

Fusion

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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.

Important Note

This story is presented as a work-in-progress. It's not complete. It may never be complete. Oh, and this story is only posted on asstr -- if you found it somewhere else, please let me know, as it's stolen.

It started a few months ago at work. We're lucky -- we have an on-site fitness center, and yoga classes twice a week. If I said I was a regular at these classes, my friends would laugh. Yoga is life; that's the way it is. Of course I still need to keep my boss happy when I'm not practicing yoga, but that's easy -- I have a job I love.

It started with our Tuesday afternoon class. As usual I'd gone down early, changing and putting my mat up against a wall. I waved quietly to the other hard core; about eight of us were somewhere between regulars and fanatics. I did my usual opening sequence, then took a reclining inverted pose up against the wall -- on my back, butt against the wall, legs straight up, arms out at an angle, take a deep breath and let go. This is my favorite pose for meditation and centering. I let go of the day's troubles with that first exhale and feel my spine and hips sink down into the mat and the floor.

I opened my eyes a few minutes later as others arrived; it was still about ten minutes to go before class started. Our Tuesday instructor, Bill, hadn't arrived yet; must be traffic, I thought. I didn't think I wanted to be an itinerant yoga instructor for a living.

Ooh, who's this? A new gal came into the room. Asian heritage, but a very nice pair of tits. She had a nervous smile. I could tell from the way she walked she was tight from the shoulders down, especially tight in the shoulders, lower back, and hips; poor posture -- hips forward, shoulders rounded -- something about the left shoulder as well. I swung my legs over to the right and moved to a seated pose as she walked through the room.

She glanced around with that nervous smile, picked up a mat from the pile, and headed over towards Steve. I chuckled to myself; this should be good. She must be new. Of course walking into the room and looking at the three guys present, Steve, Gary, and myself, Steve is definitely dressed the best of any of us. He was wearing a shiny, slick pair of exercise shorts and a T-shirt that he probably ironed that morning; close fitting and not a wrinkle in it. He's fit, his hair impeccably groomed as usual. Kirsten caught my eye; she's another one of the fanatics and

saw what was unfolding. She put a hand up covering her mouth and started to walk quickly from the other side of the room to Steve and the new gal...

And at that moment our newcomer walked up to Steve; he opened his eyes and gave her one of the most poisonous, withering looks I've ever seen. Not nice, Stevie -- I need to talk to you about that. But as she stood there in shock, Kirsten walked up and introduced herself, leading her away from Steve.

Steve is a great guy, one of the fanatics, a good friend, and gay. "Open and notorious" I think is how he describes himself. He went back the sequence he was doing. He's good, but his style is too stiff and formal for me, overemphasizing the flourishes, unsure of his balance, tight in the mid-back. To each his own; it's an individual practice.

Kirsten and the new gal were over in a corner, laughing. The new gal was turning red; I think she had been given a Clue. I stood and walked over to them.

"Hi, I'm Tom. I see you've met Kirsten and Steve."

She was still recovering a little, the nervous smile turned into a nervous giggle as she took my offered hand and shook it gently.

"Yes, I certainly have! I'm Valerie. This is my first time."

I looked her over. About five foot eight, reasonable weight, not anorexic as the common style these days.

"Well, I apologize for Steve. He's grumpy some times."

She smiled and really turned on the charm; I felt it. "That's okay I don't mind."

We talked a little more. She'd never practiced yoga before, but had done aerobics for a long time. I looked at the clock; three minutes before class was to start, and still no Bill. I moved my mat up nearer the front; I usually stay in the back of the room. We put Val next to Kirsten. I gave her the usual introduction, telling her yoga was not a competitive sport, but an individual practice, so she needed to focus on what her body was telling her, not what the people around her were doing -- Yoga is a process, not a goal.

We talked a bit more -- a minute after five and still no Bill. Kirsten gave me a look and looked at the clock. I looked over to Stevie, then Greg, then Linda. Oh well; I moved my mat to the front center and faced the class.

"It's good to see all of you here today. Let's move to a standing position at the front of our mats and begin with the breath. Life begins with breath."

We started on breath awareness and started the initial sequence when Bill walked in. He gave me a harried look, dropped his mat at the back of the room, and left again, probably to go to the bathroom.

We completed the first sequence before Bill returned. I watched him unroll his mat at the back of the room; I made eye contact and shook my head, motioning him up to the front. I'm not getting paid for this, turkey; besides, Val needs attention.

The group laughed at my gesture. Bill picked up his mat and as he moved to the front of the room said, "No, you were doing great..."

I bowed to him and moved my mat back to the side. He took over leading the class.

Kirsten and I worked with Val for the class. Val was trying very hard. Was she also trying to show her charms? It was good practice for me, a challenge to focus on helping her, not focusing on her body, the way her hair moved, her hips and waist... As I said, it was a challenge.

It was good for Kirsten and I both, focusing on Val, going back to the core of the practice, emphasizing the simple things. Steve and I exchanged glances; he was in rare form, it looked like he was doing advanced variations whenever he could. I gave him a smile.

Bill was in a hip mood; we did a number of poses that open the hips. These are some of my favorites, and it was difficult for me not to slip into the variations I enjoyed, the variations that challenge me, and to stick to being a good model for Val to follow. To my surprise I found challenge in the basic postures once again; yoga is a never-ending challenge.

We ended the class with a brief silent meditation, sitting up and bowing at the end. Bill gave me an extra nod.

Val was bubbling over as we chatted after class, thanking me for the help. I suggested she thank Kirsten as well. I asked Val if she'd be here for class Thursday as well; she gave me an enthusiastic yes. I suggested she come down early if she'd like help preparing for it. Bill asked her a question and I took the opportunity to head to the men's locker room and change.

I shook my head as I walked in. Gary looked at me and said, "Well?"

I chuckled. "Well what? What do you think of our new addition? She's enthusiastic."

Steve turned up his nose. "The way she threw herself at you was appalling. Almost as bad as I am some times."

We laughed; I was glad to see he was in better spirits. "That look you gave her initially was not very charitable," I told him.

He sighed. "Yes, I was full of it today. I'll apologize to her and be a better model. Still, she certainly seems to have found the available one."

Gary laughed and slapped me on the back as he headed out. Of the three guys in the class, Gary was married, Steve was monogamous and gay; that left me -- the single one, and she had seemingly latched on to me. Did I have Kirsten to thank for that? I didn't mind. I put on my sweats and shoes, got my bag, and headed out quickly. I don't know why, I didn't have anything pressing.

The next morning after I waded through email, I picked up the phone and was about to give Kirsten a call when she walked into my cube.

"I was just calling you. Got a minute?"

She smiled and sat down. "Sure."

We sat silent for a moment, then both started laughing. She said, "Want to know some more about Val?"

"Yes, please," I admitted.

"She is Doctor Valerie Anders, freshly minted Ph.D. in mathematics from Princeton, working for Larry in the Operations Research group in building 3. Born in Singapore, Asian mother, Swedish father. Educated mostly in Europe. She's quite taken with you, if you hadn't noticed. And I *just* may have mentioned you're single..."

I laughed. "Thank you, Yenta... I appreciate your effort."

Kirsten got serious. "Tom, you really should socialize more."

I opened my mouth and started to say I did, but we both knew I didn't outside the yoga crowd. I closed my mouth and sighed.

Kirsten looked me in the eye. "That's better. It's been long enough. You need to get out, and she certainly seems eager to me."

Then she sat back in the chair and smiled before she continued. "And we talked with Bill as well -- he would have been quite happy to let you finish the class, and so would we. Do you need a push there as well?"

I shook my head and smiled. "No dear, I don't need a push. I'm not paid to teach the damn class, and I was more interested in Val..." That hadn't come out quite the way I'd wanted.

Kirsten raised an eyebrow. "Good, there may be hope for you yet. I told her about dinner Thursday night; she's going to join us."

The fanatics got together the first Thursday of every month for dinner at a Japanese place; everyone with their significant others, save for me.

“That’s great,” I told her. “Did Steve upset her? I gave him abuse for the way he acted.”

“No, just surprised her. I talked to him last night as well; he was quite apologetic. He asked for her name, so I imagine he’s doing something. He can be really sweet some times.”

I nodded. He was a bright and rare individual.

“See you for lunch?” she asked. We commonly got together in the cafeteria.

“Nope, I’m covering an offsite meeting for my boss -- her kid is sick. I’ll be out the rest of the day and half of tomorrow.”

With that she left and I got back to the work at hand.

I got back to the office around four Thursday afternoon, after wasting a day and a half in meetings. I didn’t bother with voicemail or email, just headed to the fitness center, changed, and lay down on the floor. Life starts with the breath, I told myself -- focus on the breath.

Voices brought me back to the real world some time later: Kirsten and Val. I sighed and moved my fingers a little; I’d been pretty deep.

“Take your time getting up,” Kirsten said. I sighed again, moved my head around, letting my legs slide apart on the wall.

I spent a minute drifting back up, listening to Kirsten help Val, coaching her through some of the basics. Kirsten was very good; if I should be teaching, so should she. I rolled to my side and moved to a seated posture, smiling as the ladies stopped and looked at me.

“How was your offsite?” Kirsten asked.

“Stunk on ice -- you don’t want to know,” I told her. “I was a basket case when I got out of there.”

“But you look so relaxed now...” Val said.

I took a slow deep breath. “That’s what the practice does to you,” I said, looking into her eyes, drinking her in.

My world suddenly converged around her, focused on her, everything about her suddenly sharpened. I felt a tingle rise in my spine as I looked upon her.

I saw the tingle go through her, saw her breath catch momentarily, watched as goose bumps spread down her arms and her nipples crinkled up under her tights. My breath remained steady and I felt the energy in her, and felt energy flowing in me. It had been a long time since I’d felt that.

