

EXOTICA: SEVEN DAYS OF KAMA SUTRA, NINE DAYS OF ARABIAN NIGHTS

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Bantam

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Pulling the curtain aside, Lilli stepped through, onto the tiled mosaic floor. The sun was softer here, filtered by the silk drapes fluttering at the edges of the terrace. The sun shone through the silk, casting shadows in red and gold everywhere.

At first all she could see was his silhouette against the sun, the shifting colors of the silk playing over his skin. He was long and lean, resting on the raised edge of a pool of water, a tiered fountain making music from the center of the pool. He was shirtless, and she could make out the rounded curve of wide shoulders, strong, muscular arms.

She swallowed hard.

"I am Rajan."

A deep voice, edged with a soft, husky tone, and an accent that was English and exotic all at the same time. She took another step forward, and the glare of the sun moved into shadow, revealing him to her.

Long, dark hair curling to just below his shoulders framed a face that was all chiseled planes, softened by the lush curve of his mouth as he smiled at her. Teeth so white and perfect.

Dazzling. His eyes were dark, nearly black. Skin the color of dark honey, and so smooth. Touchable. She flexed her fingers.

He rose to his feet, every motion graceful, and towered over her five foot four frame. She felt small, delicate in his presence. He moved toward her, one hand outstretched. "You must be Lillian."

"Lilli, please." Why was her throat so dry? He was only a man.

But no, that was a lie. He was the most spectacularly beautiful man she had ever seen. Far too perfect for her. But her skin was alive, tingling, simply looking at him.

In a moment he was in front of her, that smile making her light-headed as her blood rushed through her veins. She had to look beyond him for a moment, to the view of the rugged, dusky gray mountains like paper cutouts against the backdrop of stark blue sky. She had to catch her breath.

Her breath went right out of her when he touched her hand. Like fire. Like electricity on her skin. Was it only her nerves that were making her react like this?

"Come and sit by the water with me. It's cool out here."

His fingers folded around hers and her skin went hot beneath his touch as she followed him across the terrace. She

couldn't speak, could barely think. She'd never been so stunned by the mere presence of another person in her life.

*Calm down.*

He led her to the edge of the marble pool. The water was blue, sparkling. She watched the play of it in the fountain in the center. Someone had placed handfuls of flower petals there, and they danced as the water moved.

Then his hand was on her chin, lifting her face so she was forced to look into those glittering black eyes.

"Don't look away, Lilli. I want to see you. And you need to see me, to know me. We're going to become very close during our time together. You musn't be afraid."

She blinked up at him. "I'm not. I'm just...you're a little larger than life."

He smiled at her, the corners of that lush mouth lifting a little. His mouth was too beautiful when he smiled. And she was going to touch it. To kiss him.

*God.*

Too good to contemplate, really. But she needed to calm herself, to let go of her fear, her tension, if she was going to enjoy this. And he was far too good not to enjoy. She pushed away those old doubts about him not finding her pretty enough,

sexy enough. This was for *her*. And he was a hired professional. What he thought shouldn't matter.

"You're very thoughtful, aren't you, Lilli? I'm not speaking of being considerate, although I have a feeling you're that, too. But your mind is working. I can feel it."

"Yes." Heat crept into her cheeks.

"I believe I may have the perfect cure for that."

He moved around behind her, slid his hands over her shoulders. He was so close she could feel the heat of him against her back. When he leaned in his breath was warm in her hair. His voice was low, soft. "Give yourself over to this, Lilli. To me. I will take care of your every need, I promise you. And if I don't anticipate something, all you have to do is ask. But I'll try not to make you ask. I'll do my best to read you, to know what it is you desire before you can put it into words."

A shiver ran through her, making goose flesh rise on her skin. Yet at the same time, in her mind was the thought that he said these same words to all of his clients.

He went on. "You must learn to relax. To let go all of those thoughts running through your mind, holding you back from the pleasure of the moment. I'll help you."

His hands slid down her bare arms. His palms warm, reassuring, and lighting tiny fires of need everywhere he touched that arrowed down, deep in her belly.

"Will you allow me to do this for you, Lilli?"

God, right now she wanted to allow him to do anything, this total stranger. This beautiful stranger. *Her* stranger.

Even as her pulse hammered with fear, the word came out on a whisper. "Yes."