

The Oberlin Five & The Concord Five Epilogue

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Part One

Luke

I was more than a little disoriented, confused, when the alarm jarred me awake. I seldom hear the alarm these days because it is seldom set. I get up when I awake and go to bed when I reach a stopping point. I raised up in bed, looked at the clock and saw it was only 4:30 in the morning and still dark outside. When I reached across the bed for Matt, I remembered where I was and why the alarm had gone off. I haven't seen Matt since January third when I had kissed him goodbye at the airport in Vienna. Today is March third--two whole months since I last kissed him--and Matt will be landing in Concord at 6:30 or 7:00.

We had spent New Year's together in Vienna kinda as a result of Matt's hard-headedness about

some things. One thing he is not going to do, if it is humanly possible to do otherwise, is to be away from home Christmas. I want to be at home Christmas too, but Matt is determined to be. Each year he turns down concerts because they would require him to be away Christmas. Once or twice he has agreed to play Christmas Eve afternoon, but only when Marc can fly him home immediately afterward. He is going to be in a pew at St. Mary's for the Midnight Christmass. To tell the truth, I love him for it.

Anyway, he had been offered a series of European concerts, starting two days after Christmas. I had nothing I could not do after New Year's, so we flew into southern Italy for a couple days, then on to Vienna for New Year's. I kissed Matt goodbye in Vienna January third, and now he is coming home.

Jason, who is now living in Concord with his life-long partner, Anthony, asked me Sunday a week ago if Matt wasn't due home soon. I told him he was leaving London the following Sunday and would be landing in Atlanta Monday morning. When I told him that, he insisted he and Anthony fly to Atlanta and pick him up. "You can go if you want to," he said, "but we have been talking about spending some time in Atlanta with college friends we haven't seen in ages so we'll combine the two, leaving here Wednesday or Thursday."

"I'd love to go meet him in Atlanta as a surprise, but I have two sculptures to see installed this week. Since the commission could keep us living without work for months if we chose, don't think I better go. The sculptures were packed and shipped last week and I am due in New Orleans to see to their installation tomorrow. I'm flying out of Jackson on the first Atlanta flight tomorrow morning. Just hug him for me and I'll meet you all at the airfield."

When Marc had come to live with the Greywolfs he kept talking about a decent airfield in Concord, then took a bundle his dad had given him for earning a four on an AP history exam and bought a piece of property on the east side of town. After grading and so on, there was a decent enough grass strip and a hangar, but no lights. Then Jason and Anthony decided they'd had enough of big-city life. They had earned and invested well so they could retire at some ridiculous age, I think they both are still well under sixty-five. Anyway, they flew in their plane which they had been keeping in Lexington.

"If you two insist on flying all over the place," Millie had said after they were late for a party because of traffic in Lexington, "you need to spend some of that money you are hoarding for old age and get us decent lighting for the airfield. I'll match what you put up." So, for it's size, Concord has a magnificent little private airport.

One Sunday, at St. Mary's coffee hour, John and Uncle Michael were talking about a trip they had recently completed in connection with John's latest photographic exhibition, "Concord--American Hometown", and having had a three-hour layover in Detroit. "It was too short to get out and see or do anything and too long for humans wanting to be home," John said.

"Stephenson..." Uncle Michael started, and we knew an announcement was about to be made because when Uncle Michael called John "Stephenson", there was a plot to be announced, "...if you were not so hard-headed in thinking that you are too old to do anything constructive, you'd get your damn pilot's license and we'd fly everywhere."

"In what, Michael? I haven't seen a plane parked in our front yard."

"You get your license and there'll be a plane." True to his word, when John got his license, Michael bought a sweet little plane. Matt and I had talked about getting a license, but both had been too busy to do so. Also, we seldom were headed in the same direction. In looking back on it, the summer after our first year at Oberlin was an ideal we never seemed to duplicate again.

That summer, plans had called for Matt to do a series of concerts for Bach Organ Society chapters in July. Uncle Michael had arranged a series of exhibitions of my work, with me in attendance, for July and August. He had been able to arrange for the exhibitions to be at the same time as Matt's

concerts except for the opening one. We were both having a grand time being "famous artists", visiting sights--tourist and otherwise--seeing things we had never seen, and getting to know people who appreciated our work.

In addition to the Bach concerts, Matt had made it known that he would play another all-twentieth-century American composers concert during the week if someone arranged it. He had done the American material for his recital at Oberlin and said, "Seems a waste to never do it again." The first two weeks of the tour he was asked to do an additional Bach concert, but not the American one. The third week he was asked to do both and from then on he had to turn down requests for more than one American concert. In addition to practicing our arts and having them appreciated, the two of us were doing very well so far as earning money was concerned, much better than we had anticipated.

The third week of July we had had a late dinner, after Matt had finally been able to get away from adoring fans following one of his American concerts, and didn't get back to the room until past midnight. I was about to tell Matt I was really ready for bed, since I had to get up in the morning while he could/would laze in bed, when I noticed the message light on the phone flashing. Since Matt was getting out of his monkey suit, I called the desk and learned there was an urgent message for Matt. "He is to please call Alice and Lester as soon as possible," the desk clerk said, and gave me a number.

Matt came waltzing into the room, sans clothing, and did a slow turn in front of me. "Probably not tonight, Josephine," I said, reminding him of an old joke that we used when one of us was too tired, or whatever, for sex.

Matt thrust out his lower lip and said, "You don't love me anymore," in a childish voice.

"Maybe Lester and Alice do," I answered. "You have an urgent message to call them at once. Here's the number." I handed Matt the number and went into the bedroom to get undressed.

I tossed on my robe and tossed Matt his, since it was obvious he was going to be on the phone a while. I could see he was going to have to struggle to get in the robe and helped him into it, sat down and pulled him into my lap. I had heard Matt say, "This is a wonderful surprise," as I came out of the bedroom and now he was taking down names and dates. "Yea, I have not changed my mind at all. Married life is great and the sex is better than before." Matt talked a while longer then handed me the phone. "Tell these jokers married life is grand."

"And just who am I telling this?" I asked.

"Alice and Lester. I told you about them."

I took the phone and said, "I guess Matt's lover is getting senile. He tells me I know you, but I don't."

I heard a man and a woman laugh and then the man said, "Let Matt tell you the details, but we are not the kewl skater dude at the auditions last December."

"Oh, Lester and Alice. Now I remember. Don't know why there's a question, but married life is great. And you won't even have the problem of introducing your partner as your husband and, when Alice does, no-one will drop their teeth--which happens when one of us decides to introduce the other as husband." I congratulated the two and hung up. "So what's going on?" I asked.

