

Water Music

Elsbeth Potter

It was snowing when they finally climbed out of the Jeep after six long hours. "What is this place?" Cara asked, plunging her hands as far into the pockets of her biker jacket as she could manage, and stomping her boots in the frozen mud of the road. Snow collected quickly on her dark flattop haircut, and there was nothing in sight but trees, trees, and more trees. She didn't mind wilderness, but she hated being cold—not that she would ever admit it to anyone.

Why was she doing this? Going on a mysterious trip with her martial-arts instructor? Had she lost her tiny mind? Was she that desperate, or was Mariko that beautiful? Not to mention the intriguing hint of tattoo ink she'd sometimes glimpse as Mariko shrugged on a robe in the changing room.... Hell, she wasn't even sure if this was a date or not.

It seemed like a date. Mariko had asked her to go for a drive after afternoon class. A surprise, she'd said, for her favorite student. And Cara, wanting to impress Mariko with her adventurous nature, had said yes. All she'd been told was that there would be food and a place to sleep. A place to sleep *with* Mariko? James Dean wouldn't ask that question, Cara reflected.

"There's shelter over here," Mariko said, playing a flashlight over the snowy ground ahead. Her sleek wool coat and equally sleek bobbed black hair sparkled with melted droplets in the reflected light. She wore snug red leather driving gloves that matched her scarf and polished black boots that clung to her muscular calves. "My uncle owned this place. You can't see the whole thing; there's another path that goes uphill to the cabin." As Cara trudged behind, Mariko added, "Once I held a party out here—"

"In the snow?"

"No." A shabby-looking wooden building stood before them. Mariko pushed the door open—it creaked—and Cara followed her inside.

It was hot. "Great," she said. "First I freeze, then I melt."

Mariko pulled on an electric light and looked up at her, the chain still clasped in her gloved hand. "You don't like your surprise? We can go somewhere else if you want."

Mariko's politeness intensified Cara's embarrassment. "Oh, very funny. Would you really drive me home all that way if I asked?"

Mariko's eyes met hers, steadily. "Yes."

Cara looked away. The heat came from steam, that rose in leisurely tendrils from a pool of water. The air had a strange mineral smell, nice after the biting air outside. "What are we here for, anyway?"

Mariko's face turned a weird hue. With a shock of surprise, Cara realized that her instructor was blushing. Mariko said, "The whole idea is to sit in the water. Without any clothes on. I thought you'd like it."

Oh. "Oh," she said. "I knew that. Sure. That's great. Thank you, Mariko." She lightly rapped her boot heel against the rock floor, then bent and inspected the water. Looking around for hooks, she found them embedded in the wooden wall. Cara slipped off her leather jacket, and slowly began to unbutton her denim shirt.

"It's very relaxing," Mariko said behind her. There was a small jingle—the Jeep keys being set down. Mariko said, "I'll go and get juice from the cabin before we undress."

"Thanks," Cara said, putting her boots on a bench so that water wouldn't get slopped in them.

Mariko returned a few minutes later carrying bottles in a string bag and a pile of towels that must have come from the cabin. Civilized accommodations, it looked like. Cara watched from the corner of her eye as Mariko stood next to her and stripped quickly, shivering, her nipples in tiny hard peaks. Undressed, as dressed, she looked sleek, like an otter or a seal. Cara felt more like a Labrador Retriever, muscular and stocky, tending to scratch at the wrong times. Yet in bare feet, they were precisely the same height. "I'm going in," Mariko said, and Cara watched her gingerly dip in her toe.

Cara couldn't look away from Mariko's smooth, muscular back. Huge green and blue wing tattoos adorned her like paintings on porcelain, and were much larger and more elaborate than Cara had suspected. The feathers flexed with slight movements of Mariko's shoulders. Mariko glanced back as if sensing Cara's intense gaze.

