

# Assiduity Twenty Three

by J. Mykell Collinz

The outside world will intrude inevitably, I know, yet I eagerly yield to Uzma's spell. She is an emerging goddess. I am her servant, blessed with the task of facilitating her ascendancy, while also attempting to satisfy her erotic needs. She dresses provocatively, teasing and tantalizing, imbuing our relationship with the sensibility of a mating ritual. Her womanly, artful, self presentation saturates my senses, consumes me. Luv, Uzma's two year old daughter, appears to comprehend our romantic demeanor; and, since she is clearly happy to be living here rather than at the commune, she is doing her part to make the arrangement work by charming me with her attention. Between her and her mother, I'm occupied full time.

Early morning sunlight floods the back part of the house with brilliant colors, including the kitchen and the adjacent large room with the big windows where Luv is kneeling on the floor, leaning across her low work table, holding a charcoal pencil in her little hand. Her first drawing consisted of a hill with a tree at the top and three stick people holding hands. She has advanced to detailed sketches of leaves and flowers, using samples from a book I provided to enhance her progress. Uzma performs her morning yoga across the room. She looks over at me periodically to assure I'm watching. She reminds me of the actress who can't stop looking into the camera, which reminds me of how much I would love to be filming her and her daughter. Yet I fear it would disturb their spontaneity and break the spell.

"You should be doing yoga, also, John," Uzma says, pushing herself up from the floor.

She's wearing a white cotton sleeveless undershirt and flimsy pink shorts. With her walnut blond hair tied back in a ponytail, her sculptured facial contours become more clearly visible, along with her greenish blue eyes, which hold me in their gaze waiting for my reply.

"I exercise with weights in the basement," I say.

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Available online at *«<http://fictionaut.com/stories/j-mykell-collinz/assiduity-twenty-three>»*

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"Show me," she says, stepping her long shapely legs into sweat pants.

"You'll need to dress warmer than that," I say: "It's a big basement, a lot bigger than you would think, and it gets cold down there this time of year. There's also an emergency living space beneath the basement, a hardened bomb shelter. It's a major exploration to go down there. I've been waiting for the right time to show you."

"Why not now?"

"Because you're so beautiful in sunlight."

"I'm not so beautiful in the dark?"

"Yes you are also beautiful in the dark, you're beautiful in every way, Uzma, but the basement will still be there later, after the sun has faded in the west."

"Okay, at least tell me about it, why the big basement?"

"The survivalist who built this place had plans to use it as a low profile headquarters to hold meetings and to warehouse supplies that his group would need in times of crisis. He was arrested and sent to federal prison on explosives and firearms charges before he moved in. The property was confiscated and sold at auction. I purchased it, brand new, never used, at a bargain price. I'm not sure the federal government knew what they were selling."

"What have you been doing in the basement?"

"Not much. I've had structural engineers, close business associates, come out here and look at it. They give me an unofficial okay. It doesn't officially exist, nor does the living space beneath it. There are air conditioning and heating units built in. I have them checked periodically to make sure they still work but I don't leave them on."

"Could it be used as an indoor gardening space?"

"Electricity costs would be prohibitive."

"If you had your own energy source, like from solar, wind, or geothermal, you could make it economically feasible. Even if you needed to use grid power to supplement occasionally, it's an exciting possibility."

"Exciting enough to make you want to stay here and work on it?"

"Circumstances may have brought us together, John, but there is no place in this world I would rather be right now than here with you."

I'm unsure if she's still role playing or totally sincere. Or if it makes a difference. I'm eager to play either way. Yet, even though things are going well for me now, I can't shake the feeling I'm heading for a hard fall. Maybe it's natural to feel this way. Fear of death, perhaps. But no, this is different. It's spiraling in on me. And there is something I must do to get ready. Yet I'm unable to formulate a concept beyond a vague intuition, a nagging gut feeling.

