

Family Therapy 2

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A work of fiction, meant for adults. Read something else if you are not an adult, or are offended by stories with sexual content. Then again, if all you're looking for is in-out, in-out, in-out, you should probably read something else. I welcome constructive comments. Enjoy.

Ron

As I said earlier, virtually all my initial contacts are by electronic mail; there are exceptions. And Ron is if nothing else, an exception. Both Lydia and Tom had made oblique references to a friend of theirs giving me a call; they'd said he could use my help -- he just didn't know it yet.

So one morning the phone rang. "Good morning Janet, my name is Ron. Lydia and Tom suggested I give you a call. Would you have some time in the near future when we could get together and speak in detail?"

I like screening my clients. I insist on screening my clients. I feel secure and sleep better because I screen my clients. "Ron, I was just stepping out for a while; may I have your number and call you back later in the day?" I also realize that clients pay my bills. He gave me his number and told me he looked forward to talking with me.

I gave Lydia a call; she was in class but her secretary would have her call as soon as she got out.

That was about an hour later. "Lydia, thanks for calling back so soon. I got a call from a Ron, he said you and Tom recommended me."

"Oh, good -- I'm glad he finally called; he's in our yoga class. He's got some interesting problems that I think you could do wonders with."

"I appreciate your recommending me -- can you give me some more information? He said he knows both of you. Is he a mathematician, a lawyer, what?"

I heard Lydia's relaxed laughter through the phone. "Professionally, you could consider him the best or worst of both. He's a patent attorney; his degrees are in physics and mathematics, then in law. It's an up and coming specialty; he's quite good, which is his blessing and curse."

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This could be interesting -- he's undoubtedly a highly analytical type; sometimes these people have problems with hypnosis, as did Tom. "Why is that, Lydia?"

"Well, he's very good, perhaps one of the best in the area, so he's very busy. I think he may be working a little too hard, but he's also trying to relax; I don't think he's missed yoga in six months."

Hmmm... I might as well be blunt. "So, Lydia. You'd feel safe having your and your husband's cherished therapist alone in a room with this person?"

That got raucous laughter. "Yes, dear, completely. He has a very successful and growing practice. We've had him over for dinner on occasion; he's very nice. We see him regularly for yoga. I vouch for him completely. He's talked to me about his problems, and I've told him he should see you. So has Tom."

Sounds like a good candidate to me. "Thank you Lydia, I appreciate that. Will I see you Thursday morning?"

I heard her sigh over the phone. "Yes dear, you will, most definitely. I wouldn't miss it. Oh, be sure and ask Ron about Yoga last week."

We ended the conversation and I called Ron back. I got his voicemail at a law firm and left him the message that today or tomorrow at four would be good, he should leave me a message as to which was better for him. Then I took off to run errands.

When I got back an hour or so later he'd called back confirming that afternoon, but needing the address. I smiled to myself; Lydia might have given out my phone number, but she didn't give him my address. I called back, got voicemail again, and gave him the address, and suggested he wear loose fitting clothing if possible.

After Lydia and Tom, I wasn't sure what to expect. A successful lawyer, growing practice, one of the best in the area -- I guess I had a mental picture of a person fitting that description. I wasn't ready for a man in his early 30's, sandy brown hair and blue eyes, slender build, wearing jeans and a leather jacket and carrying a backpack. He looked more like my typical grad student clients.

"Ron?" I said, evidently with some surprise in my voice.

He laughed and said, "That's me. Thanks for seeing me so soon."

We walked back to my office and I sat him in the victim chair. He put his pack down, then took a pager off his belt, pushed the buttons a few times and dumped it into his pack. "There. That won't bother us." He ran a hand through his hair and looked at me smiling.

"Lydia told you about me, and I don't meet your image of the successful lawyer," he said.

I laughed. “No, not quite. You spoke to her today?”

“Yes, I was speaking with her when you called back. She told me quite clearly that if I did anything to upset or hurt you, she’d fry my liver and feed it to her dogs.”

I laughed again, blushing a little. That wasn’t a side of Lydia I’d seen, but one I could very easily imagine.

He leaned forward slightly and said, “That tells me you are very special to her; you’ve earned her trust and respect, something few people do. She told me I could confide in you fully, openly, and without hesitation.”

I sighed. “Thank you. She is very special as well. I may be able to help you, but I’m not a miracle worker; what I’m best at is helping people help themselves. What can I help you with?”

“She told you what I do?”

“She told me you’re a patent attorney, but I don’t know what that means.”

He nodded his head. “I’m the worst combination of engineer and lawyer. I meet with engineers and scientists, researchers, and talk to them in their own terms about the new things they’ve invented, the problems they’ve solved. Then I take that information and turn it into prose that other people can understand. In one sense I’m a translator, a bridge between the worlds.”

“And the problem you have?”

“It’s a blessing and a curse. I’m constantly searching for the right word, the right phrase to express what these people are doing. I carry all these details around in my head, searching for the right way, a better way, of expressing things. Some times it comes easily, some times not.” He sat quiet for a moment.

“Monkey chatter,” I said. “You can’t get it to stop.”

