

Edward F. Tablak

A Reluctant Lover

Prologue

“Two weeks to go and I will be out of this hell hole.” Josh Logue was talking to Pete Marko, his buddy, as they lay in an Afghanistan ditch on a hot sweltering afternoon.

They were ignoring the sound of chattering machine guns and plops of mortars off to their left.

Josh continued. “I’m hoping this is our last patrol. I was hoping against hope that the doc would not release me from sick bay until I was ready to go home.”

Pete said, “I really did think you would be back.”

Josh uttered a sardonic laugh. “Doc said the wounds were not life threatening and they needed the bed.”

Josh went on. “Well, the wounds may not be that bad, but two nicks next to the heart scared the hell out of me.”

Pete nodded. He remembered Josh's blood soaked shirt as he dragged Josh into the bushes while calling for a medic.

Josh added, "I've lost so much weight so that my pants won't stay up without cinching my belt. I'll have to get a whole new wardrobe when we get home."

"Me, too. Your sister, Jenny, has set the date for our wedding, three weeks after we're discharged. That means a new outfit for me and since you're the best man, you, too, will need new clothes."

Josh laughed. "You're right. I also need to know how to dress for my first year at Columbia. I did tell you that I was accepted for the fall term. Columbia accepted almost all my Community College credits. That makes me a full-fledged junior."

Pete asked, "What will be your major?"

"I think it will be Political Science and history. I also love the sciences, especially physics. I hope I can squeeze in some electives such as art and music appreciation. I'll have to let it develop."

“If I have the funds, I may take five years instead of four. I could use some courses in Economics or Finance to round out an education.”

“What do you expect to do for a living with that kind of courses?”

I’m not sure, Pete. I want to serve people, either through government or private services. I’m not interested in making a lot of money but I do want to take good care of my family and assure my parents of a decent retirement.”

Pete nodded and gave Josh a sly grin.

“You might even find a rich girl to marry.”

The conversation was intruded on by a shout from the sergeant. “Duck your heads. Incoming.”

Seconds later, the shell zoomed overhead, landing about seventy-five yards past their location.

A moment later, they heard the sarge shout “Let’s get the hell out of here.”

The sergeant led them to the east. That was a surprise. Josh said to Pete, “We’re moving away from the battle zone and headed for the helicopter pick up field. Water ahead.”

Two minutes later, they were wading in a deep creek, guns and ammo belts held high. Pete, just ahead of Josh, suddenly slumped, his head slipping into the water.

Josh dropped his ammo belt and nabbed Pete by the collar of his jacket and pulled him up.

“What is it?”

“I hit a hole and twisted my ankle.”

“Okay. Put your right arm over my shoulder so we can walk together. Will that work?”

“Here goes.”

Two other buddies asked, “What’s with Pete?”

“Sprained ankle.”

Joe got on the other side and slipped his arm under Pete’s shoulder. “Let’s go.”

Twenty minutes later, their helicopter was rushing to base.

Two weeks later the same pilot was dropping them off at the air base for a ride to the States

Chapter 1.

It was Monday, 10:50 A.M.

The sky was leaden. The wind was from the northeast with gusts up to thirty miles per hour. Large brown sycamore leaves were bouncing off his pant legs and rushing to join the heap that was growing at the base of the science building off to his right.

Josh pulled his park lapels closer together and tried to burrow his head deeper into the fake fur collar in order to ward off the sharp thrust of the wind onto his neck. His gloveless hands were turning blue.

“Only three or four minutes until I get out of this damn wind.”

His goal was the Tri Delta sorority house where he would be starting his first day of serving lunch to the resident coeds.

Mentally grateful for the chance, he was thinking, “Thank you, Mrs. Foster, for recommending me.”

Mrs. F. had been the one of the cooks at the school cafeteria where Josh had been washing dishes.

She had sort of adopted Josh after helping him stack the dishwasher on his first days at that job, two months ago.

A week ago, she announced her decision to take a new position at the sorority house. She called him at his rooming house three days ago to tell him that she had a better job for him.

“Josh, it’s less work and pays better. A few of the girls are a bit snooty and demanding but most are sweet and gracious.

You will be serving lunch and dinner, six days a week at a Barnard sorority. I believe the house mother would like you to serve breakfast, but that is your choice.”

He told Mrs. F. “I need the money, so tell them that I am willing to serve all three meals.”

“You can work out arrangements with Mrs. Duke, the house mother, during your interview. Monday at eleven, your final test will be serving lunch at twelve fifteen.”

A half block from his destination, he caught up with a group of six coeds who were rushing toward the sorority house.

At the walkway from the street, he passed the group and opened the door for the girls. From five he received “thank you” and only a cool look from the sixth.

Josh thought, “She’s one of the snooty ones.”

A blanket of warm air enveloped Josh. “Thank you, Lord.”

He looked up to see Mrs. Duke, the house mother, approaching him as he closed the door. Nodding an acknowledgement of his presence, she pointed to a clothes stand just inside the doorway.

After hanging up his parka, he followed her into the dining room

She asked no questions, looked him over, head to toe, examined his clothing and checked his hands. Josh felt as though he had been undressed by this stiff woman.

Her body language said, “Acceptable.”

She was pleased that he had dark blue slacks and a white shirt, as she had suggested

“Let’s review the table setting. I have set the table for lunch and ask you to memorize the setting for future lunch periods.”

“I will do the same this evening for dinner and expect you to replicate that setting thereafter.”

She handed Josh a sheet of typed instructions.

“These are the rules governing your responsibilities and behavior when you are present. You are required to obey those rules to a “T”.

“You come highly recommended by Mrs. Foster, so I expect the meal servings today to testify to her recommendation.”

“We shall take a few minutes after dinner to review your performance and discuss the option of serving breakfast. I will also answer any questions you have regarding the content of that memorandum.”

“You’re dismissed to freshen up and check in with Mrs. Foster. Remember; choose the light blue jacket for lunch and the red for dinner.”

She watched him walk towards the kitchen.

“I wish he weren’t so good looking. Some of my well-bred charges may be challenged to ignore the difference in social classes.”

Mrs. Foster gave Josh a warm hug. “Are you nervous?”

“Just a little. I got a lesson from Maggie, a friend, who belongs to another sorority. She gave me full instructions in detail.”

“Good. Wash up, now. Are you going to serve breakfast?”

“I plan to. Dad got laid off at the factory. I need to send some dough home to help out.”

Mrs. Foster nodded her understanding but thought, “He will be carrying a heavy load in more than one way.”

Josh reviewed the written rules, all of which pointed to non-fraternization. She made that point very clear. Hired help must know their place.

Except for one incident, the luncheon test went smoothly. He spilled a bit of water on the blouse of Miss Smythe as he was refilling her water glass.

“Clumsy oaf”, loud enough for everyone at the table to hear. She looked down at the spot on her bosom, lifting the breast with her other hand, saying to Josh in a

commanding tone, “Don’t just stand there. Use my napkin to wipe off the water.”

Josh’s embarrassment was cut short when Mrs. Duke stepped in and said, “I’ll take care of this, Joshua. Miss Smythe needs the touch of a woman”

A red-faced Josh turned away, aware that the girl had intentionally bumped his arm. What he did not know was that everyone in the room also knew that this was no accident.

Josh did not want to be late setting up the table for dinner on his first day. He picked up his book bag and rushed for the door of the physics lab. He reached the door just as someone came from the other direction.

Josh skidded to a halt in order to avoid a collision. As it was, he did bump into her ever so slightly. “I’m sorry, miss.”

She laughed. “I’m glad you were able to stop or I would have been flattened.”

She gasped. “Oops. Josh. I’m Sara Johnson from the Tri-Delt house.”

“I know. You sit at the south end of table two.”

She smiled. “I’m glad you remembered but I didn’t know about table numbers or directions.”

Josh smiled. “That’s only in my head so I can place each woman and her name. Mrs. Duke made it clear that when I address you, it shall be as Miss Johnson.”

Outside the lab, Sara asked, “Are you headed for the house, now? If so, we can walk together.”

“I don’t think Mrs. Duke would approve.”

Sara laughed. “Mrs. D. thinks she has responsibility for our lives. She wants to put more into her job than it calls for. Outside the house, we set our own rules.”

“All right. I’d enjoy company. Let me have one of your book bags. That’s a heavy load for anyone, let alone someone as petite as you.”

