

The Sleep of Souls

By Jennifer & Kevin Lill

PROLOGUE

She licked the pink crystallized sugar from the rim of her drink as her eyes searched the massive dance floor. This was by far her favorite moment, she thought, playfully sucking the sweet liquid through the small black straw. The crowd, rose colored through the lenses of her oversized Channel glasses, writhed in time to the music. Her outfit, perfectly orchestrated right down to her custom designed gold, toeless heels with the big pink bows. True, she wasn't in L.A., but she almost liked it better when she was the biggest fish in the pond.

Setting down her drink, she stepped down the lighted steps to the sunken dance floor, checking to make sure she still had sight of her two bodyguards. The murmur started quietly with a few of the dancers shouting into each other's ears while motioning in her direction. She smiled to them, careful to make sure her right side, her good side, was all they saw. Continuing back toward the DJ's booth she serpented through the crowd hearing the murmurs grow louder. "Is that her?" and "That looks just like..." drifted between throbs in the music.

Finally, reaching the furthest edge of the floor she found him. With his chiseled features, flawlessly gelled hair and the exquisitely tailored black silk shirt that she knew hid a set of the world's most perfectly shaped abs; she had found the man she was looking for. Slowly sliding her glasses down her nose, she winked. As she had anticipated, he abandoned the woman he had been dancing with without a word and rushed to her side.

"Excuse me, are you Dallas Hudson?" He shouted over the almost deafening music.

"Yes." She purred, striking her signature red carpet pose.

He leaned in so close that she could feel the smooth silk of his shirt brush against her tanned bare arms, "I'm such a big fan. Can I buy you a drink?"

Dallas laughed as she looked back over the sea of people she had just weaved through to get to him. It would take 20 minutes and a machete to get the two of them back to the bar.

“I’m good. Thanks.” She shouted as she began to sway to the beat.

Licking her lips suggestively she moved closer to him and he quickly took her cue. Soon they were a tangle of groping hands and grinding hips. She kissed him hard and tasted the sweat on his lips. The music surged as he kissed her neck and squeezed the ass her father had paid the price of an Ivy League education for. Pure bliss, she thought.

The DJ switched songs and suddenly the beat was much deeper. She turned and let him grind against her from behind. Looking up, she saw the crowd was watching her and her heart pumped even harder. This was better than any drug. *Look at me*, she thought. *That’s right, look at me.*

She wondered how many people were in this club. Her eyes sweeping the room she realized that the crowd had nearly doubled. There were so many people she could no longer even see the bar. Her eyes darted to the edge of the crowd for the familiar faces of her two bodyguards, but they were nowhere to be found. A feeling of dread started to rise in her chest as she realized that there were no exits on this side of the room. It seemed as if the sea of faces were moving closer, trapping her. It was getting harder to breathe.

She pulled her nameless partner’s hands from her body and tried to move back toward the bar. Yet, with every attempt she made to move forward it seemed as if the crowd was pushing back. A new surge of bodies came from the edge of her vision and her path was immediately blocked. As she attempted to swallow her rising fear, it slowly dawned on her that her vision was becoming clouded. *What kind of asshole sets off a fog machine in a room this crowded*, she thought. As she began to uncontrollably cough, it became clear to her that the substance rapidly filling the air was not a manufactured fog but a thick smoke. *Oh shit, this fucking place is on fire*, she frantically thought.

The music abruptly stopped and was replaced with the terrified screams of the club’s patrons who were now scrambling for the exits. Turning back, Dallas groped in the spreading darkness for her dance partner only to find that he had abandoned her as well. She ran her hands over her surgically sculpted breasts and found to her horror that she had failed to tuck her cell phone into her bra. Dallas could feel her eyes begin to water; she gasped as smoke filled her lungs.

Finding a wall she began to feel for a door, a window, an opening of any kind. A rising panic gripped her mind as her hands felt nothing but a long unbroken surface. As she called out over the din for her bodyguards, her cries quickly turned to sobs as she knew she had no chance of being heard.

Stumbling forward, a mass of bodies swept in pushing her in front of them like a wave. Trying to follow the flow toward the exit she stumbled on, but her shoe caught on the edge of the sunken floor. A random knee hit her in the back of her thigh causing her to fall sharply to her knees. Dallas's hands pushed back against the cold linoleum of the dance floor in an attempt to hoist her tiny frame back up. Suddenly a bedazzled heel snapped off one of her manicured nails and another crushed the pinky on her left hand. As she cradled her injured fingers, she felt the throng of bodies spill over her back and push her to the floor. More blasts of pain came, all over her body now. She began to lose her orientation and her head swam with the agony of blows that enveloped her. As her head was crushed under the torrent of trampling feet her only thought was of her funeral and the fabulous after party she was going to miss.