He nodded his head and touched an index finger to his nose. “Lydia told me you were good. Sometimes I want so much to be able to turn it off, or just have it go away for a while.” He let out a sigh.

“You’ve been doing yoga, how about meditation? Have those helped?”

He laughed. “Yes, they have, very much. But even then... One evening last week I was meditating, my mind was clearing, I was relaxing, letting go, and then the solution to a thing I’d been working on for days popped into my head. I got up and wrote it down. Like I said, blessing and curse.”

I remembered what Lydia had said. “Was that in yoga last week?”

He laughed softly. “She told you about that? No, that was something different, something vastly different. How can I explain it? Near the end of class we were doing a twisting back stretch. You lay on your back, shoulders on the mat, right foot straight out, left foot on right knee, let the left knee drop over to the right side. It’s very relaxing. I had my eyes closed, going with it, when our instructor came over and as I exhaled, she pushed down on my shoulders and said, ‘Relax.’ For some incredible period of time I was about a million miles away from that place. Then during meditation she came over and touched my forehead and it happened again, not as far away, but I think for longer.”

I nodded my head. This is a special experience. “Any guess at how long either time?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “The first time, maybe a few seconds. The second time it must have been a minute, possibly two.”

“There are people who go through life without ever experiencing what you did, and you experienced it twice in one evening. How did you feel afterwards?”

He laughed a bit again. “Shaken, but in a good sense. I felt more alive somehow.”

“So what can I do? How can hypnosis help?”

He gave me a very intense yet relaxed look as he said softly, “Help me wake up.”

I sighed. He was going to be interesting. “Hypnosis and self-hypnosis can help you relax and center yourself; you sound like you’re most of the way there already. Other things may pop out in the process. Is this what you’re interested in?”

He nodded and said, “Yes, very much.”

“Then I suggest we do two or three sessions and see where that takes us.”

“Good. Where do we start?”

“Well, would you like to do this sitting or laying down?” I asked.

He looked around the room a bit and said, “Neither, really; I’d like to work with one particular pose.”

I nodded. “Okay, if you’d like to change, use the bathroom down the hall; we’ll probably be an hour or so. You can remain in that pose comfortably, very relaxed, for that long?”

“Oh yes,” he said, standing up.

He came back into the room wearing a T-shirt and exercise shorts. He looked around for a moment and moved over to an empty spot on the floor. He moved to the floor, scooting his side up against the wall, then pivoted so his bottom was against the wall and extended his legs straight up. I saw his face start to soften; I quickly moved to the floor by his head.

“This is a wonderful pose. I spend an hour or so a day like this, and every night before I go to bed. Once I’m like this, I close my eyes, take a deep breath, and let go,” he said softly.

Some times you leave your training behind and go on instinct. Or is it that your training has deepened so that it works from an instinctive level? I don’t know. Whichever it is, when I saw his hands and arms release, heard that exhalation and saw the relaxation flow through him as his eyes closed, I moved.

I pressed gently on his shoulders and said, “Deeper... Go deeper for me...” He was there already and I took him deeper. “Let yourself go deeper into your natural trance, relaxing so completely.” I took him deeper, relaxing him, watching his face smooth out so quickly. Then I saw his legs start to move and was unsure for a moment; then I saw they were moving out, so I went with that, encouraging him as his legs relaxed into a split. “And as your legs move, the relaxation spreads and you feel your hips relaxing, letting your legs spread farther, your hips and your back relaxing, taking you deeper.”

I watched his legs spread a little further. I spent a while anchoring his trance, then helping him work out an agreement with his subconscious. I gave him the vision of being in meditation, his mind clear and quiet, of how easy it was to quiet his mind because he knew it was good for him. I gave him a number of other suggestions for dealing with stress and improving his ability to recognize it and to relax. Then I started massaging his temples, taking him deeper, more relaxed, and gave him another anchor, and the ability to go into trance when he wanted to, and to awaken easily. I let him rest for a while, integrating what we’d done.

As I watched him laying there, legs split, I thought I really ought to try this yoga class, or at least meet the instructor. I went to the gym a one or two days a week, but this intrigued me. Lydia and Tom were in such good shape; they moved so well. So did Ron. Maybe it was time for me to turn a new page as well.

I love the combination of touch and trance; it’s so powerful. I thought I’d known how powerful before I met Lydia; now I knew better. I started bringing him up, moving back to let him awaken. He took a deep breath, moved his hands, then helped his legs together and let them both drop to the right. He lay on his side for a few moments, then moved smoothly to sitting up. I moved over, sitting in front of him.

“How was that?” I asked, even though I knew the answer.

He closed his eyes and breathed in slowly. As he started to exhale, I reached over and touched his forehead, saying, “Dream time.” He slumped forward and I caught his shoulders, propping up his limp body. I was reading people well today... I talked to him softly, getting him

to sit up, then distinguishing the mental state from the physical state so he would be able to go into a deep trance and remain sitting up. I woke him again.

“How was that?” I asked.

He laughed softly. “Wonderful, both times. Before today I didn’t know where I wanted to go; now I know I’ve been there before.”

I smiled. “Now I want you to think about a technical problem you’ve been working on -- close your eyes, concentrate, and let it fill your mind.”

