

PROLOGUE

Looking back, I could not believe all these unprecedented events had happened in my life. Like most of us, I was blissfully unaware that my relatively uneventful life would be torn apart so abruptly. It is impossible to imagine what mocking fate throws sometimes at people. Now I know none of us is secured from its unexpected blows. I learned the truthfulness of the phrase, “What doesn’t kill us, makes us stronger.”

I have never thought I would commit an appalling crime without feeling any remorse and even benefit from it. I have never imagined my passionless life would turn into an eruption of sexual escapades.

I hope by sharing my life story I would influence other women to fight for their happiness by keeping the fire of desires always burning, to never underestimate the importance of sex, and to understand that we, women, are keepers of the perfect relationships.

I dedicate my memoir to all goddesses of passion’s sacred spirits.

THE EXISTENCE IN A COCOON OF MELANCHOLY

Snow endlessly kept falling down covering the ground with a white pristine shroud. The snowfall has already continued for a couple of hours with no sign of ending. Outside, everything became different, outlines of the objects changed and the snow depicted them in a strange, mysterious manner. The fairytale charm of the silent picturesque surroundings only increased my melancholy. I wished to go outside, to become one of the garden statues, and to be a part of this white, wintery landscape. I felt like my soul had been stilled and frozen by some unexplainable seizure, which also paralyzed my mind and inflicted the unwillingness to move. The only thing I wanted to do right now was to lazily observe through large panoramic windows the transformation of the backyard. My glance followed dancing in the air big beautiful snowflakes before their landing on the ground. These pristine gorgeous star-like miracles of nature slightly glittered under outdoor lighting, occasionally radiating vibrant, brilliant shine.

The blizzard outside should have made being in the conservatory more enjoyable than ever, but I sensed only indifference. However, I felt very comfortable reclining on a white wicker chaise lounge with a soft mattress. More pieces of wicker and rattan furniture with colorful seats and pillows were in the orangery, but this little sofa was my favorite. I stopped staring outside and looked around. The greenhouse had a large variety of exotic vegetation. Constant air circulation made tall palm trees slightly brandish their large leaves. The light breeze brought an aroma of blooming tropical flowers. Suddenly, canaries began singing in their divine voices, they woke up a parrot who started to skillfully imitate their songs. One wall of the winter garden was a grotto with a large built-in aquarium, installed at the back of it mirror reflected and doubled miraculous and mysterious vividly colorful sea world. Big multi-colored fish lazily swam between swaying as if alive pink corals and bright green plants. Swimming, fish moved gracefully with their lace-like fins and long tails.

Not too far from the fish tank was a fountain comprising a few wall scone-vases from which relaxing sounding water slowly ran down ending its way in a swimming pool. Underwater lighting transformed its slightly heaving surface into a huge sparkling aquamarine.

Monotonous sounds of the gargling fountain and the beauty of surroundings only strengthened my melancholy. I was in the most amazing part of our house — an orangery with an indoor swimming pool. An architect designed and builders made one wall of the orangery out of glass, which provided the stunning view of a perfectly maintained backyard with paved paths, a few statues, and large urns. The house was an accomplishment of my husband and my dreams and the work of a talented architect who fulfilled our vision into reality. The living quarters enveloped the winter garden from three sides and windows of the master bedroom, living room, and kitchen provided a vista of sparkling swimming pool and tropical vegetation around. Birds with beautiful plumage living in large cages and exotic fish swimming between plants and corals in a big outlandish water tank added greatly to the charming atmosphere of our favorite place in the house.

“I can hardly believe this is my house, not a scene from a Hollywood movie. The beauty of surroundings is outstanding,” I thought lazily. On a chaise lounge by my feet curled up my inseparable companion — a little dog Miki. He was Maltese and had long, to the floor pure white

fur, which I combed daily and parted in the middle of his back. Miki had a habit of following me around and always being beside my feet. So many times, I accidentally kicked him or even stepped on his tail, but nothing could void my faithful escort from his habit to be near me. Miki looked up at me with his lovely round brown eyes expressing such unconditional love, of which only dogs are capable. In the orangery, we also had a fireplace and now it was burning. I enjoyed looking at leaping and dancing orange with blue edge tongues, the fire hypnotized me taking me into another reality. Our faithful guard German Shepard Frida, slightly snoring, dozed off by the fireplace. She had to protect large territory, which she dutifully examined running on the grounds a few times per day. Only extremely nasty, like today, weather would make Frida neglect her responsibilities. She was a young, full of energy dog and despite her intimidating appearance, she had a very kind temper. Frida and Miki were our four-legged kids.

“Why am I so miserable and unhappy? Why am I just crumbling into pieces? I have to be strong and start writing my new novel. A publisher already called me a few times, demanding a continuation of my bestseller series. My loyal readers are waiting for the continuation of the events; I cannot leave them guessing what would happen to my characters. Why cannot I come up with any idea? What, for heaven's sake, is wrong with me? Not long ago I used to write a book every year and all of them were bestsellers.”

Thoughts slowly, exactly like fish in an aquarium, floated in my head. I diligently tried to understand my gloomy feelings, but some invisible barrier prevented my consciousness to function properly.

In the reality, my family could be a subject of envy and most likely, a lot of other people would love to replicate it. I, Mary Murray, was a world-known author, and millions of readers waited for the publication of my new books. My husband, Steve Murray, was a successful attorney and ran his own law firm. His office was located in downtown Toronto in its business section. Large windows of Steve’s office provided a breathtaking vista of Lake Ontario and fingering into the sky modern high-rise glass buildings, with a famous CN Tower among them. Over a dozen people worked in Steve’s office, not counting part-time clerks and endlessly changing articling students.

