

A vibrant rainbow graphic with a 3D effect, appearing as if a page is being turned, located in the top right corner of the cover.

A Heart Well Traveled

Tales of
Erotica, Fantasy
and Sci-Fi Love Affairs
and
Unlikely Outcomes

VOLUME TWO

Sallyanne Monti, Editor

SUMMARY

A Heart Well Traveled

Volume Two

Tales of Erotica, Fantasy and Sci-Fi Love Affairs and Unlikely Outcomes

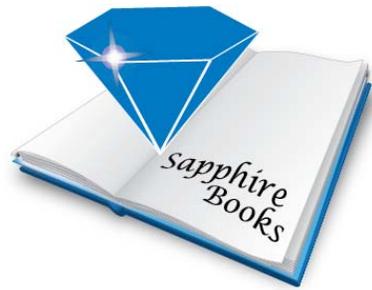
Each unique short story in this supernatural anthology will transport you to a magical interpretation of romance as authors bring to life, uncommon love affairs and out of the ordinary long distance relationships. Escape into the realms of eroticism, fan fiction fables, intergalactic intimacies, lunar love, mythical fantasy, and past lives revisited.

Is it fate, is it destiny or is it one of those defining moments where the universe comes to a screeching halt as an epic love appears?

A HEART WELL TRAVELED VOLUME 2

A HEART WELL TRAVELED VOLUME 2

EDITED BY SALLYANNE MONTI



SAPPHIRE BOOKS
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A Heart Well Traveled - Volume 2

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Preface

Magical, mystical, and otherworldly meets erotic, fanatical, and uncommon, in this supernatural assemblage of characters and uncanny plot twists. Each unique short story will take you on a long distance romantic journey through unusual love affairs across the miles, galaxies and time.

Is it fate, is it destiny, or is it an alternate reality flamed by fantasy?

Sallyanne Monti

Acknowledgment

A Heart Well Traveled Volume 2

This is Volume 2 in Sapphire Books' long distance romance anthology series, A Heart Well Traveled.

Earnest appreciation to this gifted group of lesbian authors, who placed the spirit of their creative bodies of work in our trust.

Sincere thanks to Ann McMan and TreeHouse Studios for the mystic cover art that brings the images of this project to life, and to LJ Reynolds for exceptional book design that accentuates the fast-paced nature of the stories.

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It's been a privilege to work in partnership to the shared realization of this distinctive literary collection.

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Living in Her Memories

By Vickie L. Adams

It started when I found an old photo album at a garage sale.

I love old photos. I can sit for hours contemplating the people and their lives, making up stories about them.

Nestled in a box of old books, the album beckoned to me. I dusted off the cover and slowly turned the long black pages. Group shots showed young ladies in the Women's Army Auxiliary, wearing wide grins, dress uniforms, and black low quarters, pocketbooks draped across their shoulders.

As I flipped through the pages the photographs seemed to come alive. I could hear their laughter and feel the special camaraderie they shared.

I wondered which of the women owned the album.

I turned a page and came face to face with my answer.

A sepia toned five by seven of a young woman in uniform occupied the center of the page. *Me-1953* scrawled in the margin. Dark, wavy hair framed her heart shaped face. Her eyes sparkled and her smile seemed almost mischievous.

Mesmerized, I felt her pulling me closer and closer.

"Can I help you?"

Startled, I looked up shading my eyes against the sun.

A woman towered over me.

"I was just looking at the old photos."

She glanced down at the album without comment.

"Who is she?" I asked.

"Lucille Carmichael, my husband's aunt. She served in the Army—in the fifties, I think."

She motioned toward the box of books. "Five dollars for the whole box."

I stood and dug into my pocket. I handed her the money, placed the album on top of the books, and picked up the box.

"Thanks."

I started to leave, then stopped. "Excuse me?"

She turned, her eyebrows arched, alluding to an unspoken question.

"What happened to her? Lucille, I mean."

"Lucille? She taught school for many years. Never married, no children. She lives in a nursing home across town. Why do you ask?"