“So how do you feel today? Where are you sore?” I asked her softly.

She smiled and moved a bit, almost a shiver. “I was telling Kirsten, my hips, my lower back, my arms...”

“Your knees are okay?” I asked.

She nodded. “No problems with my knees.”

“Good. With so much of the hip work we do, if you try and force it, you can put tremendous strain on the knees. Knees don’t like that.”

She nodded. The three of us worked together for a while; she’d brought a towel to roll up and put under her ankles for the sitting poses, I was glad to see that.

After a bit other folks began to wander in. When Steve came in, Val hopped up and walked over to him, stopping a couple of feet away, holding back.

“Thank you for the flowers,” she said, “That was sweet. I wasn’t upset with you.”

Steve smiled and gave her a hug. “That wasn’t any way to greet a person. I was just very bitchy that day. I want you to feel welcome here.”

“Well I certainly do,” she told him, hugging him back. I smiled in jealous awe; he got a hug before I did.

Jasmine leads the Thursday class; she came in with the next wave of people. Kirsten and I took our usual places in the back, with Val between us. Jasmine came over and talked to Val and then to us. She told Val she was in very good hands.

We had a good class; Thursday is supposed to be more of a beginner class than Tuesday, and for a change that’s the way Jasmine taught it. After class ended, Jasmine came over to us again. I thought she would talk with Val first, but she didn’t.

“Tom, will you be able to help next weekend?” she asked me, putting a hand on my shoulder.

I nodded. “Of course. What would you like?”

“Bring your chimes, your discs. Dad’s not sure yet.” She turned to Val. “Will you be there?”

Val looked confused. Kirsten spoke up. “We’ll talk about it at dinner, we haven’t discussed it yet, but I’d like her to come.”

I added, "So would I."

Jasmine said, "You'll be very welcome. I can see you're starting out well, only on your second class and already going to dinner with the in-crowd."

"And the in-crowd better get moving, or they'll start dinner without us!" Greg added as he and Steve walked up.

We headed to our respective locker rooms to change. We had a quarterly yoga retreat the following Friday night and Saturday; Jasmine's parents were the founders and senior instructors for a yoga school in the area. We'd have about forty people there, a dozen or so instructors such as Bill and Jasmine, the rest students. It was a great gathering -- I'd been going for years.

I was sad though as I drove over to the restaurant. I'd started yoga when I was ten, many years ago. I'd met Carol through yoga, proposing to her at one of the retreats; we were married four months later. We attended five more together before she died; now I'd gone to five, this would be six, without her. Yes Kirsten, I told myself, it was time again.

It must have showed on me as I walked to our table; I was the next to the last to arrive. Kirsten and Val looked up at me. The look on Val's face was special. Her smile had so much hope and joy in it -- why did it send such a pang through me? We were sitting boy-girl; I sat down in the empty seat between Val and Kirsten.

"What's the matter Tom," Kirsten said, putting a hand on my back. Val put a hand on mine. I looked at Val and smiled, then looked to Kirsten. "Life goes on, thanks."

Steve came in and sat across from us, next to his long-time companion Ben. Our hot Sake arrived and was poured. As we raised our cups I heard Linda's husband say, "The table feels complete again." I almost burst into tears; Kirsten squeezed my hand. Steve raised his cup to me and nodded, smiling. When I put my cup down empty, Val put her hand on mine. I looked at her. How much did she know? She gave me a wonderful smile.

My chuckle turned into a laugh. I was caught up in such conflicting feelings, emotions; still being chased by shadows. One part of me saw her as a beginning yoga student, remembering responsibilities as someone she looked upon as a guide, a teacher; thou shalt not poach nookie from students. Yet I knew she was a Ph.D. That and the group she was working in told me she was bright, capable, assertive. She was certainly acting attracted to me, and I found her quite attractive. I'm going to have to seek guidance on this one...

"So have you been told about next weekend yet?" I asked her to kick things off.

Val nodded. "I rode over with Linda; she told me a little. It sounds wonderful. Do you think I can do it though? And what's dinner on Saturday?"

I took another sip of Sake. “Yes, you can do it; there are always new people, and you are in beautiful shape.” Wow, how did that come out? I took another sip of Sake to gentle laughter around the table, then continued.

“Saturday dinner is one of our rituals. Jasmine and her parents are strict vegetarians. We’re not. They seem to think you can practice yoga on a diet of rabbit food and weak tea. They are correct that you can’t practice vigorously on a full stomach. If you’re like the rest of us, by Saturday night you’ll be very hungry. So we drive up the coast a little to meet the rest of the group at a steak house. We drive over together on Friday after work, and ride home separately after dinner.” I looked at the group and asked, “Whose turn is it to drive?”

Kirsten patted me on the back and Stevie raised his cup. “Yours,” he said, taking a sip.

I sighed. Everyone would fit. “Okay, I can take the five of us over.” I looked at Val. “Unless you’d like to drive over yourself, or we want to split things up. Some people drive back and forth. We stay the night. It’s up to you.”

She put a hand on my shoulder, leaned back, and gave me a sultry look. “I’ll ride with you.”

That got a laugh from the crowd, including me. I think she’s an assertive, consenting adult. Still, I’ll have a chat with Jasmine’s folks.

We had a very good dinner. Yes, the table did feel complete again. Afterwards in the parking lot we were splitting up when Val walked up to me. “Give me a lift back to my car?” she said, putting an arm in mine.

I looked at those confident eyes, her head held up and back, that smile on her face. “My pleasure,” I told her. I even opened the door for her and helped her in.

We drove over to her car in silence; it was easy to spot hers in the lot, there were few others that time of night. I pulled along side leaving the engine running. I looked at her.

“Park it,” she said.

I put it into park. I sat there for a moment until she sighed and reached up for my head. She closed her eyes and pulled me to her. We kissed. Her lips were soft, her perfume tantalizing, her tongue hungry and hot. I held her shoulders gently.

We pulled apart; she had a wonderful smile on her face.

“Sometimes you think too much. You need to let go and flow with the moment. Thanks for a wonderful evening,” she told me.

With that she gave me a kiss on the nose and hopped out, closing the door behind her.

I let my head fall back and I laughed. I laughed and I cried; assertive, capable, and perceptive -- she'd nailed me right between the eyes.

I rubbed my eyes a bit as I watched her drive off. I waved; she waved back. What a trip!

Friday was a mess; my boss Donna's son was now in the hospital, so I had to fill in for her in staff meetings. I spent an hour after that clearing up the necessities in my own office, getting home late. The house was quiet and still. I stripped and spent an hour or so doing yoga. In meditation afterwards I was drawn back to the remarks I'd heard the last few days. Wally, Linda's husband saying the table felt complete at dinner. Kirsten nagging me to get with it again. And of course Val telling me quite perceptively to let go and flow with the moment. Could it happen again? I was scared. The joy Carol and I had together had been wonderful, but the pain when I lost her.... To have one I have to risk the other. "The back is as big as the front." And who knows if it could be anything like what we'd had -- could I risk opening up to learn she wasn't the one, take the risk of finding out, or worse, of being spurned? Was this a flirt, a momentary thing?

I went back to the breath, on my mat on the floor, surrounded by candlelight. Back to the breath, be a witness to these feelings, let them flow, dance with them, bring them out, learn from them. That's one of the problems with yoga -- that increased awareness. Everything is so much more intense -- the good, and the bad, always experiencing, always learning.

But I don't want to learn pain, I've already learned pain, and I don't want any more.

But that's what life is about -- taking risks. I'd been holding back for too long.

I got up, fixed myself some soup, and went to bed.

I went to my usual Saturday morning yoga class, another that Jasmine teaches. It had been one of Carol's favorites. I was up in the front of the room with Jasmine, helping her, helping others. We took turns going around the room helping students, moving an arm here, drawing back a shoulder there, while the other led the class.

After class Jasmine and I cleaned up the room. As we finished she said to me, "Will Valerie be joining us? She seems pretty special."

Our heads were about a foot apart as we finished moving things back into place. I looked into her eyes and sighed. We both sat down on the floor; she held my hands.

"Tell me, Tom."

It was hard, caught in another tidal wave of feelings; focus on the breath. "Yes, she'll be there. Jasmine, I don't know. I'm scared. I should talk to your dad; I don't know if it's right."

"What are you scared of?" she asked me softly.

“I’m scared of the pain. I don’t want to go through that again.”

“But is it worth living in a small box the rest of your life? You’re holding on to that pain; you need to let it go. Be here, now.”

I laughed and held her hands. “That’s just about what she told me after dinner Thursday.”

Jasmine smiled. “So she’s perceptive as well then...”

I laughed a little. “Yes, perceptive, assertive. But I’m still scared, scared of taking the risk. And I don’t know what your father would think.”

“Have you talked to him?”

I looked down. I didn’t have to answer. She raised my chin with one hand, looking in my eyes again.

“It sounds like she knows what she’s doing to me. Do you want me to have Dad call you? He’s doing a private thing this weekend, but will be back tomorrow night.”

I sighed again. “Yes, I should talk to him. What do you think?”

She shook her head slowly. “From what Linda told me, she’s a very smart and capable young woman. I’d take the risk for her, but you know what Dad says...”

I nodded. “Yes, you can’t breathe through my nose. I value your opinion. I value your teaching, and your friendship.” We hugged. I let my eyes close, feeling her close; a feeling I knew I missed terribly.

“Do you value being kicked in the ass?” she asked me as we sat back.

I was startled. “What?”

“Because that’s what I’m going to do if I think you’re screwing up and letting her get away without trying!”

I laughed and Jasmine laughed with me. “Yes, I value that as well,” I told her. We stood up and hugged again. She headed off to breakfast, I begged off and drove down the valley.

