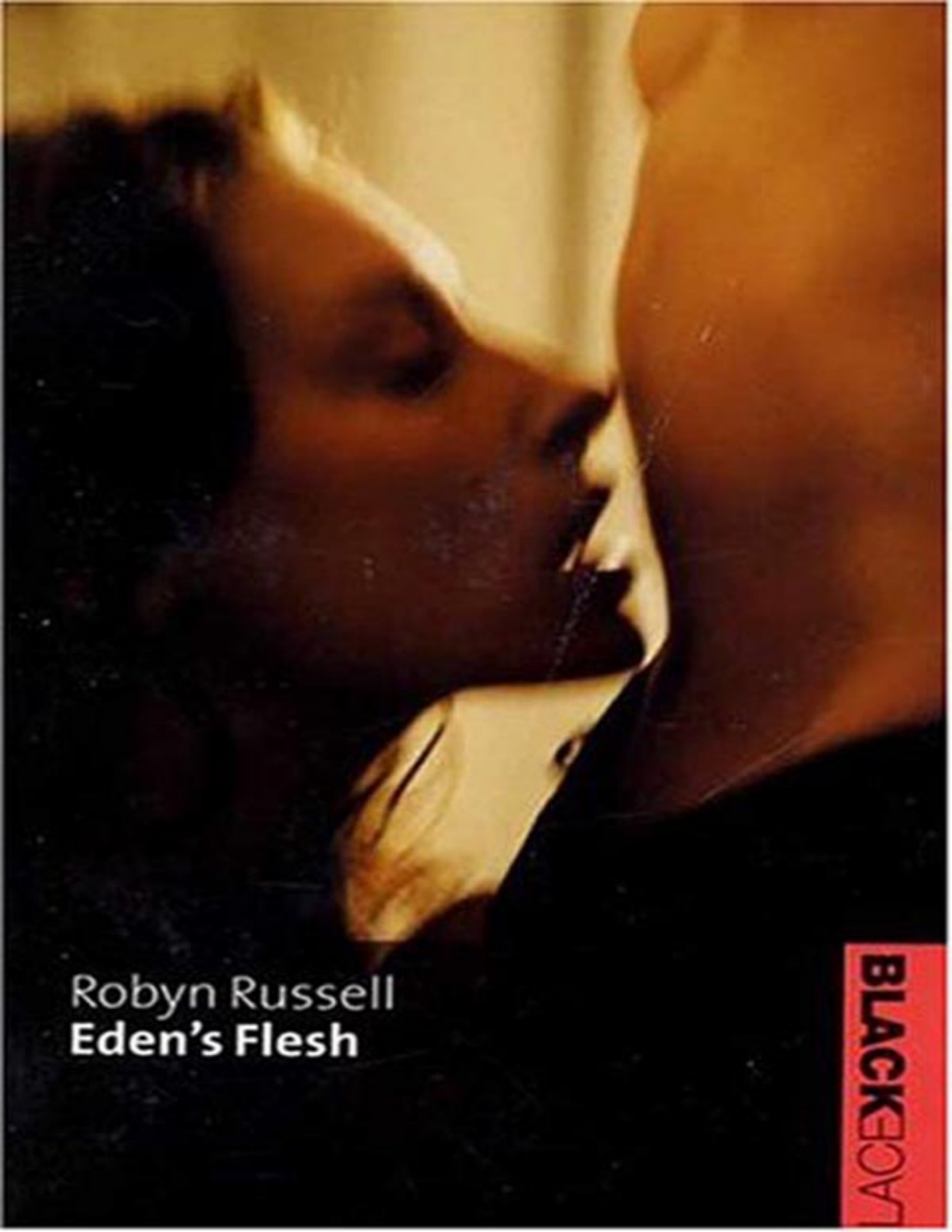




Robyn Russell
Eden's Flesh

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Eden's Flesh

Robyn Russell

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Epilogue

to all the bears

Chapter One

Hot Photographs

During a slow afternoon, Eden Sinclair, Director of the exclusive Galerie Raton in Atlanta's prestigious Midtown district, sat alone in her office. A shaft of warm summer sun shone through the skylight above her head, falling across her shoulders and chestnut hair, to lie shimmering upon the smooth maple surface of her desk. Bouncing off the highlights of a group of black-and-white photographs arranged before the young woman, the ray of afternoon light spilled off the desk and spread, diffusing in intensity, across the Persian carpet on her office floor.