I shrugged. "Seems a shame she left all these memories behind."

She shook her head.

"She has Alzheimer's. Most days she doesn't even know where she is. She lives in her memories now."

I turned away, saddened by the thought of Lucille, alone in her dementia. I thought about Lucille as I drove home.

Teri met me in the doorway.

"Hey, I'm just leaving. Where have you been all day?"

"Garage saling. I found this great old photo album."

I set the box down and picked up the album.

“Later, okay. I’m meeting Sue and Al and I’m late. As usual.”

“Oh, sure. Later.”

“Why don’t you join us?” she asked. “Dinner at Good Earth? Swing by the Copa later.”

“No, thanks. I’ve got some things I need to do.”

She shook her head. “You need to get out and meet people, Kelly. It’s been long enough. If you change your mind, come on down. See ya.” She bounded down the steps.

I lugged the box into my room and dumped the books on the bed. I placed Lucille’s photograph on my bedside table and sat on the bed with the books. Lucille had apparently taught American literature. Most of the books were outdated textbooks and collections of short stories and poetry. Notes filled the margins, her handwriting neat and compact. I shuffled through the pile and came across a dog-eared copy of a book of poetry. The book fell open to a page marked with fading highlighter. I scanned the lines. Rich words touched my heart. I longed for a love so intense, so sensual.

Tears filled my eyes. I studied Lucille’s face, and then turned my attention back to the album. The photographs showed Lucille and her fellow G.I. Janes, serving in the Orient, smiling, arm in arm. Again, I heard the noise of the glamorous city streets, the sounds of a moving stream, the laughter of the women. The smell of cherry blossoms filled my room. I traced Lucille’s face gently. My eyelids grew heavy. I stretched out on the bed and drifted into a deep sleep. In my dream Lucille invited me to join her.

“Kelly,” she called. “I love you. I’m waiting. Come to me.”

She reached for me. I felt her hands on my cheeks and the warmth of her lips against mine.

When I awoke I felt confused. “Lucille?”

I sat up and turned on the lamp. The light fell across her face. Her eyes followed me as I moved around the room.

I picked up the photograph.

“Who are you?” I asked. “I feel as though I know you. Am I losing my mind?”

Teri’s right. I need to go out. I need to get on with my life. I picked up Lucille’s picture and carefully placed it in the album.

I glanced at the clock. Nine-thirty.

I showered, threw on some clothes, and headed for the door. Something called me back. I grabbed the album and left the house. With the album in the back seat I headed for the Copa. It had been months since I’d been out to the bar, afraid of running into my ex and her new lover. Darcy and I had split up nearly a year ago but it still hurt me to think of her with someone else.

I stood in the doorway of the bar. The crowded dance floor pulsed, the bass thumping the floor.

“Kelly!” Teri stood at a table. Sue and Al turned and waved.

I moved toward them.

“Kelly,” a familiar voice called.

I stopped and turned, expecting to see an old friend and found myself face to face with Lucille, in full military regalia. She stood an arm’s reach from me, more beautiful than her photos had revealed.

The noisy crowd faded. The lights dimmed. All I could see was Lucille.

“Lucille?” I whispered.

“Yes, my love. I’m waiting for you.”

I shook my head slowly. “We’ve never met.”

“I’m waiting for you.” Her green eyes sparkled. She smiled and my stomach flipped. “We’ll be together. Always.”

I reached out to touch her and everything went black.

“Kelly? Kelly? Are you alright?”

I opened my eyes.

Teri knelt over me.

“Lucille?” I glanced around but didn’t see her.

“Who?” Teri asked.

“The woman who was talking to me, didn’t you see her? She was wearing an Army uniform.”

“An Army uniform? In here?” she asked. “You must have bumped your head when you fainted.” She helped me toward the table.

“You okay, Kelly?” Al asked.

“You look like you saw a ghost,” Sue added.

“I think I did,” I said.

“Beep, beep, back that truck up,” Al said. “You saw a ghost in here? What, some disco-age drag queen?”

