Restoration
by Freida Theant

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Her dripping skin streams off the rinse water in silvery rivulets.

Deliciously naked she stands up from her Jacuzzi, splashing the almost-drained bathwater with her feet. For half an hour, Ingrid has been steeping in the fluid massages of the Jacuzzi's hydrotherapy. Reluctantly she rose from her steamy refuge; needing to dry off and get dressed.

When first she arrived home, she felt tense and edgy, as much from accumulated stress as fatigue. She had no appetite for anything in this state and correctly guessed that time in the Jacuzzi might get the restoration going.

Her dermis remains moist. Pliable, rosy-hued from the bathwater's heat and a little clingy to the touch, her skin awaits her decision: which conditioning step will she institute to restore essential oils and pliability leached out during the steamy soaking? Stepping cautiously onto the bathmat from the tub, she seizes her Turkish towel. Her blond pageboy hair is a clustered fibrous mat.

Bath time is really over, so she dries herself off; patiently at first, deliberately, and luxuriously in the towel that rivals a beach blanket for sheer area. Still pondering whether to restore lost moisture by rubbing in a skin cream, or make silky and dry that tacky surface with fragrant talc she invests her towel strokes with a new aggressive purpose, speeding up the frequency and rubbing with greater pressure.

The steam in the sealed-off bathroom atmosphere conserves, and even amplifies the rich aromas of her floral fragrances in her body bath soaps, shampoos and conditioners; the seductive, relentless lilac, the flagrantly cloying embrace of the rose and the ineffable sublimity of the wisteria, an aroma worthy of royal patronage.

Her vapor-laden inhales left her chest feeling cleansed and renewed, and invited her to inspire the steamy fragrances even more slowly and deeply, for greater lengths of time. She locates her favorite dusting powder, Lavender by Woods of Windsor and shakes out a smattering in her left palm. Dipping the pads of her fingers in the talc, she puts them to work tracing modest circles of all around her chest, applying the bath powder lovingly to give her skin the dusty covering it needs to reverse the stickiness and return it to baby-smooth. When she arrives at her breasts, she applies extra powder to her palms and cups them to emulate their natural curvature with her own fingers. The silky friction of her hands caressing her breasts with the subtle friction of this talc invests this massage with erotic overtones adding to the sensuality already accumulated from the warm, moist heat and tropical aromas.

Wriggling her toes into the angora-frizzed slippers, she drapes the supersized bath towel from her naked shoulders downward in a relaxed spiral that folds closed loosely at her left. A shorter bath towel swaddles her hair in a salon turban as she pads out of the steamy cavern towards the dry, slightly chill bedroom. Ingrid brought along her lavender bath powder, to reprise her skin treatment in the bedroom. Within this dry environment her nostrils detect the oh-so-faint residue of her last Marlboro. The one going back an hour ago.

But even a reminder that faint was enough to ramp up her ‘jones’ for some lung tingling satisfaction. For that urge there can be only one response: a freshly lit Marlboro!

Even more so now as she is mildly aroused by the attention she’s been paying to the naked surface of her rejuvenated, cleansed body. Atop the dresser, her pack waits seductively. She exchanges the bath powder in her hand for the pack on the dresser. And right now she simply can’t delay her surrender into opaque, rasping gratification any longer.

Seating herself erect on the edge of her quilt-covered bed, Ingrid opens the pack to examine her choices within. To her relief over half the contents still remain; the all-white 100’s neatly arrayed, awaiting her pleasure, ready in an instant for life-giving ignition. Each will then recede slowly in an extended smoldering demise, measured not by metronome, but by the syncopated rhythm of her relentless drags, one satisfying, fiery pull at a time. Extracting one, she tosses the pack onto her bedside table.

Seizing the Colibri metallic rose lighter, she sparks the butane into a yellow flame and fires it up by holding the cigarette between her lips while barely brushing the flame across the flat tobacco tip, moving the lighter slightly in small circles while her lips maintained a prolonged kiss. Her

cheeks hollow as she draws in the first concerted pull, and the flame penetrates the chocolate brown circle. For her first puff, she is rewarded with an irregular orange yellow dot growing in the center of the tip. She shoots a quick jet of smoke straight forward. She upends the Marlboro to scan the progress of the burn.

Then she lays her metallic-rose Colibri next to the pack on the bedside table.

Then a crease of alarm wrinkles her face.

Remembering her cell phone, she's reminded that it's back on the Jacuzzi; "I need it to be here with me in the bedroom," she murmurs.

Unwrapping her towel turban from her head and dropping the bath wrap from her figure, she strides nude through the doorway. Pressing her cigarette's filter between her lips, Ingrid trails behind a streaking ribbon of smoke from the cherry meandering into the back eddies of twisting air which swirls behind her. They catch at her cigarette smoke streamer and swirl it into tiny cyclones that spiral into invisibility.

Re-entering the steam-heavy atmosphere, she snatches her cell phone from the moisture laden rim of the Jacuzzi and swipes her hand over the surface to clear away any water. She presses the buttons to ring up her work associate and personal friend, Lara. Before she connects, she pulls on the Marlboro still between her lips, coaxing out a hit. Next she inhales with air mixed in from her nostrils to temper the package before delivery to the depths beneath her breasts.