“Thanks, but don’t let the pettiness fool you. I’m in great condition. I have to be as a member of the soccer varsity. In fact, if you come out to Saturday’s game, you can watch me score a couple of goals.”

“I’d like that but I have no time for extracurricular activity. I’m either working or studying.”

Sara nodded her understanding. She changed the subject. “You seem a few years older than most of the boys. Are you a vet?”

“Yes. I had two years at a Community College and joined the marines in order to qualify for the G. I. Bill educational benefits.”

“Are you a qualified junior?”

Josh grinned. “I lucked out. Columbia accepted all my credits except English Comp, so I have one class with a bunch of freshmen. It’s my toughest subject.”

Sara tucked away that bit of information. She was an English major, taking a course this semester in Novel Writing.

“Are you a junior, Miss Johnson?”

“Yes, I’m majoring in English with a minor in World History. In fact, this semester my history class covers the Middle East since WWI. I’ve been fascinated with the new understanding of the tensions between major branches of Islam and where each branch dominates the culture.”

“That’s interesting. I’m just back after most of two years in Afghanistan as a marine fighting the Taliban, an ultra-conservative group, who would like to control the country.”

Sara said, “I’ve been doing a great deal of collateral reading on Afghanistan, current and historical as part of our assignments for the seminar.”

“Perhaps I could talk you into attending our seminar as a guest. The other nine members and our professor would welcome the opportunity to chat with you.”

“That might be fun if I were truly welcome and found the time fits my schedule.”

Sara said, “Let me try to work things out.” Her excitement was palpable.

As they turned into the house walkway, Josh noticed a slight movement of the drape in the front window. “Oh, oh, Mrs. D. will not be happy seeing us together.”

He did receive a cold look of disapproval but nothing was said.

“Poor Sara will have to endure a lecture on proper behavior with the hired help.”

On Friday afternoon, Sara was waiting at the lab door when Josh was ready to leave.

She said, “I thought you might want to know what happened after we arrived on Monday.”

“I would. I made some guesses but the facts would be enlightening.”

Sara chuckled. “I receive a stern lecture about the difference in our social standing. I told her that my behavior outside the house was not of concern to her but she disagreed. I’m afraid our tempers flared. She said that if this continued, she would call my father.”

“I wouldn’t mind a call to Daddy who would pooh, pooh her attitude but Daddy’s wife would hit the ceiling and threaten to send me to Smith or some other girls’ school.”

Josh said, “It might be wise not to be seen together.”

“Maybe, but I intend to make my own choices. By the way, you’re invited to the seminar next Thursday at three thirty. Can you come?”

“I can do that. Now, clue me in about the prior discussions and something about the attenders.”

A block from home, Josh said, “Now run ahead. Let’s not tempt fate.”

Sara nodded and dashed home.

Dr. Cherol, the professor who headed the seminar, invited Josh and Sara to have a cup of coffee after the session.

“Me. Logue, I really appreciate your contributions to today’s session. You made the plight of the Afghan citizen come alive when you told the story of one family.”

Sara cut in. “I was in tears when you told of the young girl who had to quit school when the Taliban took over their village. All those villagers were under house arrest even if that is not what the Taliban says.”

“I can’t even imagine living such a restricted life.”

Josh said, “It was the father who suffered most. As a teacher in a girl’s school, he was terminated and forbidden to seek any other occupation. Being unable to provide for his family stripped him of his manhood as head of the family. It was painful to hear his story when we finally freed their community.”

Dr. Cherol asked, “Would you be willing to join us again?”

“I’m sorry. I can’t afford the time. What I would suggest is that you find an Afghan student. There must be one or more either at Columbia or Barnard. That would serve you better than another visit from me.”

On the walk back to the sorority house, Sara said, “Thanks again, Josh. I’ve never known every student to be as attentive as they were during your short presentation.”

“I’m glad it worked out, Sara. Now, head back to the house. I need to go to my room before I come to work.”

Josh was running late cussing himself for not watching the clock. He would have to rush the table set up for dinner since Mrs. Foster always met her deadline for serving dinner.

He was breathless after dashing the last hundred yards. He was pulling off his parka even as he kicked the door closed.

He still had to wash his hands or Mrs. D would have a fit.

When he opened the cabinet to pick up the plates, he gasped. No plates were in the cabinet.

He turned toward the dining room. Three grinning faces met his look. Sara said, “When it was obvious you would be late, we decided to be your little helpers. When I mentioned the fact to Mrs. Foster, she turned down the oven. Dinner will be served at six ten this evening.”

Josh, with a big smile, put his arms around all three girls with a grateful “Thanks” and rushed to don his jacket.

After dinner, Sara asked, “Will you be able to come to Saturday’s soccer match? It’s the league championship. All three of us will be in the lineup.”

Josh laughed. “I owe you and I will be there. The loudest voice in the stand will be mine. By the way, will you be at the library this evening?”

“I will. Pat and I are going together at seven. Do you need some help?”

“Yes. I would appreciate your critiquing my essay that is due tomorrow.”

“Okay. What time?”

“When do you have to leave?”

“No later than nine forty. I don’t have a pass for late arrival tonight.”

Josh arrived at eight fifteen. Sara read through the three hundred word essay and red lined three sentences.

Based on other such sessions, Josh immediately rewrote the three passages while Sara worked with her roommate.

Fifteen minutes later he handed the rewrites to Sara.

“You’ve got it, Josh. I predict a B plus or better. Your instructor likes indirect or implied anger rather than direct statements about anger.

“Thank you, Sara. I owe you big time.”

“No you don’t but I can use your help. Pat had to leave. She is breaking up with Michael. Do you have time to walk me home? I promised my folks that I would never walk alone after dark and I need to keep that promise.”

“Of course.”

During the walk to the house, Sara asked Josh, “Do you enjoy dancing, Josh?”

“I do but I haven’t had time to go to any of the afternoon dances.”

“Would you be open to escorting a date to the PanHellenic Ball?”

“Wow. That came out of nowhere.”

Sara didn't wait for an answer. “Do you have a tux?”

“Slow down, Sara. I haven't agreed to anything and I don't have a tux.”

“I can take care of the tux. This is an emergency and you have to say yes. Patricia will be without a date and she is the current president of the Association.”

“You know Pat, my roommate and best friend. She's beautiful and a great dancer and the right height for you. Above all, you have a way of making people feel comfortable and worthwhile.”

She stopped for a breath. Before Josh could say a word, she rushed on.

“Say yes, Josh. I will be so grateful. Please.”

His mind was whirling with questions and trying to solve all the problems the invitation would be causing.

Friday evenings were study times, given the fact of the hours he worked. Saturdays were committed to work in the morning and to Marie for dinner and other activities.

Despite Sara's friendliness, he was mostly ignored by most of the little rich girls.

The way fraternity guys hung together, he was sure to feel out of place in their midst.

Sara cut into his thoughts. "It's just for a few hours, Josh. I'm sure you can handle that. Please, Josh. You would be the savior."

He gave in. "Okay Sara, I'm willing if Patricia decides to ask me. You, Sara, are a great friend to Patricia."

To himself, "At the same time, creating a new and scary experience for me."

She stood on her toes and gave Josh a peck on the cheek. "You won't regret it, Josh."

When she was gone, Josh asked himself, "What the hell have I gotten into? I'm stepping into a world I know nothing about or even care to know about."

Chapter 2.

Josh took a seat in the special rooting section of a well-attended soccer match.

The opening whistle had sounded as Josh entered the stadium. His first glimpse of Sara made him think of a

midget in the midst of giants. He remembered how short she appeared alongside her teammates, Sue and Patricia.

Suddenly, Sara was dashing toward the goal line parallel to Patricia, who was gracefully moving the ball around a defender. With a flick of her ankle, the ball was in front of Sara who began a kick toward the goal.

At that moment, a giant of a girl dressed in colors of the enemy, crashed into Sara's shoulder, knocked her to the turf where she lay without moving. To Josh, she appeared to be a lifeless corpse.

The crowd groaned and began shouting "Foul. Foul."

The team doctor was hurrying to examine Sara. The crowd of players around Sara parted to make room for the physician and then closed the circle again.

It seemed forever to Josh until the circle opened and Sara was slowly walking toward the bench.

The crowd began a loud cheer that lasted until Sara acknowledged the support and play resumed on the field.

Sara was back on the field at the beginning of the second half. The game was still tied at nil but there was a spark of energy in the Barnard team with Sara back in play.