I watched his gaze shift, harden. His eyes closed, then drifted up and to the right, then centered again, focusing on something in the distance of his mind. I reached over, and with one hand behind his head, touched his forehead again. “Dream time.” His eyes closed and he sighed softly, his body wavered a bit but he remained sitting; if anything his posture improved. “So deep now, mind so clear, mind so calm, mind so quiet and so calm, so peaceful.”

I deepened him, anchored that state, then let him rest in it, putting things together. I woke him for the third time. I just smiled.

He moved his head gently side to side. “That was incredible. I can do it. Thank you so much.”

I had to laugh. “You did all the work; all I did was help a little.”

I moved back and stood up. He flowed up, slowly and gracefully. I needed to check out this yoga class.

He went back to the bathroom and changed. He gave me a check and we tentatively scheduled an appointment for two weeks to check on how he was doing; I told him I didn’t think he’d need much more help, especially if he practiced every day. In passing I asked him about the yoga class and he filled me in on the details, telling me the instructors were great. We parted with a handshake; I heard him laughing as he walked down the street.

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I got a call from him about a week later. “How are you doing? How is your meditation going?” I asked him.

“It’s going very well. I find I can clear my mind now so easily, be so quiet and calm, and yet my focus has improved as well. It’s incredible. But I’ve got a problem, that’s the reason I called.”

He sounded very serious all of a sudden. “Oh, what can I do to help?”

“Well, I think I need a referral to another therapist.”

I was shocked. “Of course... But could you tell me why? You don’t have to, but if you can, I’d really like to know. If you think a refund is in order, I’ll be happy to consider it” What had I done? I thought things went so well, better than I’d expected in fact.

“No, no.... First of all, it’s nothing you’ve done; what you’ve done for me was amazing, helping me achieve much more than I’d believed possible. It’s more an ethical or professional conduct issue.”

Now I was really concerned, but he continued.

“I believe you are a highly ethical individual; you’ve earned Lydia’s respect, something very rare. In my analysis I think it would pose too many problems to attempt to deal simultaneously with both... Oh hell, I’m rambling. I’m sorry... I think it would be best for us to sever the professional relationship so we can start a social one; I’d very much like to know you better. If you feel that’s not possible, just tell me and I’ll understand. You did make a very big dent in me. But I’d like to take you out to dinner.”

I laughed. “You don’t think it’s ethical for me to date a client, so you don’t want to be a client anymore, is that it?”

“Very well put; are you busy for dinner tomorrow night?”

I laughed again. My heart felt it was the thing to do. “I need to think it over tonight. You’ve presented me with a wonderful dilemma. You don’t think we could proceed on a professional basis?”

“We could, but I don’t know if I want to or could restrict it to a professional relationship.”

An answer from the heart; calling for the same from me. “The answer is yes. I’d be delighted to go to dinner with you tomorrow. We need to tread softly, carefully.”

I heard him sigh. “I understand and agree. I’ll call you tomorrow before lunch to set the time. Any particular likes or dislikes?”

“I’d prefer something quiet. I eat anything.”

“Okay then, I’ll talk to you tomorrow. Thanks so much for your understanding.”

“You’re welcome. Talk to you tomorrow.”

I put down the phone and took a deep breath. Wow. Was this transference with a capital “T?” I didn’t think so. I’d facilitated his own trance state, helping him recognize and develop it. My work as a therapist was completed with him. We’d just have to see.

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I picked up the phone and called Lydia; I had a copy of her schedule, she should be in the office. She was.

“Lydia, do you have a few minutes to talk? I’ve got a problem.”

“Why yes dear, of course. What’s the problem?”

“It’s with Ron. He just called me and told me he wanted a referral to another therapist...”

I was going to go on explaining, but she shouted, “He what? Tell me exactly what happened.”

Maybe this was the wrong approach, I got her upset, and that’s definitely not what I wanted.

“Lydia, it’s all right. He asked me out, that’s why he wanted to sever the professional relationship. He asked me out on a date.”

Now she was laughing; good. I wouldn’t want her upset.

“That’s different. That’s wonderful. What did you tell him?”

“I told him yes, I’d go out with him.”

“That’s wonderful dear... He’s such a talented and nice young man. I’m glad to see he’s pulling his nose away from the grindstone a little more. So if I may pry, your session with him went well? We didn’t have a chance to talk after yoga last week.”

She was prying, but she’d prodded me on the important things. “Lydia, your telling me to ask about his experience in yoga was the key; when he told me what had happened, I knew he was there already. Thank you. It went very well.”

I heard her sigh over the phone. “That evening after class he looked shaken. When he told us what he’d felt, I knew from what we’ve done that all he needed was a nudge. So where is he taking you for dinner?”

“I don’t know. I’ll find out tomorrow. And what is this about frying someone’s liver and feeding it to your dogs? I didn’t know you had dogs...”

I heard Lydia’s full laugh. “Yes, I’m very protective about some people. I did threaten the managing partner at his firm; they need to ease up on him, he’s doing very well for them, and they needed a little reminder of that.”

Not what I was expecting, but now I knew that he was also special to her. I wonder if he knew that?

“Lydia, you are a very special friend, and client. I’ve learned a great deal from you.”