“Quit kidding, Al. I think she’s serious.” Sue placed her hand on top of mine. “What’s wrong, Kelly?”

“I think I’m in love with a woman I’ve never met,” I explained. “I’m in love with a photograph.”

“Oh jeez,” Teri said. “It’s that old photo album, isn’t it? You ever see Christopher Reeve in that movie where he becomes obsessed with Jane Seymour, named *Somewhere in Time*? Only she’s long dead? All it got him was very dead.”

“I know, Teri. But you don’t understand. She was standing right in front of me.”

“You are definitely flesh hungry,” Sue said. “You need some loving. Maybe just a good, old-fashioned one-night stand. A little pressing of the flesh and you’ll be as good as new.”

“That’s not it,” I said, rubbing my hand over my eyes. “She’s real. She called to me. She said she loves me.”

They glanced at each other. No one spoke.

“I think I better go home.”

“Relax,” Al said. “It’s only 11:00 p.m. You just got here.”

“Uh oh,” Sue said.

I followed her eyes toward the door. Darcy and her lover stood in the doorway. My heart fell. Darcy caressed her love with her hands and her eyes. I felt sick.

“It’s okay, Kelly. Ignore them.”

“I’m not ready for this.” I leapt from my seat and ran for the door. I heard Darcy laugh as I pushed past her.

I ran blindly toward my car, my eyes filled with tears, my ears filled with the taunting sound of Darcy’s laughter. Fumbling, I started the car and pulled from the parking lot.

I stopped at the light and stared into the rearview mirror. “You look like shit,” I said.

Then I saw her. Lucille sat quietly in the back seat of my car. I yanked my head toward the back seat. She wasn’t there. The album lay on the seat, open to the photograph of Lucille. I reached for the album and held it close to my chest.

“God, I’m losing my mind,” I cried.

The sound of a car horn jolted me. I dropped the album and pulled quickly into the intersection, turning toward home.

“You’re not crazy.”

I turned sharply. Lucille watched me from the passenger seat. My heart beat wildly. “Oh god, oh god,” I whispered. I couldn’t take my eyes off her.

“Watch the road, Kelly,” she said softly.

“Are you real?” I asked. My eyes flicked back and forth between the road and Lucille.

“Very real, Kelly,” she said as she grinned.

“But, how? You look just like you did in the album. That was what, forty-five years ago?”

“Uh-huh,” she said. “The happiest years of my life. I never forgot them. Or you?”

“Me? What are you talking about?”

“Be honest with yourself, Kel. You’ve always felt out of sync with the rest of the world. Like you’ve been here before, been through it already? And something’s missing.”

I listened as she described me to a T. Tears filled my eyes.

“You and I were together. In love and inseparable.”

“What happened?” I whispered, afraid of the answer.

“They called you in as part of a witch hunt. Threatened to tell your folks you were a lesbian unless you cooperated. You refused to give up one name. But...” Her voice broke. She turned toward the window.

“Tell me.”

“You were ashamed to face your parents. You killed yourself. Jumped from the roof of the dormitory.”

“And you?”

“I spent my whole life loving you, Kel. Waiting for you to return to me. I knew you would someday.”

“But how...”

“I died tonight. Just a couple of hours ago.” She nodded toward the cell phone. You can call and see for yourself.”

I pulled off to the side of the road and reached for the phone.

Lucille placed her hand on top of mine. A tingle ran through me. My breath caught in my throat. Our eyes met. Our lips met.

“Don’t leave me, Lucille.”

“I can’t take you with me,” she said. “You have to come on your own. But I’ll be waiting for you. All our friends are waiting. We’ll be together again. Forever.”

And then I was alone.

I sat on the side of the road for a long time. When Teri mentioned *Somewhere in Time*, I know she meant it as a warning. Christopher Reeve’s character may have ended up dead but he also found what he had been searching for—eternal love. I didn’t have time to will myself into the past. I knew what I had to do.

As the car picked up speed, my thoughts turned to Lucille, our friends, and the Orient.

“Wait for me, Lucille. I’m coming, darling.”