Josh was intrigued with the deftness and speed of Sara whether she had the ball or was maneuvering for position. He saw her shouting encouraging words to team mates and even directing play at times.

He had never paid attention to soccer but he marveled at the agility of those players. He was taken with Sue and Patricia as they seemed to float down the field with Sara between them.

Just after the fifty nine minute mark, Sara received a pass from Patricia about twenty yards from the opponent's goal. As she headed down field, she faced a defender and with a feint to the right, she shifted to the left and headed for the goal, facing only the goalie.

Suddenly she received a shove on her left shoulder, causing her to stumble. Her left knee buckled slightly but she recovered quickly, placed her right foot firmly on the turf and with her left foot sent the ball, as though on a tight rope, to the right upper corner of the goal.

Seconds later the gun sounded the end of the game. Students rushed onto the field and soon had Sara on their shoulders shouting her name and rejoicing in the league championship.

“Put me down,” shouted Sara. The gang relented and gently placed her on the ground.

Josh, who was standing in the crowd just outside the circle of players, was smiling and pleased for Sara.

Finally the players began to drift toward the field house. Josh started to move toward Sara but stopped when a handsome, curly headed blond athletic type pulled Sara into his arms and planted a kiss on her lips, to which she responded with enthusiasm.

A minute later, Sara spotted Josh and waved to him to approach. She surprised him with, “Josh, meet my boyfriend, Nick James.”

“Nick, meet my friend, Josh Logue.”

“Great to meet you, Josh. Sara has told me how much support you have been to her.”

His hand shake was stronger than necessary, his smile fixed and his eyes just a bit cool.

He turned toward Sara. “The gang is meeting at Butler Hall. Shall I wait? How long will it be?”

“No, Nick. Go along with the gang. It takes us women a long time to prep for our dates.”

Josh said to Sara, “I’ll see you on Monday. Great game. You were fantastic during the whole second half.”

She grinned and acknowledged the compliment. “Thank you for coming. Wasn’t Pat terrific in the way she evades blockers and passed the ball? She is grace personified. She will have you floating on that dance floor at the Ball. See you later.”

Saturday evening meals at the Tri-Delt house were sparsely attended. The meal was more like eating at a deli. Mrs. Foster’s replacement had light duty.

He noticed that, during dessert, Patricia sat at a table with two freshmen who were paying close attention to what she was saying.

Patricia called, “Josh, Sara mentioned that you were physics major. Would you mind helping Sharon and Jacqueline with their assignment? This is a bit beyond my ability.”

“Absolutely.”

Fifteen minutes later, two smiling and adoring faces were thanking Josh, their new savior.

Mrs. Duke, the house mother, was out for dinner and the busboy/dishwasher failed to show.

When the last co-ed left the table, Josh decided to clear the tables and stack the dishwasher.

He was returning to the table from the kitchen and bumped into Patricia who decided to give him a hand.

“You shouldn’t be doing this, Miss.”

“Neither should you, but together we get this done quickly. Besides we need to talk. I told Sara I am so delighted to have you escort me to the ball. Will you do me the honor? You do realize that I may not be good company.”

“The answer is yes. I understand but I’ll try to keep a smile on your face.”

“Great. At the ball, I’ll make sure you have a lot of dance partners. You do know that half of the sisters at the house would love to ask you for a date. It’s the stupid sorority protocol that makes it impossible.”

“That’s hard to believe.”

“It shouldn’t be. You are handsome and so willing to help. At the library, you have never refused to help any of the girls with questions for their physics or math classes. That is a rare trait in our circles.”

“There, now. We’re all done with the dishes.”

“Thanks for the help, Miss.”

She put her hand on his arm. “Please call me Pat unless old stuff face is around.”

Josh was sure his pulse rate was up as he watched her walk away, his mind calculating, five foot nine, blond, thirty four, thirty, hundred and fifteen pounds and a lovely hip movement.

“Down, boy. Don’t let your mind go there.”

On the way back to his own apartment, Josh was thinking, “I liked that. Working in the kitchen with her, felt so natural. There was warmth that emanated from her that I hadn’t expected. It’s too bad about house rules, but I understand. Socially, we are worlds apart.”

He suddenly remembered that he had promised Marie that he would prepare a Denver omelet when she

arrived at ten. Since his apartment mate was gone, Marie was staying the whole weekend.

A week before the Ball, Josh found a hanging bag in the washroom holding a tux. At his apartment, later, he discovered it to be a perfect fit, as though it was tailor made.

There was only one table for four as opposed to the tables for six at the house. This table was always reserved for the four snooty ones, as he called them.

They really ignored him, acting as though some robot was serving them. They continued with their gossip about anyone and everyone, be it another sister, some fraternity guys or the Dean of Women, all of whom were less than equal to their own social status.

While he was serving the entrée, he realized they were talking about Patricia Harris.

“Can you imagine? I hear she is being escorted to the Ball by some blue collar type who is one of those veterans. I didn’t find out the specifics.”

“Really? I did hear that she was ditched by Michael Jackson, you know, the son of Fox Chapel Country Club president. Poor girl.”

Another of the four said, “If this weren’t a mandatory appearance, I would think we should not attend.”

“Good idea but maybe we can talk our dates into leaving early.”

None of the four realized that Josh had stopped serving and was obviously listening to their conversation.

One of the girls said, “I need more water, waiter.”

Josh walked away. “Such arrogance. I wonder what they will say when they discover that I am the subject of their conversation.”

“Maybe I should be looking for a different job. It’s disillusioning to see people from money acting as though the rest of the world existed purely for their service to the upper class.”

Sara ordered a cab to take the four of them to the Ball. Josh was aware that Pat was as stiff as a board.

In the cab, he took her hand in his, whispering, “It will be fine. You will charm this entire crowd.”

Her body relaxed just a bit.

“Thank you. You’re sweet to try to bolster my confidence. I also want you to have a good time.”

At the Ball, Pat took his dance card and returned twenty minutes later with a full card, including one Trish Smythe, the cool one who ignored him since he spilled water on her breast during his serving trial.

It was a good evening. Nick, Sara’s boyfriend, kept them entertained at the table with jokes while Josh told some of the lighter stories of village life in Afghanistan.

Every dance partner was an exceptional dancer. Only one made it obvious that she was doing this as a favor to Patricia while others made him feel welcome. That was better than Josh expected.

Patricia lived up to Sara’s claim that he would feel like he was floating when they danced together.

Only two incidents were a trifle upsetting. Near the end of the evening, Nick, in a snooty tone asked, “How does it feel to wear one of my discarded tuxedos?”

The other experience was his dance with Trish, who danced tight, her ample breast thrust hard into Josh’s chest

She smiled ever so sweetly when he could not hide his arousal. Just as the dance ended she said, “In your left pocket is the key card to room 14000. After you dutifully escort the queen, I’ll be waiting in a lovely see through. Ta, ta.”

Patricia was grateful for Josh’s presence. He kept her relaxed with a few cute stories and compliments after each presentation she made as part of her responsibilities.

During breakfast on the following Monday, Trish got a little retribution by bumping his arm as he served her seat mate. The result was a fried egg on Mary’s lap.

“I’m sorry, Miss Fox.”

“It wasn’t your fault, Josh.”

She picked up the egg and not very gently slapped the egg on Trish’s lap.

Mrs. Duke was there in a flash and stepped between the girls. “Grace, please change your skirt while I take Trish to get cleaned up.”

The room went silent as the others fixed their eyes on their own plates. Patricia whispered to Sara, “I’ll bet Josh turned down an invite to her room on Saturday night.”

“You’re probably right.”

“By the way, Sara, thank you for making the arrangement with Josh. He was sweet, making me comfortable all evening. At no time was he over solicitous. As you know, his stories of village life in Afghanistan were fascinating, showing tenderness in his makeup.”

“I should have reserved more dances with Josh for myself on his card. The other guys, with whom I danced, didn’t know what to say, given my situation but Josh made me feel so wanted as a partner.”

Sara laughed. “Listen to yourself. You sound starry eyed like one of our frosh sisters.”

Pat laughed, too. “I know. I sound just like you did during the first months after he arrived on scene.”

Sara said, “Don’t let yourself get carried away. Your mother is worse than mine. She’ll have a heart attack if she finds out you’re dating a no body.”

“I know but I like my fantasy. Meanwhile, like you, I think I have a good friend, thanks to you.”