The sun was like Zeus' famed 'golden shower' in Greek mythology, Eden Sinclair thought idly, as she looked up from her intense study of the images and watched the sunlight dance its dappled pattern at her feet. She considered the erotic implications of the god, Zeus, sprinkling his 'golden shower' of seed over the unknowing Danaë, impregnating the girl with his immortal come so that she gave birth to the hero Perseus.

Eden, who wore her thick and shiny, chestnut-brown hair close against her head, emphasising the oval shape of her face, sighed impatiently at the thought of a sexy ejaculation. She uncrossed her legs, kicked off her high-heeled sandals and stood up.

Tall and graceful, Eden stretched and smoothed down the hips of the snug skirt hugging her figure. Her brilliantly coloured linen suit was a deep blue that matched her big dark eyes. Eden picked up a handful of photos and walked to the low teak balustrade that formed the edge of the mezzanine eyrie that was her office.

From this perch above the main floor of Galerie Raton, Eden could survey most of the tall exhibition spaces below, normally inhabited by the highly priced art so admired by the gallery's clients. But this afternoon, the walls and the floor were empty; the space silent. Her gaze lingered on the stark white walls and polished maple floors, and on the fine lines of the spiral stair that curled upward to bring visitors to her sanctum. Except there was no visitor. No art and no artist, when there should have been both.

Perusing once again the large format photographs fanned out in her hand, Eden admired the anatomical details of the cast bronze male and female figures. In reality, the nude sculptures were maquettes, though they looked monumental in scale, so life-like were their details. Some of the polished beauties stood or reclined alone, while others, in couples or larger groups, touched or bonded in a variety of poses. Some of the lovingly modelled, smooth metal figures were clearly engaged in sexual activities, while others were more contemplative.

Every member of this sculptural cast radiated sensual power just from the black and white 8×10 inch reproductions, and Eden was impatient to see them in their bronze 'flesh', filling the hollow receptacle of the gallery with their erotic energy. But the floor space in the room below was still empty. For at least the tenth time since lunch, Eden wondered impatiently, where were those sculptures?

Having cleared out the gallery in readiness to hang the new group show that would launch the summer's exhibition season, Eden had yesterday dispatched one of the art gallery's delivery vans with a crew to pick up the new work from Savannah, only four and a half hours away on the Georgia sea coast. And the sculptures' creator, Michael MacKenzie, a Scottish artist new to Atlanta and to Galerie Raton, was supposed to have called her today to set up a meeting.

Eden needed to see these new bronzes before selecting several complementary works by the gallery's other artists. Her boss, Alexander Raton, had decreed just two days ago that MacKenzie's sculptures would be the centrepieces of this imminent show.

From the photographs in her hand, Eden recognised that this new work of MacKenzie was certainly good, but having to include it this late had completely messed up her original plans, forcing her to rethink the whole exhibition. The opening reception was now only nine days away, and Eden was still undecided how to curate the show. At the last minute, she had been forced to cancel the original announcements at the printers, and instead had hurriedly sent out invitations to gallery clients in the form of a generic postcard, with no illustration and few details. This was not at all the way she liked to do business! Eden paced the floor in annoyance, growing tense with worry. She started to call the gallery's receptionist, Angela St John, at her desk below, but paused as a movement caught her eye.

Looking down towards the foyer of the gallery, Eden saw that honey-blond Angela was otherwise engaged. The focus of the young gallery assistant's excitement was not, however, the imminent arrival of the new statues, but instead a local artist, Winston Fineman, who doubled as the

part-time critic for the *Atlanta Democrat*. As Eden watched from above, the tall angular Fineman walked through the gallery foyer and approached Angela's desk. The receptionist was leaning against the desktop, one cheek of her trim bottom firmly wedged on one corner, her skirt hiked up high on her thighs, and today she wore heels that almost qualified as stilettos!

As they talked and laughed, the tall, urbane and dark-haired Fineman loomed over Angela's shoulder from behind as she proffered a sketchbook for his attention. But from where Eden was standing, undetected above, she saw that the man's interest was not on the artwork Angela held but rather on the trim receptionist's pert breasts which he deliberately and languidly absorbed as he looked down her low-cut blouse.

* * *

Only recently, Eden had discovered that Angela, like many workers in the art business, nurtured ideas of her own career as an artist. A week or so ago Angela had brought in her sketchbook for Fineman, a frequent visitor to Galerie Raton, to critique, and she had been hanging around him at every opportunity since.

At Angela's suggestion, Eden had leafed through Angela's sketches and, to her surprise, had been quite impressed. Most of the figurative drawings from life or from copies of classical statues were nudes, and Angela's technique for rendering the muscles and bone structure of the human body was very accomplished for a young artist. Eden had recognised several classical poses from her own art education, when she herself had nurtured ambitions of becoming a practising artist.