“Janet, you have an incredible talent. You have done so much for us. I want to be able think of you as not only a therapist, but as a counselor and a friend. I’d like you to think of me not only as a client, but also as a friend, and a counselor you can turn to. We have a great deal to offer to each other.”

“Thank you Lydia, you have shown me so much.”

That afternoon I dealt with another “I like smoking but I want to stop” case. It was our second session; we were making progress. Another one and we’d be there. The issue isn’t getting them to stop, it’s getting them to want to stop and not do something else that will upset them, and to make sure smoking isn’t covering up some other problem.

After we finished, I put my aerobics tights on under some street clothes and headed out a little after five. I had an appointment a few blocks over. I found the address; it was on the second floor above some shops. I knocked on the door and a man in his mid thirties answered; tall, square jaw, brown hair in a ponytail, flashing brown eyes. He smiled.

“You must be Janet. I’m Bill, come in please.”

I went in and he closed the door behind me. It was a large room, a few chairs on one side, a large well padded carpeted area in the middle, going right up to the walls on two sides, one of them mirrored. A desk was in one corner, a long table with a sign up sheet near the door. It felt serene, relaxing.

“Would you like a chair?” he offered.

“The floor is fine, actually.”

We both sat on the floor off to one corner. I moved as gracefully as I could.

“You’ve spoken to some of the people that practice here?” he asked.

It was professional -- I matched his breathing; he was relaxed. “Not so much spoken to them, but watched them, observed them. They move with such grace and ease.”

“That’s one of the things yoga practice can bring. Do you have specifics you’re interested in? Relaxation? Stress relief?”

I smiled. “I think I’m pretty good at relaxing. I’d like to learn more about living with my body, developing that comfort and ease.”

We talked for a few more minutes. I told him I’d not done yoga before; he had me stretch and move a bit; I told him I felt stiff, and could use the flexibility.

Then he asked me if there was any particular area I was interested in working.

“There’s one pose I’d like to learn, one with your bottom against the wall and your legs in the air.”

He smiled and started walking to the wall. “It’s an inverted pose, and very good for meditation.”

He had me sit down with a hip up against the wall, then swing around and bring my legs up. He centered my legs and then bent down and arranged my shoulders, pulling them out from the wall a bit, then arranging my arms out at about a 45 degree angle.

“Now close your eyes, take a slow deep breath into your belly, and then let go of it.”

As I breathed in I felt my back, really felt my spine on the floor. It was easy to take a deep breath, feeling my ribs expand. I let it out and felt my spine relax, all the way from my neck to my hips. I took another breath, slow, letting the sensation spread. When I let go of that breath I felt his warm hands on my shoulders and he said, “Relax...”

I let go and was floating. A while later I heard the sounds of the door, so I brought myself back up. I rolled to one side as I’d seen Ron do and moved to a sitting position. I looked over the room; a young woman had entered. Bill saw me moving and they both walked over. From the way they walked together I knew they were lovers, the way her hips turned, the way they matched each other as they moved.

“Janet, this is Jasmine, my partner in the practice. Janet came for the beginning class this evening. You are very good at relaxing,” he said to me. I looked at the clock on the wall; I’d been out for about ten minutes.

“Thank you. I’ve never done that pose before. I know I’ll do it often from now on.”

Jasmine smiled. She had a thin build, light brown hair pulled back, greenish eyes. “That pose is a favorite of a few of the people here.”

Bill moved away and Jasmine and I spoke briefly. She led me through a couple of sequences, advising me to pay close attention to my body; yoga is not competitive, so I shouldn’t judge myself by watching others; everyone moves at their own pace. She provided me with a thin rubber mat and set it up near the front of the room.

The class started at six, with people continuing to arrive for another few minutes. I let myself drift into a training trance, something I’d not used recently, and focused on Jasmine and Bill, doing the best I could, listening to my body, paying attention when it cried “enough!” That was often -- I learned quickly that hatha yoga took not only flexibility that I didn’t have, but also strength I lacked, especially upper body strength.

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Near the end of class we did the twist that Ron had described; one foot on the other knee, let it drop to the side. I was breathing deep into the twist, feeling my knee rise with each inhalation, feeling it drop a little more with each exhalation, when I felt hands on me. I heard Jasmine's voice say, "Relax and breathe." I felt her hands on my shoulders and another pair of hands on my extended foot.

On my next exhale she held my shoulders while the other pair of hands pulled on my foot. I consciously told myself to relax and felt my body lengthen, felt my knee go further over. It was great. Then her hands moved to my head and moved my head slightly, straightening and lengthening my neck. It felt even better. After a few more breaths we switched sides and they stretched me again; glorious.

We went from that to lying meditation. I let go, following my breath, enjoying the new peace I'd found.

The class ended too soon; we sat up and bowed. Sitting up after the bow I cleared my head; I knew I was going to be sore the next day. As people milled about, Jasmine and Bill came over to me; I also saw someone moving over from behind me.

"You did very well," Bill told me.

"And you relax very well; most people would have tightened up during that twist," Jasmine added.

"Thank you. You've got another regular," I told them, then looked around to see who was behind me.

