre there.’

He turned to Peter, who had followed them through. ‘There you are – perfect. Plenty of light; nice and warm here too.’

Gaston provided Peter with the materials he needed. Peter looked to Kate, ‘What do you think?’

She faced him, arms crossed over her chest, her head moving slowly from side to side. ‘Oh Peter,’ she said, ‘what have you lured me into?’ Then she began to unbutton her shirt.

Kate agreed to pose each morning for about two hours; after that she would be a tourist. Peter began with high excitement. He tried to build the figure up gradually, as he had been taught, holding back on the detail to get the poise and the balance right. Kate wondered if a sense of destiny automatically provided you with the means to achieve it. By the third day she thought not. He was obviously struggling, carving off clay and taking the whole thing back to an earlier condition. He made no comment as he doggedly set about building it up again.

Kate looked forward to seeing Gaston in the mornings. They adopted the ritual of greeting in French:

‘Bonjour Gaston,’

‘Bonjour Kate.’

There was a sparkle in his eyes when he smiled. He always had coffee ready and he never intruded on the privacy of Peter’s workspace.

On the fourth day Kate was asking Gaston about some of his earlier pieces. It was so sad to see him modelling rabbits when he was capable of such inspired work. She touched a figure that looked damaged and asked him, ‘What happened here?’

‘I got mad with that one, and a bit mad with the model, too. It was going to be my *capolavoro* as they say here, my masterpiece, my Aphrodite. I am still dreaming about it.’ He paused before adding quietly, ‘I need the right model.’ He caught her eye and held it. For a long while neither spoke. Then Gaston inclined his head slightly in a questioning way and Kate heard herself saying, ‘If you want me to.....’ Her voice trailed off.

Peter was excited when he heard that Gaston would be returning to his true art. That his girlfriend would be posing naked for the purpose didn’t seem to worry him. He would be learning so much.

Kate wrapped herself tightly in her thin summer robe. She crouched on a chair in the corner while Peter and Gaston shifted the partition to create more space for the two of them to work. What have you agreed to do, she asked herself. Exposing yourself to two

men. What on earth would Mum and Dad think? She was scared, but just a bit excited too.

When the men were ready they looked to her expectantly. At first her limbs refused to respond. Gaston walked over and reached out a hand. Kate took it and he led her to the centre of the studio. She slipped off the gown and handed it to him, averting her eyes.

‘Peter’s pose will suit me very well,’ Gaston said. ‘Maybe I ask you to make a small change sometimes, just for a moment.’

He didn’t touch the clay at all on that first morning. He prowled round her, rather like one of the big cats at the zoo, Kate thought. After a while he began to draw in charcoal on a large pad, his hand sweeping boldly over the paper. Maybe that’s how Peter should have started, Kate thought. His problem seemed to be that he lost the major lines of the figure whenever he began to work in detail.

Suddenly Gaston turned and went behind the partition, saying, ‘I will give you music, help you relax.’ The sound of a piano came through.

‘Chopin,’ Kate said.

‘You know it. That is good. I have a lot of music here.’

On the next morning she walked alone to the studio, feeling calm; Peter had gone ahead of her. She looked at the people she was passing and thought – you’d never guess what I’m going to do this morning. She understood that, to Gaston, a willingness to pose nude for an artist was respectable, something to be admired.

When she reached the studio she got a surprise. Standing on a turntable was a roughly modelled clay figure, unmistakably her own. The basics were there - the shape, the posture, the balance. The weight was taken mostly by one leg, which tilted the hips a little and caused one buttock to nudge the other to the side. She liked the way he had achieved that; he knew how a body fitted together.

‘This much I do on my own,’ Gaston said. ‘But from here I need you.’

Another two days passed. He selected music for her and soon she had heard Debussy, Saint-Saens, Vivaldi and Faure. He was working with assurance. Peter seemed to be fighting discouragement.

‘I’m not going to work on mine today,’ he announced. ‘I’m going to the Bargello - have another look at the Montese exhibition. I’ll go and see The Three Graces again too.’ Addressing Kate, he said, ‘I’ll see you later, back at the Brancaccio.’

Gaston positioned himself at a different point of the compass each day. ‘I must not get too much used to one viewing point,’ he said. ‘We are not like painters; our work must be looked at from three hundred sixty degrees.’