As I turned the wheel toward the abutment the smell of cherry blossoms filled the air.

Vickie Adams is a retired military officer. Her short stories have been published in anthologies, including Hot + Bothered, Wilma Loves Betty, Beginnings, Skin Deep, Seducing the Virgin, and UniformsEx, under the pseudonym Lou Hill. Vickie is working on three novels. She lives in Michigan with her partner, three dogs, and nine birds.

Crossroads

By Shannon M. Harris

Ivy stuffed a couple of T-shirts and three pairs of cargo pants into her duffle bag, along with her toiletries and threw it on the bed beside a pair of sneakers and dress shoes.

“Are you sure about this?” Her sister asked.

No, she wasn't sure about anything. She bit her lip and eyed the clothes hanging in her closet. Only the best would do. She ran her fingers along the collar of the blue button-down shirt and remembered the first time they met eight years ago.



Ivy had just gotten off a four-day rotation on Blyter Region's outer moons. As soon as her shuttle docked on Sala, a neutral resting station, Bryan, her mechanic had run off to meet up with his sister, and she had gotten a room, showered, then went in search of something to eat.

The bustle of the station never failed to set her nerves on edge. It might have been neutral ground, but half of these beings, wouldn't blink an eye to attack her once she was out of safe air space. Even though weapons were allowed, you would be permanently banned if you were caught using one. No matter, she still felt a sense of comfort from the phaser strapped around her leg. Her father had gifted it to her when she was fourteen, six years ago.

She ignored the stares as she entered the establishment and nodded her thanks when she was seated in a booth toward the back of the room, away from prying eyes. Once the waitress took her order, she pulled out her tablet and looked over her calendar, purposely keeping her gaze averted from the group that had just entered.

The Penkos were officially known as traders, but everyone knew their practices were unscrupulous in the best of times. They were thieves and had no honor. In the war of the Triads, their kind had used underhanded tactics to kill hundreds of thousands of innocents. It wouldn't bother her one bit if their entire planet was wiped out.

She looked up when they started hollering, clapping, and stomping their feet. The five men moved out of the way to allow a woman to pass through. Once she was clear of them, the woman bowed and grinned at them.

“Please, please,” she said. “Don't stop on my account.” She placed her hands on her chest and laughed.

When the woman turned in her direction, Ivy swallowed as those deep blue eyes settled on her. The signature gray hair of the Penkos, fell in curls around the woman's shoulders and she had the marks of a warrior, two red lines, around two inches long, tattooed on the side of her neck.

Ivy knew what those marks meant. This woman had killed and not just a few but a lot. It was one thing to have one mark, but two was almost unheard of. Whoever she was, she wasn't some lowly soldier. This woman was high ranking, or royalty.

Disgust coiled in her stomach and she turned from the woman's fiery gaze. If she hadn't been so hungry, she would have left, but the granola bar she ate three hours ago, was long gone. She thanked the waitress when her stew was set on the table, along with several pieces of bread.

“Excuse me?”

Ivy swallowed, set her spoon back in her bowl, and discreetly slid her left hand to the handle of her phaser. She slowly turned her head and caught the Penkos woman’s eyes. There were a lot of things she could have said, but she wasn’t here for trouble, and she would behave because Bryan didn’t deserve them to be banned from the station. “Can I help you?”

Without asking for permission, the Penkos woman slid into the seat across from her, leaned back against the cushion, and laid her arm across the back of the seat.

“Come here often?”

Ivy blinked and glanced around the room, but no one was looking at them. Did she just really ask her that? Did she not know what race she was?

“Who wants to know?”

She held out her hand, and Ivy only hesitated for a moment before lifting her hand from her phaser and clasping the one across from her. Soft fingers caressed her hand before sliding out of her grasp.

“Resha.”

“Ivy.”

Resha cocked her head. “So, come here often? I only ask because I have a proposition for you.”

“Just like that?” Ivy snapped her fingers and ignored her comm beeping in her pocket.

“Why not? You have something I want.”

“Look, my shuttle doesn’t carry cargo. Do you know what I am?” Ivy said.