I didn’t really know where I was going. I went over to a yoga center on the other side of town; if I remembered correctly, they had a class starting in an hour or so.

I remembered correctly. The founder and lead instructor, Toni, was a little pistol; a reformed dancer a bit over five feet tall. She was happy to see me; we hadn’t seen each other since the last retreat. Of course I was welcome; she wouldn’t let me pay the drop-in fee, saying

she'd put me to work instead. And she did, and I enjoyed it, enjoyed helping her with a new group of people.

We went to lunch together afterwards. "How would you like to teach a class for me on Saturdays? The pay is lousy, but the students have heart."

I snorted, another surprise. "I thought Peter was helping you."

"His wife got a job in Colorado -- they moved last week. I'd love to have you do it."

"Let me think about it."

"Well as a big favor to me, would you do today's class? I'm beat and behind on paperwork; one of the problems in running your own show."

I smiled. "Okay, but it will be my third class today -- I'm getting worn out too."

"You don't do that much yoga when you teach -- you know that. Will we see you this Friday?"

"Of course. Wouldn't miss it."

"Will you be alone?" she asked, looking me in the eye.

I gave her a funny look, then looked around me. I was starting to feel as if the deck was stacked.

"No, not alone..." I told her.

She smiled and grabbed my hands. "Wonderful! Who is she?"

I shook my head. "A young woman I met Tuesday, it was her first yoga class. I still need to talk to the Old Man."

I guess she could see the concern, the uncertainty flicker across my face. She leaned forward and whispered to me, "Open up -- take the chance, please Tom."

"Is there an echo around here? What's going on?" I asked as I stared at her. She looked confused. I smiled. "I had just about the same conversation with Jasmine a few hours ago. I have the feeling someone's stacked the deck, and I'm not sure I like the feeling yet."

"There's only one way to find out," she told me.

I looked in her eyes and smiled. "That's what everyone is telling me. How long do we have before this class?"

Toni looked up at the clock. "A little over an hour. Time enough for you to rest and me to catch up on some more paperwork."

We headed back to her school. I changed again, unrolled my mat, and relaxed on the floor again. Life begins with the breath, I told myself as I closed my eyes.

I taught the class, a mixed bag of fifteen students, and I had fun. It was a challenge. There are always issues with a different instructor; the rapport is different, the sequences are usually different, the terminology a little different. I like to think that my joy for the practice shows; that's one of the things I want to share. It was the first time I'd done a whole class for a few months, since the last time Bill canceled on us. After meditation as we ended the class, I could see the glow in some of the faces, some of them had it, others were getting it.

I thanked them for practicing with me; we bowed ending the class. I stood up and spent a few minutes talking with students, answering questions, fine tuning technique. A few asked if I would be teaching the class from now on. The second time I got that question Toni was standing next to me. She smiled but said nothing.

"I don't know," I told my questioner, a red headed gal in her thirties.

She put a hand on my arm and said, "We see how much you love it, that's infectious."

After the rest left Toni took me over and sat me in a chair.

"They loved you. You have a gift for this. And tell me the truth; you enjoyed it as well."

I smiled. "It was hard work, and yes I enjoyed it. I need to think about it. I'd need to clear it with work as well."

She sighed. "You need to take the risk Tom -- you were alive out there, we both know it."

"That's the problem with good yoga people -- you can't hide anything," I told her as I stood up.

We laughed and hugged; I left and drove home.

I went to work Sunday, partially to catch up, partially to avoid being alone with my thoughts.

I got the phone call I was dreading after dinner on Sunday.

"Hello?" I said, answering the phone.

"Thomas, I am hearing very disappointing and confusing things about you." It was Jasmine's father.

“Sir?” I asked. Would I be happy or sad if he didn’t approve of my relationship with Val? Wait a minute, what relationship?

“I understand from William that you stopped a class you were teaching when he came in. Then I hear from Toni that you did extremely well assisting and teaching for her, and her students were begging you to take the position she’s offering you. And then my daughter -- well my daughter told me she’s never seen you so focused and intense as you were Thursday and yesterday. And then there is some confusion about a young lady. Can you explain any of this to me, Thomas?”

I sighed. “I’m confused, sir; and uncertain. What did Jasmine tell you about Valerie?”

“That she was an intelligent, capable adult, and evidently one that has her sights set on you, yet you are holding back. Why?”

“Sir, I’m concerned -- she’s a student, a beginner, and I’m...”

“No Thomas, that’s not it. This is not a situation where you are exercising power or influence over some naïve young thing; I know you too well, my daughter knows you too well, that’s simply not something you could do. Can you tell me what the real problem is?”

I laughed; even over the phone he could see through me. Like it or not, I’m on an emotional roller coaster again. “I’m scared sir. I’m scared of the pain. I don’t want to go through that again.” I was practically in tears.

I could hear him sigh. “Thomas, you’re not afraid of pain, you’re afraid of living; you’re living in anticipation of the past, and that’s madness! You need to live. You cannot continue to squander the gifts you have; that causes many of us pain. Would you like to come talk to Elizabeth and me about this? You can come over right now, or tomorrow...”

I held my head in one hand, leaning on the table. “I don’t think so, sir. I know what I need to do.”

“And how do you feel about this young woman? What do your feelings tell you to do?”

Without hesitation I said, “Hold her and squeeze her and swing her around laughing until she begs me to stop.”

“You don’t sound confused to me. Listen to your feelings, Thomas. Talk to her. Live. We are here. Otherwise we will see you Friday evening, and I expect to put your skills to use.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“You are welcome, Thomas. Namaste.”

“Namaste. Thank you, sir.”

Click. I hung up the phone. I felt wrung out, more drained after a few minutes on the phone with him than I'd been at the end of Saturday after three classes. He was right; he usually is. They're all right. Why can they see it so clearly and I can't?

I didn't sleep well that night, not a big surprise. I left a voicemail message for Val early Monday morning, asking her to meet me in the cafeteria at half past eleven. Even with the leftover adminstrivia from Donna to take care of, time moved very slowly for me.

I got to the cafeteria early. I stood outside waiting, brooding, unsure. What was holding me back? Nothing but me. What was holding me back? Shadows. What was holding me back? What had he said, “anticipation of the past?” Fear of the future, fear that the pain of the past would be repeated?

Then I saw her. She saw me and smiled, walking a little quicker, now a spring in her step. I took a deep breath and went with it. I walked up to her, put my arms around her, picked her up and swung her around, my eyes closed, feeling her hair against my face. I took air, energy, and life into my lungs as if I was breathing for the first time, my arms around her.

And she did it; she laughed, wonderful laughter! I swung her and held her, squeezed her until she finally said, laughter still in her voice, “Tom, put me down, please!”

I put her down and she gave me another hug, then stepped back a bit.

“What got into you?” she asked as I wiped the tears from my eyes.

“I woke up. You did. Will you have lunch with me? Do you have time to talk?”

She looked at me and sighed, shaking her head. “I was worried for a while. Of course I'll have lunch with you; I'd love to talk. I've had a very interesting morning.”

Oh? Why did she have that look of composure, of control, and I felt giddy and caught up in a whirlwind? Shouldn't it be the other way around? I leaned against the wall in the hallway for a moment. I looked at her, deep into her eyes, taking a deep slow breath, centering.

And as I exhaled, taking her in with all my senses, I saw the shiver run through her, her eyes close a little, her nostrils flare as her head tilted back a bit showing me a luscious smooth neck that needed to be kissed, caressed, bitten. I felt the energy rise in me again as I inhaled, heat and energy spreading up my spine to my head, then down again through my limbs as I exhaled. For the first time in a long while, I felt energy in the palms of my hands, the soles of my feet.

She put her hands on my shoulders. Her head tilted forward and she opened her eyes to bore into me with a look of incredible lust, her nostrils flaring once again, the breath flowing in

and out. I felt her fingers squeeze me, felt but didn't see her pelvis tilt even though we weren't touching, saw her shoulders relax and open up.

"Do you know what that look does to me?" she growled, eyes aflame, the hungry smile of a predator.

I smiled. There's only one way to find out if I'm in over my head. "I'm learning." All of a sudden I felt so calm, all my senses so sharp, feeling the turbulence around me. I moved away from the wall and gave her a strong hug. I felt on fire, but so calm, so relaxed; I felt her heart race, the tension and twitching in her muscles, the ragged nature of her breath as I held her in my arms.

We stepped apart and I looked at her again. Now she was the one who looked giddy, confused, in a turmoil; and she was smiling, enjoying it.

"Let's get lunch," I said, leading her in to the cafeteria. She laughed and put an arm around my waist. We split up when we went in, she heading for the hot lunch, I to the salad bar.

I'd finished building a salad when I felt a hand on my shoulder. Kirsten said, "You need to eat more than that."

I turned and smiled. "Yes mother... I'm going to make a sandwich."

She laughed. "Good."

It took me a while to build a sandwich; by the time I'd paid for my lunch and walked into the seating area I spotted Val and Kirsten sitting at a table together; they saw me and waved.

I sat down and put a napkin in my lap. As I looked up Val gave me an intense look and asked, "How do you do that?"

"Do what?"

She sighed. "When I first saw you in the hall, you were a nervous wreck. Now you're so calm; you're radiating calm." She moved a hand on to one of mine and took a deep breath, smiling. "And I'm the one who's feeling mixed up."

Kirsten laughed; I just smiled.

"It's easy," I told Val, knowing that wouldn't really help.

She frowned at me.

"Close your eyes for a moment," I said, holding her hand in both of mine. She closed her eyes. "Now relax and take a slow, deep breath, and as you exhale let go of the tension, let go of everything. Very good. Keep doing that, slow, deep, letting go. Now I'll tell you the first part.