Pat reflected on her conversation with Sara. “She’s right. Josh and I need to keep this on a friend only basis. It

is obvious that he would be uncomfortable with the gang. In fact, I'm getting bored."

Josh was not looking forward to the Christmas vacation period. He could not afford to go home for the whole period. He needed income to replace the sorority income that would not be coming his way while the co-eds were away.

He managed to find a holiday job at Macys on the swing shift, two o'clock until ten. That left him with time on his hands.

On the last day before the two week holiday, Pat asked, "What will you be doing, Josh? Going home?"

"Nope. I found a job at Macy's starting at two. I need the funds."

"I know you like to help people. Would you like to help some young kids from Harlem keep busy and out of mischief? That's what I want to do. I can't stand to be home with my snooty step mother so I volunteered for the Christmas season program at the Riverside Church. The program for eight to ten year olds is funded by Barnard. We can use a helping hand, if you have time."

Josh worked with the boys and Pat with the girls. They ate with the children and Josh told stories that he created for those kids who never saw the world outside Harlem.

The kids loved him and responded to his instructions. Pat marveled at his touch.

Josh reciprocated. He watched with wonder at the way the little girls never took their eyes off Pat.

It was a time through which their friendship deepened. They had no time to visit after each session because of Josh's tight schedule.

Josh arranged for a late arrival at Macy's of their last day at the church so he could invite Pat to a brief lunch at a Broadway Chinese restaurant.

“Pat, I wanted a few minutes to tell you thanks for inviting me to participate. I had a great personal experience. I want to add that I loved the way you related to those little girls.”

“I love working with girls that age and I appreciate your noticing. The boys were attentive for you. You have a nice touch.”

They talked for a bit about their Christmas day plans before Josh had to run.

Both did get home for the actual holiday. Josh was wrapped in the warmth of his loving family.

That wasn't the case for Pat. Their home was filled with strangers, friends of her stepmother. No one was interested in anything she had to say. Her father was the busy host and had limited time for Pat.

She left right after dinner, drove to the city and booked a room at Butler Hall.

Rise, work, and go to class and study. That was Josh's life for the next two weeks after the holiday.

It was the week before semester finals. Josh was looking for Sara at lunch on Saturday.

He whispered to Pat. "Is Sara off for the weekend?"

"Yes. She left for home right after breakfast."

"Damn. She was going to critique my final essay."

"I'm sorry. May I help? I'm a fair hand at essay writing."

“You could be my life saver. Do you have time today?”

“I’m free after dinner.”

“Great. Where can we meet?”

“We can work at the dining table. Mrs. D. is off for the weekend.”

Both laughed, recognizing that Mrs. D. would prohibit such fraternization.

When Pat finished reading the paper, she said, “Your essay is excellent, Josh. I corrected a few typos and inserted two commas. I predict an A.”

“The scene in the hospital room is tender and loving while the participants try not to display their fear of what is happening.”

“Now that I read this piece, I can see more clearly the Josh who has made our house a softer and warm place for a few hours every day. You’re pretty special, a surprise for an ex-marine.”

“Not very special, Pat. I’m just trying to pay back or even pay forward for the blessings that come my way.”

Pat switched subjects. “Josh, I have a favor to ask which includes a chance for you to make some additional cash.”

“You may not know but grade averages for our house is a big deal. We compete against other sororities and frat houses for honors.

As a result, we hold special hours during finals week for anyone to come to special tutoring classes we sponsor starting on Sunday.

Some of our upper class mates serve as the tutors, mostly to answer questions. When necessary, we pool some money to bring in outside help in certain subjects.

Would you be interested?”

“Sure, but I already help some of the younger ones.”

“I know and admire you for that but this is different. This means six hours here tomorrow and two hours each evening through Thursday. Your subjects will be Poli Sci and Physics. This is for any of the sisters from frosh to seniors.

The other seven of us are all upper class sisters tutoring the younger sisters.”

“What will Mrs. Duke think?”

“I’ve cleared it with her, who, by the way, has fallen under your spell, just like the rest of us.”

Josh chortled. “I wondered why she no longer looks at me like an enemy. I would be pleased to help. I’ve done all the boning up I need to do for the week.”

After Pat had left, Josh said to him, “That was a nice surprise. She needed help but chose me so I could earn a few more bucks. I owe her.”

Two weeks later, it was Mrs. Duke who said to Josh, “Thank you for helping my girls with their studies. This house now ranks number two in the Pan-Hellenic Association, a move from eleventh last term. Here is your check. A couple of the young ladies have included a bonus for special attention you gave to them. You’re a fine young man.”

Chapter 3.

On the following Saturday, the new bus boy failed to show for dinner, so Pat had helped Josh do the cleanup and stack the dishwasher.

They had taken a last cup of coffee to the living room and sat on the sofa.

“Pat, may I ask why you’re here most Saturday nights while your sisters are having fun on dates? You must be beseeched by loads of guys who want a date with a beautiful woman.

“Yes and most of them just want to get into my pants and mark down another conquest to brag about. Do you know that some of the frats have competitions with rewards?”

“Besides, I’m just not into drinking and noisy music and trying to talk above the noise. Our crowd is made up of the same people week after week.

I don’t think of myself as a snob but I find most of our crowd boring. For some reason, Sara and Nick are always bickering these days. That’s no fun to see.”

“I also find that I talk to my dad, who avoids big parties on the week end while his younger wife revels in such activity.

“He usually delays going so that we can have a long talk about eight o’clock or so. Daddy made a bad marriage and I think is considering a divorce. Fortunately, he has the wherewithal to handle it. Daddy is filthy rich but very real. He wears his money easily but married that woman who

acts as though she was born to the purple just because her father made a fortune.”

“She and her lady friends live in a world totally removed from reality, some sort of elite. I don’t understand how my daddy got snared into that marriage. Perhaps he was on the rebound after my mother’s tragic death.”

All of a sudden, she went silent. Josh took a close look and saw tears flowing down her cheeks. He reached for a tissue and dabbed at the tears that would not be stopped. She began sobbing. In order to help, he reached his arms toward her. She fell into those arms, bringing her face into his breast.

He felt her shudder and almost collapse within his grasp. It took some long minutes for the sobbing to ease. Josh’s shirt was very damp, not that he noticed.

His hand smoothed her hair and then caressed her shoulders until she sat up, dry eyed.

Her hoarse voice was hardly a whisper. “Thank you. You are a dear friend. I’m glad it was you who dried my tears.”

Josh took her hands into his. “That’s one of the values of friendship.”

“Now, you must leave. I need to repair this mess of a woman.”

“Patricia Harris, no tears or messy hair can destroy your beauty. You must remember that.”

“Here’s my cellphone number, just in case. May I have yours?”

She nodded and gave him the number.

They stood and walked to the front door. She extended her hand for a hand shake. “Thanks.”

Josh stepped out the door to be greeted by a gust of wind. He had forgotten that a light snow driven by heavy winds was the prediction for the evening weather.

Being off balance and not prepared for the wind, he was driven back into the room before he managed to get his footing. He started once more.

He heard Pat say, “Call me when you get home to let me know you are safe.”

The door closed and he was off into the blinding snow.

A half hour later, he was saying, “I’m home, Pat. Thanks for caring.”

Within minutes, he was adding the last vegetables to the pot of soup on the stove and buttering the sourdough that would be dinner for Marie and him.

Marie was pursuing her doctorate in Political Science and led small group studies.

She was only a year older than Josh but considerably more experienced in the art of making love. She had no culinary skills but had a keen mind for politics.

They gorged themselves on his cooking and spent themselves making love through the night. After a late bunch just before noon, they hit the books.

Marie always wanted to say goodbye for the week end scrubbing Josh in the shower.

They never talked romance or love, both agreeing that this was an interim affair.

Marie, like Josh, came from poor circumstances. She was the middle child in a family of five children. Her dad worked for the recycle division of the borough of Staten Island.

Middle children are often the forgotten siblings. This was true in Marie's case.

One evening, after telling Josh some of her story, she said, “I don’t know much about love, so I’ve done a bit of experimenting and made some bad choices. I kept being disappointed and sometimes abused, hoping for tenderness and respect. Josh, I haven’t been in a relationship this long with any other man.”

“You treat me as a woman. You respect me as a woman with brains. I know we do not have a future but I love these week ends and will keep coming back as long as you will have me.”