"Ron! What are you doing here?" I asked in happy surprise.

"I was going to ask the same thing. I'm so glad you came here. Lydia will be thrilled as well."

Bill pointed to me with a questioning look on his face, then touched his forehead and let his head drop back momentarily. I looked over at Ron, who nodded his head up and down. How much did they know?

Jasmine asked, "You worked with Ron, and Lydia and her husband?"

"Yes, I have."

Jasmine looked at Bill and smiled. She turned back to me. "We've seen the difference you've made in their lives. We're very glad to have you here." She seemed to be on the verge of saying something else, but other people moved near and she and Bill got up. I turned to Ron.

"What are you doing in a beginning class? I thought you were in the more advanced class with Lydia and Tom?"

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He laughed a little. "I am. I come as well because I enjoy the practice -- I need it. I have a number of people telling me I should be spending more time doing things I enjoy... And, you haven't had dinner yet! Do you like Japanese food?"

I laughed as well. "I love Japanese, and I haven't eaten yet. I thought our date was tomorrow night?"

"It is, but I've got a standing reservation at a Japanese place for after class. I'd be honored if you'd join me."

"I'd be delighted. Let me put some things on over this." I got up and put my slacks and blouse back on over my tights. I moved a bit on the mat; I'd feel it tomorrow, which meant I needed to come back and do it again. Jasmine saw me and walked over. "You'll probably be a bit sore tomorrow; plenty of liquids and a hot bath tonight will help."

"Yes, I was planning on that. The best thing for me to do though is come back and practice more."

She nodded and walked off.

As I put my socks and shoes on, Ron walked over, now dressed. He helped me stand.

"What a wonderful surprise! Did Lydia finally talk you into starting?" he asked.

"No, she hadn't mentioned it. Was she going to?"

He chuckled. "We've been plotting on how to get you to join. She said she'd take care of it. I'll thank her anyway."

We walked down the stairs and on to the street. "Ah, Ron, just how much do they know about me?"

He took my arm in his. "They only know that you're a therapist in private practice, and you've worked with Lydia, Tom, and me. Lydia and Tom have both sung your praises, and now I do as well, quietly of course. I think they may be looking for someone to help lead meditation a couple of nights a week. You wouldn't happen to know of anyone, would you?" His eyes sparkled in the streetlight as we walked.

"We'll just have to see. I think my evenings are starting to book up, though. What with the beginning yoga class twice a week..."

We walked to the restaurant and went in. Ron was expected; he spoke with the staff in Japanese and they showed us to a small table, whisking off the "Reserved" sign as we sat down.

"You speak Japanese as well?" I asked as we wiped our hands with hot towels.

“Yes, army brat -- it’s one of the things that makes me popular. Some times I think I could make more money and work fewer hours just translating technical documents for people.”

“I’ve always wanted to visit Japan, there’s a small hut I’d like to see in a forest...”

He got the funniest look on his face. “Gogo-an by Mount Kugami? Ryokan? You have to go during the week, during the winter. Otherwise it’s too crowded.”

“You’ve been there?” I asked, shocked. “Do you have any pictures?”

He smiled; I could see the emotion in him. “I’ve been there. I don’t have any pictures; they can’t do a place like that justice. I’ll take you there if you like.”

I was impressed by the tears forming in his eyes; Ryokan is perhaps the greatest of the Zen poets, definitely my favorite. It’s a small world.

“I think we should have dinner first.”

He laughed and ordered dinner after consulting with me. We talked about Yoga. I told him about my experience, including doing his favorite pose before class, and having Bill touch me and send me floating.

“That happened to me in Tuesday’s class; we should probably talk to Bill and Jasmine. I was up against the wall for meditation, she touched me on the forehead and said something, and the next thing I knew she was shaking my shoulder and forty minutes had passed.”

I sighed. “I’ll talk to them; there’s nothing for you to worry about, they just need to know how to bring you out. You can only go into a trance when you think it’s safe, and that is a very safe place for you. Without someone to bring you out, or a subconscious instruction to bring yourself out, you just drifted off into natural sleep. Has that happened to you at home in the evening, starting like that and drifting off?”

He gave me a sheepish look. “Just about every night. I enjoy it. Give me the name of someone to talk to so I can learn to bring myself out.”

I frowned. “Nonsense. It’s my problem and I’ll fix it.” I smiled. “Besides, it will be fun.”

We had a very nice dinner, talking mostly about Ryokan and his poetry. That’s what led to the excitement afterwards.

Ron paid for dinner, and we were walking out when he pointed to some calligraphy hanging on the wall by the entrance. There was a crowd waiting to be seated, including some older Japanese businessmen, stonelike in their suits.

“Here’s one of my favorites. It’s written in an old style.” He moved his finger along the characters, speaking Japanese in a clear lyric voice; I could hear the emotion in his voice, even though I didn’t have a clue what he was saying.

When he finished and turned to me smiling, one of the Japanese businessmen said something to him in Japanese. Ron bowed and replied. The conversation continued in Japanese for a few minutes, bringing in more of the suits. There was the ceremonial exchange of business cards, with Ron bowing again during the exchange. After more bowing Ron took my arm gently and we went outside.