Serenity isn't freedom from the storm, but peace within the storm. Serenity isn't freedom from the storm, but peace within the storm."

My eyes were closed now as well. Who had initially taught me that? Was it Barbara, so many years ago? I let the feelings build in me, letting them flow; feeling the calm, the peace within the storm of emotions swirling around me, through me; the feelings of anticipation about this wonderful woman sitting so close to me. I felt another surge of energy, of strength rising from within me, almost seeing a flash of silver. The fear was still there, much smaller, overshadowed by joyous anticipation. "When you open your eyes in a moment, let that peace come with you." I squeezed her hand and put it down.

Val opened her eyes and gave me a wonderful smile; I could see the glow starting in her, a tear start to form. "Thank you," she whispered.

"Thank you so much for helping me wake up," I told her.

I looked over at Kirsten, sitting there shaking her head slowly. I reached for one of her hands; she jumped a bit when I touched her. I held her hand gently for a moment, feeling the warmth and the love of a good friend for so many years.

"And why didn't you kick me in the pants earlier?" I asked her, knowing I was breaking the spell that we'd woven together.

It worked; Kirsten laughed, Val laughed, and I joined in.

I looked down at my salad. "I really do not like broccoli," I told the salad, which had plenty of it; I'd put it there.

"Then why do you eat it?" Val asked.

I looked up and told her, "It's good for me, so I do it." I speared a chunk of it along with some lettuce and put it in my mouth.

Val laughed at that and dug in to her lunch. We ate in relative silence for a few minutes.

Then Val casually said, "I had a very interesting chat on the phone this morning with a wonderful woman named Elizabeth Williams. We talked for over an hour."

I stopped in mid-chomp on my sandwich; Kirsten started choking. I put my sandwich down. Elizabeth was Jasmine's mother; wife of the man I'd talked to last night, a yoga master in her own right.

"And?" I asked, reeling a bit and struggling to remain in my center.

Now Val looked up, smiling, amused, that look of control again.

“She told me quite a bit about you.” She was leaning back again, that sly look; she was enjoying the game.

What the hell, so was I. “Such as?” I prodded.

“Well, she told me about the scar you have and how you got it.”

I laughed. Wait -- that had been many years before I’d known them. Barbara must have told them, I think it happened around then.

Kirsten said, “*That* scar? Tell me more!”

Val had her head tilted a little, that mischievous smile. “It seems at a retreat when our Roger was a teenager, he was showing off doing headstands on a wooden porch railing. The railing collapsed, and on the way down, he caught some large chunks of it... It took a doctor quite a while to pick out all the pieces, and six or seven stitches to close him up.”

Kirsten was laughing. I could tell from the look Val was giving me she knew exactly where that scar was. And few people know my first name is Roger; I never use it.

“Would you like to see it?” I asked her, upping the ante in the game.

She stayed very cool. I saw her nostrils flare a bit before she spoke again. “I’ll see it soon enough. And she told me I’d have to ask you about Nancy and the inversion sling. She said maybe you could show me this weekend.”

I turned red; I could feel it. I heard Kirsten gasp. I could either say, “Oh shit!” or laugh; I laughed. I looked at Kirsten; she was blushing as well. I took one of her hands and one of Val’s, and looked directly at Val.

“Val, before you said that, I thought there were only two people in the world that knew... I’m obviously mistaken.” I glanced at Kirsten; it had obviously spread. Then it struck me -- Val hadn’t made the connection, she couldn’t! I looked back to Val.

“Valerie dear, I feel we’re both being pulled into something; you’ve met that Nancy, only she likes to be called Jasmine now -- she’s Elizabeth’s daughter.”

Val looked shocked -- she gasped and put a hand to her mouth. I glanced over at Kirsten; she was practically cross-eyed.

I turned to Val again, taking her in, taking that deep slow breath again. “Dear Valerie, you know so much about me, and I don’t even know how old you are.”

She pursed her lips in a smile as she looked at me, I could see the control returning to her. “I’m twelve days older than you.” Then she softened, now holding my hand with both of hers.

“They care for you so much. I feel I’m being pulled in as well, but pulled into a wonderful warm family.” Then she took a breath and sat up straight.

“But now I’ve got to run off to a design review; I’m one of the executioners and I’m looking forward to it.”

I could tell from the look on her face that she was; someone was in for a surprise.

“Are you busy for dinner tonight?” I asked her.

She tilted head a little. “Unfortunately yes. But you’re busy tomorrow after class.” Then with a smoldering glance she rumbled, “Don’t make any plans.”

With that she stood up and picked up her tray. She stepped around us, and paused as she went by me. My head was right at tit level; I could see and sense tight, warm nipples under her blouse and bra. She leaned down and gave me a kiss on the head, then turned and walked off, a predatory sway in her hips.

I turned back to Kirsten and gave her a look of shock.

“Wow,” she said.

“I agree. So I take it the inversion sling escapade has spread farther than I’d thought? God, I didn’t think her parents knew. I’m surprised the Old Man didn’t kill me.”

Kirsten was laughing softly. “It’s practically a legend by now, and always as a nameless but caring couple -- this is the first time I’d ever, ever heard names put to the story. And I must say, Doctor Chen, I’m very, very surprised, and very envious...”

I laughed so hard I was crying.

“Want to tell us what’s so funny?” I heard Greg say. I looked up to see him and Linda sitting down at the table. I looked over at Kirsten; she was blushing a bit. I reached over and squeezed her hand. I looked up at Greg and said, “No.” I looked back to Kirsten and said softly, “Thank you. That was a long time ago,” -- long before I’d met Carol.

I took a clearing breath and sat up. Greg and Linda were looking puzzled, still trying to figure out what had been going on. “You missed it, and God am I ever glad!” I told them. Greg shrugged his shoulders and dug into his bowl of chili.

Linda gave me an intense look, then smiled and said, “You’re back.”

I closed my eyes momentarily, tears forming. I opened them again and said, “That bad?”

She nodded. “It’s great to have you back. Was Valerie here? I thought I saw her headed back to the Ivory Towers.”

I winced at that; there's a split between the research people and the product groups in our company; I'm in a research group, but we live in an engineering building. "Yes, she joined us for lunch; we had a very nice conversation."

Greg grunted and said, "At least."

Kirsten and I hung around for a bit as Linda and Greg ate; she and I work in the same building, so we walked back together.

When we were outside in the courtyard, she stopped and turned to me.

"Tom, that was incredible."

"What, Kirsten? What was incredible?"

"The way you looked at Valerie, her reaction; I could feel the energy, especially the energy between the two of you, and that was before you touched my hand."

I remembered how she'd jumped a bit; it was like a spark jumping between us. I let myself relax, breathing that feeling of calm in my center as I felt the turbulence pick up around me again, the energy swirl, that coolness in my palms.

"You're doing it again -- how do you do that!" Kirsten was giving me a look I didn't understand.

"I don't know. I talked to him last night, her today, things just clicked." I smiled, feeling the energy around me. I looked up briefly into the blue sky above us, drinking it in. I was tingling, feeling the energy moving up from the base of my spine. I looked back at Kirsten, the look of wonder on her face.

I hugged her to me; I had too much energy to keep inside myself. "I don't understand it either, but I know I have you to thank for it, and the others." I told her.

We turned to the voices of others approaching on the path. She now had a glow in her eyes; whatever it was, I could share it. We walked back to our offices in silence.

I swam in the usual chaos of life through the day and through the next, finding myself once again on Tuesday afternoon in the fitness center, on my mat, on my back. I was still tingling, not knowing if I was controlling the energy I felt, or if it was controlling me. I'd slept better than I had in weeks; everything around me seemed so much sharper. After a while on my back I moved my mat over a bit and moved into seated meditation. I thought again of my first teachers, Dea and Barbara, Bill and Zora, Phil, Kimberly, and tried to reach out and thank them.

I sat eyes closed, feeling the calm, the peace at the center of the storm. I had changed, the storm hadn't, or if it had, it had grown stronger. Val knew... How much? How much had

Elizabeth told her? How much does Elizabeth know? How much does she know about me that I don't? Carol and Nancy had been close from the day they met. Val had heard; that's different from knowing. And she'd heard about some other person, someone I shared a past with.

Sounds of voices and people moving again, Bill's voice. I brought myself back into the room; I felt as if I'd been somewhere much larger. I was tingling from head to toe. I opened my eyes, took that clearing breath, and looked at Bill, looking into him.

He looked at me, twitching as if he'd been poked, and said, "Holy shit!"

I laughed and felt whatever it had been dissolve around me, back into me. Bill looked as if he was going to say something else when a couple of people walked up to him and started asking questions.

Kirsten came in with Val; we set up our mats in the back corner, with Val between us. One gal in the class asked me for some help; I went to her mat for a minute. As I talked to her, touching her, positioning her body, I could feel the energy. I tried to project calm. I don't know if that intention worked, but she thanked me and I walked back.

The mats had been shuffled; I was now between Val and Kirsten. As I looked at how the mats were now arranged, Val said, "Bill told us to work this way." Fine with me.

In our opening salutation we start out standing in prayer. From there we raise our arms overhead, gathering prana, energy, looking overhead. I know it's going to be a good session when I can almost see the blue sky above my head, even though we're in a room in the lower floor of a building. I could see the deep blue sky as I raised my arms inhaling, and felt the energy gathering, tingling as my hands moved up, breathing it in, surprising myself with the intensity, feeling it fill me and rise again from the base of my spine, through my hands and feet.

I moved in another world, moving as a guide. For part of the practice Bill had me move about the class assisting. I knew I needed to call Toni; I needed to teach.