“I have eyes. Yes, I know you are an Amdon.” Resha shrugged. “Should that concern me? The war’s been over for hundreds of years.” She narrowed her eyes. “Don’t tell me you’re still holding a grudge?”

“You have some nerve.”

“You have no idea.” Resha rested her elbows on the table and leaned forward. “So, about that proposition?”

“I don’t have anything of value. I’m not sure what you want.”

Resha licked her lips. “You. I want you.”

Ivy sucked in a breath and shook her head. Was this really happening? Could this really be happening? That was the last thing she expected.

Resha grasped Ivy’s hand across the table. “I stop here every four months. It would be nice to know I have someone waiting for me and I don’t have to look for company.”

Ivy jerked her hand back. “I am not a body slave.”

“I didn’t think you were. If I wanted one, I could easily acquire one.”

“Why me?”

Resha bit her bottom lip. “I saw you when you arrived. Those leather pants hugged your ass like a glove. You’re hot and I want to fuck you. Why not you?”

Ivy swallowed. Why was she even hesitating? She hated Resha’s kind. She pulled her comm out when it beeped again. It was Bryan informing her he would be ready at eight in the morning. She slipped it back in her pocket and ate a bit of her stew when the waitress set a steak on the table in front of Resha and a glass of clear liquid. She was pretty sure that wasn’t water.

When the table was cleared, Resha dabbed her lips with her napkin. “Are you going to join me in my room?”

Ivy threw a few bills on the table and stood up. “No.” The disappointment that flickered on Resha’s face only gave her pause for a second.

“You’re coming back to my room with me.” Ivy said.

She might still hold out some hostile feelings toward Resha's kind, but it had been a while since she'd spent the night with a beautiful woman. One night couldn't hurt.

Resha stood up and followed her out of the restaurant. Ivy kept her back to Resha and nodded at the people that passed them and spit at the few people who dared to make a derogatory comment toward them. When one particular man passed by them and slurred his words, Resha slipped her arm around Ivy's waist, not allowing her to miss her stride.

"They're not worth it," she whispered in Ivy's ear.

Once at her room, Ivy gripped her key, and didn't comment when Resha slipped it from her hand and waved it over the lock. When the click sounded, Ivy pushed the door open and pulled her jacket off while Resha shut the door. Ivy slid her hands in her pockets and took in the woman in front of her.

Alone, Resha didn't look all that intimidating, but there was no mistaking she was powerful and attractive. If it had been any other species she would have been concerned but she knew the Penkos anatomy was the same as hers.

"So..." She rocked back on her heels and stiffened when Resha stepped in front of her, slipped her arms around her waist, and pulled their bodies flush together. Her heart pounded in her chest and she closed her eyes. Resha smelled sweet, with a touch of spice. Without opening her eyes, she slid her arms around Resha and ran her hands up her back and gripped her shoulders, before rising and biting her ear.

Resha threw her head back and laughed. "Oh, Ivy. I think we're going to have a lot of fun."

Ivy yelped when Resha lifted her up, and wrapped her legs around Resha's waist.

"You might not know this about my species, but we are extremely strong." Resha said.

"Shut up and put those muscles to use," said Ivy.

With the first taste of Resha's lips and the swipe of her tongue, Ivy knew she was a goner. Resha laid her on the bed with ease, and straddled her, keeping her entire weight from pressing down on Ivy.

"You sure about this?" Resha asked.

Instead of answering her, Ivy leaned forward, grabbed Resha's shirt and pulled it over her head. She let her eyes linger on Resha's chest and toned abs, before licking her way from her collarbone up her neck.

Resha shuddered above her. "I'll take that as a yes."



Ivy was jerked from her memories when her sister shook her arm. "You with me now?"

"Yes, and yes I'm sure about this. We meet every four months. This is not going to be any different."

Her sister smiled sadly. "If you say so. Her family's going to be there, aren't they?"

Of course her family would be there. "I'm trying not to think about it."

"You said her brother was sending you a pass for their landing station." She zipped Ivy's bag for her.