I started asking, “What was that about?” when he started laughing, head back, eyes closed. He laughed for a minute then gave me a big hug. “I need to sit down,” he said, so we walked over to a bus-stop bench and had a seat.

He was smiling, grinning really, and holding my hand.

“After I read that poem, Abe-san complimented me. We talked about Ryokan for a bit, his poems, his calligraphy. Abe-san introduced me to his associates, and I introduced myself, telling them I was an attorney -- *bengoshi desu*. They’re with a mid-sized high tech company.” He handed me one of their cards; I turned it over to the English side. “And they’re not happy with the firm doing their legal work. They’re coming over to my office tomorrow morning at ten.”

I squeezed his hand. “That’s great! You think it will mean business for you?”

“I think I’d have to do something pretty stupid to chase them off. I’m so glad I met you! My God, I’ve got a lot of work to do in the next thirteen hours!”

“Anything I can do to help?” I asked.

He sighed. “Thank you for asking. Landing these folks will be a big deal. Getting to sleep tonight and being relaxed tomorrow may be a problem.”

I smiled. “It’s not a problem at all. Do you want to do it here, my place, your place?”

“Why don’t we walk to my office; I need to spend some time there, pull things together.”

“No problem. I’ll do what I can to help. Let’s go.”

We walked to his office a few blocks away; he was rambling about the things he needed to pull together. He let us in, then turned into a whirlwind. I ended up in his office, a small room loaded with file folders of different colors, the walls covered with calligraphy. I grabbed a magazine from the reception area and made myself comfortable in his chair.

He whirled in and out, eventually coming back in and getting some stuff out of a desk drawer, then heading off again; it looked like a brush and a little wooden box.

He returned a few minutes later. "I need your help, please."

I got up and went to him. He was leaning against the door. "Of course, what can I do?"

We walked over to the conference room. On the conference table I saw some sheets of calligraphy, a brush, a small ink stone. He waved at the sheets.

"I'm still wired, and it shows. My hand shakes. Can you help?"

I sat him in a chair and sat in another one pulled in front of him so we were knee to knee.

"It looks beautiful to me," I said as I took his hands. They were shaking a little, and clammy.

"Thank you, but I can do far better, if I can relax a bit."

I nodded and let go of one hand. I raised my hand to his forehead and as I did, said, "Close your eyes and relax." I touched his forehead. "Dream time, deep trance for me, dream time."

I heard that wonderful sigh and saw his face relax, felt his other hand relax in mine. I helped him relax, feeling the calmness spread through his body, into his hands. I had him stand and moved him to the brush and paper. I talked to him about feeling the expression fill him, his love for the beauty of it, how much he enjoyed it. I had him open his eyes and pick up the brush, and then write.

It was awesome, watching him, moving the brush so expressively over the paper, speaking slowly in Japanese as he did so, doing one page, then another, then another, then another. After a while he put the brush down. I sat him down again.

"Let your eyes close again, remember this feeling, the place you're in right now, so relaxed, so creative and expressive. Whenever you want to, you can return to this special place where your writing is so easy, so beautiful. All you have to do is close your eyes for a moment as you hold the brush, take a slow breath, and as you let it out, you'll be there."

I gave him some instructions for relaxing in the morning, then woke him.

He took a deep breath, stretched, then opened his eyes and looked at the sheets covering the conference room table.

He smiled as he looked at them, then turned to me. "These are good. The feeling I had when I did them was incredible, the brush was part of me -- everything flowed..."

I went over and gave him a hug. "It was incredible watching you do it. What else do we need to do here?"

He sighed as he moved the sheets around. “That’s about it. These two are for the lobby, welcoming them.” He moved two sheets aside. He then picked up two far more complex ones; the characters were far more ornate; there was another ornate one as well.

“That looks like the one at the restaurant?” I said.

He nodded. “Good eye, you’re right. I’m going to give this one to Abe-san,” he put one down then turned to me, “and this one to you. The other one is for Abe-san as well.”

I was more than a little surprised. It was beautiful. “Which one is this?”

He pointed to a character, then laughed. “It’s right here. Sorry, this is one of my favourites, the end of it goes:

Wearing snowy straw sandals, I visit cold villages.
Go as deep as you can into life,
And you will be able to let go of even blossoms.”

“That one is one of my favorites as well, from Dew Drops on a Lotus Leaf,” I whispered.

He sighed. “Yes, so little time...” Then he straightened up again, took the sheet from my hand and gave me a hug. “Let’s get out of this madhouse.”

I helped him clean up; he wanted to throw away a number of pages of calligraphy, but I convinced him to let me have them. We set out the ones for the lobby, and he pinned the ones for Abe-san on the wall in the conference room. He left some voicemail messages for folks, then we left.

We started walking down the street, headed to my place. I stopped. “Let’s go to your place,” I said.

He gave me a questioning look.

“I want to tuck you in and make sure you get a good night sleep. I’ll let myself out and walk home; I’m a big girl.”

He sighed and smiled. “Thank you.”

We went to a fairly new condo complex just a few blocks from where I live. He had a nice unit, decorated in an eclectic oriental bachelor style and not picked up in a while. “Please ignore the mess; the cleaners are coming tomorrow,” he told me as we stepped in the door.