"You remember I said one of contestants at the auditions was dressed as a skater dude?" I nodded, recalling how horrified Matt had been at the time. "Well, Lester and Alice have been very good friends since high school. Seems the idea that there might be more going on between them just never came up until mid-spring. Lester came home from practice one afternoon to see fire trucks parked in front of the building where he lived. Fortunately his place was spared but, because of damage, the building had to be vacated. He called Alice to see if she knew of any place he could stay and she invited him to move in with her. Her roommate had taken a job at the beginning of the year and Alice hadn't

found anyone who wanted to move in with her."

"Nature being what nature is, the two were working very hard to keep their relationship on a friendship-only basis but, when Alice went home for spring break, she asked Lester to go with her and when her mother asked them if Lester was Alice's boyfriend, Lester said they looked at each other and both said, 'I guess so.' You can, of course, guess the rest. When they started talking about getting married, they couldn't find any time without risking their MFAs, for which they had finals in the spring. Both had interviews for jobs in June--which was complicated by the need to find jobs close together--so the best time seemed to be July, when Alice was scheduled to do the concerts."

"She knew if she just said she wouldn't do them, her refusal would be remembered long after the concerts would be forgotten. They had just about decided to rush out and get married on a lunch hour, when Alice's grandmother gave them the use of her cottage in Bermuda all of July. That cinched it. Lester called Mr. Lawrence and explained the situation to him. He had said he was sure the third-place winner would be acceptable to the societies and gave Lester the kewl skater dude's number. Oliver, it turns out, really is a kewl skater dude and was leaving the next morning for a skater's tour of Europe. Sooo, they called me to see if I would agree to do the August series if Mr. Lawrence approved." Which, of course, he did and we finished the summer with Matt in one city and me in another, but the rest of August we were together, having a ball and making money but, as I said, that has seldom happened since. And now I was getting ready to go to Millie's Field--its official name--to meet the love of my life and reason for being.

Matt

Even before I really thought I could afford it, I flew first class to and from Europe, otherwise I would arrive exhausted. This time when I reached Heathrow for my flight to New York, I was exhausted. I not only had played a grueling series of concerts, but also had done a number of master classes. Luke fussed because I was doing so much, but I wanted to pack as much as possible into the time I was away from him and especially in Europe since it involved a flight over and back. I had long ago lost any love I'd had for flying. Well, that's not quite true. I really love flying with Marc and with John Stephenson. There's something really special about flying with friends. Anyway, we were barely off the ground in England before I tilted my seat back, until it was essentially a bed, and went to sleep.

I slept the sleep of the innocent and woke up only when a cabin attendant tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Mr. Greywolf, we will be landing in half an hour." She waited until I had my seat up and asked, "Would you like coffee?"

"Please, if you would." She brought me coffee and I drank it slowly, dreaming of being united with Luke before the day's end. I thought back over this European tour, much of which was just work. I mean I still enjoyed sitting down at the organ and playing, and I had played some fine and famous organs this trip, but I didn't like the rush from place to place. There were times I felt I needed to look at the calendar to see where I was.

Days before, I had just finished a concert in southern Germany on a very ornate Baroque organ in a very ornate Baroque church. I had done a master class earlier in the day and, by the time the concert was over, felt as though I had been trapped in a candy and frosting factory. To add insult to injury, the organist was so proud of the organ and kept extolling its virtues. I long ago decided not to correct local organists when they really did not know what they were talking about so I didn't tell him the least problem the organ had was being a bit out of tune. After my years at Holtkamp while I earned my BA and MFA in organ at Oberlin, Mr. Holtkamp had told me, "Matt, you are well-qualified to be an organ builder. I suspect you will never put your knowledge and skill in organ building to work, but please, don't put down

organs you play. Sure, you could improve some--perhaps most--organs you'll be playing, but unless you intend to do so, remember that the organist you are leaving behind is stuck with the organ. Don't burst his bubble if he knows no better, or force him to admit he's stuck with a poor organ. You will not make a friend doing so."

Only once had I slipped up. A fellow who reminded me of the poor fool who had auditioned for the series of concerts for Bach Organ Societies, stepped on my last nerve with his showing off. His playing was poor and the organ would have benefited from an uncontrolled fire. I didn't feel I could tell him his playing sucked and, instead, pointed out some of the organ's shortcomings. After that, any chance he had to put me and my playing down, he did. It did me little harm, but I did feel rotten about it and never did it again.

Anyway, I had finished the concert, and was having a late dinner with the organist and her husband, and the sponsor of the concert and his wife, when the waiter indicated I had a phone call. My heart sank because a call from Luke wasn't expected--it was my night to call him. We knew when we would call each other as we did nightly. I couldn't think of anyone who would need to contact me urgently enough to call. When I answered the phone a familiar voice said, "Sleeping in an empty bed, Sarang Homan Pomul?"

"Larry?" I asked hesitantly, then almost shouted "Larry!". I got calmed down enough to ask, "Where are you? What's going on?"

"I am in Baden Baden, foot-loose and fancy free. Returning to the States next week and called Luke to see if I could hang out at your place for a while when I get back and he told me you were in Germany."

"Larry, we need to talk for hours!" I said.

"Yea, sure do. It's been ages since we talked."

"Right now I am having dinner...."

"Sorry to interfere."

"Don't be. But can I call you back in, say, an hour?"

"Yea, if you like or if you can give me an address, I'll come down. As I said, I'm free."

I gave Larry my address and asked that he call me back in an hour unless he could get a train down before.

I had only been in the room a few minutes when the phone rang and Larry told me he couldn't get a train until the morning. "Can you meet me?" he asked. I checked my calendar and discovered I had the day free. I had thought about just lazing around and it would be good to laze around with Larry.

Larry had sounded really upbeat which was great. He had gone into a major tailspin the second year we were at Oberlin. He had a fantastic time in Nepal and India working with a film crew the summer after our first year. He had been encouraged to use his free time to photograph on his own. "You are good with video," he had been told, "but you're better with a still camera. Work on developing that." "I became absolutely fascinated with children and especially their faces," he told us, "and spent hours photographing them." When he returned, the film crew he had worked with all received sets of his prints for Christmas. The team leader showed his set to a publisher and Larry had his photographs published in a lavish coffee table book called "Faces of the Innocent". The book both earned him a name and made a pile of money when it was released for Christmas sales the third year we were at Oberlin. That did much for his emotional state which, as all of ours, was pretty shaken our second year. He, with the rest of us, sometimes wondered if we would survive a very rough second year. It had started with the aftermath of Paula's rape.

The holiday break following Paula's rape, found Kent and his family in North Carolina to be with

her. We were lucky enough to have a good day at the falls which Paula said had been very healing. We all hoped the Christmas break with family and friends would get Paula well on the road to recovery but, when we returned to Oberlin, so did the nightmares. At her request, Matt and I held a sweat which, again, seemed to help for a time, but the nightmares, flashbacks and other psychological problems became more and more disturbing. Paula was seeing a counselor four or five times a week, and different drugs were tried, but her recovery seemed to be as far in the future as ever.