She had been pretty good, too, thought Eden, allowing herself a smile of remembrance, although it had been several years since she had painted seriously. Like many artists setting out on their careers, Eden had taken a series of part-time jobs in the art business to make ends meet. Eventually, she had forged a career in gallery management, handling other people's art instead of making her own. Eden continued to use her trained painter's eye to assess talent, and her commercial judgment had improved over the years to match her critical opinion.

Skimming through the pages of Angela's work, it was obvious to Eden which drawings had been made from real-life models and which were from plaster statues. About half of the pencil sketches vibrated with a special energy which the others lacked, despite their crisp technique. These better drawings were all of the same young man, and several of them depicted him in states of evident sexual arousal. One sketch in particular had made Eden pause in her brisk perusal and stare with critical approval and a tingling enjoyment: the young man, reclining on a covered couch, was fondling his very erect penis with obvious pleasure, gazing straight at the viewer, tense, as he stroked the long shaft of his member with one hand and cradled his balls in the other, but still with a lazy half smile on his lips.

Angela's drawing technique had captured both the physical details of her model's anatomy, and a sense of sexual energy barely held in check, as if a great burst of semen was about to erupt from the young man's cock. This sketch was looser than the others, a quick study with brisk and confident pencil strokes. Eden had imagined Angela working fast and furious to capture the moment before she gave in, threw her pencil and sketchbook aside, and knelt in front of her lover (for surely this was he!) and took that delicious-looking flesh in her mouth, sucking her lover's

cream, tasting his essence and his lust. Or perhaps Angela had just pulled off her clothes and impaled herself on that impressive member, riding her man for the last few moments before he inevitably came with a flood inside her!

But after only a few more drawings, the young man had disappeared from Angela's pages, to be replaced by more conscientious but dull studies of standard statues. Eden had felt a sense of disappointment, both as a critic, sensing that something had been lost from the work; and as a woman, for the only reasonable interpretation seemed to be that Angela's affair with the handsome young man had come to an untimely end.

* * *

Bringing her sketchbook to Galerie Raton had been only a prelude for bigger things. Today, Angela had carried in an actual painting for Winston Fineman to see. Eden observed it now, propped against the reception desk below her. It featured the same young man who appeared so often and so aroused in the pages of Angela's sketchbook, although in the larger oil painting the man's sexual prowess was held in check. Although naked, his pose was more demure, his penis politely flaccid and his hands occupied with a book as he lay on the same couch, his attention apparently focused on his reading.

As she watched them from above, Eden saw Fineman lead Angela by the arm around to her painting, gesturing between it and the sketchbook's open pages.

'This captures the spirit of some of your best sketches,' Eden heard Fineman say. 'It's obvious you do your best work from life rather than classical copies. You clearly respond to

your subject in an immediate and sensual way, capturing all that sexual energy, whether he's turned on or not.'

Not bad, mused Eden, poised unseen on her balcony above the pair, and thinking that Fineman's comments, while ostensibly about Angela's art, were a pretty good opening for a more personal agenda. She nearly laughed outright when her intuition was borne out by Fineman's next little speech.

'It is easy for me to critique your work from an academic perspective, and from my experience as a painter myself, Angela,' he began. 'I could remark on your quality of line, on your brushstroke and handling of paint. I can see some problems of composition, of difficult negative space on the canvas. But your colour mixing is good; it's very clear that you don't just use colours straight from the tube.'

Angela was absorbed, a rapt expression on her face.

Fineman smiled and continued. 'But I could really be of more help to you if I could observe you at work, visit you in your studio, perhaps. It's evident that there's a strong sensual component in your painting that I could analyse much better by being there with you and watching you work. If you're going for coffee soon, we can talk more about it then.'

Men are so transparent, reflected Eden, as she observed Fineman's none-too-subtle moves on Angela. But she supposed Angela, too, had some ulterior motives of a sexual nature. Now that Eden paid attention, it was evident that Angela had discarded her bra after returning from lunch, and the cotton fabric of her blouse allowed a clear outline of perky nipples and the contours of high rounded breasts.

Eden understood her assistant's intentions as she watched Angela turn to face Fineman, flip her long, honey-blond hair over her shoulders and laugh prettily. Standing on tiptoe to brush his lips with hers, Angela whispered something in Fineman's ear that Eden did not catch. As they turned to go, the art critic's hand delicately cradled Angela's right breast, brushing her inviting nipple with a thumb. Then they were gone, taking the painting with them.

