

## A MORNING AT MY HOUSE IN TUSCANY

by Maxine Dunn

Waking up in the west upstairs bedroom feels unimaginably luxurious, the cozy confines of the feather bed engulfing me as I gaze at the crackling fire.

I'm excited this morning as I've bought a grand, old, chandelier for the dining room and today is the day we're picking it up. It will be rather a feat of engineering to fit the giltwood and iron Venetian masterpiece into the back of our tiny van and find a way to attach this imposing antique to the ceiling.

I finally find the strength to extricate myself from my cocoon and pad down the hall to the main bathroom. Even though our restoration of this old house is still underway, this was one of the first rooms we finished and probably my favorite. In the center of the floor is a hand inlaid marble mosaic tile, a beautifully detailed fleur-de-lis pattern within a square, three feet by three feet.

There's an enormous window on the far wall, its generous sill, Portoro black and gold marble, the folds of its thick velvet curtain pulled to the side and nothing but vivid green beyond. The window is almost as high as the ceiling and has a rustic bronze handle that takes two hands to turn and open. Leaning on the massive frame, I push on its obstinate weight with all my might to get my first taste of the day.

Standing at the open window my skin feels moist and cool, the breeze blowing my nightgown against my body as I listen to the soft rain falling on the vineyards in the valley below me. Even though the clouds are low and gray, the bougainvillea and jasmine under the window are blooming, the wild fennel on the other side of the garden wall, filling the air with licorice.

My nose is telling me that coffee is already being made in the kitchen. What a joy! I can hear the espresso maker hissing and gurgling as I walk down the old mahogany staircase. It joins the upper level to the lower level like the slender passageway in the center of an hourglass, intimately connecting the airy artistry of the rooms above with the stony, permanent, warmth of the main house below.

The Florentine terracotta tiles cool the soles of my feet as I make my way to the kitchen, pausing for a good morning kiss and then step outside the heavy wooden door that leads to the garden.

## A MORNING AT MY HOUSE IN TUSCANY

by Maxine Dunn

The rain is softer now, almost a mist, but I see it dancing across the leaves of the olive trees, thousands of tiny drops shimmering in the puddles beneath the bird bath, the rose petals damp and soft but full of color even on this wet day.

I walk along our beloved porphyry path that surrounds the lavender bed, its gray and purple stones rough and sturdy underfoot, the ancient Forno oven looming almost as a sculpture at the end of the garden.

As I bend my head forward to take another sip of my coffee, I hear, "Maxine!" A little startled, I realize that I have become immersed once again in the sensory perfection of this place. "Let's go get our chandelier! We can have it up by tonight!"

I smile as I turn and walk back inside, my cup of coffee warming my palms as I hold it close to my face, my bare feet leaving wet footprints on the deep red tiles.