While they were in North Carolina, Paula often called to Kent at night and he would go to her room to comfort her. When we returned to Oberlin, he didn't bother to return to his room. Needless to say, in spite of what had happened to Paula, they were soon making love. For some reason, Paula refused to take birth control pills and insisted Kent use a condom. Maybe she knew more than she thought. In the spring, Kent and Paula talked about being married in the summer and the Oberlin crew started making plans for the wedding. With her wedding in the future, Paula seemed to have overcome her emotional problems and everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

Then Paula started having emotional problems again, her health seemed to be deteriorating rapidly and no-one seemed to know why. Kent wanted to go ahead with the wedding, but Paula and her doctors advised against it. No-one could give a really good reason for postponing the marriage, but Kent reminded us that there need be no reason beyond Paula wanting to postpone it. We were all puzzled by Paula's reluctance since it was obvious she was mad about Kent and he certainly didn't move out of their room.

In spite of everything else going on, the whole household revolved around Paula when all was said and done. Then in April she discovered she was pregnant. Kent had said on a couple occasions he didn't think condoms were nearly as dependable as he had been led to believe, but we thought nothing about it.

At first, the two could only see the pregnancy as a problem, and actually talked about an abortion they told us later. When they decided there would be no abortion, they announced Paula's pregnancy to the household. Everyone was so excited and began making plans for a baby. Paula also said she thought we could plan for a wedding as well.

Our plans and dreams were smashed when Paula went for her first visit with the obstetrician-gynecologist. When she had been raped, those attending her were concerned about her becoming pregnant as a result of the rape and were much relieved when that seemed highly unlikely. Unfortunately, no-one had been concerned about something more devastating--not that anything could have been done about it had they known. As a result of a routine test, Paula was found to be HIV positive. When Paula and Kent were told, they called all of us together to tell us. "How about you, Kent?" Larry had asked.

"I think it will be a miracle if I am not, but I don't know. I have been using a condom, but obviously they are not 100% safe. I had the test today and will know next week sometime."

Among ourselves, and without Kent or Paula knowing it, the rest of us discussed the future. We agreed that, regardless of the outcome, we would support Paula and Kent and their child. We were all bowled over when Kent announced that he and Paula had come to a decision concerning their situation. "If I am HIV positive, Paula and I have decided she will have to have an abortion. There is every likelihood that the baby will be born HIV positive and with parents under a death sentence, I don't think we can handle it and even if we could, there's a possibility that both parents will be dead, leaving the care of our child to someone else." There was little that could be said to the two, so about all we could do was be with them.

The report for Kent was good. By some miracle, he was not HIV positive. He and Paula had been

told, again, that the baby would likely be HIV positive. Again, Paula and Kent started questioning whether or not she should have an abortion. The whole household got in on the debate. Finally, only Paula thought it was a good idea, and in the end she was very appreciative of our determination to see that her child had as good a life as possible for what, in all likelihood, would be a short one.

Against all hopes and prayers, Paula's HIV status raced headlong into full-blown AIDS. In December when her son, Paul, was born, Paula was clearly in the end stages of the disease. Paul, of course, tested positive for HIV, but Paula was never told. I don't know whether her pregnancy hastened the development of her AIDS or gave her strength to hold out. In any event, her situation was speeding toward the end and, as we watched her, we could only hope death would not stay away.

After a lengthy discussion over several days--in which Paula took some part--Kent had called Marc and asked about him flying Paula to Concord where she would be in the hospice, cared for by Gladys and Chelsea. The move was postponed for one reason or another until it never happened. Paula died in her sleep in late February. In a compromise with her Jewish tradition, her body was flown to Lexington for burial in the Jewish cemetery there.

In one of HIV's mysterious behaviors, Paul was checked for HIV again when he was eight weeks old, and tested negative. Kent planned to drop out of college to care for Paul, but the household, wisely I think, discouraged the move. With the help of his mother, Kent found a woman to live in and care for Paul. The baby was, of course, the center of life in the house.

Kent finished his landscape design degree at Case-Western Reserve. By the time he did, he had completed several projects which had earned him a name and he could have stayed in Cleveland and had a good life and good business. But when offered a fellowship to continue his studies at North Carolina State, he took it. "I will have experience and training in both the north and the south," he had said. Paul was just two and a half when Kent moved to Raleigh to attend NC State. Paula's mom had finished her studies and insisted on moving to Raleigh to help Kent care for Paul. She easily found a job which she loved and which allowed her to work a flexible schedule so she could help care for Paul. Sandra told Kent she didn't want to interfere with his life, but wanted to help out with Paul. "I will not share your house or apartment," she had said. "You are young and need to get on with your life. But I do want to be as much help as possible." When Kent found a duplex, she relented and moved next door to him.

The second semester he was at NC State, Kent was teamed with a young woman from Arizona, Katie, for a project. Since she lived in a single room and Kent wanted to be home to watch over Paul, they worked at his place. After the project, she often came to play with Paul and helped Sandra babysit when Kent had to be out of town on a project. The head of their department suggested they enter a design competition for a new garden at Emory in Atlanta, which they did and won. Not only did they get the generous prize money for their design, but were also awarded the contract for constructing the garden. They would have been ahead even if they'd had to pay to be allowed to construct the garden. The garden was first opened during graduation week and was seen by hundreds who came to graduation. The dedication of the garden also attracted a huge crowd. As a result, the two NC State students had more commissions than they could handle.

Katie knew, of course, about Paula and when she found herself falling in love with Kent, held back for fear of opening old wounds. Kent had fallen in love with her, but didn't think he had the right to ask her to take on a family so he kept quiet. Katie finally decided to take a risk and proposed to Kent. After giving her all his arguments as to why she didn't need him, he told her he needed time and space to think. He called me and Luke and he and Paul came for a weekend visit to the house we'd built near Concord. When he started talking about his dilemma, it was clear he was as head-over-heels in love with Katie as

he had been with Paula, but we were getting nowhere with him. Then Luke had an inspiration and invited Margaret and David to dinner Saturday night. It took very little prodding before they were laughing about their problems getting engaged. Monday, as soon as Kent got back to Raleigh and had time to say yes, the wedding was on. Their families being so far apart, the two decided to get married in Concord--and where else but at the falls? They were married in April before graduating from NC State in June two years ago.

Their business takes them all over the country and Paula's mom still lives near enough to take care of Paul and Kathryn, who was born the January following their wedding. When the two decided to have a house built, they included a neat garden house for Sandra, who keeps the kids when they cannot travel with Kent and Katie. The two youngsters also spend time in Ohio with Kent's parents and in Arizona with Katie's.