"I received it yesterday." She hugged Elisha tight. "I'll be fine. Don't worry so much."

"I love you. Of course I worry." She sobered. "I've heard their ceremonies are beautiful."

Ivy turned her face away. "That's what I hear."

"Ivy, you don't have to do this." She gripped her forearm. "You really don't. No one would think badly of you if you didn't go."

Ivy sighed. "Yes, I do—If only to say goodbye. I need the closure."

"Well." She took a step back. "I'm just a tap of the comm away."

"I need to get going." Ivy said.

"I'll see you in a few days."

“Fingers crossed.” The truth was, the flight plan she had mapped out wouldn’t be easy to transverse, but she had a good feeling she wouldn’t be attacked on the trip. Over the years, her shuttle had been tied to Resha and her group. She still didn’t know whether that was a good or bad thing, but if it granted her safe passage she would take it.

She settled into her shuttle, engaged the flight plan, and only relaxed when she was given the all clear and took flight. After initializing the cruise control, she kicked her feet up and grabbed the bag of dried fruit she packed and thought back to two years ago when they’d meet up at an outpost outside of Sanmoron Region. It wasn’t exactly neutral territory, but they were a peaceful people and they both felt comfortable exploring the area. It was the first time since they’d met that she felt like they’d turned a corner and were more than fuck buddies.



Other books in the series

A Heart Well Traveled - Volume One

Tales of Long Distance Love Affairs and Unlikely Outcomes

Discover the many facets of romantic relationships as authors in Volume One of, *A Heart Well Traveled*, unravel the trials and tribulations of long distance love affairs.

Each author, with their own unique style of storytelling, will leave the reader begging for more. Go from wild rides to gentle love stories, exploring the twists and turns lovers go through as they work to be together despite the distance between them.

Explore bonds beyond friendship, chance meetings, family drama, gender complexity, longstanding love and unexpected passion as lovers seek their happily ever after.

A Heart Well Traveled is a collection of short stories where women who love woman share the joys and challenges of long distance relationships.

Can love really conquer all?

Coming December 2017

A Heart Well Traveled - Volume Three

Tales of Long Distance Love Affairs and Unlikely Outcomes

Love stretches across international boundaries as Sapphire brings you a collection of unique stories of romance and intrigue across the continents.

Pack your bags and let your imagination run wild as you find yourself on romantic escapes to Africa, Australia, Bora Bora, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, South America and the United Kingdom.

This fast-paced anthology will leave you wondering if you could endure love with nothing but miles between you and your lover. Watch as the characters face countless impossibilities without ever losing sight of the one thing we all want, one true love.

Can they defy the odds?

Other Anthologies by Sapphire Books Publishing

The One: Stories of Falling in Love Forever - ISBN - 978-1-943353-32-3

If lucky enough, we fall in love once in a lifetime.

Children's books and romance novels promise us an encounter with a beautiful, mythical love – a passionate lover that sweeps us off our feet and changes everyday life into happily-ever-after. In reality, most fall in love a couple of times throughout a lifetime. Yet, those relationships fail to fulfill the “forever” expectancy – they end. Still, we hope that love, true and eternal will embrace us. We hope that stardust will cover the banal when life becomes monotonous or loneliness grasps us too firmly when days fade to night.

Reading about love triumphant sparks desire for more than uninspired routine existence.

In *The One*, an assortment of writers chronicle the discovery of the one woman to share the rest of life's journey.

Everyone deserves happily ever after!

A Sapphire Collection - Our Stories Continue Vol. 1 - ISBN - 978-1-943353-49-1

We craft lives from memories, shared moments with others, and from our experience as beings in the world. Our stories emerge from fashioning bits and pieces of life together with imagination and putting these ideas into words. As writers, we build worlds, give birth to characters, and hope to create a portal into a new realm, a place of communion of ideas, where fiction is alive in the mind of the reader. That's the joy of having others read our work. Our stories continue in the mind of the reader. Stories become shared spaces of strength, joy, personal insight, and where the individual loses herself for a while in an alternative realm of her own creation