Josh could not understand how anyone could abuse this lovely woman. She was petite, blond like Sara, a soft manner and a passionate lover.

After lunch on Monday, Sara buttonholed Josh. “I’m worried about Pat. She seems so withdrawn since I got in last night. I think she needs some variety in her life. Do you know that she hasn’t been out on a date for weeks?”

Josh maintained an interested but neutral face while Sara continued. “My dad is coming to town Thursday evening. She and dad are good friends. Would you be available to come as her partner to join Dad and me? Nick is away for a few days.”

“Sure, but I can’t before nine. I need to get to my apartment for a shower after I finish here.

“Great. I’ll let you know.”

Pat was anything but withdrawn in the taxi as it sped toward Columbus Circle. She cracked a slightly off color joke.

She said to Josh, “Uncle Seven has loads of worries. I love him as if he were a close real uncle. I do my best to make him happy on the rare occasions we see each other.”

He will assume you’re a real date, so don’t be surprised if I act a bit overly friendly.”

Josh grimed. “I can handle that. I like beautiful women to fuss over me.”

Steve Johnson was waiting at the door of the restaurant. He hugged Patricia and gave Josh a warm handshake. “Sara is at the table.”

Pat lived up to her promise. She was charming and obviously had Steve assuming that she and Josh were an item.

In all other ways, Steven was extremely acute. Analyzing responses to his questions and listening to small

talk with the girls, he determined that Josh was special to both of them and could use a job that paid more than his job at the sorority.

He pressed Josh for details of his service the military and his teen years and the cleverly changed subjects. He did make it obvious that he liked Josh and approved of Pat's choice.

There were a few minutes later in the evening when he and Patricia were alone for a few minutes.

“Patricia, he’s a great young man with potential. I could use him in our firm but I can’t make him an offer. He would see it as patronizing. If he ever talks about making more money while still at Columbia, such as a summer job, mention TWE.”

“We need young persons like the two of you and he will need some help to find his place in the working world.”

“I know because I got that break when I was a fresh graduate.”

“Uncle Steven, don’t forget about me. I want a career and, as you know, it will not be with Daddy.”

Steve put the two of them into a cab. “Sara is staying at the hotel with me. She’s cutting classes tomorrow so we can play catch up.”

The cabbie said with a grin on his face, “The boss gave me a big tip so that I would drive slowly. I promise not to peek.”

The young people burst into laughter. Pat said, “I like playing that game and I wouldn’t mind if we did continue.”

Without warning, she turned her, put her arms around his neck, moved in tight and let her lips begin the search for his.

As surprised as Josh was, there was no way he could deny the pleasure she brought.

The cabbie thought they would die of suffocation, when he decided they hadn’t taken a breath until he stopped at ninety-Sixth Street.

“That’s over forty blocks without breathing. Wow. Wait until I tell my old lady.”

The couple separated for the space of two inches and for ten seconds and renewed the battle of lips.

They fell apart as the cabbie jerked to a stop. “First stop. Take your time.”

“At the door, Pat said. “We need to talk tomorrow.”

She handed him the key to the door, then planed a sweet thank you kiss before she slipped into the house.

Sleep came slowly to Pat. She hugged her pillow and kept experiencing that romantic interlude from fifty six street until the stop at the house

“I’ve never been kissed lie that. Every cell in my body was trembling. I’d have done anything he wanted in order to have that go on and on.”

“Oh, Josh, my dear friend, what have you done to me? I didn’t realize I was playing with fire.”

It was much the same at Josh’s apartment.

He was talking to himself. “Josh, you stupid ass. You’ve ruined a wonderful friendship by letting you r passion dictate your behavior.”

That same theme played over and over again. Even reading a chapter on nuclear physics could not drive away the memory, joy and regret of that cab ride.

Pat avoided eye contact with Josh as he served her breakfast the next morning. She left early to avoid the possibility of Josh wanting to walk with her to her class.

She opted for a light lunch at the cafeteria instead of coming to the house for lunch, but then said to herself, “This is silly. We are both mature enough to handle the embarrassment of last evening.”

She thought her behavior at dinner was acceptable until Sara asked, “Why are you so tense?” You’ve dropped your fork twice and haven’t chewed the food in your mouth for a full minute.”

Pat stammered. “It’s that dam stepmother again.”

She approached Josh in the kitchen after dinner. “Any chance you can stay for a while? The whole gang is off to Pan-Hellenic game night. We need to talk.”

“I agree. I have a short errand but can be back by seven fort five.”

“That’s fine. I’ll make fresh coffee.”

Just as each finished the first sip, both began at once to say something. Both laughed nervously. Josh said, “Okay, ladies first.”

Pat said, “That’s the problem. The way I acted last evening was not very ladylike. I’m afraid I got carried away.”

Josh protested. “No, Pat. I started it and put too much emotion into a game we were playing.”

Pat said, “It was my words that set us off and I remember that my lips were desperately searching for yours.”

Josh said, “I should have stopped it right there but selfish me couldn’t stop.”

All of a sudden they both burst into laughter. Pat said, “Listen to us apologizing for something that must have given us great joy. I know it did for me.”

“And I’d be lying if I denied it but what happens next? I do not want to lose my best friend.”

“Oh, Josh. I feel the same way. You mean so much to me. There is never any tension between us, like the way I felt before my breakup with Michael.”

“I would feel so alone if I thought you were not there to support me in times of stress. I felt so relaxed

during the evening of the ball, in the easy way you got me through that evening.”

Josh said, “I’m glad because I always felt that I’m fulfilled when I can do something that helps you.”

Pat asked, “How do we continue? I don’t deny I like all of last evening and it may happen again when we are alone in the right place.”

“I know. While you are my closest friend, you are asp a very desirable woman.”

Pats face flushed. “So I’ve been told dozens of times. I do try to dress down a bit but that doesn’t seem to work with those frat brothers.”

“May be I should scare them off.”

“That’s a good idea but it probably won’t work. I wouldn’t mind being seen in your company at the coffee shop or at the movies. That might work.”

Josh, in a joking manner, said, “We could pretend to go steady until the right guy comes along for you, Pat. That should keep the wolves away.”

“That would work. It would allow me to make out with you on the sofa when the mood hits us. Would you like that?”

“I don’t think that’s good idea. Making out might lead to a more complicated relationship than being good friends.”

Pat laughed. “Ohm well. It was worth thinking about.”

“Patricia Harris, “There is a bi of the devil in you.”

Five minutes later, they were sipping hot coffee and glue to the movie channel.

As her closest friend, Sara soon was aware of the closer relationship between Pat and Josh.

Patricia Harris, what’s going on?”

“What do you mean?”

“Come on. This is your closest mate. What’s with this Josh relationship? Are you sleeping with him? I warned you.”

“Definitely not. I would tell you if I were. We are very close friends. I can confide in him as I have with you.

Besides, you are spending a lot more time with Nick and I find an hour or two with Josh to be rewarding.”

“Okay, but I think the hours are more than a few.”

“You’re right. Recently, Josh has decided that he needs to learn more about art and music. When he has time, we take the subway down town and go to the Metropolitan Museum or the Museum of Modern Art.”

“He has a quick mind, genius like. He absorbs information almost immediately and has a very retentive memory for his new knowledge.”

“I like the evenings we find each other at the library. He makes studying fun with the games he creates.”

Some afternoons, we take an hour at the music department where I can help him to understand the themes and background of some of the great classics.”

Easing her tone, Sara said, “I’m sorry I’ve been deserting you recently. Nick is being very attentive and wants to spend more time together.”

Pat agreed. “I understand and that’s how it ought to be when you’re in love.”

Pat continued, “Josh is great with the young kids from Harlem, so we do spend time on Saturday mornings at Riverside Church.:

“On some weekends when you’re away, we even attended a Sunday church service.”

“Sara, I thank you for arranging that date for the PanHellenic ball.”

“I’m happy for you, Pat but it’s time to get back into the social swing. I’ll be happy to set up a date with someone from the Sigma Chi house.”

Pat gave the idea some thought. She loved to dance and was thinking why asking Josh was probably not a good idea.

“If you could find a handsome good dancer, I could use a date for the Spring Ball.”

Sara grinned. “I’ll get right on it.

“Thanks, Sara. It’s too bad our class schedules leave so little time to visit. I do understand your desire to spend so much time with Nick.”