Cara stared at the floor, stripped off her underwear, and went down the steps carved into the rock, trying to imagine herself covered to hide the blush that seemed to go down to her feet. The water was hotter than she had expected, but to her aching muscles the temperature was exquisite. She sighed deeply as she sank in up to the neck, sitting on a ledge across from Mariko. In a few moments she was sweating and understood the reason for the cold juice. Cara took a long swig from her bottle. The icy cold was a magic contrast to the steaming water.

What had she gotten herself into? Why couldn't she just proposition the woman and get it over with? It had always worked before. But somehow Mariko was different. Why couldn't Mariko get her act together and do the propositioning? Then everything would be easy.

Mariko settled in a little lower and rested her head on the edge. Then she sat up, reached for one of the folded white towels, and tucked it under her neck. "Perfect," she said, staring up at the ceiling.

Cara took another swallow of her juice, watching Mariko through half-closed eyes. She felt absolutely limp.

"You've been staring at me, Cara."

Surprised, Cara sat up a little. "No, I haven't." She grinned and said, "Not that I wouldn't."

Mariko didn't answer her feeble attempt at flirtatious humor. "Earlier," she said. "In the gym. At my tattoos."

Cara hesitated, but curiosity won out. And she had to make a move sometime. "Can I see?"

"I don't see why not." Mariko waded over to her and turned around, matter-of-fact as if they'd been at Tigress Defense and fully clothed. "Go ahead."

Carefully Cara traced her fingers over the wings, marveling at the gradations of color. Mariko's skin was soft. Reluctantly, suddenly shy, Cara let her hand fall. "Thank you," she said.

Mariko shrugged and sat down next to her, her side against Cara's. The unexpected skin contact was electric. "Have another juice?" she asked.

"No, thanks," Cara said, glad to have something to say, flustered from having Mariko so close to her. You win, Mariko, she thought, with an imaginary salute. She slid her arm around Mariko's shoulders and pulled her a fraction closer. "About the juice—there's an outhouse, or something?"

"Or something," Mariko said, reaching up and brushing her hand through Cara's wet hair. "There's even a real shower."

Cara said, quickly, "How long do you think it will take before we parboil?"

"Days," Mariko said. This was definitely a pass. Mariko worked an arm around Cara's waist and passed the other over her breasts, circling the nipples. "Isn't this interesting?"

Deliberately, Cara slowed her breathing. "Yes."

Mariko dragged her fingers through the water trickling down Cara's sternum. Cara tensed. Mariko licked her own fingertips, reached up, and touched Cara's mouth. Her hand dropped and lazily circled on Cara's left breast. A small gasp escaped Cara when Mariko flicked the nipple with her nail.

"Do you want to—" Cara said, her voice unsteady.

"Hold still." Mariko stood up and curved her palm against Cara's neck, then resettled in Cara's lap, facing her. Cara braced Mariko's muscular waist with her hands and leaned forward to trace her mouth over Mariko's forehead then slid down to her lips for a long, slippery kiss. Cara identified the growing ache in her stomach as hunger, consuming hunger that blotted out her mind.

Cara caught the sides of Mariko's face, fingers tangling in her wet hair, her mouth devouring Mariko's. Mariko was making her crazy. Cara pulled back, gasping for breath. Unexpectedly, Mariko began to nibble on the side of her neck, and a small sound caught in Cara's throat.

"Slow down," Cara said, eyes shut, neck arched into Mariko's mouth. A long moment later, she sat up, and she could think again, through the haze of hormones.

Cara grasped Mariko's waist and stood, slipping off-balance for a moment with her weight until she found her feet. Cara gave an experimental lift, thinking of the words she needed. "Edge, sit on the edge, here."

"Tell me you want me, Cara," Mariko said, her eyes glazed and her hair in wild tendrils. She looked as if she were about to attack someone in a flurry of limbs. She looked impossibly desirable.

Cara needed a full minute to control her breathing enough to speak. "Mariko," she said, low in her throat. "I want you."

Mariko's held Cara's eyes for a moment more, and remarked, "Your voice is so beautiful, like that." With one smooth movement Mariko lifted herself and sat on the edge of the pool. Water cascaded down her body in a sheet.