The Murray couple was well known in the city, and we frequently had to attend various social gatherings. Sometimes, Steve and I were reluctant to take part in a specific event, but often it was not possible to discard the invitation. We had to take part in openings of new museums, welcoming ceremonies for important persons visiting our city, fundraising events, and many other meetings, on which we communicated with powerful, wealthy, and influential people. On top of the official social gatherings, we often received invitations to celebrate weddings, anniversaries and, unfortunately, sometimes we had to attend funerals. All these events were part of our mandatory social life.

Our two adult children have already left the safety of the parental house. Twenty years old, John was a student in one of the most prestigious educational institutions for higher education — the University of Cambridge in England. From his father, he inherited a thirst to implement in life practice of law and studied to become an international lawyer. Annette, being two years younger than her brother, starting from her teens wanted to know everything that was going on in the world and dreamed to be a journalist. She was also inspired by my success as an author and planned writing. Annette was a great athlete and for her outstanding success in sport, York University granted our daughter a scholarship. Our house was located on the outskirts of the metropolis, and Annette lived on campus by the university. Steve drove to work back and forth, but we could not make our young daughter experience the inconvenience and danger of driving every day on highways and we let her live near her place of studying.

Thoughts about my family made me proud but did not invigorate. I still felt incapable of doing even simple tasks, as if some invisible evil spirit sucked out all my vitality. I tried to analyze the reason for my strange emotional downfall. I thought,

“Soon I will be fifty years old, it is half of a century. Why should I feel happy? In two months will be my birthday and twenty-fifth anniversary of our wedding?”

The difference between these two events was only ten days, and we decided to celebrate both anniversaries at once. Steve and I planned to organize the grander celebration. The thoughts about the next party did not improve my gloomy mood.

“Oh, God! Again, those fake smiles and shining artificial teeth. Again, I would have to listen to deceitful or insincere compliments, praising my look and followed by gossip. Most people thrive in knowing others’ business and are driven by envy and jealousy. They will analyze the smallest detail of every woman’s outfit and try to guess which couture house created it. For them, the monetary value of the jewelry is always another important subject for discussion. I am so tired of people’s insincerity!”

I recalled celebrities, who felt soul-burning solitude while being surrounded by the crowd. Alexander McQueen, a world-famous fashion designer, committed suicide at a peak of his career. Karl Lagerfeld, a leading designer for Chanel House, frequently complained about his depressing loneliness. Marilyn Monroe, the stunningly beautiful woman admired by thousands of men, voluntarily left our world because she could not find reciprocal love. Recently, successful and young Kate Spade committed suicide. She started designing and manufacturing purses in 1993, and in two decades, her husband and she had a multimillion-dollar empire. This woman had such a lifestyle, about which most people cannot even dream. I could recall many similar examples. I often thought about twists of mocking fate and about our perception of life.

“Obviously, people who have achieved in life recognition and financial success themselves in comparison to others, who while having the same opportunities miserably failed, feel as if these accomplishments entitle them to an exhilarated life. However, finding out that success doesn’t guarantee happiness, such persons sense the misery of their joyless existence greater than others.”

My husband and I considered ourselves and society recognized us as a very successful couple. We started our way to fame and wealth from nothing and most likely I, feeling privileged, expected that all my accomplishments would open for me a door to another world, which was full of wonderful sensations and extreme joy. I felt thrilled for some time and lived in hope that those incredible feelings would last forever. However, in a while, I understood that this enchanting world has been lost for me and I have no chance to find a way to return there. I took for granted our splendid mansion and our prestigious lifestyle, and this did not bring me any longer happiness or even satisfaction. Now I could not understand the reasons for my strong frustration and misery and I did not know how to cope with my gloomy feelings. I felt as if I was lost in a labyrinth of despair, got stuck in its dead end, and had no chance to find an

exit. I felt as if I endlessly wandered on the winding paths of unhappiness with no hope of escaping from my fate.

Returning to reality was hard for me, but by my willpower, I forced myself to come back from the stupor. I got up from my comfortable position and gracefully stretched. I thought,

“Soon Steve will come home from work. I have to cook supper and set up the kitchen table.”

Both dogs woke up instantaneously and now were staring at me in anticipation of going for a walk. They had no clue of the nasty weather outside. I walked along a rectangular swimming pool and approached a place where I had a little yoga studio. It was a secluded corner of the orangery, separated by lavishly growing tropical plants, an abundance of which reflected in a large mirror. I stood in front of this mirror, looking at my image. I did not tie the belt of my silk gown and a slippery garment slowly fell down, exhibiting my naked body. I was alone in the house and adored swimming nude. It was an incredible feeling — to merge unclothed into warm water and swim, enjoying by every cell of my body the tender touch of this miraculous giving life substance. Constantly working jets made water in the pool slightly heave, and it mysteriously shone radiating an aquamarine shade. Swimming in such outstanding surroundings was a heavenly pleasurable experience.

Standing in front of the mirror, I critically examined my body. I had to admit that despite approaching unpleasant half of a century age bracket I looked splendid. Constant exercising, swimming, and yoga helped to keep my nicely formed feminine body in a decent shape. I was blessed to have a narrow waist and sizeable resilient breasts. After the birth of two children, they sagged a little, but still looked fantastic — two sticking out nipples crowned round pink circles on the top of good-sized semi-spheres. I ran my hand over my breasts and played a bit with nipples, they immediately responded by growing in size and hardening. My hand went down and by a circular motion, I caressed my slightly prominent stomach, my eyes became foggy from a sudden pleasant feeling. Instinctively, I went further down and touched slightly protruding covered by golden curly hair the most private part of my body. The irresistible desire to make love captured me and I thought,

“I wish Steve would come home soon. We have not been close for some time. I miss our intimacy.”