I never think about Paula and Kent without becoming angry at how one sick mind was able to destroy one life and bring pain to so many others. At the same time, when I see Kent, Katie, Paul, Kathryn and Sandra, I am thankful that joy was possible even after so much heartache.

Well, it was Larry's call that set me off on that tangent.

See, with the household's attention on Paula, no-one else got much attention. Well, we were as supportive of each other as we could be, especially making sure grades stayed up, but that was about all we had time for. The combo lost Paula and Kent of course, but Luke also found it was taking too much time. The upshot of it all was that it dissolved. Eugene had played with a jazz group at a lake resort during that first summer and continued playing with it as we started our second year.

He was gone every weekend, playing Friday and Saturday night, sleeping all day Saturday and most of Sunday. His schedule finally reached the point where we saw very little of him. He became a stranger in the house. He simply wasn't there as we struggled with Paula's illness. We all assumed his relationship with Larry was sound, and even when Larry asked Kent about moving into his old room, no-one gave it a second thought. When Kent asked, Larry said, "Eugene has such weird hours we really need separate rooms so we can both get some rest."

He made the change and we were so wrapped up in our own problems and dealing with Paula it passed unnoticed. The two guys might well have gone on their way had not Marc made a comment when he flew up to transport Paula's body and us to North Carolina. After the funeral, he and Michael were working on the pasture fence when Marc said, "Michael, aren't your brothers anti-drug?"

"Damn right! Why do you ask?"

"When I made the second trip to bring them down for the funeral, I was sure I smelled weed. Could be wrong, but I don't think so."

"When? Where? Who?" Michael asked.

"Eugene's jazz group was practicing in the studio and I went there looking for Luke. Seems he has done very little work in the studio lately so I'm sure it wasn't him. A couple of the guys were smoking cigarettes, but I was sure I smelled weed also."

"I'm surprised anyone was smoking anything in the studio, but weed? I guess we should tell Luke and Matt, but I don't want to tattle."

"Know what you mean," Marc replied.

The two said nothing, but I doubt it would have changed anything. It was Luke who first noticed Larry's move, but accepted his reasoning. Some time later, after Paula's death, Luke went to the studio one Sunday afternoon and came back enraged. He stormed upstairs and yanked open Eugene's door. "Eugene, I hope to fuck you have a damn good reason for the studio stinking like an ashtray!"

"What's the problem, Lukey Boy?" Eugene said as he half sat up in bed.

"You know what's wrong!" Luke continued. By this time the whole household was upstairs. "That bunch you're hanging out with have been smoking in the studio. I don't think I need to remind you that smoking is out everywhere on this property, especially inside anywhere. Now get your lazy ass out of bed and get the studio cleaned up and aired out and there better not be another cigarette lit anywhere around here."

"I'll get to it after I get some rest," Eugene replied.

"You'll do it now!" Luke shouted, reached over and pulled the cover from Eugene's bed, and when Eugene made no effort to move, dragged him out of bed. "You have an hour!" Luke said, and stormed off.

We had had disagreements in the house, but nothing like this. Luke was completely enraged and the rest of us upset as soon as Luke said why he was pissed. By the time Eugene had been left on the floor, we were all pissed at his attitude. When Luke had first shouted at Eugene, Larry had come out of his room. He watched until Luke dragged the covers from Eugene's bed. When he turned to go back into his room, I saw tears in his eyes.

Eugene got up, cleaned up the studio and went back to bed. It was Wednesday before we saw him again, as he was going to and from school by himself and never showed up for meals. In fact, he frequently didn't bother to come home. He came in just as we were sitting down to supper. "Just in time, Eugene," I said.

"Don't have time," he said. "We have found a practice studio nearer the campus. I'll be practicing there. You can leave my name off the duty roster as well. I'll likely be staying in town."

Larry got up and left the table and, after Eugene had gone, Luke went upstairs and asked him to come down. Kent and I joined the two in the library to talk about the situation.

"Look, I really feel rotten about the situation," Larry said. "Eugene has been hitting the booze pretty heavy for some time now. When I spoke to him about it, he blamed it on Paula's sickness and death. He also said he was spending so much time playing he needed something to keep him going. Then I found a pot pipe in our room and confronted him about that. He said one of the combo members must have left it. 'Pot can really get you sailing,' he said. 'I don't use much, but it helps the music.' If you've ever tried to talk to someone about smoking pot, you know I didn't get anywhere. That's when I moved out. I don't know about my feelings beyond being very confused, but if Eugene has any love for me, he hides it well."

I think if we had been on top of our own feelings and emotions, things might have gone differently, but we were all walking basket cases by the time Paula died. Things all came to a head one spring Sunday afternoon. When Luke and I got back from St. Anne's, we went upstairs to change as we had decided we would all go on a picnic. When we reached the head of the stairs, Eugene's door was open. Eugene was tied, spreadeagle, on his bed while a guy dressed in leather used a whip on him. There was a strange odor in the hall.

"What the fuck is going on here?" Larry shouted. "Eugene, if you are into such stuff, at least close your door."

"Hey, why are you upset? You sure seemed to enjoy giving me pain. Why so tenderhearted now?"

Larry gave a cry, turned and ran down the stairs. "You take care of Larry. I'll handle Eugene," Luke said.

I raced down the stairs, catching Larry as he was about to go out the door. "Hold up," I said and reached out to him. He collapsed in my arms, crying his eyes out. I gently led him to a garden seat under some huge oaks in the grove where we held sweats. We sat down and Larry poured out his story, a story we all should have known, but were too wrapped up in ourselves.

"When we got back after our first summer, Eugene had changed, but I guess we all had. Anyway, everything seemed ok. Then he really got into playing clubs. I knew he came home sometimes after having had something to drink, but he said he'd just had a beer with the guys. Then he started coming home smelling of pot. At first he said he wasn't doing any, then he said he only did a joint to get mellowed out so he could play great jazz."

"As you know, he was keeping some very strange hours and, since our sex life was a thing of the past, I moved out so I could get some rest. I still loved him, but we spent any time we had together fighting--about booze and drugs. Then one night he came home smelling of sex. I don't know how I felt about that. I had mixed feelings. If he was having sex, then maybe we could have sex again. But if he was having sex with someone else, that meant I was no longer a part of his life. Also, having lived through Paula's bout with AIDS, I was not anxious to have sex with someone who was playing around."

"No need to go into all the details, but I found he was into rough stuff, using poppers, smoking pot and drinking. It made me sick, but I didn't know what to do. We were all wrecks so I said nothing. I didn't think he'd be stupid enough to bring all that shit into the house, but I was wrong."

We were still sitting in the grove when Eugene and his leather-clad sex machine came out of the house, carrying a couple bags. They tossed the bags in Eugene's car and sped off.

"I guess we need to go inside and see what Luke accomplished," I said, extending my hand to pull Larry to his feet.