Cara kissed a spot just above Mariko's knee and murmured into her thigh. "I want you," she repeated. She nuzzled her other leg, rubbing her cheek against soft flesh. Mariko's scent mingled with that of the steaming waters and the leather smell that lingered on Cara's own flesh. "Tell me I can have you."

"Yes," Mariko hissed, and gasped when Cara began kissing a feverish path across her inner thigh. "Talk to me."

Mariko couldn't possibly know what it did to Cara when someone asked that, when language became sex; she couldn't let Mariko know that she was making Cara insane when they'd barely started. "Can't do two things at the same time," Cara growled, parting Mariko's labia, dragging her tongue over her in one long wet stroke. Mariko made a choked sound, and Cara felt momentary triumph. "You're mine now," she said.

"So—so I—make you crazy, right?"

"I knew you were out to get me," Cara said, replacing her mouth with her hand, and lightly stroking Mariko's labia. She kissed Mariko's abdomen and spoke quietly against her damp skin. "It's true, isn't it?"

Mariko was unnaturally still for a long moment. "Oh...I felt that inside...."

"Yes, you're making me crazy. Why are you doing this to me?" Cara said, then resumed her finger's gentle circling, nearer to Mariko's clit. "I can't stop until you're not so...not so...hot and wet and making me want you."

"Yes," Mariko gasped. "Don't stop."

Hardly conscious of what she was saying, intent in watching Mariko's reactions to every minute shift of her index finger, Cara said, "I'll win."

"At?"

"You'll come first."

"No," Mariko replied, the effect somewhat spoiled by a drawn-out moan.

Cara's fingers were dripping with wetness. She took a deep breath and smeared the back of her hand with Mariko's slick fluid, then coated her palm, trying to ignore the small sounds Mariko made. Cara glanced up. Mariko looked down at her, and slowly nodded, her dark eyes huge. Cara slid a finger inside her, biting her lip as Mariko's vagina sucked gently at it. She took another deep breath and closed her eyes, then slipped in two fingers. Then four.

"Hurry up," Mariko groaned.

Cara grinned, her cheek pressed against Mariko's thigh. A fantasy come true. "No."

"Bitch." Mariko's moan took the sting from the word.

Cara moved her hand gently, her own body calming as she concentrated on Mariko. She maneuvered her wrist, allowing her fingers to curl under.

"Hurry *up*."

"Why, when this is so much fun?" One push. With a soft feeling of suction, Cara's entire fist slid inside of her. Mariko encased Cara's hand in hot, slick muscle.

Mariko gasped out an exclamation in Japanese and dug her wiry fingers into Cara's hair. A slow smile crawled over Cara's face. Experimentally, she flexed her fingers a fraction of an inch and was rewarded with a parallel reaction. "Is this all right?" she asked, lightly.

Mariko's response was unmistakable, though Cara knew no Japanese. Cara rotated her wrist, first to the left then to the right, then pushed gently. "Like that, Mariko?"

"Yes," Mariko moaned. "Just—just—"

She looked as though she were dying, if dying could look like art. Gently Cara twisted her wrist again, judging Mariko's elasticity, then pushed rhythmically. At the third repetition, Mariko moaned softly.

"Relax," Cara murmured, slowing down. "Relax."

Mariko moaned again.

"You're mine, you said you were mine. You have to do what I say."

Again, Mariko called out in Japanese.

"Let me have you," Cara purred. Once. Twice.

"No—"

Three times. Four.

Mariko made no sound as she came, but her inner muscles contracted with crushing force, trapping Cara's hand. Cara breathed raggedly with pain and satisfaction. "Let go," she rasped, trying to command, but she did not think Mariko heard her, was beyond such control anyway. Cara waited, panting, until she could pull free of her, then cradled her hand against her chest, sinking into the water. Mariko slid down next to her, and curled into Cara's side. Cara stroked her back and nuzzled at her ear.