* * *

The couple's departure deepened Eden's sense of solitude in the empty spaces of the gallery. A glance from the single window of her office revealed the soulless cacophony of glass and polished stone façades that comprised Atlanta's business and cultural Midtown district. The cold reflective surfaces of the new edifices stole the beauty of the few historic structures that remained in the cityscape, hugging the refracted images of the old buildings to their shiny new walls.

Galerie Raton was housed in one such older property, sharing its spaces with some attorneys and accountants on the lower floors. It was an idiosyncratic building, originally a town mini-mansion for a wealthy industrialist. Now it sat wedged between skyscrapers that tried desperately to look like 1930s art deco, resembling, Eden thought, second-rate rejects from Gotham City in a Batman movie.

Although dwarfed by its neighbours, the building which the gallery inhabited was large on a domestic scale, having five storeys rising straight up from the pavement. The top three floors sat above a two-storey plinth of local granite, which disappeared into the steep slope of the site as it rose towards the rear. The attorneys and accountants occupied the floors in the stone base, while the gallery filled the

upper three spaces, which had been extensively remodelled to provide tall, light and airy volumes, ideal for the display of fine art.

But tired now of these empty rooms below her, Eden strode across to her single, sloping skylight. This afforded her a southerly view towards downtown where, framed between adjacent towers, Eden could see the larger multitude of skyscrapers that marked Atlanta's commercial heart, two miles away. The teeming activity implied by all these gleaming commercial hives, each with their thousands of workers, contrasted starkly with her own seclusion.

Irritated by her introspection, Eden snatched a plump cushion from her chaise longue and tossed it on the floor. She gathered up all the remaining photographs from her desk, and rearranged them around her as she knelt on the sun-flecked carpet. In the absence of the sculptures themselves, perhaps she should just run through potential exhibition strategies in her mind one more time.

But as she studied the sensual imagery before her, composed of bronze heads and hands, handsome torsos of athletic hips and muscular thighs, buttocks, breasts and genitalia, Eden's thoughts drifted. The heat of the summer afternoon, with its sun-laden silence broken only by the gentle whisper of the air-conditioning, deflected her intentions. She found herself pondering not the logic of sculptural selection for the space below, but rather the erotic nature of the statues themselves, which seemed to celebrate physical intimacy and the tenderness of sex.

Most of the MacKenzie sculptures were neoclassically inspired by masterpieces such as Giorgione's famous painting, the nude *Sleeping Venus*, an opulent odalisque, whose left hand gently played with her pubic hair as her

fingertips seemed to explore the very opening of her vulva. As Eden examined the sculptor's reinterpretation of this elegant lady daintily fondling herself, she found her own hand wandering between her thighs, raising the hem of her skirt and stroking her own pubic mound through the thin silk of her panties. Sinking back into the cushion, she stroked the flesh of her inner thigh as she gazed next at a pair of lovers whose mingled limbs recalled the sensual foreplay captured by Jacques-Louis David in his canvas *Venus Disrobing Mars*.

In MacKenzie's sculpture, a nude woman undressed her lover as he lay back, unresisting to her ministrations. The woman's nipples were erect and a bulge was rising from the male figure's groin, still partially covered by clothing. As if in sympathy, Eden felt her nipples stir beneath her blouse. But her admiration for the work transcended superficial eroticism. These sculptures were more than just clever elaborations of sensual paintings by old masters. Whereas the motions and passions of love-making were timeless, the figures in the sculptures seemed utterly contemporary.

A young lady lawyer from the high-rise office tower next door could have been the model for MacKenzie's rendition of Venus. His Mars could be an investment analyst from the Magnolia National Bank skyscraper down the street. Or, with their trim bodies, they could be instructors at Eden's local health club, a couple blocks over by the commuter train station.

Eden's attention returned to the solitary female figure who daintily fondled herself. Whether her small caresses were in preparation for her lover, or as a solo substitute for the attentions of an absent partner, was unclear, but Eden's sympathies lay with the latter interpretation; there was no man in her own life at present, and she wondered if

MacKenzie's Venus was also without a man to fondle and caress her.

Having spent more than a year without a man close to her, Eden allowed the erotic charge of these bronze images to lead her mind down an increasingly familiar path. She transferred the sensual daydreams of her reveries to her co-workers and gallery artists, while the figures in the photographs of the cast bronzes, mythical beings and goddesses, danced in her mind.

