



CHAPTER 9

MARGARET RIVER

Meet we did.

“I see you found it,” I said, walking up to Mindy and Gupta on the lawn in front of Leeuwin Estate.

“Despite the name change,” said Gupta.

“I should have known,” Mindy said.

“Lovely,” said Frannie looking out over the vineyards.

“You said it,” Gupta echoed. “Gorgeous rolling hills of green with natural gatherings of trees abounding that beckon us to venture hither.”

“Well my golly, that’s a mouthful. It does look inviting. Think we can go for a walk here?” I said.

“I know we can. We camped in those trees over there,” he said with a distant smile.

“Is that alright?”

“It’s off their property.”

“Oh—you sneaked out there and hid out. Looks doable.”

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“It was.”

“He’s acting a bit mysterious,” I said to Frannie.

“Still loony from love I guess,” she stage whispered.

“And you look tired Gupta—you both look tired. But you are especially beautiful Mindy,” I said. She had on a tight brown sweater and pants with a few leaves and dirt stuck on them and a green scarf covering her red hair that would otherwise be flowing down to her waist. “Yes, tired but radiant.”

“Ah, you’re just sayin’ that,” she said demurely.

“No I’m not,” I answered adamantly.

“Well somebody did,” she chimed in looking around.

And then she removed her scarf.

“Something’s different,” I said.

“Mindy! Your hair! Ah, you look great in short hair.”

Francine went in to inspect. “I cut mine a couple of years ago. It’s so much more free that way. Looks like an artistic job. Hmm.”

“Gupta did it last night.”

“Could maybe use a little touch up here and there. I can do that.”

“Got scissors?”

“Yes I do by chance.”

“After the tasting.”

In we went. The girls looked at the wine list, Gupta sat in front of the stone fireplace, I scanned the brochures. This place has evidently gone to extremes to make the bestest wine they could. Robert Mondavi, the senior wine guru from where I live, helped them to get it going. He chose the site back in '75. It's organic or some of it is. Won a lot of prizes. Expensive too. The restaurant looked pricey. I got a brochure for Kelly who's a wine salesman and wondered if he sells Leeuwin or would like to know about it.

Tasting time. Frannie was careful not to drink too much. Mindy too. They take that seriously here and have a punishing .08 limit like in California. Gupta and I don't hold back and taste eight different wines—Sibling Shiraz, two

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Chardonnays, a Riesling, their Sauvignon Blanc Semillon, Cabernet Sauvignon, and then two more Chardonnays. The Chardonnays were especially delicious. Oh yes—we had one at the Indiana Tea House. Not the expensive one at sixty bucks a bottle. I bought the cheaper of them for Frannie.

Gupta asked if anyone still stomps on grapes to make wine and the woman behind the bar said for home stock, but not here. He said he'd like to and I told him to come visit and I'll introduce him to an old Italian I know who makes wine that way in Monterey County. Mindy and Frannie agree we should do that ourselves and started talking about how to plan for it, which I doubted would come to fruition. They got some more bottles we'd pick up after going downstairs to the gallery, which features leading Australian artists, especially paintings for the Leeuwin Artist Series, their premium wines.

We found a whole room for Hobart Brown's humorous and endearing sculpture—fascinating brass, copper, and steel creations. My favorite was the copper bus that's big enough to get, say... cats in. The lady there said all of Brown's recent sales were in Australia, not Humboldt County where he lives. He's from Ferndale way up north but with the same telephone area code I have. Ferndale's where they have the kinetic race. It's by the Lost Coast just south of Oregon. Big pot growing area.

Mindy and Frannie with scissors in hand took a walk into the vineyards on a sanctioned path as opposed to the wilderness where the amorous couple spent the prior night. Gupta and I walked another way. He whispered furtively that they'd taken mushrooms the day before. His first time.

"I friggin' loved the trip we had. It friggin' blew my mind. Actually, *she* friggin' blew my mind."

"What friggin' happened?"

"Mindy had never had it before either. She has a friend who grows them. They were *Psilocybe cubensis*, reputed to be the best. We went through a tour, looked around, sneaked off to the woods beyond the vineyard by the main

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house, and spread out a blanket over the ground that was slightly wet. It had rained the day before. We ate the mushrooms—three and a half grams each, a big dose—and waited. After about an hour she was saying it didn't affect her and she was joking she's going to demand her money back. She got quiet and stared for a while then, talking slower and looking around her, she whispered, "The colors, the colors."

Gupta gazed into the distance. He said she kept saying, "The colors," and he repeated "the colors" in agreement.

"They're so bright," she said.

"Yeah," he agreed.

Then it came over them strongly, a feeling of wholeness and euphoria welling up. They looked around and reached around, crawled around, inspected the leaves, the dirt, the trunk of a tree.

"It was a fantastic experience," he said, "It was important. It opened up an astonishing dimension. But when I tell it, it sounds so silly. I mean—actual tree hugging."

"Yeah—most media would use your description as an excuse for ridiculing you, supporting the law that throws you in jail, takes your home from you, takes your children away."

"I don't have any children."

"See. I told you."

"Yeah, that shouldn't be illegal. Horrors. No. Making that illegal is the crime."

"They don't go arresting people who get crazy drunk or roll on the floor in churches. It's a private thing that should not be denied you. But some people love to persecute others for any reason they can dream up. That's the evil drug we must kick—persecution addiction."

"Okay, I've got your message. You're right but your time's up," he said, and went on describing their trip.

They hung out in the same spot for the heavy part of the experience, the first couple of hours. After being so fascinated with their surroundings they discovered each other and realized the other was a most magnificent being. They made love and Gupta said he could not possibly describe how

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serene and subtle it was. He said he felt as if they had bonded forever.