As I moved by Stevie, I saw him in the asana called raised runner, and while his form looked outwardly good, it also struck me as comical, sad somehow, his rigidity and formality. His toes were white, he was pressing with them so hard. I stood beside him and touched his shoulders, his stomach, and said, "Relax into it." I could feel and see the tension drain away, see him smile, eyes still closed. "Thank you, friend," I said to him and walked away.

We end each class in meditation; Bill put on a recording of gongs. I was in seated meditation, Val and Kirsten on either side lying down. I did what I'd done so many times and so well the last few days, breathing into my center, feeling the calmness and peace in the center of the storm. I could feel the energy crackling around me. I turned my mind's eye up into the imaginary deep blue sky.

At first I soared, high in the deep blue, full of energy. When had I last felt this? One summer's evening with Carol, outside on the deck at her parent's place, on what was to be our last time there together.

With that thought I slipped; in a flash I plunged down into loss, questioning, pain. But something made me look up again and think of my friends, my teachers, Kirsten next to me, and Val. I thought of Val; felt her near me, that sly look on her face as she'd teased me at lunch, her insight. I knew Elizabeth wouldn't open up to just anyone; I trusted her judgment. I moved upwards again to Val, slower, as if I was carrying something, feeling as if Val was reaching for me. I felt her reaching, pulling, yearning...

I soared up into the blue, into the energy again, knowing I wasn't alone. Instead of letting go of the pain, the loss, I held on to it, taking it up with me, watching its fabric dissolve in the light, feeling it dissipate. I floated in that timeless blueness, feeling surrounded by Kirsten and especially by Val.

As I returned to the center again, letting the energy cleanse me, I took another deep breath through my nose in time with a gong... And felt the stirring deep in me before my mind recognized it, the wonderful musky aroma of feminine arousal. I opened my eyes and glanced at the women beside me without moving my head. I knew it was Val. But it was Kirsten as well. As I looked at their hands, outstretched from their reclined bodies, I smiled and gathered something inside me. I unfolded my hands from my lap and moved them slowly, waiting for the next large gong to sound in the background.

As it sounded, I exhaled and touched their outstretched hands, moving energy outwards, feeling the spark. I watched Val as she gasped, her body trembling. Did I hear a gasp from somewhere else in the room? I felt the animal satisfaction flow through our touch, so deep, so primitive. As the gong sounded again I gave some kind of internal nudge or push and watched Val shake once more and go limp. I focused now on calm, on peace, and let that radiate through me. I saw her soften, a slight smile form. I glanced over at Kirsten; she looked ... satiated came to mind. I felt peace and calm, thanking her for her friendship and support.

I raised my head and looked forward. Bill was looking at me, giving me a very amused look. I let the energy dissolve around me as I closed my eyes, dissolving back in to me and sending out a last wave of calm and peace.

After another minute Bill brought everyone back to sitting, concluding the class. As they sat up I got very intense looks from both Val and Kirsten. Kirsten had a look of surprise; Val's glance told me of surprise, awe, and animal lust. I almost did it again, taking that deep breath gathering and moving prana, but bowed my head instead, stilling the wave I'd begun to raise.

After our bow to end the class, I sat where I was; we were pretty much in the opposite corner from the door, so there was no hurry. I scooted on the floor over to the wall and started rolling up my mat.

Val leaned over to me and whispered, "My God, how did you do that? What was that?"

I looked up; Kirsten moved closer, looking a bit shaken. Bill walked up, then bent down to us, touching me on the shoulder.

"I've only witnessed that a few times, and never experienced it. Be careful, and call him if you need help. See you Friday. Namaste." With that he stood up and headed to the door, off to his next class.

I turned again to Kirsten. "Are you all right? I didn't mean to hurt you."

She smiled, shaking her head. "You didn't hurt me, not at all. It was just ... intense." She looked around; there was no one near us. She looked at me and said, "It's just that I wasn't expecting the most intense orgasm I've ever had in my life during a yoga class, and from you touching my hand."

I looked over at Val, she leaned up against me and said, "What a wild ride..."

"Tell me about it, please, what was it like?" I asked them both.

Kirsten spoke first. "When we started the meditation, I felt a wave of energy; it was scary at first, but I knew it was you, and I let you in. Then it grew, and I felt calm, and peace..."

Val spoke softly. "And soaring, soaring so far away from this place, but then suddenly falling, the loss, the pain..." I could see the pain return to her face; she'd felt it.

Kirsten had moved closer. "It changed so fast, it hurt, I miss her too... I wanted to let go, get away from it, but I had to help, I couldn't let go of you."

Val put an arm around my neck. "I knew I had to help. I'd let go; I'm sorry; it felt like I watched you fall. Then I reached for you, wanting you, wanting to help, to pull you back."

I could feel her tears on me.

"You did, you did pull me up," I whispered. "I felt it; I felt you. You pulled me back. And I brought you up again with me, both of you." I hugged Val, sitting up a bit more.

Kirsten had moved closer as well, we were all scooted together. She shivered and said, "I thought it would be peaceful again, I was letting go to that tranquility..."

I raised Val's chin with a finger. "Well? Tell me what you did, if you can."

Val smiled as she ran a hand across my abdomen, raking me with her nails. "As I pulled you up, it started with just wanting to help, not wanting to lose you. That feeling turned into hunger, and as we floated up into that energy, I lost focus, lost control, and it grew into incredible lust."

Kirsten said, "I felt it too, and I was too far gone to care; I rode with it, and then you touched us..."

The room lights came on; we were being encouraged to move out for the next class.

I hugged them both. "I think someone else in the class may have felt it as well; I don't know what I did. I hope both of you will forgive me."

Kirsten sighed as she moved back and stood slowly. "Nobody would believe me anyway; I'm not sure I do."

I helped Val up; we gathered her towel and my mat and headed to the door. Val ran nails across my back and whispered in my ear, "I'll let you know in the morning. Wait for me."

I sighed as we went into our locker rooms. I stopped for a drink of water. I was still tingling, hands shaking a bit. When I got to my locker Greg and Stevie were pretty much dressed again.

"Mind telling us what the hell that was?" Greg asked, looking up at me.

I sat on the bench and sighed. "Not a clue. It was me, though, or part of it was me."

Steve put a hand on my shoulder. "It is the kundalini risen," he said softly but clearly. "We are in the presence of an adept. Thank you for your help and your friendship."

With that he picked up his bag and walked out.

Greg, ever eloquent, grunted.

"About as good an explanation as I've heard," I said. "Can you tell me what you felt?"

"I could feel this... energy in that corner of the room during class. When you started moving around, I could tell it was you. It was easier with my eyes closed. I could feel it as you helped Betty, the gal next to me. Then there were some weird sensations during meditation. Once I thought Betty was coming or something, the way she sounded."

"Hmpf. Very weird. Well, I'd better get moving," I told him. "Thanks for telling me. If you think of anything else, let me know."

He picked up his bag. "Sure. Still catching up on work?"

I smiled as I buttoned my shirt. "Nope, hot date tonight."

He smiled. "Good for you. Where you going?"

"No clue."

Greg laughed. "That's the best kind. See you Thursday."

"Thanks. See you Thursday."

When I left the locker room, Val was sitting on one of the couches in the front of the fitness center, head back, eyes closed. I plopped down next to her.

"How are you doing?" I asked, putting a hand on her thigh.

She raised her head and smiled at me. "I don't know. Better. Starving." She sat up. "I'm driving." Then she gave me that wry smile through half closed eyes and rumbled, "Got a change of clothes in there, sweetie?"

I felt her thigh a little more. I always carried clean shorts and socks in my bag, and the basic toiletries. "Enough to get by." I held both her hands and touched my forehead to hers, looking in her eyes again. "But what could I do to top what we just did?"

She sighed and shivered a little. "I don't know; we'll just have to work at it, won't we. It was one hell of a way to break the ice though."

We laughed and stood up hugging, picking up our bags and heading out the door.

I took her car to a little Mexican place on Villa street. We talked mostly about work, about living on the West Coast. Every once in a while she'd stop and give me a look and a sigh.

"So can everyone who's practiced yoga for eighteen years do that? I'd guess Bill can't, from what he said."

I took another sip of beer. "We'll probably get some answers Friday from The Man. I don't know."

Our hands touched across the table. I told her quietly, "I do know that it was you that pulled me out of a very painful place. You."

She sighed and I saw something flash across her face. "Now I'm scared. I don't know what's happening. I felt it too; I felt it the first time I saw you -- a bond between us, something flashing like silver. Can that be true?"

"I don't know; part of me hopes it's true, wants it to be true. But I don't want to hurt you; I feel like I'm pulling you in so fast, so deep."

She smiled and dug her nails into the back of my hand. "You are, but I'm jumping in. I'm not scared if you're there too."

I felt the doubt flicker through me. "I'll be there, but I don't know what's going on. Maybe we should talk to them. He can help; we could go there tonight, it would only take us half an hour to get there."

"I know where you're going tonight, and it's home with me." I was learning to recognize the flaring nostrils, the way she wrinkled her brow, the angle of the eyelids.

I bowed my head. We paid and headed back to her place.

She had a nice townhouse half an hour on the other side of work; it looked rented. We'd have to do something about that; I live in a house two miles away from work.

I didn't get the tour; as soon as we went in the back door and dropped our bags her arms were around me and mine were around her. I pushed her back against the washing machine, feeling the electricity of our hips touching.

"Valerie, I don't have any condoms," I told her as we hugged, still in the laundry room.

She bit my neck and said, "You don't need them. You've been fixed; Elizabeth told me. Besides, what are you thinking of that for?"

I sighed and leaned back, our hips still together. "What didn't Elizabeth tell you?"

She put her hands around the back of my neck. "What she didn't tell me her daughter did. Now be quiet and come with me."