While Eden enjoyed these fantasies, they were ultimately unfulfilling. But they must remain fictitious, she reminded herself, for over the years she had developed an inflexible rule never to become romantically involved with her clients or her artists. She had seen too many instances where reputations had been unravelled because professional boundaries had been erased and integrity compromised. Having sex with her artists was definitely out of bounds, but fantasising about it didn't do any harm!

And though she didn't really like the man who was her boss, Eden couldn't help speculating about Alexander Raton's sexual attributes and appetites. His tall, slim grey-haired figure was always clothed in what appeared to be exactly the same fitted Italian suit. He must have dozens of identical outfits, mused Eden, to look so immaculate day after day. Even in the harsh heat and humidity of Atlanta's summers, he never seemed to sweat; he always smelled of lavender.

Conjuring up an erotic daydream, Eden pictured Alexander Raton as one of MacKenzie's neoclassical satyrs, naked to her gaze at last, his long fingers grazing her skin as he undressed her, his solemn countenance changed into a grimace of lust as he buried his face between her thighs,

his long tongue probing her swollen flesh, seeking her clitoris.

As Eden imagined being ravished by insatiable desire, she transformed Raton into the similarly tall and elegant figure of Winston Fineman, last seen playing with Angela's nipples. Eden formed an image of Fineman reclining naked on a large bed with Angela, who lay with her legs apart, the golden curls of her pubic hair matching her blonde tresses. Both lovers turned towards her, inviting her to join their revels; Fineman's hand moved from stroking Angela's clitoris to his own cock, as he raised its full length between his fingers in silent invitation.

And to one side of the lovers, Eden's imagination placed Justin and Paul, the gallery delivery men, now posing as a pair of attendant young cupids, their nude bodies rippling with muscles while both their cocks responded directly to Eden's gaze, rising straight out from their flat bellies and tight pubic curls.

In her mental picture, Justin and Paul walked towards Eden, deftly masturbating as they offered her the delicacy of their dicks, by now glistening with the first beads of pre-come. As Eden took first one and then the other of their cocks in her hands, she knelt and licked them with her tongue.

In her imagination, Eden now felt her own body the focus of attention, as Fineman and Angela stroked her buttocks and teased her clitoris with their tongues and hands. Her love bud pulsed with pleasure as clever fingers found their way to her very core, one set reaching into her vagina, the other teasing her clitoris, goading her forward to the edge of climax.

Her fantasy dissolved in an instant to the jangling of the telephone.

Chapter Two

Coup de Foudre

Eden could just reach the ringing telephone, and as the instrument throbbed, one ring, two, she sat with parted legs, with one hand inside her panties, where she curled a finger around her clitoris.

As she rose to her knees, Eden withdrew her hand from its arousing activity and picked up the telephone. Her momentary sense of unreality was compounded by Angela's voice on the other end talking about sex, as the receptionist said, 'He thinks it's very sexy!'

Eden slowly realised that Angela was talking about Fineman's opinion of MacKenzie's work, and not giving a description of her own amorous adventures with the art critic. As she listened to Angela's excited tone impart other, more important news as well, Eden came back to reality.

Angela explained, 'Eden, the guys called from a quick stop. Their cellular phone needs recharging, or something, so they couldn't call earlier. Traffic delays on Interstate 16 held them up, but they've just passed the Beltway, and the sculptures should be at the gallery soon.' Pausing, she added, 'Oh, and Winston will be coming up to your office to get some quotes for his article. He's going to review the show.'

After she had put the phone back in the cradle, Eden swiftly gathered the sensual images of the bronze sculptures in her hand, stood up, smoothed down her skirt, and put the cushion back on the chaise. Stooping to retrieve the jacket she had discarded in her lusty fantasies, she tossed the brilliant blue garment across the back of the couch. Her simple lime silk blouse gave her a less formal appearance, and set off the pleasant tones of her lightly tanned skin. As she sat down on the buttery smooth leather of the chaise, her skirt rose high on her thighs.

Glancing down towards the gallery's main floor, Eden saw Winston Fineman staring up at her, and she felt a strong erotic pull in her groin as his eyes raked over her body. Instinctively, she started to adjust her short skirt lower as he slowly mounted the steps to her mezzanine office. But as the tall, dark man ascended, his eyes hovering around her legs and hips, Eden left her skirt where it was and subtly rotated her body so that the hem rode even higher, showing off her trim thighs further. Young Angela may have a few years on her, decided Eden, but she could still show off her legs if she felt like it.

And, she realised, she did feel like it.