Then the next stage of their trip began. Mindy's spunk surfaced and she decided to run off naked. Gupta wasn't in as uninhibited a mood as she and had a keen desire that they not be discovered. He picked up their clothes and followed her as she ran down the hill into the vineyards. She saw a house and wanted to go in and visit. He begged her not to do that and said it was surely a house for staff at the estate and they wouldn't take well to being bothered by naked, euphoric trespassers. She soon forgot that and was babbling on about how she wanted to run all the way to the ocean and jump in and swim to Perth.

Mindy ran away then on the damp path back into the woods—a relief to Gupta. She went ahead of him as he walked on alone for a while catching his breath. Then surprise! Mindy jumped back around a corner, her naked skin covered in slimy, glistening clay head to toe. She crouched with hands outstretched and tongue fully extended roaring threateningly like a wild cat about to attack, her eyes shining out fiercely from surrounding dark clay. He almost fainted at first, then fell down laughing in the wet grass. She jumped him, growled, and chewed on his hip. He rolled over, picked her up, half-carried her to a little hillock where they sat. They remained there for a couple of hours quietly glued to the scenery till the sun went down. It was still winter and they were naked and content, grooving in 50 degree Fahrenheit air.

When it was dark Gupta and Mindy returned to the place where they'd left their back packs. They wiped themselves with towels, put on their clothes, and sat on their blanket. He opened up their sleeping bags and lay them out on a tarp. Mindy was running her hands through her long red hair and said she wanted to cut it. He said that would be a shame.

She said, "I want to cut my hair now!" Gupta suggested tomorrow and she said fiercely, "Find some scissors and

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cut it now or I'll burn it off!" She looked around. "Where's my lighter?"

"Okay, okay, okay. Give me a minute. Unless you brought scissors we don't have them."

"I'll burn it off then," she repeated looking for the lighter.

"Stop. Stop. Let's go down and we'll find some scissors."

Gupta went to the winery looking for scissors but they were closed. A watchman came out and said there weren't any scissors around. He kept an eye on them as they got into her car and drove off. A convenience store didn't have scissors either. They ended up in a pub drinking with Mindy announcing to everyone there how terrific the mushrooms were. She's so charming the clientele ignored the legal aspect, appreciated the entertainment, bought them drinks, and there was prattle and laughter. Gupta finally got some scissors from the bartender and cut Mindy's hair with a dozen fellow customers cheering. It was one of those places with all the local and foreign currency on the ceiling. The bartender stood on a stool, which Gupta held steady, and tacked her long red locks up with the dollars, franks, dinars, and pounds. Gupta and Mindy played pool and drank and back and forthed it with the gang till closing time and then the bartender kept a few of them in and they drank and talked more. The adventurous couple got back to their sleeping bags at about four in the morning and slept till ten.

The four of us sat on a hill overlooking the grape-less vineyard. Gupta was strumming Mindy's guitar, Mindy's very nice guitar. "What is it?" I asked, looking it over respectfully.

"It's an Ellis," she said. "Made in Perth."

"What can you do with it?" I said.

"How about this?" Gupta said and sang ...

*Once upon a place
I first saw your lovely face*

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*Oh yes we met by what they call as chance
And I sighed, sweet lady, may I have this dance*

*And we danced and danced and
Danced and danced and danced
And we danced and danced and
Danced and danced and danced
With your dancing eyes and smile and feet and hands
We danced and danced and danced and danced
And danced and danced and
Danced and danced and danced.*

*Love like this of what we're made
Wouldn't take no stock in trade
So come to me and join our hands
Kindly lady, may I have this dance*

*And we'll dance and dance and
Dance and dance and dance
And we'll dance and dance and
Dance and dance and dance
With your dancing hips and breasts and dress and glance
We'll dance and dance and dance and dance
And dance and dance and
Dance and dance and dance.*

*Once upon a place
I first saw your lovely face
Oh yes we met by what they call as chance
And I sighed, sweet lady, may I have this dance*

He sang "and we danced and danced" over and over and wailed with the chords making his voice sound like a howling violin.

On the way back to Dunsborough Frannie and I talked about Gupta and Mindy's mushroom trip.

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“They’re following the way of Dionysus,” I said.

“The god of wine.”

“And religious ecstasy.”

“And what are we following?”

“A bit more of Apollo in the mix—light and music and order.”

“I’d never think of myself as that—or you.”

“Human history can be seen as a struggle between Dionysus and Apollo. Greek theater was dominated by this theme. There’s been tons written on it. Nietzsche made a big deal out of it.”

“It’s the balance that’s important isn’t it?”

“Sure. But you got to be left to have your times of imbalance like our buddies are going through.”

“It’s all imbalance, don’t you think?” she said and looked at me with a slight smile.

The next morning there were goodbyes and hugging with Frannie’s family. I bid farewell to the sisters and brothers, calling each by name. I shook James and Jack’s hands and told them how great it had been to meet the family and how much I appreciated Francine. Jack said with touching sincerity, “We are so proud of her.” I paused for a moment with Francine’s mother. She told me she had an old friend in India, a Catholic priest, and, handing me a piece of paper with his name and address, suggested if I get his way maybe I could look him up and say hi for her. I said sure and kissed her hand. We looked at each other briefly but long enough to connect. Olivia drove Francine and me back to the rail platform. Francine was quiet on the train. Della would pick us up at the platform where she dropped us off. I gazed out the window at Australian grasslands, Australian trees, Australian sky, Australian heart and hurt.