We moved to the bedroom, I paused in the guest bathroom a bit taking care of business. When I reentered the bedroom she had candles lit and was sitting naked on the queen-sized bed, covers thrown back.

I had to try it. I knelt at the side of the bed, turning her to me and holding her hands. I looked deep into her eyes, lit by the flickering candle light, and took that deep, slow breath...

I felt myself open up at the same time my vision closed around her. I watched her head drop back, her eyes closing. She moaned as the goose bumps ran down her arms, her nipples crinkling up. I drank her in, letting the feeling build, letting it spread to my loins, feeling myself grow erect as I breathed slowly, deliberately, moving energy.

I could smell her now; I could smell her perfume before, but now it was mixed with her own special scent. I got up on my knees, letting go of her hands and slid my fingers up her arms to her shoulders. She moaned and twitched, head back. I ran my fingers down the fronts of her shoulders, gliding down her breasts, pausing at her nipples. God, how I wanted to devour them, suck on them, be buried in them. I let that feeling sweep through me and she shook as I gently squeezed her nipples.

She started falling back on the bed; I grasped her arms and lowered her down. As I did her legs uncurled from underneath her, sliding over the edge of the bed. I smiled; what a wonderful way to start.

I pulled her legs over the edge more, then knelt back down between them. I looked at her before me, taking my gaze from the glistening wetness between her thighs, up the soft brown curls of her mound, looking at those delicious breasts, now so far away.

I thought about kissing my way slowly up her thighs, but her scent drew me to her core. I heard her moan again, and felt her shake as my lips and tongue touched. I let the animal part of me free to taste, touch, feel, explore. As I devoured her I felt her legs squeeze my head, my hands moving under her bottom, one of her hands in my hair, the other pulling one of my hands up to her hip and holding it there as she cried out.

After a long time she shuddered once again, squeezing me with her thighs, then went limp. I kissed her gently and rested my head on her thigh.

I moved up onto the bed. She was covered in a fine sweat. I ran fingertips from her thigh up her abdomen to her breast; she twitched a little.

“Val, are you still with me?” I whispered. I was still tingling; how long had I been at it?

Her head moved back and forth on the bed. “Uhhnn.”

I pulled her legs on to the bed, then curled up next to those beautiful breasts.

I kissed a nipple, hearing her moan a bit, then slid an arm underneath her and started sucking gently. I let my eyes drift closed in the flickering candlelight. I let go of my breath, letting it do its own will. Gradually I felt myself drifting back to that center, felt the energy build around me. She moved, rolling toward me, cradling my head in her arms and moving me to the other breast. I let the energy build, letting it flow between us, feeling her deep inner strength, her deep inner hunger. As I felt that hunger the energy shifted, moved. She held me with strength now, moving my head.

“Oh God, I’m on fire... You’re doing it to me again,” she moaned.

I let it build in me as well, feeling the fire in my loins yearning to be quenched in her. She rolled me to my back and started moving on top of me. I swung her around, sitting up. I pulled her between my legs and she put hers around me, squeezing me as our lips moved together.

The wave of energy I’d started within us took on a life of its own. She slid up then down, impaling herself on me. I held her waist and moved my legs into triangle seat, lining up ankles and knees, supporting her and holding her in. She crossed her legs behind me and we moved together.

The energy in us and between us continued to grow. I knew I couldn't control it, but I could guide it. I guided, calming, filling, healing, moving in so many ways all at the same time.

I felt our connection, felt us moving together to that point of no return. I guided and gathered. I held and caressed. I pulled back from her lips and held her head, opening my eyes, commanding her silently to open hers. She did, glazed and hungry. I smiled and breathed anew, feeling a new tingle flood us. Her eyes were locked on mine as a moan started from deep within her, a sound millions of years old. I held her head, holding her eyes, using the breath, going to that ragged edge, delaying it, focusing it.

I felt us soar once more within the deep blue as our lips touched and the worlds swirled around us. Our senses and selves were one.

And as we soared I had a mystic vision; two braids of ribbon coming together, twisting and swirling together through the middle of a shining six rayed star.

I drifted back to sunlight. We were in bed; she was curled up at my side as I lay on my back with an arm around her. I caressed her gently and kissed her forehead. She raised her head slowly, smiling.

"Good morning, beautiful. Sleep well?" I asked her.

She gave me an open mouthed look of wonder. "My God..." She pushed herself up on one elbow and looked around.

"Shit! It's nine o'clock!"

I pulled her back down to me. "Must have been that Mexican food. I didn't have any early meetings. Did you?"

She laughed and squeezed me. "No, but I'd better get up before my bladder bursts. We'd better call in though."

She sat up and ran a hand down my belly, giving me nails and a look of lust. "But we can do that later."

I sighed and rolled off the bed, heading to the guest bathroom. I sat on the can, doing my business, eyes closed, listening to what my body had to say. I felt good -- hungry, but good. I felt that energy again; a weird feeling this time, far away and close at the same time, part of me yet separate. I got up, brushed my teeth and washed my face, then returned to the bedroom.

She was sitting up on the bed, glowing, radiant; I could feel the energy when I came into the room. She smiled and looked at me, and I felt the wave flow from her through me. I lost myself in it as I stumbled forward to the bed, almost falling down next to her. She put a hand on my chest; I twitched at her touch, almost jumped. I lost myself in her gaze as she breathed

slowly and deeply, moving her hand down my belly, her nails soft against my skin, sending waves of passion and lust through me.

Is this what it felt like to her? She straddled me, kissing and taking me deep inside her. I pulled my legs into butterfly as we rocked together. We were joined again, moving together. I felt the energy build, climbing. It was too late; I was too far gone to control or even guide it. It swept over us in a flash and we were both coming, senses and souls blended. As we soared again I managed to gather some of the energy, bringing it into us, replenishing, healing. I saw it again, the two ribbons joining, intertwining as they passed through the center of the six rayed star, extending intertwined.

Then we sank gently into peace and calm, floating together. I remember the feelings of holding, being held, whole again.

We woke again a little after ten. We got up silently, except for laughing together looking at the glorious mess we'd made of her bed. We hugged and showered together. We dried each other off. As Val worked on her hair, I went into the kitchen. It was interesting; I knew she liked coffee, and I watched as my body knew where to reach for the coffee filters, where to find the coffee sitting in its bag in the door of the freezer, then getting out the measuring spoon she used and measuring coffee into the filter. Things wobbled a bit for me as I measured the coffee; I was using my right hand to do this, and I'm left handed. As I watched my right hand, I could almost see her fingernails, the smooth light almond shade and silky soft texture of her skin. I started the coffee and sat down at the table, sat down to wonder.

I looked at her in awe when she walked in; she gave me the same look.

"What does it mean?" she asked, a look of concentration on her face as she sat next to me, holding my hand.

"What does what mean?"

"The two triangles of silver, coming together to make a six pointed star, the two ribbons joining, intertwining, extending off to infinity..."

I'd missed parts of the vision, but as she spoke they became clear. Yes, it was two triangles, made of silver, moving together and fusing into the six rayed star. And the ribbons did extend to infinity.

"I don't know. I didn't know we shared it. You saw more detail than I did."

She put a hand on my arm. Her touch was electric.

"It was so vivid last night, then again this morning. You saw it too?"

I shook my head. "No, I felt it, I lived it. We were one. That's part of it. I see it better now, the two triangles moving together, fusing together becoming the six rayed star."

“They keep going... Like us?” she asked.

I smiled, falling into her eyes again. “I think it is us. What now?”

She shook her head. The coffee pot gurgled. She turned and looked at it, then turned to me again. “Thanks for starting the coffee. Have trouble finding things?”

I smiled and hugged her hand; she frowned. I told her, “I knew where everything was. I watched my body do it, it was like watching your body do it. And you, this morning, the energy -- you did that, you swept me away. That’s what I felt when I was sitting on the can. I felt you gathering prana; I felt the connection.”

“So did I. I wanted to try. I couldn’t control it like you could. What do we do now?”

I sighed and said “Well, we should get something to eat. I don’t think we’re going to work today.”

She shook her head, smiling.

I continued, “So we ought to call in. Then we could go to Santa Cruz, go to see him; if anyone knows he will.”

She smiled and I felt a wave of peace and love, our bond. “Or we could drive to Tahoe...” she said.

The surprise flashed through me; Tahoe, Lake Tahoe in Nevada, a few hours away, famous for casinos and instant marriages.

“Isn’t that a bit abrupt?” I asked. I knew the answer.

She smiled. “Today, tomorrow, next week... Waiting won’t change anything. You know that; I know that.”

I sighed, nothing to say. If I closed my eyes, I could lose myself in the feeling.

“You need to talk to him, get his blessing,” she said.

“I don’t need his permission...” I said.

She shook her head. “Not permission, I know that; his blessing. You need, we need him to smile on us, that’s all.”

I remembered the first time I met them, experiencing what others had said; you could tell when both of them were in the same room, you could feel the love, the bond between them. Is this what we had?

What did I need? I closed my eyes, feeling the buffeting, the deep feelings again; loss, pain, fear.

And then I moved to that calm center; I was pulled to that calm center. And in that center I was no longer alone. I would not be alone.

I opened my eyes to find us kneeling together on the kitchen floor, hugging and crying. “My God, I love you,” I sighed in her ear.

“I love you, oh I love you,” she whispered back.

We sat back, now holding hands. “We can go to Tahoe,” I told her.

She shook her head. “No, we should wait. We should pick out rings today though.”

I nodded, then noticed at how she was sitting and laughed.

“What?” she asked.

“How are you sitting?” I asked her. She was sitting perfectly balanced, back straight, folded legs, something she’d been unable to do yesterday in yoga.

She moved a little, moved her shoulders, looked at her legs and hands, and looked up at me questioning.

“Stand up,” I asked her, “Stand up for me.”