We ended up talking for hours and finally it was Kent who said, "Look, we have had one whipping with Paula's death. I'm not sure we are even close to being over that. I know I'm not. Now we are trying to decide what to do about someone we loved and cared for, but who doesn't give a shit about us. I'm for calling Millie."

The three of us looked at each other, then at Kent, and said in one breath, "Yea, you should call Millie."

To make a long story short, Millie asked Jason to fly up and see about getting Eugene on the straight and narrow. After two days, Jason told us Eugene was further gone than we thought. We knew he was doing some pot and alcohol and into some pretty weird--at least to us--sex. Jason told us he was doing a lot of alcohol and pot and was doing some cocaine. "He's really into S&M and has been abused by his 'master' at times until he passes out. I'm taking him with me. I'd appreciate it if you could get the necessary paperwork to withdraw him from Oberlin. I'll talk to Mom about his part in the house and so on, but don't worry about that.

Jason took Eugene back to North Carolina put him in a rehabilitation clinic. We got a letter from him, an apology, which was a part of his treatment. We heard nothing more. Larry worked hard at accepting the fact that Eugene was no longer part of his life. He felt guilty because Eugene had said Larry had started him on the S&M path. Finally Luke took him to see a counselor even though he didn't want to go. Surprisingly, he really did work with the counselor and it helped tremendously. He also spent hours with Paul, playing with him, photographing the child and just watching him. When the time came for planning for the summer, he was ready to return to India, this time to south India, with the team he'd worked with the year before.

He had told the crew so much about the falls and Concord, and they had seen so many photographs, he invited them to spend the last week there before they left for the summer. It was good to see him happy again.

Among the crew members was a handsome young man, beautiful! Luke and I had gone to Jackson to meet the crew, taking the family vans. When they walked through the gates, Luke said, "Damn, Larry, you better be glad I'm married to Matt or I'd go after that eye candy coming through the

gate. But you're not attached, Larry. Woof, woof, go get 'em boy."

"Guess your gaydar is on the fritz, Luke," Larry said. "He let me know right off the bat last year that he's straight and claimed. But that's ok. I'm not in the market for a boyfriend, not now and maybe never." The pain in Larry's eyes was clear.

Luke once again had a series of exhibitions that second summer and I got a fellowship to study in Germany. We discussed the summer at length, with particular attention to what we had been through and our fear of being separated. Kent finally helped make the decision when he said, "If you two allow one summer to determine everything you do for the rest of your lives, you're fools." He was right of course, so I took the fellowship.

Kent had gone to North Carolina the middle of August and was still there when we returned. Larry was on the same flight into Lexington with us. As soon as we had landed and gotten ourselves situated, I called Millie. "How about you Oberlin folks coming for dinner tomorrow evening?" she asked.

"Sounds good. Talk to you then," I said. The fact that she didn't mention Eugene sounded like bad news to me. Luke agreed.

When we reached Millie's she welcomed us with open arms, then tears started running down her face. "May as well get the bad news out of the way," she said, leading us into the library where Woody was waiting. "Eugene was in treatment three months after Jason brought him back here and then was allowed to come home. He was in an outpatient program and seemed to be doing well. Then Jason discovered he was no longer just doing booze and pot. While he was in that expensive treatment center, he was introduced to crack."

"Eugene got wind of what Jason had discovered so he drained his bank account, got in his car and left. Only because I begged him, Jason spent a week trying to find him. When a private detective finally found him, Jason went to get him. Eugene refused to come with him, so Jason just had him arrested. In order to get out of jail, Eugene agreed to enter treatment again, this time in a program that was not a country club. We have heard nothing from him. Frankly, I would like to think otherwise, but Jason tells me--and I think the experts agree--there is little hope of Eugene ever being free of drugs again. Larry, love, I don't know what feelings you have for Eugene, but I can tell you the Eugene we knew is no more. I hope you can just think of him as dead and move on with your life. I am trying to balance that with doing everything I can to prove the experts wrong."

"In the meantime, let's enjoy the company of dear friends." Two weeks later Millie got a call telling her Eugene had escaped from the treatment center and his whereabouts were unknown. She heard nothing from him and agreed with Jason that hunting him was a waste of time. In late October Eugene's body was found in a dumpster in Atlanta. He had been shot once, execution style. "A drug deal gone bad," the police told Millie.

Part 2

Matt

I was excited about seeing Larry so I left a wake-up call for the morning, knowing that his train was arriving at 7:30. I popped out of bed as soon as the phone rang, took a quick shower and got dressed. I was at the station by 7:10 even though it was only a few blocks from the hotel. I wanted very much to see anyone from home, but a chance to see Larry was very special.

Larry had wandered the earth after he finished at Oberlin and Case-Western Reserve. He'd had several coffee table books published, all following in the footsteps of his first book, pictures of children.

So far as I knew, there was never another love in his life. He had taken Eugene's death very hard even though he had said any love Eugene had for him was dead long before then.

I waited impatiently for the train, pacing the platform. When it pulled in, Larry was the first person off. As he stepped onto the platform, he waved, then extended his hand to someone getting off as well. As soon as the other person stepped onto the platform, I saw it was the young man Luke had once called eye candy, and he still was. I rushed up to Larry and he grabbed me in a bear hug. We kept hugging each other until the young man--I couldn't remember his name--laughed, "Hey, I'm getting jealous!"

"Stephen, one of my bestest friends, Matt Greywolf. Matt, Stephen Berkins, the love of my life."

"I thought you told Luke his gaydar was on the fritz a few years ago when he said you should go after that piece of eye candy I now know as Stephen."

The two laughed and Larry said, "It's a long story. Let's get breakfast and we'll tell you all the sordid details."

We walked back to the hotel where the three of us ordered a hearty breakfast and, while we waited for it, I said, "Look, I'll catch you up on the news from home as soon as I know about you two."

Larry looked at Stephen, blushed and said, "Matt, to be honest, I never thought I would be happy again after Eugene's death. No, it was before he died. I never said anything about it because I was, I don't know, hurt, ashamed. Anyway, he came in just before dawn one morning leading a bruiser in leather. They had been smoking pot and drinking. 'Get out, Larry, Oliver and I need some play space,' he ordered me. He might as well have stabbed me with a knife. I had no inkling he was into any of that stuff. But that was the beginning of the end. So far as I was concerned, Eugene died long before he left Oberlin, much less before he died."

"I didn't know what a touchy spot Luke hit when he said I should go after Stephen. That first summer we became great friends, sharing, I thought, everything. He was the video photographer I'd thought I was becoming so we did a lot of work--for the team and on our own--together."

"Don't you know it, Larry was the still photographer I'd thought I was becoming," Stephen grinned as he covered Larry's hand with his. "Since all I could hear was 'Eugene this' and 'Eugene that,' I made sure my feelings for Larry were those of friendship. That was ok because I had never had a friend like Larry. He was tough when he needed to be, but was one of the most caring people I had ever known. I learned a lot about being a man from him."