The conversation with Sara made Pat aware of the amount of time she was spending with Josh. “School will be

out in six weeks. Unless I get real lucky, this is going to be a lonely summer. I ought to ask Josh how he plans to spend the summer. In fact, I need to ask myself the same question. I can't spend time with that woman who married Dad."

Pat walked into the kitchen after dinner. "Josh, do you have a few minutes to chat after your chores are completed?"

"I sure do. Shall we take a walk around the block? It's a gorgeous day."

"Good idea. I'll meet you at the big red oak in a half hour."

Pat began the conversation with a question. What plans have you made for the summer?"

"I just started to do some noodling last night. I better get on the ball. Before I can make definite plans I need to talk with my folks. Say, how would you like to drive upstate with me Saturday evening? You will love my folks."

"Are you sure? They might get the wrong idea."

"No way. I told my mom all about our friendship during a long phone conversation."

“I’d like that, Josh. Shall I arrange for a motel?”

“No need. You can sleep in my old bed while I stay with Sis and Pete. They live next door. If that is inconvenient, I can stay with my older sister, Alice, and her family.””

That sounds like we would be putting your sis to trouble.”

“Sis will love it. She and I are very close.”

Pat dressed down for the trip. She wore shorts with a wraparound skirt to cover her legs when they arrived.

The arrival was marked with shouts of joy, hugs all around, Pat included. Alice’s fourteen year old twin girls looked admiringly at Pat and hung onto every word she spoke that evening.

The family welcomed Pat as though she had been a family friend for years.

Pete, Josh’s buddy and his sister Jenny arrived a half hour later. The family was delighted to her that Jenny was pregnant and Pete has a new job in Albany.

Soon the men were gathered in one room telling war stories while the girls cornered Pat and probed her with questions about Barn and, life on campus and in the city.

Before she slept, Pat reflected on the day. She loved the warmth of her reception, the kinship and love she saw within the family and the love that Josh had for his family and Pete.

“I had no idea that such love existed in any family.”

Everyone was up early, knowing that the couple would be planning to leave about noon. Everybody contributed to creating brunch, the twins and Pat peeling potatoes and learning from Gramma how to put ingredients together.

Lots of tears and hugs marked the departure of the young ones in their rented Ford.

They had planned a slower drive down scenic 9J instead of the interstate.

Josh said, “I had some good news from Dad. He has started a new job with a lot more pay than his last. That takes some of the pressure off. Let’s talk about the summer. What are your plans?”

“I haven’t any yet, Josh. I will not go to Greenwich where my presence will cause constant tension. I don’t look forward to a whole summer without seeing you.”

Josh said, “I feel the same way. I was getting lonely just thinking about your being away all summer.”

“I want to find a summer job that could be the basis of a long term career. I know that various corporations offer such opportunities.”

“That reminds me, Josh. Remember the evening that we dined with Sara’s father. He told me that he was impressed with you and would love to have you in their firm.”

Josh took a quick look to see if she was serious. “He said that to you?”

“Yes. There was a time when you and Sara were both away from the table. I have a card with a name and address to give you if you have any interest. I have no idea what the firm does.”

“That sounds intriguing. I can call the number and set up an appointment.”

“If that works for you, I will plan to find something to do in the city. Daddy has an office on Wall Street. They have loads of jobs for college students each summer. I feel better already.”

“Good .Sit back and enjoy the scenery.”

“Josh, what are your career plans?”

“I haven’t anything specific. I’ve taken accounting, economics and finance courses. If I choose the business world it will be in the service industry. I want to serve people in some direct fashion.”

“I want to research some of the international agencies that focus on the poor areas around the world.”

Chapter 4.

Josh filled out the standard application for a position with Tran’s World Enterprises and spent an hour with the head of Human Resources before his official interview with Michael Jordan, President of the North American Division.

He discovered that TWE sold equipment for five major manufacturers of small parts for a variety of uses.

This division marketed to firms in the States, Mexico, Canada and several Central American nations

“Right now, we can use help in Sales, Administration, Research and Product Testing. Wherever you serve, it is an opportunity for you and us to evaluate interest, opportunity and ability regarding the future. No strings attached other than signing of the confidentiality agreement.”

“Based on the two interviews and your record at school and the marines, we are ready to offer you summer employment in any of the departments that you decide. Think it over and call this number within seventy two hours.”

Although the words were formal, there was feeling of warmth and welcoming in Mr. Jordan’s manner.

Mr. Jordan walked with Josh to the door. His parting words were. “I know that I look like the great Michael Jordan but I’m not related.”

He was eager to tell Pat the good news but this evening a good many of the sisters were absent. They, including Pat, were out to dinner with their dates for the Spring Ball.

Pat slept late and was not at breakfast on Saturday morning. Sara hurried through the meal and slipped a couple of muffins into a napkin and headed back to the bedroom.

This did not go unnoticed by Josh. He waited around afterwards, hoping to catch Sara, but to no avail.

He asked Joyce, one of his favorite frosh. “Is Miss Harris unwell this morning?”

All he got in return was a shrug of the shoulders. He was sure she knew but he would not press her.

Neither Sara nor Pat showed up for lunch He discovered that they had gone out for lunch.

Both were at the table for dinner each chatting with the sister sitting in the next seat.

Josh took a casual but close look and noticed a bruise on Pat’s right cheek, carefully treated with makeup to cover up the discoloration.

“Damn you, whoever you are.”

He touched her shoulder so that she could not help but look up. The look on his face said, “We need to talk.”

She had been expecting this. She reached under her plate, picked up a slip of paper and handed it Josh.

In the kitchen, he read the short note. “Red Oak tree at seven thirty.”

She was trying to dry the tears when he walked toward her at the meeting place.

“Oh, Josh, it was terrible.”

She choked and put the wet handkerchief to her eyes. Josh took his large handkerchief and substituted it for hers.

“Take your time, Pat.”

He noticed that the tears had wiped away some of the makeup, revealing a very black and blue bruise on her cheek.

“I’ll kill the bastard. How did this happen? What’s his name?”

Pat said, “Let’s walk while I tell you.”

“I won’t give you his name at the moment but this very handsome great dancer and respectable gentleman of the whole evening turned out to be a drunken mean date by the time we got into the backseat of his friend’s car.”

“He was absent for fifteen minutes after the last dance and returned, his breath reeking of booze.

I’m guessing he had a bottle stashed, reserved in order to get up his courage. I should have refused to leave with him at that point.

He was a bit unsteady as we walked to the car.

When the doorman opened the car door, my date, he practically pushed me into the seat.”

“I started to reach for the handle to the other door but Fred, the driver spun rubber as he gassed the engine.

Jack, put a strong arm round my neck while his left hand was reaching for my breast down the front of my dress. I pulled that hand away but he gripped the bodice and ripped it.

I tried to remove the hand around my neck with little success. His left hand moved from my breast and began raising the hem of my long skirt.

I concentrated on resisting by trying to hit his hand which started moving up my legs. When I felt it at my knees, I squeezed and trapped the hand, causing him some pain because he screamed and cursed.

I have no idea how long this struggle went on but suddenly the car braked to a halt. Fred and his date got out of the car. “Seventh floor.” Off they went.”

Jack changed tactics and tried to pull me from the car. I tried to break his hold. The next thing I knew, his fist connected with my cheek and down I went.

He yelled something like. “You are costing me points.”

“Hey, what’s going on?”

It was a burly doorman at the hotel who was approaching the car, accompanied by a young man, apparently the parking attendant.

The doorman grabbed Jack and the young man took a mighty swing and floored Jack.”

“Are you hurt, Miss? Shall I call a doctor?”

I said, “”No, thanks. Just get me a cab.”

“Sara didn’t get in until four. I told her the whole story. You can guess the rest.”

Josh was spitting mad. “Are you going to charge him for assault?”

“No. Sara and I talked with the doorman. He said, “The attendant gave him quite a drubbing and his boss suggested that he could be charged by Jack for assault if we went to the police.”

With agreement by my attorney on the phone, Sara and I agreed not to do that figuring that Jack had been properly punished. We, of course, reported this to the president of the Sigma Chi house.”

“Pat, please give me his name. I need to find out what punishment he receives.”

“I’m sure it will be severe, Josh. His name is Jack Swan. Let’s forget this. Tell me about your interview at TWE.”