She stood up, moving with more grace than I’d seen before, some uncertainty, then looked at me again.

“Close your eyes and do the sun salutation. Don’t think, just do it.”

The sun salutation is one of my favorite opening sequences in yoga. I watched in awe as she shifted her balance, standing there in the kitchen, then inhaled slowly as she raised her arms. I felt the prana rise in her, heard her struggle to control her breath, felt her surprise. She flowed back, then forward, folding with grace and extension. She stepped back into plank and lowered, raised smoothly into cobra, and then moved to downward dog, wincing as she moved through.

“That’s enough. Sit with me again,” I told her, laughing.

She moved to sitting again, laughing in wonder. “What? How? We are one...”

I took her hands again. “Yes, yes, yes. Just as my body knew about where things were, you know what I know; I know what you know. Your body needs to catch up. That was what was weird for me making coffee, watching my right hand do things my left hand usually does.”

She laughed. “Then we need to practice this afternoon. We’ll need to put another blue spot on your ceiling.”

I laughed as well; we were one. I’d painted a blue spot on the ceiling of the room where I practice yoga at home, so I could look up and see a patch of blue, reminding me of practicing outdoors.

“When can we move you?” I asked.

“We’ll move gradually, but I can’t be without you.” She leaned forward, putting her hands on my legs.

“Max’s for brunch?” I asked. I knew it was her favorite local place to eat; I’d been there before and liked it as well. “We can look for rings afterwards.”

She smiled and nodded. We got up, hugging again. She turned to pour herself some coffee; I went to the hall and picked up the portable phone, right where I knew it would be. I picked it up with my left hand and started dialing with my right; I stopped. This is going to be quite weird getting used to. I moved it to my right hand and dialed with my left, as I usually do. I left word that I was out all day, probably be back Thursday morning. I didn’t check messages.

I handed the phone to Val and went to the bedroom to get dressed. The bed was a wonderful mess; I pulled off the sheets and the pad to dump in the washing machine. I was putting on my shoes when she came in.

“Thanks. Did you have any messages?”

I wrinkled my nose. “Didn’t check ‘em. They can keep.”

She laughed. “I didn’t check either.” We hugged again, a glorious feeling.

She got dressed, with a little help from me, and we headed off to the shopping center. After a nice meal we started looking for wedding bands. The first shop we went into, the gal behind the counter asked what we were looking for. “Wedding bands,” I replied. “In Sterling silver,” added Val. I didn’t know why, but when she said it, I knew that’s what we needed, only silver would do.

The gal told us she didn’t have anything in Sterling, and there would probably be only one place in the shopping center that did. She gave us their name, and also the name of another local jeweler that would be sure to have Sterling.

We ended up at the other place, a store that had been in the area for a long time. We found two simple silver bands and bought them.

We stopped outside the store, looking in each other’s eyes again.

“Should we wait?” she asked.

“Let’s wait for this evening,” I told her. She closed her eyes and we touched our heads together, holding hands.

Then it was back to the real world. “Let’s go get the Jeep,” I told her. “We can move you quicker.”

That’s what we did, making two trips loading up her little car and my Grand Cherokee, getting the essentials.

As we were unloading things in my place, now our place, I heard her laugh in the kitchen.

“What’s so funny?” I called out, walking to the kitchen door.

She turned to me, holding a utensil in her left hand. “Is this what you went through? I’m picking up things with my left hand, but I know where everything is.”

We unpacked, we rearranged. She decided on another load of necessities; we’d do it after dinner.

We spent an hour doing yoga. It amazed us both; She now had my skills, but in her body. We went through some sequences many times, making them her own. It would take a while before her strength and flexibility caught up with what she felt she should be able to do.

We had a simple dinner then headed back to her place for one last load for the night. After we’d unloaded both vehicles and more or less put things away, we ended up together again in the practice room.

We looked at each other and sighed; it was time for something, but what? She stood up and left the room. I lit the candles around the room, and the incense burner, then took off my clothes and returned to the center.

She returned naked, holding the rings in one hand. She sat before me, our knees touching. I held her hands and looked at the two rings in her palm, one crossed slightly over the other. I looked up into her eyes and the breath and the vision came again, of its own.

As we looked into each other’s eyes, feeling the energy build and swirl around and within us, we saw it again. We saw two triangles of silver slide across and fuse into a six rayed star. We saw two strands of ribbon approach from below, enter the center of the star and swirl together, emerging as the double helix, extending to infinity. And as they rose, the six rayed star changed, smoothing into a circle and sending out a flash of light and energy through the center of the helix that startled us both.

I picked up the smaller of the rings and placed it on her finger. “Will you marry me Valerie?” I asked softly.

As I looked into her eyes I knew I’d never be alone again.

“Yes, I already have,” she said, clearly and with strength. She took the other ring and placed it on my hand.

“Tom, will you marry me?”

I felt the feelings surge up, felt my skin tingle, then felt that incredible calmness and peace, and the knowledge I wasn’t alone.

“Oh yes; thank you for making me whole.”

With that we kissed, our arms flowing around each other. Soon we moved together, she moved into my lap as we continued our kiss and caress. We let the hunger grow, then moved together with a mutual gasp as she impaled herself on me.

We turned slightly in the room; one direction felt better than the others. We moved together in the candlelight, kissing, caressing, feeling ourselves grow closer and intertwine.

The energy within and around us had a life of its own again; we knew we could only guide it, not control it. We rocked together, kissing, feeling, squeezing as we let it carry us past the point of no return.

We both cried out and held each other as we came, soaring again through the middle of that symbol, now a shining silver ring.

We returned to the real world some time later. When we looked around, over an hour had passed. We got up slowly, put out the candles, cleaned up, and went to bed.

In bed we kissed and I started to turn over. But Val held me, pulling my head to her chest, nestling my head between her breasts. “This is where you belong,” she told me.

I heard and felt the beating of her heart and knew she was right. We went to sleep in each other’s arms.

The real world intruded in the form of the alarm clock; we got up, showered together, had breakfast, and got in my Jeep to drive to work, without speaking a word. We didn’t need to.

As we got out in the parking lot I looked at her. How much she had changed... How much I had changed... We hugged in the parking lot. “I can feel it too...” she told me. “We’re both alive, and together.”

We met for lunch in the cafeteria. We were sitting together eating when Kirsten walked up. One of the great things about me being left-handed and Val being right-handed is that we can hold hands while eating.

Kirsten sat down and took about three bites of her lunch before she stopped. She looked at Val, then at me, then back at Val. I picked another French fry off my plate and was putting it in my mouth when Kirsten grabbed my left hand.

“What in the world did you two do?” she said in amazement as she touched my ring.

“I took your advice,” I told her, moving my mouth over to capture the fry.

“He didn’t want me to get away, and I didn’t want him to get away either,” Val added.

Kirsten let go of my hand and sat in shock. “Tahoe? You did it yesterday? I figured you were just tied up in bed...”

I laughed. Val spoke for us. “No, we just got the rings and I moved in.” Val reached over and took Kirsten’s other hand. “We may go this weekend. Would you be there?”

Kirsten looked at us both; we could see the tears forming in her eyes as she shook her head slowly in disbelief.

“Of course. I don’t understand it. I can feel it, I can see it, but I don’t understand it.”

“Neither do we,” I told her.

“What? How? Oh, never mind. Congratulations to you both. Who else knows?”

“You’re the first,” I said.

“Let’s test the other’s situational awareness,” Val said.

I laughed, as did Kirsten; she shook her head again. That was one of my phrases.

“Did you two do a Vulcan mind meld or something?” she asked with knitted brow.

Val and I looked at each other. “Something like that,” Val said very matter of factly.

“Oof,” Kirsten said, and dug back into her lunch.

None of the rest of the gang joined us for lunch; we parted with hugs and another round of congratulations from Kirsten.

We met again a few hours later in the fitness center. We’d brought another yoga mat for Val to use; it had been Carol’s. Val and I were both against the wall, legs up against the wall.

The only difference from my usual pose was that our hands were touching. We pretty much stayed there, eyes closed, until we heard Jasmine start to speak. She usually makes some chit-chat for a minute or two before starting class, giving folks like me that were zoned out a chance to come back to the planet.

I sighed and let go of Val's hand, then rolled to my right and into a seated posture on the mat; I usually hung out in the back of the room anyway. When I opened my eyes, I saw Jasmine giving us a very puzzling look. Us? I looked over to Val; she was sitting up as well, smiling at Jasmine, in close to perfect form. I chuckled; we'd undoubtedly rolled over and into a seated posture as one; it probably looked pretty weird.

Jasmine started the class. I closed my eyes and lived it, feeling Val next to me, feeling Kirsten, able to feel the others if I reached out to them. A few times I opened my eyes and looked at Jasmine; she was shocked, surprised, amused, bewildered, I wasn't sure what. One time I felt her nearby and heard her say, incredulously, "Yes, that's right..." and heard Val reply, "I know where I want to go, but my body doesn't have the flexibility yet."

At the end of the usual class Jasmine looked back to me. "Tom?" Two Thursdays a month I led the class in meditation. I'd brought my Tibetan chimes, called tingsha. When I reached around for them, I found Val holding their velvet bag. She smiled and held out a hand. I touched her and knew; I nodded. Let's do it.

As Jasmine moved a little to the side, both of us walked forward to the center of the room. As Val and I moved, holding hands, I felt the connection between us grow again; felt the glow, the energy. Jasmine had a very puzzled look on her face; as we passed her, Val reached over and touched her on the top of the head. Jasmine gasped and smiled as a look of wonder filled her face.

Val and I sat down in the front of the room; Val took our chimes out of the bag and handed them to me. Most of the class was already in a reclining pose; a few were sitting, and those with opened eyes looked puzzled.