"The second summer we were together, I was so concerned about both Paula and Eugene that I was about to go nuts. Stephen was a rock-solid friend the whole summer and when I really got down, he found a project for us to do."

"It was certainly not the time for making any advances--well, I suspect that had I made any, Larry would have fallen into my bed, but I wanted more than that and would have felt like dirt had I taken advantage of his situation. He was worth waiting for," Stephen said. He and Larry reminded me of when Matt and I had first professed our love. They were two kids really in love and their eyes and actions announced that to anyone half-conscious.

"When we finished our studies, with neither of us knowing the other's feelings, we took jobs, dream jobs. Unfortunately, those jobs took us to opposite sides of the world. Then, last December, I got a phone call while I was in the middle of a shoot in Mexico. It was Stephen inviting me to come to Colorado for Christmas. I asked about Mom coming with me and he thought it was a good idea and said he'd invite his parents as well. We had a grand Christmas, really enjoying having Mom meet Stephen's parents. The two of us still had time before the next project, so extended our stay a week after Mom and Stephen's parents had gone home."

"I, of course, knew Larry was gay and couldn't understand why he didn't pick up on the hints I was

dropping. My parents know I am gay, but I threatened them with death if they so much as hinted at it. As luck would have it, we were once again sent off on projects, Larry to Canada...."

"Definitely not the place to be in the winter if you're a southern boy," Larry grinned.

"Yea, well, Larry was headed to Canada and I to the Middle East. I was more than a little nervous about the assignment, especially after the previous 9/11 and with war talk all around. He came to see me off at JFK and when I started for the gate, I extended my hand. Larry pulled me to himself and said, 'Stephen Berkins, you may be straight, but I love you and if I thought you'd not kill me, I'd kiss you goodbye.'"

"I just said, 'Coward,' and nothing more."

"I couldn't believe I'd heard what I did, but decided I had nothing to lose. So I gave Stephen the first real kiss I had given anyone in years."

"The man knows how to kiss! I was stunned as I kissed him back. We broke the kiss, looked at each other and grinned. We were two fools, standing in the middle of JFK with possum-grins on our faces. 'Call you tonight,' I said as I was being rushed through the metal detector."

"I didn't even have time to give him my number and I guess he forgot that I was on my way north. I called his parents and my mom and gave them a number for Stephen. Well, he didn't call that night nor any night for over a week. I decided he'd had second thoughts about what he had said in the airport."

"I was going nuts trying to get a call to Larry. It took two days to get a call to my mom. She gave me a number for Larry. It took two more days to call the number only to be told he was out of contact. I finally had enough and called the producer in New York and told him he seemed to be able to get a video phone signal when he wanted it, but couldn't seem to get a simple number in Canada. 'When I get in contact with Larry Watley, I MIGHT be able to get a video feed to you, but if there is no way to contact someone in Canada, I don't think the video link will work,' I told him."

"The threat worked," Larry laughed. "We had phones, but were too far from any transmitter for them to do any good. We had a radio, but hadn't thought about asking for phone feeds to be sent to it. One evening the radio crackled and a voice said, 'Please, damn it, please answer, over.' Needless to say we were all scared shitless. We were due to be picked up by a ski plane at noon the next day and this sounded like an emergency. I must confess, my first thoughts were Stephen had been hit--I didn't dare think about his being killed. I let another member of the team pick up the mike and answer. 'Thank God, you answered,' the radio voice said. 'All of CNN is on hold unable to get a video feed until someone in the Middle East talks with a member of your party. If Larry Watley is there, get him on the radio.' I knew it had to be Stephen or something about him so I took the mike and put on headphones. I didn't think the rest of the crew needed to hear what I hoped to hear and what I heard."

"What neither of us knew was that the connections had been crossed up and all of CNN heard our conversation. We found out when I said, 'Larry Watley, I want all the world to know I love you madly.' As soon as the words were out of my mouth, the producer came on the phone and said, 'They know it, kid, they know it.'"

"I flew out of the wilderness the next day, called Stephen and we decided we'd take a break as soon as our assignments were over--actually Stephen's because mine was already over. 'I can be in Germany day after tomorrow,' Stephen told me, so we agreed to meet in Germany. I called Luke to see how things were in Concord and learned you were here, which was perfect. Only one more thing before you'll have the floor. Stephen and I have done a lot of talking--a lot of talking about what being in love, being committed, being a couple means. The more I talked about that and about you and Luke, the more I realized you guys may not have a perfect marriage, but it's damn close. Stephen is constantly amazed at you two."

"First time I have ever heard you call what Luke and I have a marriage, definitely how we see it," I said, somewhat puzzled.

"Look, Eugene and I said what you two had with your commitment ceremony was nothing more than what we had. We didn't need a ceremony, we said to anyone who asked. I think we were wrong. I think there's something about committing yourselves to each other 'in front of God and everybody' that's important."

"I agree," Stephen said. "I was never much for religion and ceremonies until I started traveling the world and saw how important they are to people. I was convinced when I saw how easily Larry sits with religion, at home in a Buddhist temple or a German cathedral, but at the same time in touch with what's behind it all. At least that's the way I see it. Anyway, when Larry told me about your marriage, I knew that was what I wanted for us."

We finally decided we had been at breakfast long enough and spent the day exploring the countryside. Larry and I talked about Concord, our friends, our days at Oberlin, but mostly about the future. He and Stephen did decide to spend the night and we sat up very late. In fact, it was 2:00 in the morning when I finally called Luke. I told him first of all about Stephen and he asked if Stephen still qualified as eye candy and I assured him he did. Then we talked about my day with Larry and Stephen. "It is good to see two guys so in love they light up the world around them. And they want a commitment ceremony."

"Yes!" Luke said, and I could see him shooting his fist into the air.

The next morning, when I saw them off at the train station, they reminded me I had promised to see about arranging a marriage ceremony for them and told me they'd be in Concord the first of April.

Luke

Matt and I talked for an hour about Larry and Stephen. I was so excited I couldn't wait to call Millie. Somehow or other she blamed herself for Eugene's treatment of Larry. That was kind of strange because she didn't blame herself for his slide into drugs, alcohol and kinky sex--nor should she.

Matt had called from Germany at 2:00 in the morning, reaching me at 8:00 in the evening. It was after 9:00 when I hung up, so I debated whether or not to call Millie. She and Woody often turned the phone ringer off at 9:30 and let the machine answer, but I wanted her to hear the good news. I decided if I got the machine, I'd not leave a message so I could be wide awake when I talked with her. She was often up before the dawn and I wasn't.