"Well," she said, then couldn't think of anything else for long moments. Finally she asked, "After that, do I win something? Free lessons, maybe? Just kidding."

Mariko didn't—maybe couldn't—answer. Cara smiled and stretched under the water, contemplating her success with lazy pleasure.

Finally, Mariko said, in a voice that sounded slightly drunk, "Ohhh, Cara. There's a cabin. But...."

Mariko's hand wandered over Cara's stomach and began to circle on her hip under the water, rekindling dormant arousal.

"Here," Cara said. She wasn't sure what else to say. Then Mariko's mouth was closing gently over hers, languid, a wet and sensuous kiss. The urgent need Cara had felt

earlier in the evening had evaporated; she relaxed into Mariko's embrace, tingling to the tips of her fingers and toes as if she'd drunk champagne.

"Slowly, Cara? May I?"

Not feeling like speaking, Cara nodded. She closed her eyes, letting Mariko push them away from the edge. They stood in the center of a world of water and steam, surrounded by vaporous mineral smell, now fragranced with musk.

Water lapped like hot fingers at Cara's hips and buttocks and mons as they rotated, slowly, shifting from foot to foot like dancers. "Lean back," Mariko murmured, in between kisses on Cara's neck. "Lean back into the water. I'll hold you up. Lean back."

Cara's feet didn't want to leave the bottom at first, but then Mariko's strong arm curled around her waist and she floated, the water startlingly hot against the back of her scalp. A long sigh escaped her.

"Like class," Mariko said. "Feel your body. You'll float."

"I had a crush on my first swim teacher," Cara murmured. "She wore a purple bikini. But now it's wing tattoos, all the way."

Mariko giggled, and Cara blinked open her eyes and smiled back at her. Mariko said, "This is my ultimate slow seduction, and you are telling jokes? What a woman."

"I didn't know martial arts would be like this."

"Only if you're very lucky." Mariko cocked her head to one side. A strand of dark hair clung to one high cheekbone and sweat had dewed her short upper lip. "Do you want me to make love to you or not?"

"Oh, I suppose you can go ahead." Cara began to laugh softly, drunkenly, and Mariko giggled helplessly against Cara's belly, until she began to sink. Sputtering ensued, and desperate clutching that dissolved into more laughter.

When both had caught their breath again, Cara said, "I'd like to lean on the edge."

"Perhaps you should," Mariko said. She splashed over to the pool's rim and retrieved a towel. "Here, put this under your neck."

After a few moments, Cara was arranged comfortably with her head on the edge of the pool, the rest of her body buoyantly reaching for the surface. She reached over her head and gripped the smooth stone, aware that the gesture showed off the tone of her triceps and pectorals and lifted her breasts wantonly.

Mariko stood between Cara's ankles. She sank to her knees and maneuvered Cara's legs over her shoulders, massaging the insides of Cara's thighs with firm, strong strokes. Cara felt sound building up within her and let it out slowly as a soft moan. Mariko's head lowered and she nuzzled Cara's labia apart. Tiny waves created by the motion of their bodies mimicked the dabs and flicks of Mariko's lips and tongue.

Cara's hips writhed upward. She was unable to control the whimpering sounds any longer. Mariko's lips closed over her clit and tugged. Cara crested, riding the pleasure as if moving through a long tunnel. When she became aware of herself again, she was sitting on the underwater bench wrapped around Mariko like an octopus, panting.

"Wow," Cara said, when she could speak.

Mariko smiled and kissed her.

Cara grinned back, sharklike. "I liked my surprise."

"Good. Do you want to surprise me next time?"

Cara reached up and caressed Mariko's soft, smooth cheek, lingering on her jawline. "Not a surprise," she said. "It'll be sunny, scorching July. You'll wear a backless red swimsuit provided by me, and we'll borrow my Aunt Beverly's swimming pool while she's in Vegas, and there'll be inflatable pool toys."

"And until then?"

"We can keep busy, can't we?"

Mariko settled in next to Cara on the bench again. "Yes, I think we can manage that."

The End





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