"Find a comfortable position," I started out as I usually do.

"...and let your eyes close. Focus on the breath," Val said.

"Life begins with breath," I responded.

My eyes were closed; I imagine Val's were as well. One of us would start a sentence or phrase, and the other would finish it. We bounced back and forth. The experience from where I sat was incredible. After a while we both stood and moved through the room, speaking in turn, looking at each other, still connected by our gaze. I could feel the love, the calm, the strength.

Near the end of the meditation we did something Barb had shown me many years ago; somehow I'd never felt like doing it before. We moved among the people in the class. I said, "May we all be free from suffering," and Val concluded with, "May we all be at peace." As we

did this we touched each person on the forehead. I'd never felt that kind of calm before; I could see people relax as we touched them.

We ended up together near Kirsten and Jasmine. I put a hand on Kirsten's head and said, "May we all be free from suffering." Val put hers next to mine and said, "May we all be at peace." We could see the glow in Kirsten, see her relax.

We did the same with Jasmine; I have a special love and affection for her.

Val and I held hands and moved back to the front of the room. After a few minutes of silence I rang the chimes again, as I had through the meditation, and we brought people back to the room.

As people moved to seated postures we saw looks of wonder, of joy, and of peace. Val and I were holding hands; I knew we were radiating peace. We moved apart a bit and held out our hands to Jasmine. She came back and sat between us, gasping a little at the shock of our touch, smiling as she sat down, enveloped in the serenity.

We bowed and ended the class. I looked over at Val; she nodded. I turned again to the class, our friends.

"In case you haven't noticed, something wonderful has happened," I said.

"Tom and I are going to be married," Val added.

We listened to gasps, applause, and cheers from the class. Jasmine hugged us. We stood up and it seemed like everyone hugged us.

Jasmine asked, "Do dad and mom know?"

Val shook her head. "Not yet; we want to tell them."

Jasmine looked at me, puzzled. Val and I put arms around each other. "Vulcan mind-meld," I told her.

She chuckled and picked up her mat. "I'll see you tomorrow night. I'll check into sleeping arrangements for you.

I laughed; Val gave her a hug and whispered something in her ear. Jasmine laughed and nodded her head.

"Anything you want to share with me?" I asked.

Val said, "Go get changed," and patted me on the bottom as I picked up our mats.

In the locker room both Gary and Steve were giving me looks. I started changing clothes, waiting for them to ask.

“Well?” Gary finally asked.

“Well what?” I said, pulling a sweatshirt over my head.

“What the hell happened? I mean I’m happy for you and all that, but isn’t this kind of sudden? And what the hell did you do to us during meditation?”

I laughed as I sat down. For Gary this was eloquence.

“You experienced that? Yes, it’s sudden. We don’t know what happened.” Steve came over and looked at my ring.

“Stevie -- why silver? We knew the rings had to be silver, not gold.”

Steve gave me a knowing smile. “Silver is the Lady’s metal. It’s a good sign.”

I took a chance. “What about two triangles of silver, moving together to form a six rayed star, then fusing into a circle?”

He sat down and looked at me, still holding my hand. I could feel something in him, I wasn’t sure what.

He spoke softly. “Where did you read that?”

I answered as softly. “We didn’t read it, we saw it, lived it, both of us.”

He sighed. “You are both blessed. Do you know of the Great Rite?”

I shook my head no.

“You did sometime; you will. Two triangles forming a hexagram is the sign of the heart chakra. I’d like to hear more about your experience; our coven leader would like to hear about it.”

That was the first time I’d heard Stevie use the word “coven.” His tastes were more diverse than I’d imagined.

Steve let go of my hand and stood up. I put on my shoes. I looked up at him. “We’re going to talk to Him tomorrow, but we’d both like to know what it means.”

Greg said, “So when are you going to get married?”

I looked over at him. I felt quite married already. “We were thinking of going to Tahoe, maybe this weekend. We almost went yesterday.”

At that Steve said in a loud clear voice, “Not without me, you won’t!”

I laughed and stood up. “We won’t get married without you. We’re just not sure where to put you...”

Steve gave us a pose and said, “Well, I’ll have to talk to Valerie and see if she’s picked out colors yet...”

Some times he’s too much. “Okay, crazies. See you tomorrow afternoon. We can load up the Jeep after lunch; remember to eat hearty.”

Gary clapped me on the back; I grabbed my bag and headed out.

Jasmine was waiting by the desk; we waited until Val came out of the Women’s locker room, then the three of us walked out together. I was in the middle, with ladies on each side.

“Bill told me he’d witnessed something incredible,” Jasmine said as we walked to the parking lot, “but wouldn’t tell me anything more. I wouldn’t have believed him if he had.”

We had one more hug at Jasmine’s car. “I’ll see you tomorrow. Namaste,” she said to us, bowing her head a little.

“Namaste,” we said. I closed the car door for her and we walked over to my Jeep.

On the way home I told Val, “Stevie has some clues about the silver and the images we’ve seen...”

She squeezed my hand and said, “Oh?”

“Something to do with the heart chakra, a coven, he mentioned a Great Rite or something like that.”

We exchanged glances. “And he wanted to know if you’ve picked out colors for the wedding yet,” I added with a smile.

She laughed, her head going back, exposing that biteable neck. She looked down and asked, “Will we be able to sleep together?”

I grunted. “Will we be able to sleep, or will we be together?” I felt a soft hand on my shoulder. “They let the married couples sleep together. Jasmine will do her best.”

We went by her place and picked up another load of stuff. At home we had a light supper, put things away, and gathered things for the weekend trip.

“Would we drive to Tahoe straight from dinner Saturday?” Val asked as we packed.

“We could, but it wouldn’t be fair to the others -- it’s got to be six or seven hours from the coast. If we do it this weekend, we should leave Sunday morning; we’ll be pretty tired Saturday night.”

We set aside a separate pile of clothes for that trip, if we decided to do it.

We got ready for bed, then sat back to back in meditation for a while. We could feel each other; we felt so whole. We moved to bed and made love gently, falling asleep afterwards in each other’s arms.

Braap went the alarm; whap went the hand to silence it. We snuggled together for a few minutes, then got up and showered together. We fixed breakfast, loaded the Jeep, and headed off without speaking a word; we communicated with glances, with touches. We bid each other goodbye in the parking lot.

The gang met for lunch in the cafeteria. I saw Greg in the checkout line; he had a pile of food on his tray that looked as if it was for two people. I had soup, a salad, and some fries. Val had some pretty good looking enchiladas. After a fairly quiet lunch I went out to the Jeep with the others and we loaded up belongings.

We left work a little early; the Traffic Gods were busy entertaining themselves with people going the other way, so we made exceptional time. We were one of the first cars to pull into the Center’s parking lot. Val and I had been in the front seat, with Linda, Steve, and Gary in the back. As we got out, Steve said, “You two go on in, we’ll unload things.” I turned to Steve and gave him a smile; I tossed him the keys so he could lock up.

I took Val’s hand. “Are you ready to meet Him?” I asked.

She nodded. “Are you?”

I sighed and gave her a hug. “I need to have my eyes checked,” I told her.

She pulled back and gave me a look of concern. “Why?”

“I’ve got this blind spot... Everyone else sees things that I can’t.”

She laughed and pulled me up the ramp to the door.

I stopped as we went in the door. Val took a half breath.

“Can you feel it too?” I asked her.

She looked at me and nodded. She pointed to a wall on the left. He was over there, in that room. Then she pointed off to the right. She was over there. We both felt it; felt the connection between them. Could they feel the connection between us?

We had our answer soon enough. Elizabeth came out of a door on the right and walked up to us, sweeping us both into a hug.

“Oh I’m so happy! Valerie, it’s so good to meet you in person. Tom, it’s so good to have you back, really back.”

We were standing there beaming as He walked in. I turned to him and bowed. When I looked up he was smiling at us.

“So Thomas, this is your young lady?” he said to me.

“Sir, this is Valerie; she has agreed to let me be her husband,” I said, struggling to remain centered.

I felt Val stand beside me and put her hand on my shoulder; I felt our connection grow.

He came closer to us and took our hands in his. He looked at us for a moment; Elizabeth came over to his side and put an arm around his waist. I didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry, the feeling of the bond was so strong.

“You have our blessings, and our congratulations,” He said.

I felt relieved. “Thank you, sir,” we both said.

Elizabeth asked, “When were you planning on getting married?”

He hrmfed and said, “They’re as married now as they ever will be.”

I smiled and told her, “We were thinking of going to Tahoe on Sunday.”

His countenance changed in a flash. “I will hear of no such thing!” He roared.

Val and I clutched each other. Then he laughed. “You will be married here, whenever you want, among your friends and family.”

“Thank you, sir,” I said.

He gave me another stern look, then looked at his wife for a moment. “Thomas, I don’t know where you get this ‘Sir’ stuff. From now on, the two of you should address us as father and mother, mom and dad, whichever you prefer. Is that clear?”

I hugged Val. “Yes father,” we said together.

He smiled again, putting hands on our shoulders. “Good. Now I know what my daughter was doing with the sleeping arrangements. I approve.” He looked at his wife and said, “I suppose you knew about this all along?” Elizabeth just smiled.

He handed me a piece of paper. “Write this up on the schedule board. I’ve got to see to other matters.”

And with that, he turned and left the room. Elizabeth took Val’s hand and said, “We’ve a lot to discuss.” They left.

That left me with a job to do. This was turning into the usual deal at these retreats. I laughed and went to look for markers for the whiteboard.

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We were still holding hands as we opened our eyes.

“I saw them,” I said, tears in my eyes.

“So did I,” she whispered.

Julie, our daughter, and Mark, our son.

WORK IN PROGRESS!
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Fusion

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