Woody answered the phone and after we had chatted a bit I asked to speak to Millie. "Luke, thought you'd be getting ahead on your beauty sleep since I hear that wild Indian is arriving soon," she said as soon as she picked up the phone.

"That he is, Millie, my love. I talked with him tonight. He had guests all day yesterday and stayed up until 2:00 in the morning to tell me about it."

"Guests in Germany?"

"Yea, remember telling me you heard something on CNN which sounded like a man telling Larry Watley that he loved him?"

"Sure do. I was right too."

"You sure were, and the two of them spent yesterday with Matt." I then told Millie all I could about Larry's new love and all that was going on with them and Matt.

"Luke, you'll never understand how much this news means to me. I don't know why, but I have felt somehow or other responsible for what Eugene did to Larry. I have prayed every night that he would find a man worthy of his love and affection and it seems to have happened. And they want to get married.

Great! Concord will have another wedding uniting two wonderful men. Stephen has to be wonderful if Larry loves him."

"Of course you are right," I answered. "They will be here in April so we need to get things moving for their wedding. That's only a month from now you know."

"And you'll be so wrapped up in that wild Indian shortly that you won't know whether it's day or night," she laughed.

"And I won't care!" I responded.

There was still a week before Matt would be back, and I had to finish a commission and get things ready for my babe. I called Merry Maids and asked for a crew to do major cleaning. I kept the house basically clean and picked up, but at least twice a year we had a cleaning crew in for in-depth cleaning. I arranged the cleaning for while I'd be away installing the sculptures in New Orleans. I had Sunday dinner with the Family and told everyone about Larry. Eugene's slide to death had hurt everyone, and all were happy to hear Larry had found a true soulmate. There was no real news from Mary Kathryn and Michael. He was finishing his second year in seminary at Sewanee and Mary Kathryn had been fortunate enough to get a teaching job in the elementary school down the mountain in Cowan.

After dinner I got everything together for the trip to New Orleans and, when I finished, decided to call Bill and Linda and let them know Larry was coming home.

Bill and Linda did a joint enrollment the last semester of their senior year, attending the community college where they earned college course credit and high school graduation credit as well. When they finished high school, they decided to stay on at the community college and complete their first two college years since it was cheap. Bill's parents denied it, but sending Bill and Jacob both to college would put a real strain on the family budget. With Bill and Linda in the community college, it cost little more than high school.

The transfer to Oberlin never happened. In the early spring of what was to be their last year in the community college, tragedy struck Concord again. Jacob and Susan were on their way to Sabbath worship in Lexington when a fully loaded log truck ran a stop sign and T-boned their car. The truck was so heavy and traveling at such high speed that it just rolled the car over and over and over before coming to rest atop it. Needless to say, Jacob and Susan were killed and, in fact, Dan--who had covered the wreck--said the decent thing would have been to just bury car and all.

As a result of the accident, Bill's mother went into deep depression and Bill just couldn't see leaving his parents alone. Instead, he and Linda managed to get scholarships at the state college in Jackson so they could come home at least once a month. Since they were transfer students and had enrolled late, they did not get a choice of housing, both being given rooms in a freshman dorm. When they complained to the administration, they were told the college had no more housing. "Why don't you just shack up in a town apartment?" the housing secretary asked them.

After some discussion, they decided the idea wasn't all bad. Accordingly, they got married over the Christmas break. Millie got wind of their plans to just pop by the rectory and get married, and had a fit. "A lot of things should be utilitarian," she had fumed, "but a wedding is not one of them! I'll take care of everything except the rings and what you wear."

When Linda had called Mary Kathryn and told her about the wedding, Mary Kathryn asked if she remembered their getting Paula a dress for the prom. Linda did, and the two of them put their heads together, but would tell no-one what they were up to.

The wedding was great! Not a lot of money was spent, but everything that should be done was done. Turns out Mary Kathryn had gone into Cleveland and found a funky second-hand store and bought a 1920s dress for Linda and a tux for Bill. They were a handsome couple indeed.

Since they had done some AP classes, completed joint enrollment and gone to summer school, they got their degrees in the spring of 2000 and both had teaching jobs in Lexington. Bill was teaching in elementary school and Linda in middle school, and Bill was also high school assistant basketball coach. Linda had confided to Mary Kathryn, and Bill to me and Matt, the only fly in the ointment so far as their marriage was concerned was the absence of children and the possibility that they might never have children.

Even though they lived in Lexington, we had seldom seen each other in recent years. They had come back to St. Mary's a few times but, as they became more involved in Lexington, they finally found a church there. As I thought about it, I realized I hadn't seen or heard from the two in six months or more. "Larry's news is enough reason to call and invite them over," I thought.

The installation in New Orleans went smoothly and the committee--surprise! surprise!--was more than satisfied, generally not the outcome. I had time to get things together and change before my flight home. While I was waiting for my flight, I remembered Linda and Bill and called them. After clearing up their confusion over where I was, I told them about Larry, which made them very happy. I invited them over for supper Saturday and said, "Look, Matt will be home and I know we'll want to talk forever. Plan to stay over. I'll see if Dan and Chris and Marc and Keith can make it."

They agreed that sounded like a good idea and, just before they hung up, Linda said, "We may have something to add to the party," but refused to say more.

On the flight back, I decided I needed to call Doug and Janet in addition to getting in touch with Dan and Chris--they were easy to contact as both were in Concord--and Marc and Keith--who would have to be traced down, since no-one could keep up with them.

I got back to a very clean house and had done grocery shopping on my way in. I was starved since I had only had airplane food since breakfast. I fixed myself a sandwich, poured a glass of juice and grabbed the phone as I sat down at the kitchen table.

When Matt and I started designing our house, we made a list of what we wanted. We had lucked up in getting land. The summer following our first year at Oberlin, Luke and I both made a pile of money. I doubt that we would think it was such a big pile now, but it just about floored us then. Matt had done eight weeks of concerts--thanks to romance and kewl skater dude--doing three every week and a couple weeks doing four. Since he had few expenses, he came back to Oberlin with over \$12,000. I had done almost as well with my exhibitions, plus having all the commissions I could handle. Oberlin was taken care of, so we had little to pay out of the income from the summer.

We had spent one Saturday at the falls with our friends--Larry was just back from India and Nepal and was in Concord visiting his mom. Paula and Kent had decided they couldn't make it down and Sandra had flown up to be with them. She would be spending some time with Paula who was pregnant, and Eugene had said he was busy playing and couldn't come down. He had also told Larry just to visit in Concord and they'd be together shortly. Anyway, Michael and Mary Kathryn, Bill and Linda, Dan and Chris--for part of the time, since Dan had to go to work second shift--Jacob and Susan, Marc and Keith were all present. Doug and Janet had talked about coming up, but Janet hadn't been feeling well--"Pregnancy will do that for you," she'd said as a way of announcing her condition. Anyway, we'd had a grand Saturday and, Sunday after church, Matt and I had decided we'd like to be alone for a while. We got in his Jeep and just drove aimlessly, soaking up enough spirit to last until Thanksgiving.