Seconds later, as Fineman stood beside her, his scent, or maybe his and Angela's combined, came to her nostrils. As his eyes explored her body, Eden crossed her legs to show Fineman even more of her thigh, barely concealing her pubic mound beneath her shortened skirt. Eden again felt an erotic impulse as Fineman stared down at her. She felt like squirming on the chaise, imagined opening her legs and masturbating in front of him. But although she was hot with a wild sexual drive, Eden projected a businesslike countenance towards Fineman, rather at odds with her pose on the couch.

The critic's voice faltered as he dragged his eyes away from Eden's provocative display and asked, 'S-s-so just who is this new artist Angela keeps telling me about? His work certainly looks very hot in reproductions.'

Eden stalled, finding it enjoyable to turn on this man. She stood up and invited him to sit on the couch while she herself returned to her desk, nestled deeply into her office under its sloping ceiling. Aware of his hooded, black-lashed eyes following her, she consciously swayed her hips provocatively as she moved away from him, and coiled herself sensuously into her stylishly ergonomic chair. The shafts of sun had moved on, leaving her work area in deeper shadow.

'I haven't met him yet myself,' Eden admitted.

Fineman's eyebrows arched in surprise. The Eden Sinclair he knew from his visits to the gallery was competent, efficient and always in charge. He knew that Alexander Raton normally left the day-to-day running of the gallery in the hands of his director, ever since she had assumed the post nearly a year ago. Fineman knew that Eden also influenced most of the artistic policy, with Raton only turning up at just the right moment to seal a sale with the sort of unctuous charm that fed the appetites of Atlanta's bourgeoisie.

'So, how is it that this exciting new artist is unknown to the gallery's director?' Fineman asked, somewhat coyly, noticing that she was radiating sexual energy and heat in waves that seemed to raise the room's temperature by several degrees. He glanced at her curiously but Eden merely shrugged, deflecting his enquiry. This was the same question that had been bothering her. Getting no response, save Eden's unusually smouldering attitude, Fineman turned

his attention to a folder of slides on the glass-topped coffee table in front of him.

From her side of the room, Eden tried to concentrate her thoughts on the new artist's work, but with half her mind she continued to see Fineman as the subject of her recent erotic fantasies. She found him vaguely attractive, even though he was so shameless in his pursuit of Angela -or perhaps because of it; he was so obviously horny. She wondered how he and Angela would make love; how their bodies would meld together in the heat of their lust. Fineman himself could be Peleus, in naked pursuit of his lover Thetis, the subject of one of the new sculptures laid out in the photographs before her. All the male bronzes had finely modelled genitals, with most of the male members in states of mild or extended arousal. Peleus' proud manhood was no exception, and Eden grazed Fineman's crotch with her eyes, imagining the size and shape of his penis, and the weight of it in her hand, feeling as she did so slightly envious of Thetis, or Angela, as the case may be.

The object of her erotic fantasy was silent. Sitting across from her on the chaise, he flipped through the magazines and artists' slide albums on the glass-topped coffee table. Over there, Fineman seemed miles away, too far to know that Eden was surreptitiously fingering herself beneath her desk, affecting nonchalance as she contemplated the photographs of the sensual bronzes. Slouching slightly in her rotating chair, she spread her legs and reached her hand between her thighs, and asked, 'Did you want to ask me some questions about the art?'

'Yes,' he responded, 'I want to get some quotes for my article on your new group show. The first show you did after arriving at the gallery set the artistic tone and direction for the year. What do you plan this year, and how does the

work of this new guy, MacKenzie, fit into it? For example, do you think these sculptures are truly sensual or just pornographic? And how do you think they'll be accepted by Atlanta art patrons?' He had taken out a small pad of paper and was marking off points with the tip of his pencil.

Good questions, mused Eden, who didn't answer at first, appearing to weigh the matters carefully. Behind her desk, she secretly slid her forefinger across her thin panties, and caressed the inside of one thigh. Seconds of silence ticked by as she pulled aside her panties and masturbated softly, slowly circling her clitoris until she felt the tiny nub stand up rigidly.

He was staring at her but said nothing.

Reddening slightly at her own arousal, Eden finally replied, 'I think there's no doubt that these works demonstrate very clearly the difference between truly erotic art and simple pictures of fucking. They're in a different class than, say, Jeff Koons' explicitly sexual sculptures from the 1990s.' She looked up at him and saw that he was shocked by her blunt language. 'From what I can tell,' Eden continued, 'MacKenzie's works capture erotic emotion and the details of sexuality as well as anyone since Rodin.'