Kate nodded her understanding. Some days she spent the morning with the eyes of this man on her back, but today he stood where she could see him from the corner of her eye. She watched as handfuls of clay were slapped on and then pared down, first with a wire tool and then with his hands. Now he was caressing the clay figure delicately with his rough fingers and Kate began to feel a tingling sensation in the corresponding areas of her skin. Was he still working, she wondered, or had he paused to dream?

It had been intensely humid for the last two days. Kate’s skin was glistening and she could see Gaston’s clothes clinging to his body in places. Above the skylight it was getting darker, a summer storm approaching. Prokofiev’s violin concerto had reached the heart-rending second movement.

‘I stop now,’ Gaston said, abruptly. He walked round the screen. Kate, left alone, allowed her body to relax. She stretched her arms and shoulders and then went down on her haunches to ease the muscles of her legs. When she had dressed, she followed Gaston and found him sitting at the table in front of two clay rabbits, unfinished and abandoned.

He was facing the wall on which he had tacked some of his charcoal sketches of her. She looked at his broad shoulders, slumped against the back of the wooden chair. She could usually read his face, but now he didn't turn round. Eventually he spoke. 'I'm hungry, Kate. You want to come, have something to eat?'

She looked up at the roof window. She could hear thunder in the distance and the sky was threatening, but it wasn't raining yet. They went to a place down the street, a *tavola calda* that she and Peter had once tried. They sat at a small table and ordered pasta with beer. Gaston seemed unusually silent and while they ate there was no conversation. Kate watched his huge hands, the delicate way he handled the cutlery. When they were nearly finished he looked up, his eyes serious. She returned his gaze, knowing that the longer she held it, the more she was silently committing herself.

'Oh, Kate,' he said.

She reached over and clasped his hand.

'But Peter, ' he began.

'Peter,' she interrupted him, 'is following his destiny and I don't think I'm part of it.' She had been standing in front of Peter with her clothes off and he hadn't touched her since the day she got there. Now the rain was beating noisily on the cobbles outside. They smiled and reached for each other across the table.

'Shall we run for it?' Kate said.

It was only fifty yards but they were drenched by the time they reached the studio. Their clothes were coming off as they got the door open and then locked it behind them.

Peter's decision to suspend work on the 'Third Grace' was taken on the spur of the moment. When he looked at his clay figure and then saw what Gaston had achieved, it was as though a spell had been broken.

From the studio he set off westwards, keeping to the back streets and passing by chance the house of Dante, where a young man in a scarlet costume was declaiming the words of the poet with exaggerated gestures. When he reached the Arno he followed the embankment as far as the Ponte Vecchio. He walked onto the bridge, ignoring the jewellers' shops that lined its sides, and paused in the centre of the river. He looked at the grand palaces and the more humble houses along the banks and tried to imagine the people who had built them. He saw a world that contained all that was lacking in his own. The Florentines of today were reminded of their heritage by everything around them. His own early years in Maidstone and Streatham felt impoverished by comparison. Was it a longing for a sense of continuity that had led him to imagine himself as the inheritor of a great artistic tradition?

He would become a sculptor, but he must behave like a pupil and not presume to the status of a master. Gaston would be his master. His mind went back to the hours he had spent at the V & A in London, in the huge hall of plaster casts. He took Kate there once and tried to communicate his sense of wonder that a sculptor could reduce a block of stone to something so alive and perfect. But her interest seemed to be in the people who posed for the artists. How could that boy hold his crouching position long enough for Michelangelo to finish his work? His legs must have ached.

When he thought about it now, Peter was surprised that Kate had taken to modelling so willingly. He recalled that yesterday, when they took a break, she had wandered about the studio, talking to Gaston, completely naked. 'What will you do with me when you've finished?' she had asked. Gaston had looked puzzled, but then she continued, 'Will you cast me in bronze?'

‘A cast will be made, yes. They are expert here in Florence. I will have three of you made. One I will show and try to sell; one I will keep, and the other will be for them, to pay for their work. Of course they have to like it.’

This morning there would be just the two of them back at the studio, but Peter’s mind had been on other concerns when he left them there.

He had earned his living for twenty years and had saved up a sum of money that should enable him to live here for a year or two, at least until he found a means of supporting himself. This was a city of tourists; he was a historian and a student of the Renaissance. If not as a sculptor, then surely he would find work as a guide.

Today he would not look at sculpture. He would explore like a tourist and see where his feet took him. By coincidence he found himself in the Via del Corso, and he sought out the gallery that Gaston had mentioned. There in the window were two of his rabbits, looking cute and lifelike. The gallery was tastefully set out, exhibiting animals in glass, china, wire and other materials.