“Oh, optimistic, are you?” I couldn’t help needling him.

He had a surprised look on his face. I hugged him. "You got me to invite myself in already. Now go get ready for bed and let me know when you're ready to be tucked in."

He gave me a squeeze and a kiss on the forehead. I sat down on the leather sofa and looked out the window; he had a pretty good view of the city. The table was strewn with magazines and legal files, including some Japanese computer magazines. The artwork on the walls was interesting; mostly Japanese. I recognized Hiroshige and Hokusai prints, views of Edo and Mount Fuji. I opened the folder he'd given me and looked at his calligraphy once again. There was a similar one on a wall. Looking at both of them I could see small differences in the characters. The one he'd done tonight felt much more flowing. I put it down and used the half bath off the kitchen. I raised my top and put on a little more perfume; might as well make it a memorable experience.

"All ready," I heard him call.

I walked into his bedroom; it was a bit cleaner. He was in the king size bed, covers up around his neck, eyes closed. I walked over and sat down on the bed beside him, then leaned over and smothered his head between my breasts. He inhaled at the touch of the soft fabric and moaned softly. "Dream time, dream time, relax for me."

I held his head as I spoke to him, relaxing him, preparing him for the day tomorrow. Tomorrow he'd be alert yet calm, relaxed, focused. I dealt with his problem during yoga, so he could go into a trance if he wanted, but would always wake up at the end of class. I gave him some suggestions I might use when we became lovers, then talked to him more, taking him deeper, squeezing him to me, then sending him off to sleep.

I turned off the light and let myself out. As I walked home, I pondered the day. What a day it had been! I went in and closed the door to my little place. So much so fast -- Lydia... Was she playing matchmaker? I went to bed and dreamt of holding him, strange calligraphy, strong deep emotions....

Ron gave me a call the next morning thanking me again for my help; he felt great and couldn't remember when he'd slept better. He'd be by to pick me up around half past six; we were going to one of his favorite Continental restaurants, within walking distance. I knew of two, both were good, and expensive. I wished him well with his meeting. He told me it was going to be fun; some of the partners of the firm were in a frenzy.

As I was picking up clothes from the cleaners after lunch I found myself half a block from the yoga studio; I looked at my watch and thought of their schedule; they should be having an open practice session now. I decided to drop by.

Both Bill and Jasmine were there; Bill kept working with half a dozen people. Jasmine came over to me.

"It's good to see you again. What can we do for you?" I loved the way she moved, her smile.

“I wanted to talk about Ron, if you have a few minutes, about meditation the other night.”

“Certainly, why don’t we go over here.” We went over behind a set of paper screens and sat on some cushions.

Jasmine said, “We didn’t think anything was wrong, he was very relaxed, and was fine once he woke up.”

I nodded. “Have you done any work with hypnosis or self-hypnosis?”

She shook her head no.

“What you did with him was fine. We’ve been doing hypnotherapy; what he’s learned here has helped him immensely. From what he told me, when you touched his forehead, he went into a light trance, and from there drifted into natural sleep. This is nothing to worry about; he’ll only go into a trance if he feels he’s in a safe place; so it’s quite a compliment to you that this happened.”

I paused and smiled; she smiled in return.

“I’ve already worked with him so if this happens again, and it may, his subconscious will pay attention to what is being said in class, and when you end the class, he’ll wake up. If you needed to wake him though, all you have to do is say his name, and tell him to be awake and alert again. But, it’s nothing to worry about. If he’s like that and hears you taking people through swan, he won’t wake up thinking he’s a swan; it doesn’t work like that.”

I looked up to Bill walking up to us. He glided to a cushion and said, “Welcome.”

He and Jasmine extended hands and touched halfway. Jasmine said, “Janet was telling me about Ron, what happened and what to do.”

Bill raised an eyebrow.

“It’s not a problem, and as I told Jasmine, it’s actually quite a compliment to you; he went into a light trance, something he’ll only do if he feels he’s in a safe, secure environment.”

I watched them smile and squeeze hands. How good it was to see tenderness like that.

“From a trance, he drifted into normal sleep; I’ve worked with him so he’ll pop out at the end of class, or you can wake him. Again, nothing to worry about, and quite a compliment.”

Bill nodded. “I’ve noticed how relaxed Tom gets in meditation now; both he and his wife have made tremendous progress in the last month or so. Did you do that as well?”

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"I'm not a miracle worker. Both of you know we carry that calm place around inside ourselves; most of us need help reaching it, finding it. That's what you do, that's what I do; we help people find that place."

They smiled and nodded. I needed to get going again. I bowed to them and said, "Namaste."

They bowed back and repeated it. We stood up, they stood with grace and fluidity; I creaked, popped, and moaned.

"Sore and stiff today?" Jasmine asked.

I laughed. "Yes, but I'll be back Tuesday night."

Bill said, "You could come tomorrow morning if you want."

I gave him a quizzical look.

"It's not on the schedule; we have a session every Saturday from nine to eleven; it would do you good, and we'd like to see you. Ron is here almost every Saturday."