Fineman stood up, his sudden movement putting Eden's sexual wanderings on hold. She slipped her hand out from between her thighs and sat up, alert to Fineman's approach and to noises below in the gallery.

At that moment, Angela came halfway up the stairs, to say, 'Eden, the delivery van is here!'

Almost disappointed, Eden pressed her knees together, stood up and straightened her attire while Fineman's attention focused on the movement below them. Perhaps

she would have been daring enough to coax Fineman's long hands under her skirt, inviting him to repeat what he was probably doing earlier with Angela. As Fineman and Angela descended the stairs, Eden saw him caress the receptionist's hips and lean buttocks, his fingers hesitating just long enough to press between the cheeks of her bottom, lingering in the shadow of the deep cleft outlined by her tight skirt. Eden shivered.

Already aroused from Fineman's lusty stares, her own masturbation, and the increasingly sexual displays of the budding couple below, Eden was hot, moist and frustrated, her labia throbbing with the desire to be touched. With one finger, she felt her rigid clitoris through the material of her skirt. Before descending to check on the arrival of the sculptures, she wanted to masturbate to a satisfying climax, but as she looked down from the balcony office, toward the main gallery floor, Justin and Paul appeared, manoeuvring in the first of the bronzes.

As she watched the two young delivery men strutting their stuff below her, Eden felt herself gather even more heat; unconsciously she unfastened the top two buttons of her silken blouse. Justin was good-looking in a bad boy sort of way and Eden thought of him as a sexy jungle cat, like a jaguar. Paul was stockier, but with good muscle tone and posture. She enjoyed watching them move as they deftly positioned a bronze sculpture. Justin was newly decorated with one small gold earring, Eden noticed, and was also now sporting what looked like some form of tattoo that peeked above the waistband of his Levis.

Eden feasted her eyes on them for several minutes, for each boy was sexy, well muscled and tanned, naked from the waist up, and with a macho appeal in his work-hardened body that really turned her on. Closing her eyes for a few

seconds, Eden imagined lying between the two of them, nuzzling her lips in their hair and along the line of their necks and shoulders.

In her mind, their sun-tanned bodies contrasted with her lighter flesh as, with bronzed hands and fingers, they fondled her breasts and teased her vagina. She imagined her pale forearms between their legs, her hands reaching to massage their hard cocks and fondle their balls. For one luscious moment, Eden caught in her mind's eye the contrast of white semen spurting over brown bodies as she masturbated one of them to his climax. Suddenly, she wondered if they were tanned all over.

Still enshrined behind the balustrade of her eyrie, Eden stared frankly down from her office perch as Justin and Paul moved another wrapped bronze sculpture slowly across the foyer of the gallery. Lustfully, Eden devoured the sight of the young men's muscles playing in rippling rhythm across their torsos. Justin's long brown hair was gathered in a clip at the nape of his neck, that nape she had fantasised about licking and kissing just moments before.

But Eden noticed that another man, too, had come in from the loading dock - a tall, ruggedly handsome man with vivid auburn hair. Eden speculated that perhaps he was a specially hired helper, for he was dressed in working jeans and tool belt with a Charlotte Hornets' T-shirt stretched across his chest, and hefting another smaller sculpture. That bronze looked familiar!

As the sexy stranger carried the smaller bronze out of sight, Eden retrieved the sheaf of photographs from her desk top, and selected one. There it was!

In this maquette, a three-dimensional version of an image from the wall paintings at Pompeii, a nude Dionysus lay across the naked breasts of his beloved Ariadne. Eden could just see the contours of the god's penis as he positioned himself between his lover's open thighs, his hand reaching between her legs to guide his rampant rod into her vagina.

Moving from sensual foreplay to rampant coupling, the twentieth century counterparts in MacKenzie's *Dionysus and Ariadne* had taken lessons from their classical progenitors, making a frankly explicit erotic piece of sculpture. Eden wondered again how the Atlanta public would respond to this. The city was very contemporary in matters of style and commerce, but its attitude towards the arts was still parochial. Eden knew this well, having already battled fiercely against political conservatives and religious fundamentalists in the twelve months she had lived in the city. Both groups liked nothing better than to force their narrow-mindedness upon others, and artists were most often the targets of their invective. In particular, mulled Eden, anything to do with sex brought these morons crawling out of the woodwork!

At that moment, Alexander Raton himself whisked up the stairs, and Eden jerked back to the present as she once again admired the figure her employer cut in his habitual grey suit. As always, its colour was an uncanny match for the shimmer of his hair. Eden wondered if his mane of silver hair would be mirrored by furry grey curls around his dick. Pale blue eyes blinked at her from behind thick eye glasses.