Filling the inner recesses of her chest with the fluid astringent, she savors the almost-burn sensation of the imprisoned smoke. Holding it for several heart-pounding seconds, she wrings out the last full measure of nicotinification before returning the vapors to the moist atmosphere. Still awaiting a connection with Lara on the phone, Ingrid channels the smoke laden exhale up and through her nostrils to exit in feathery plumes of cascading rolls of whiteness to spill forth in colliding and tumbling clouds. The steam of the bathroom magically amplifies the visibility of her exiting smoke many fold, so snow white cones appear from her nose, painting an aura about her head in a haze, growing denser with each second.

At last the respondent picks up.

Ingrid withdraws the cigarette from her mouth, leaving it scissored upright between her index and middle fingers. “Lara?” she asked. Hearing Lara she opens the conversation,” I just finished soaking in the Jacuzzi and now I’m drying off. I just want to spend some down time here, tonight, by myself; maybe watch some TV or even doze off. It’s been an exhausting week.”

Lara’s response reflects her disbelief in the tone of her voice, “You’re not going out tonight? Why not?”

“I told you, I need some ‘Me Time,’ alone.” Not hearing Lara’s reply gave her a chance to pull a long, unhurried pull on the Marlboro. Sliding the filter out left behind the slenderest of silky smoke filaments that oozed from the yellow stained mesh of the filter like marbled streaks even after the suction was broken. To fully savor the impact of her tightly compacted smoke, she let a cottony bulge of the fumes glide beyond the arch of her upper lip for a split second, and then snapped the whiteness back within, diluting it with an air intake to dilute the load before plunging it deeply below her breasts. “Why? What are you up to tonight?” Ingrid said.

“I thought we, and I’m including Karen from Human Resources, were going to get together at the Fifth Avenue Bar and Grill tonight for drinks and munchies,” Lara quipped. “They have an outdoor smoking area so we can enjoy ourselves even with those horrid smoking restrictions.”

“Yeah, I know we talked about it.” Suddenly Ingrid realized that she had no ashtray in the bathroom, and her lit cigarette required it at this moment.

She plopped the precariously lengthening ash straight downward onto the moisture coated tile next to her bare feet. The ash parted instantly form the coal and hissed slightly as it hit the water layer. Ingrid squashed it out with her foot and rubbed it from sight.

“It’s just that I’m sooo relaxed right now,” she went on as if nothing had happened, “You’re better off without me tonight, trust me.”

Lara objected but she felt Ingrid probably wouldn't change her mind. Nor did she.

Ingrid signs off and returns to the bedroom with the phone in hand. She locates her ashtray, already holding today's handful of previously crushed out butts, and adds to their number by crushing out one more.

She returns to the bed and flops backward, arranging her head to fall among the pillows. To Ingrid this seems like the opportunity for her to resume her talc rub. She rescues the white box labeled Woods of Windsor from the dresser top and returns to the bed positioning herself at its center. She draws her leg up with her feet flat on the quilt and reaches her knees. The powder flows and coats her smoothly while she rotates her dusky hands around the sensual contours of the surface of her calves, inner knee and thighs. Then her fingers straighten to apply around her groin: it takes a back and forth sliding movement.

The closer her fingers get to her labia, the more titillating the massage feels. She reaches the vulva and already the sensation crosses the boundary from therapy to erotic and instead of backing off, she increases the vigor with which she applies the movement. Her labia are responding, too, and begin filling and enlarging. The first passages of her fingers overtop the vulva create a thrilling sexual tension, and essentially demand gratification.

Now she's committed to an orgasmic conclusion or suffer unresolved sexual tension. Licking her fingers with her tongue, she now focuses her digital pressures on her pleasure points with smooth and flowing strokes lubricated with saliva which now forms amply in her aroused mouth.

The tension builds in waves, and then recedes slightly before rising into another crest of acute orgasmic anxiety. The cascading waves build on each other, and the anticipation becomes unbearable.

She cries out in an agony born of expectation and suddenly, the crashing release of her climax strikes like multiple forks of lightning bolts. She is swept into a tidal wave of orgasm that carries her beyond the reaches of ordinal reality. Her hands fall to her side, palms down to anchor her to the bed. Her breathing runs fast; more like panting.

When her heart finally restores its rhythm, and her breathing no longer labored, her hand stretches out blindly to the bedside table to locate the post-coital Marlboro that's needed to bring this final stage to its proper conclusion.

Ingrid's arm extends past her mattress and retrieves a cigarette and the butane lighter. Rising, she sits upon the mattress' edge, burns life into the Marlboro and spurts off the initial puff.

Taking her time, she kisses her cigarette and plunges the smoke deep within those same lungs that moments ago panted with fiery passion. She holds the aroma captive until the smoke releases its gift to her lungs. Only then does she free the flavor to exit. Something akin to a muted burn or maybe a pleasant rasp radiates from her core and sends waves of post-coital, nicotinic satisfaction penetrating outwards.

Ingrid has that relaxed feeling that blots out all of the trauma and feels thoroughly restored.