Pat was ecstatic when Josh told her that he would be working in midtown for the summer. “It’s a good thing that I will be making enough money to pay the extra rent. My roommate just graduated and will be gone on graduation day. In fact, he has been living with his girlfriend and moved all his clothes”

“Josh, let’s celebrate. I know we usually go Dutch, but I want to buy you a steak dinner at Rudy’s on fifty-

Ninth Street. I feel like a free woman, knowing I can make a clean decision about my summer.”

Josh started to protest but the victory belonged to Pat. “I’ll make the reservation for eight thirty. That will give you time to shower and change after dinner.”

“We’ll grab a cab on Broadway.”

While eating dessert on the evening before their date, Pat slumped in her chair, grabbing at her right side. She cried out loud in pain.

Sara moved quickly to Pat’s side to stop her slide to the floor. Josh rushed to her side and eased her to the floor.

“Call 911 for an ambulance.”

Pat shrieked in pain, and her grip of her side tightened.

Mrs. Duke rushed into the room but was calm. She took one look and said, “Acute appendicitis, I’m certain. Josh, see if her right side feels warm or hot.”

As he tried to pry off her grip, she screamed again.”

“Her side is very warm, Mrs. Duke.”

“Sue. Get some ice cubes in a cloth that may give her some relief until the medic arrives.”

“Mrs. Duke, do you have her father’s number?”

“I’m dialing now. Hold on.”

A minute later, she said, “He’s out of the country.”

The siren on the ambulance was increasing. One of the girls opened the front door as the vehicle screeched to a halt.

Five minutes later, the ET said, “Hot appendix.”

The other attendants moved with dispatch, getting a moaning Pat onto the gurney and heading out the door.

Josh asked, “May I ride with you to the hospital?”

The ET looked to Mrs. Duke, obviously the house mother. She nodded.

“Get in the back with the patient. You should hold her hand to comfort her and give me as much information as you can.”

Pat squeezed his hand, her yes saying. Thanks”

Josh ran alongside the gurney until the emergency doctor shooed him away. “Take her to the operating room, stat.”

An aide led Josh to the waiting room for a long lonely period during which his mind dealt with a myriad of thoughts and prayers.

He paced for a while. He searched for a coffee machine which produced a tepid weak drink.

“Dear God, Please don’t take Pat away from us. Her dad will be devastated. Her friends need her. I have never had a friend like her in all my life. Please.”

A voice was calling. “Mr. Logue.”

Josh looked up and saw a doctor, in greens, approaching. “I am pleased to say she will survive. She got here just in time with her burst appendix. That was a close call. She is in recovery. Someone will let you know when you may visit.”

“Thank you, doctor.”

An hour later, she was gripping his hand. She offered Josh a weak smile.

“The doctor just told me that I owe you, big time. You saved my life.”

Josh shook his head. “I had a lot of support from Mrs. D. and Sue and other sisters.”

“Perhaps, but I’m sure you took charge. After all, you are Joshua, pretty much like the original in the bible.”

“Wow. You are buttering me up for something.”

“Well, there is an old saying, “When you save someone’s life, you are responsible for that person for the rest of her life.”

Josh laughed. “You better be kidding.”

“Just a bit for now, but I reserved the right. Now, I will settle for your presence and some hand holding.”

She was asleep in minutes. Josh decided to call Mrs. Duke that the news was good.”

She said, “Thank God and thank you, Josh. By the way, I heard from Mr. Harris. He has your cell phone number and will call you in order to determine if he should fly home. He is calling the hospital first.”

“The girls will be delighted to hear the news and will want to know when they can visit”

His phone rang two minutes later. “This is Josh.

“Mr. Logue, this is Harris. How is Pat?”

“She had a close call but is now out of the woods. She is still a bit weak, but wanted to be awakened if you call. Please hold for a moment.”

Josh awakened Pat and then walked to the other side of the room so as to give them privacy.

Later, Pat called, “Josh, Daddy wants to talk.”

Harris said, “Pat says that you are not only her friend but now her savior. Thank you. She says that I am to call you Josh. Well, Josh, she insists I not cut my trip short. I won’t be home until your school term is over.”

“I am asking you to give Pat all the support that you can. I look forward to seeing you in Greenwich in June.”

“I’ll do my best, sir.”

For the next five days, one of the sorority sisters was at the hospital all through the day. Others were in her classes taking notes.

Josh took over at seven thirty each evening, staying until closing hours. It was a time during which their friendship deepened while they shared stories of their childhoods and laughed about their first romances.

Pat pressed him to tell her about his tour of duty in Afghanistan. He changed the subject.

After a long political discussion of the Federalist papers, she made Josh promise to take her to the Hamilton production on Broadway.

Pat was reluctant to see him leave at curfew, introducing a new subject for discussion just before he had to leave.

Meanwhile, through some detective work, he discovered that Jack Swan's punishment was being dropped from the competition for the annual competition award for most different women conquered between October first and May thirty first.

Josh caught Jack alone one evening returning from a midweek date. Jack was never able to identify his attacker or figure why he received two black eyes and a groin kick that caused pain for days.

Josh was delightfully surprised to see Pat at the lunch table on Saturday. She gave him no indication during the previous evening.

The house was buzzing, in a party mode, celebrating Pat's return.

It was the same at the dinner hour. Just about the time Josh finished his chores at seven thirty, the house was very still except for the sound of the television.

Josh walked into the parlor. Pat was all alone, seated on the sofa.

She smiled, saying, "After I shared a bit about our time together at the hospital, they wanted this evening to be like this. You and I have a chance for intimate conversation"

She patted the seat, next to her on the sofa. "I need to hear the latest off color story so that I can be one up on the sisters before bed time."

She ended up laughing and holding her side. "I' mot ready for that much laughter yet."

In a serious tone, she said, "Josh. I have a favor to ask. The doctor has agreed that I can start light exercise. I'd like to start swimming."

“Sue is inviting us to join her and her family Sunday at Winged Foot Country Club. This is her twenty first birthday. Pete, whose pin she is wearing, you and I and her parents make up the private party. Please say you will join us.”

Josh hesitated. Pat rushed on. “I know it’s not your thing but I know Pete and Sue’s folks. You will be comfortable with all of them and it is important to me. Sue is one of my two best friends.”

Josh was thinking, “She is almost begging me. I may find myself uncomfortable at a country club but I can’t let Pat down.”

“Okay, Pat, but I will need a bathing suit.”

“We can go shopping. I need a suit and a causal shoulder wrap of some sort. Do you have some time after lunch tomorrow?”

He replied. “I’m free at three thirty.”

When they boarded the subway, Pat said, “I found a nice sportswear shop for men and women at seventy second street. Let’s try that.”

Josh was about to choose a dark blue, boxer type swim trunks. Pat walked up to him at that moment, holding a dark blue set of briefs.

“These are more your type. When the girls see you in these, they will come flocking.”

Josh started to protest but Pat said, “Here, take these to aisle three and find your size. I want the girls at the club to envy me.”

When he returned, she was waiting with a package under her arms.

Josh took a liking to Pete the moment they shook hands. Sue explained that her family would be there in time for a late lunch.

“They’re not much for country clubs but Dad’s firm insists that it is good for business. We can swim and get a start on our summer tans.”

After a long swim, Sue and Pete were cuddling on a double chaise lounge while Pat and Josh shared large blanket on the lawn.

The sun felt quite warm on their skins.

“Josh, there’s sun tan lotion in my tote bag, would you please get it and rub some on my body?”

He fetched the tube. She was lying on her stomach so he straddled her body and began gently applying the cream to her back.

“Oh, that feels so good. You have a gentle touch.”

She turned over, facing Josh whose shadow kept the sun from her eyes but his body seemed to be hovering atop her. Pat blushed as she pictured something more, but caught herself and laughed nervously.

To her, “Wow. That turned me gooey but I can’t let on although I am enjoying this in an unexpected way.”

While Josh tried to be careful at her breast, she insisted that every bit of exposed skin needed lotion.

“All right, marine, on your stomach. The moment her fingers began a smooth stroke, Josh shuddered. Pat noticed and tucked the memory away for the future.

As her fingers moved down his back, they encounter the scar directly behind his heart. “Josh, were you wounded in the war? You never mentioned that.”

“I know.”

She leaned over and kissed the scar before resuming her gentle massage.

When he turned over, she saw the scar on his chest. She cried out, “How did you survive? This scar is directly over your heart.”

She leaned over to kiss the scar; he tears s dropping on Josh’s chest.

“Don’t cry, Pat. It was a long time ago.”