Unaware of his employee's sexual speculation concerning his genitals, Raton smiled as he handed Eden a second sheaf of photographs. These seemed to be detail shots of the work arriving downstairs, but Eden only gave

them the briefest of glances. Although she usually paid close attention to her boss, this time Eden hardly heard what Raton was saying. Distracted, she peered around his tall figure as Justin and Paul slid the next sculpture carefully on to its pedestal; again, the third man assisting them garnered Eden's attention, but Raton was blocking her view. When Raton stopped chattering for a few seconds, she detected a Scottish accent below. Could this be the mysterious MacKenzie, whose work had spawned so many erotic fantasies for her this afternoon?

Raton floated back down the stairs and greeted the man who left Justin and Paul to their task and followed Raton into the conference room. Moments later Eden's telephone rang. It was Raton, asking her please to hurry up: they were waiting for her!

Scolding herself for not paying closer attention to the business at hand Eden made the move downstairs, tucking her lime green top into her blue skirt, pulling on her high-heeled sandals, slipping back into her blue jacket and readjusting her short skirt. She scooped up the collection of photographs and smoothed her hair into place as she circled down to the exhibition floor.

Still feeling sexually charged by her afternoon fantasies about the men in her vicinity, she moved though the gallery with a provocative gait to her walk, emphasised by the heels she wore. Prancing by in her sandals, Eden stopped to allow space for Justin and Paul to navigate another precious object. As they worked this next sculpture past her and into the corner of the room, Eden's eyes frankly appraised their muscular forms.

'Whoa,' said Justin, 'Pretty lady, you're going to make us drop this, you looking like that.' He and Paul, having placed

the somewhat larger, wrapped object upon a sturdy pedestal, paused in their movements and stared in open admiration at Eden, ranging their eyes over her figure, from her face and hair, all the way down to her toes. Paul took a slug from the Evian water bottle he wore on his belt, and Eden felt Justin's eyes lingering on her breasts, the outlines of which were visible through the unbuttoned top section of her blouse.

She teased him in her newly polished French, which she had recently studied for her last visit to Parisian galleries, *'Aimez-vous cetttes sculptures, Justin? Les trouvezvous excitant?'*

The young man looked at her blankly for a few seconds, but slowly retorted, 'I don't know much about art, honey, but I reckon I could copy a few of them moves with you on that big old table...'

Paul guffawed softly but did not speak.

Although it was comical to think of Justin and Paul abandoning the sculpture to make love with her on the table in the conference room, Eden couldn't help picturing a reclining scene for all three: herself mounting both these men on that large mahogany table, her juices and their semen joining in rivulets across its polished surface. The intensity of the vision brought a bright flush to her cheeks, and with a half-embarrassed smile she turned away.

Eden didn't look back as she turned the knob of the heavy oak door. As the workmen watched her figure disappear into the room, Justin nodded to his friend, touching the evident bulge at his own crotch with a knowing wink, but Paul hissed in a low voice, 'You'd be wasting your time. I hear our Eden prefers girls to play with!'

‘No way! She’s too much a woman!’ retorted Justin, ‘What I heard was she wasn’t getting any!’

Paul said, ‘She’s got to be getting it somewhere; maybe she really is a lesbian...’

‘Oh, yeah? Maybe we can convert her to dickdom!’ suggested Justin, demonstrating by grabbing the crotch of his jeans and rubbing the outline of his erection.

‘You and me, both!’ said Paul, who pretended to unzip his jeans. The men sniggered.

Having slipped inside the darkened chamber, Eden was unaware of this locker room repartée. As her eyes gradually adjusted to the room’s more subdued light, she saw two men loading twin slide carousels; one figure stood to offer her a chair. As he moved into the light Eden recognised him as the red-headed stranger who must be Michael MacKenzie. The small bronze sculpture that recalled Ariadne and her lover rested in the middle of the polished table like a centrepiece.

‘How gorgeous!’ Eden exclaimed spontaneously, as she laid her eyes on the shining, curving metal forms of the reclining figures. It *was* gorgeous. But the sculpture wasn’t at the crux of Eden’s interest. Rather, what really grabbed her attention was the physical presence of the tall, husky man with the shock of thick, curly red hair.

Eden caught her breath when their eyes met, and felt herself colouring more deeply. To her alarm, she simultaneously dropped the sheaf of photographs and blurted out ‘You’re the Scotsman!’

MacKenzie smiled his assent, drawing nearer. Alexander Raton began to introduce them, but got no further than,