The sun was coming and going between clouds. He continued to walk until he found a bench in the Piazza del Duomo, by now teeming with visitors. As he sat watching a street entertainer, an acrobat, an idea began to form. The seated, contented-looking rabbits were appealing in their way, but an animal in movement would be more exciting. The hare, for instance, alert and watchful; running, or leaping.

‘Am I squashing you?’ Kate raised her head and lifted her hair away from Gaston’s face.

He smiled and clasped her more tightly. ‘No, no.’

Their bodies were damp and slippery. She planted kisses on his chest, his stomach, his belly. There was a knock at the outside door.

‘No, no!’ she shouted. ‘Not now!’

At first neither of them moved, but then Kate said, ‘It must be Peter!’

Gaston rose and found his trousers and T-shirt. On his way to the door he pressed the button to set off the music again.

Peter was wiping the rain from his face, looking agitated. ‘Gaston,’ he said, ‘I want to talk to you, ask your advice.’

Sounds came from the back of the studio. Gaston said, ‘We have been working. Kate is still here, just getting dressed now.’

Kate had put on her clothes and was trying to tidy her hair. The glow would not leave her face. Jesus, Kate, she said to the mirror, that wild-looking woman – is that you?

‘How was the museum?’ she asked as she joined them, attempting a casual tone. She couldn’t look Peter in the eye.

‘I didn’t go. I was coming to ask Gaston for advice, but I think I’ll leave it till the morning.’ He turned and left, with a ‘see you later’ to Kate.

She knew that he knew. And in any case, she also knew that the imprint of Gaston’s hands would be showing only too clearly on her body when she posed tomorrow. She went and rested her cheek against his chest.

‘He won’t be expecting me this evening,’ she said.

Five days passed before Kate went to an agency and faxed her resignation to the college. While she was there she scribbled another message, to Heather:

‘I’ve been seduced by Florence! I’m staying!

Can you be an angel and find someone nice to rent my half of the flat? Put the money in my bank account?

Come and see me soon - I’ll tell you ALL!’

Kate's second-hand scooter, a Piaggio 150, had become her most treasured possession, a symbol of liberation and her new life. She had bought it from a friend of Gaston's. On an afternoon in late autumn it carried her swiftly up the steep hill to Fort Belvedere. There she sat on a low wall and looked down on the city, spread beneath her.

She picked out the Palazzo Ferragamo, occupying a long stretch of the river bank. She knew that Gaston was there now, called to discuss a work of sculpture that the family wanted to commission - a 'Venus', life-size in bronze. He would be driving a hard bargain, they would expect that. An artist must value his work and these days Gaston was a confident man. They had seen his Aphrodite and insisted that he use the same model for the new work.

Kate smiled as she thought about the morning, four months ago, when she stood naked at her mirror in Putney, studying her shape. Perhaps some premonition had prompted that uncharacteristic action. Only four months later her body was being celebrated by people steeped in representations of ideal beauty.

Her eye travelled over the rooftops beyond the river. Somewhere down there, between the Palazzo Vecchio and the Duomo, was the Via del Corso. Tomorrow morning Peter would be taking his first two 'leaping hares' to the gallery there.

He was becoming fluent in Italian, taking daily lessons from the lady who rented him accommodation. She was from a noble family, now in reduced circumstances, and Kate suspected that some kind of relationship was developing. The Contessa - that was her title, though she didn't use it - was a few years older than Peter. His imagined destiny as a sculptor had crumbled, but to feel himself part of this city of art and scholarship was the fulfilment of a dream.

Kate was in love. She felt alive in every inch of her body and she knew that Gaston loved her. She posed patiently for him every morning, feeling a link with those who had posed for the masters of the past. To see Gaston's renewed passion for his art was more than enough reward for her.

The afternoons were for sleeping and making love, and in the evening they strolled, arm in arm, through the illuminated streets, before stopping at one of their favourite cafes. Friends would often look in on them there; sometimes Peter would join them.

Kate took a final look at the city. The last rays of the sun were colouring the rooftops a deep orange. Florence had cast its spell on three people who came and couldn't leave.

She got to her feet and moved with a light step to retrieve her scooter. All would have gone well at the Palazzo Ferragamo, she was sure. Gaston would have his commission and tonight they would celebrate.