My mind raced for a bit. "I can't promise, but I thank you very much for the invitation. My body could certainly use it."

We laughed softly together as we walked to the door, and I left them to their class.

What would tomorrow morning bring? My pulse raced and a tingle flashed through me; would I be alone in the morning? Did I want to be alone in the morning? What had I said about treading softly and carefully? After last night?

I pattered in the afternoon at home, taking care of bookwork, then cleaning up and getting ready. I put on a simple skirt, hose, and a sweater top, with a jacket to go over it.

When Ron knocked on the door and I opened it, I felt so... collegiate, like a grad student going out on a date. He was wearing a very nicely tailored gray suit, white shirt, and burgundy tie.

I laughed. "Now I know you're a lawyer."

He laughed and twirled me around the room, picking me up. "Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

When he finally put me down I said, "I take it things went well?"

I pulled him over to my small sofa and sat down, holding his hands so he sat next to me.

“Yes, very well. One of the senior partners tried to take over the meeting, but Abe-san quietly and firmly told them they were interested in working with me. Luckily for the firm, he took the hint and faded into the woodwork. Abe-san was so ecstatic about the calligraphy I’d done for him that his face almost showed expression! Actually, I could tell it touched him. The incredible part though, at the end of our meeting as we were getting ready to go to lunch, I could tell they weren’t sure where the calligraphy had come from; they didn’t want to believe I’d done it, but they weren’t going to call me on it either. So I asked Miyahara-san if he would like one as well. He said yes, so I got my brush and paper.”

He took a breath and looked into my eyes; I could feel the energy and then the calm spread through him.

“When I picked up my brush and closed my eyes for a moment, I went back to that amazing place you showed me. I opened my eyes and the characters flowed from my soul on to the paper. I put the brush down and looked at them; Abe-san was shaken, almost in tears. Miyahara-san was almost ashen; his hands were shaking as I handed it to him. I felt so calm, so peaceful.”

I could see the tears forming in his eyes. I held him close for a moment.

“So you got their business?”

He laughed as he wiped his eyes. “Yes. Wally, the senior partner that had been hanging around actually asked me if he was needed at lunch. I asked Abe-san in Japanese, and Abe-san told me he was welcome if he wanted to pick up the bill. We laughed at that and I told Wally we’d probably spend the whole time speaking Japanese and eating raw fish; he didn’t have to come with if he didn’t want to. He excused himself. We spent lunch talking about the Japanese countryside, my growing up there. Miyahara-san could hardly make eye contact with me. When we ended lunch Abe-san told me I had their business; not the firm, me; he would send me a letter to that effect. I could use others in the firm as I saw fit, but I was to be their contact. When I got back to the office, I got dragged into Wally’s office with John, another senior partner. I told them we had the account, and I’d need to reassign some of my other work to handle matters. John is a cagey old bastard, and very sharp. He asked me if they’d given the business to the firm, or to me.”

“And what did you tell them?”

“I smiled and bowed.”

“Then what?”

“We talked a bit about estimates of their business, how much work it was going to be, then they threw me out and had an impromptu partners meeting in the conference room. They called me back in about an hour later, and John told me that they’d made the decision in the last partner’s meeting but normally didn’t make announcements until the end of the year, but given what had happened, they were making me a full partner as of today.”

I hugged him again. "That's wonderful! Oh, I'm so happy for you!"

He whispered in my ear, "It's all because of you."

"So does Lydia know?"

He chuckled. "Of course -- she managed to get a sitter, so they'll be joining us for dinner tonight. I hope you don't mind."

"No, I don't mind at all. We need to celebrate."

"Especially since the firm is picking up the bill!"

I looked at the clock on the mantle; "Do we need to be going, then? Am I dressed okay, or would a long dress be better?"

He held me close and ran his hands over my sweater. "I'm a sucker for soft fuzzy sweaters, and I can't thank you enough for the way you tucked me in last night."

While I enjoyed his embrace, I took that to mean a long dress would be appropriate. I stood up and pulled him with me into my little bedroom, and sat him in the chair. I reached into the closet and pulled out a longer pleated skirt and a full length dress. "Which would you prefer?" I asked him.

He indicated the dress. I looked him in the eye as I slipped off my skirt, moving my hips slowly, stepping out of it to show my legs. Then took off my sweater, turning as I did so, lifting my arms slowly to give him a good profile, shaking out my hair and allowing the rest of me to jiggle once it was off. I slid the dress over my head, then walked over to him. "Zip me, please?"

He stood and rested his hands on my waist for a wonderful moment before zipping me up. I leaned back against him and he put his arms around me. I turned in his arms and we kissed.

"You've got me in a trance again," he whispered in my ear, then kissed my neck softly.

"You're easier to manage that way," I whispered back.

We squeezed each other and chuckled as we headed out the door.

We walked a few blocks in the crisp air to the restaurant. When we went inside, Lydia and Tom were waiting for us. We exchanged hugs and congratulations and were shown to a table. A bottle of champagne quickly appeared. We toasted many things; Lydia started off. "To partnership!"

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We drank a toast, then Ron held my hand and softly said, looking me in the eye, “To partnership.”

I must have blushed, and drank quickly.

WORK IN PROGRESS!
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