As we drove past the road which ran along the river--where Millie had fallen skipping rocks, and Dan and Chris had first professed their love for each other--I saw a sign and asked Matt to back up. It had half fallen which might have been one reason it was still where it was. It was a "For Sale" sign. Before I could get the words out of my mouth, Matt said, "We've got to have this place!" I hopped out,

pulled up the sign and put it in the Jeep. When we got back to Matt's place, we told Greywolf we wanted the place. "I don't care what it costs," Matt said. I agreed and Greywolf said, "I think it's a good thing you're leaving this up to me or you'd lose your shirt." Greywolf did some snooping around and found the farm had been for sale for just less than a year and had few people interested in it. It would never be profitable as a farm and was too far from any large city to be attractive as a country place.

The former owner had died and left the farm to be divided among his three children. None of them wanted the farm and two just wanted it sold to get what they could out of it. Greywolf bought it for a song. We paid half down and arranged for yearly payments over the next ten years. It was only after it was paid for--which took only three years--that we discovered Greywolf and Jens had held our mortgage.

Anyway, when we started designing our house, a huge kitchen with a very large kitchen table was definitely in the plans. So were the decks which were cantilevered out over the river, almost directly above where Millie had fallen and beside the old maple Dan and Chris called theirs. The upper deck opened off our bedroom and Matt's music room. The lower deck opened off the dining room and den. My studio was beside the river, joined to the house by a covered walkway. As soon as our house was built, we added a guest house which actually was two apartments. The main house also had four guest rooms, a large living room-library, a monster dining room and a recreation room. Originally the recreation room was just space we hadn't figured out what to do with, but when our friends started having kids, it found a use.

The juice really hit the spot as did the sandwich. I dialed Chris and Dan's and got their machine. "Dan's saving lives and I am saving the starving," Chris's voice announced. "If you are neither, try a Greek place or the hospital, or you can leave a message, English or Greek." Every time I heard that message, I promised myself I'd learn a Greek insult, but never did.

"Dan, Chris, give me a call if I don't reach you before," I said, then hung up and dialed The Acropolis, Chris' fancy place. During high school he worked at his granddad Demetri's place and decided he liked it. He got the scholarship to go to Greece the summer after he came to Concord, and came back excited about his visit but was also excited about being back. He and his granddad talked and decided Chris should go to the community college and take the hotel management course, since it included a great deal about restaurant management. He enrolled in the course and before he had completed it, the college had started offering a culinary course. By the time he had finished the courses, he had located a huge old farm house for sale about midway between Concord and Lexington. After he and Demetri had looked everything over, Demetri said he would put his place on the market and maybe the two of them could buy the farm house and convert it into an upscale restaurant. Chris was horrified. "Never, never will that place be closed," he vowed. "It serves a real need in the community and, besides, it probably saved my life by keeping me busy." And, as he later confessed, Demetri might slow down, but he would never fully retire and if his old place was closed, "He'll drive me nuts!" Chris had laughed.

There was a small house on the farm which had been used by a farm family who worked on the place and Demetri decided it was a perfect house for him. When it was fixed up and he moved in, Demetri started introducing himself as "a real country gentleman". The big two-storey farm house was converted into a bed and breakfast upstairs and The Acropolis downstairs. Demetri became the host of the bed and breakfast and cut back on his time at his original place. Just about the time the three businesses were becoming too much for grandfather and grandson, Chris got a letter from a fellow he met in Greece telling him he would like to come to the US and bring his wife and their baby. Turned out to be a real break for Chris and his grandfather as he took over the in-town restaurant.

The farm house had a completely private wing added sometime in its long history and that became Dan's and Chris' place. Dan, when he gained some seniority, finally got on the day shift and

became an evening farmer, tending a rather large vegetable garden as well as landscaping the place, then caring for it. He loved digging in the dirt so much Chris suggested he just quit the EMS team but, as Dan pointed out, the two of them owed too much to the EMS. "Besides," Dan laughed and said, "I like it almost as much as sex!"

Anyway, I finally reached Chris and he said he and Dan would "be there with bells on." "Casual dress expected, but maybe not that casual," I laughed feeling really good that Dan and Chris had found/made a great life for themselves when it looked as if neither had a chance at one.

When I reached Doug, he said they had been thinking about coming up and this was a good excuse. "Bring the kids," I urged him.

"You sure you are ready for three copies of Janet?" he laughed. After the third girl, he had told Janet enough was enough. "I don't require a son to prove my manhood." The two had finally gotten his parents out of his hair and settled in to painting. Neither had the kind of success I had, but they didn't work at it as I did. They could have had a fairly decent living from what Uncle Michael sold for them, but they had no need for extra money as Douglas was filthy rich.

I finished my sandwich and juice, took a shower, tossed on a robe and started pacing the floor, a habit I think I picked up from Matt. I knew that if I didn't get control of myself I would be a wreck when he arrived. I went to the den and lit the gas logs. I started to pick up a book, then decided to try to locate Marc and Keith. Before I started that, I called Michael and Mary Kathryn. "Little Bro," I said when he answered the phone, "need you and your wild woman to come home. Possible?"

"Something wrong? Emergency?"

"Sorry, didn't mean to give you a scare, but Matt's coming and I'm seeing if we can't get everyone together this weekend."

"You're in luck. I was supposed to preach this Sunday but the rector of my field work parish decided he would. I don't think he has recovered from the last time I preached. The lay people love it, but he wants to treat them like they have pea brains. Mary Kathryn, can you get a sub for Friday?" Michael called. I couldn't hear her response, but when Michael turned back to the phone, he said, "We'll leave as soon as Mary Kathryn finishes school Thursday." We talked a while longer before I started to hang up. Just on the off-chance he might know something, I asked Michael, "By the way, do you happen to know where Marc and Keith are?"

"Matter of fact I do," Michael answered. "I thought they were going to waste their lives, but they are here on campus right now. You know they have gone to school for a semester and traveled a semester. Since they did that year around, they actually graduated last semester. Last year they were somewhere in South America when Keith got sick. There was no adequate medical care there, so Marc quickly flew Keith back to Johns Hopkins. What he had was not at all serious in Baltimore, but would have been deadly if not treated. I was surprised to learn the two of them had applied to medical school and have been accepted. They will be entering Emory Medical School next semester. They were flying back from Emory when Marc said, 'Let's go see Michael and Mary Kathryn.' Hey, I'll get things organized and all four of us will fly in Thursday evening. Tell the Family."

I sat, thinking back over the past few years and thinking about the future. The gas fire, the trip, the time caught up with me and I drifted off to sleep.