She continued to keep her lips on the scar until Josh said, “You need to finish massaging with the cream. I was enjoying that. I may hire you to do that every evening before I leave .”

She laughed. “You deserve it after those long days you put in. That might be fun.”

“Josh, I do need to her the story some evening. Promise you’ll tell me.”

“We’ll see.”

The luncheon was delicious. The cake was beautiful and the harmony by the patrons of the ding room was excellent as they joined in for the “Happy Birthday.”

Pete, who was driving, dropped Josh at his apartment before taking the girls to the house.

Josh knew he would find it difficult to sleep. He pulled out some textbooks and tried to concentrate. He had no luck. His mind was a jumble of thoughts.

Josh was recalling the pleasure he felt when stroking the gorgeous skin of his beautiful friend. He caught himself. “Don’t go there.”

He switched to a later scene when she kissed his scar and wept tears that fell on that scar. Her empathy moved him deeply.

He remembered her request to hear his story of the event that produced his scars.

“She doesn’t need to hear that gruesome tale. What I’d rather tell her how wonderfully empathetic she is.”

Meanwhile, Pat was restless. She rolled back the covers of her bed and sat in the slipper chair, instead.

Sara was sound asleep.

Pat thought to herself “Sara, you are so lucky, so settled with Nick while I find myself at sixes and nines I

have the greatest friend a girl could want but I seem to want more.”

She let her mind drift back to the scene on the lawn. She was just turning onto her back with Josh straddling her body. In a flash, she found herself wishing he would ease himself onto her body.

She recalled the way his body quivered when she stroke his back. She wondered if he was aware that his movement had sent a shudder to her body.

“Get a hold of yourself, Patricia. Quit fantasizing. Be happy with what you have been given.”

“You have a friend who treats you like a woman instead of a college girl. I can’t believe how much I’ve changed in just the few months since Josh came into my life.”

“If we ever make love, I know that it will be as man and woman, not as a couple of college kids. Oh, Pat, go to sleep.”

She finally yielded and found an unsettled sleep.

Unfortunately for Pat, nothing was resolved through the night. Watching him serve breakfast brought back memories of yesterday.

She thought, “I need to get off memories of yesterday.”

The problem was that he was in her life three times a day. She remembered something her dad had tried to teach her on more than one occasion.

His words were, “Don’t try to evade your problem. The resolution will come when you confront and move through the issue, whatever it is.”

Friday evening, with the house almost deserted, she and Josh were watching TV.

“Josh, I’m not interested in the movie. Would you like to hear an idea I just had?”

“Sure. I’m all ears.”

She took his hand into hers. “Just before this bout with my appendix, you agreed to let me take you to dinner. Now, we have an additional reason to celebrate.”

“I was hoping you forgot about that.”

“No way. After the event of this past month, I am more determined. How about a week from this evening?”

“All right but I think we should go Dutch.”

“No. The original deal was my treat.”

Josh was surprised when Pat ordered a scotch while he had a white cocktail wine.

The meal was superb. The crisp salad set the tone for the meal. The steaks were medium rare and perfectly done, ready to melt when they touched lips.

The meal was served very slowly with the maître d’ keeping an eye on the waiter. Together they finished the bottle of Cabernet.

Josh was feeling just bit light headed and thought Pat must be also. He looked for a sign but she seemed totally sober.

Her conversation was animated. She talked about the many things they shared with emphasis on times when he had been her strong support.”

Josh never noticed any transaction take place, guessing that Pat had made a payment agreement ahead of time. This was Pat's party.

As they walked out the door, after being escorted by the Maître d', Pat took his hand and turned right, not left toward the street.

Josh found the answer to the mystery when Pat stopped in front of the elevator and pushed the up button, handing Josh the keycard to room 1101.

Alone in the car, she took Josh's hand into hers. "Every once in a while. I daydream of that cab ride with an alternate ending to the separating at the door. I hope you don't mind my trying to duplicate the scene."

The elevator door slid open. Josh put his arms under Pat's knees and sweeps her into his arms. He made his lips available to hers as he carried her into 1101.

He placed her gently on the sofa in the suite, in the same position she occupied in the cab that evening then assumed his position.

Once their lips met, it was a battle to discover who was getting the most joy.

After coming up for air the second time, Pat lay her head on Josh's shoulder taking a deep breath,

“Josh, you do take my breath away, but it isn't what I expected. It is almost but not quite. I want to catch my breath and try once more.”

John took her face in his hand, turned it so that he could look into her eyes.

“I'm willing to hold you tight and lock lips as much time as you desire.”

Pat wrapped her arms around his neck, her lips latching onto Josh's.

The result was the same. Josh saw the disappointment on her face.

“Relax, Pat. You're as tight as a drum. Cuddle up under my left arm and talk to me. What brought you to do this?”

She didn't respond immediately. She moved deeper into his arms.

“It's complex. A number of reasons came into play. First, every once in a while, the memory of that cab ride and what happened to me, pops into my head. With my old

boyfriend, the result would have been a ride to a hotel but I thought that kind of action would get in the way of our friendship.”

“I also realized I was getting horny after watch some love scenes at the movies or on TV. I haven’t had that kind of date since I broke off my relationship.”

“Experiencing the love and kinship in your family made me realize that I have never known such warm feelings except in my friendship with you.”

“The relief I felt when you decided to stay in the city for the summer cinched my decision. I wanted more in our relationship. I’m not calling it love, but something beyond the current status.”

“There were a couple of moments on the lawn at Winged Foot. There was the time when I turned onto my back and there you were straddling my body. In a flash, I was visualizing your easing yourself downward onto my body.”

“All week, that picture had been repeating itself in my mind.”

“Tonight is the result of that convoluted thinking. I hope I haven’t made a mistake.”

Josh caressed her hair with his free hand.

“No mistake, Pat. I want to echo your idea. I have been trying to figure out a way to deepen our relationship, to experience intimacy beyond friendship.”

“I believed that whatever was going to happen had to begin with you. Your family wealth is one of several factors that will complicate matters.”

Pat sat up, pulled out of Josh’s arms. “Joshua Logue, forget the wealth. We’re not talking marriage or using the word love, at least not yet but I need you deeper in my life at this time.”

Patricia Harrys, you honor me. I will do my best to make certain you have no regret.”

“I’m sure I won’t. You have this effect on me. I’m so relaxed now. That is just one part of your charm.”

“Pat, this should not be happening. We both know that there will be a time when we have to pay the piper.”

“I know but right now I am willing to put that into the future. I want you. I need you.”

Pat stood and helped Josh remove his jacket and tie and start unbuttoning his shirt. She got no farther. Josh

wrapped his arms around her so she had to raise her arms around his neck. The lips met and once again the battle was on. When they took their first breath, she pushed Josh down on the sofa and resumed her oscillatory attack.

Finally, Pat rose and pulled Josh to his feet. She resumed undressing him until he wore nothing except his shorts.”

“Wow. Those loose clothes you wear have been hiding Adonis. With my twirling mind last weekend, I wasn’t aware of those shoulder and chest. Now, it’s turnabout.”

Minutes later she was whispering. “Lordy, Josh, you’re already making love even as you undress me. Each movement you’ve made is like a caress. Ooh, ooh. Yes.”

Minutes later, she was standing in front of Josh who was grinning. “If I’m your Adonis then you are my Aphrodite.”

She laughed. “I don’t know about his love making but I can attest to yours even before we get to a bed. You may remove my panties, already dampened with the beginning of an orgasm.”

Josh joined in the laughter. Now, I suggest a massage as a preliminary for the main event.”

“I’m putty in the hands of a master. Just leave me with enough strength to please you.”

Josh was affirmed in what he suspected. Pat put her heart and soul into returning to him the pleasure he gave her.

It was ten thirty on a bright morning when Josh heard Pat ordering room service. A minute later his nude Aphrodite was all over him, brushing kisses over his chest, neck and ending on his lips.

“Good morning. Oh, what a beautiful morning, even though this is not Oklahoma. Would you join me in that gorgeous bathtub? Room service won’t be here for an hour. I need someone to wash my back and other body parts. I’d be happy to reciprocate.”

She lay with her wet back pressed onto his chest as his soapy hands moved over her breasts.

“What a wonderful night, Josh. The times that I was with other boys provided no comparison. It’s hard to find the right words. At first you wooed me, and then melted me

before winding me up in preparation for a climax of pure joy.”

“I hope you let me try to get even before we check out this afternoon.”

When the waiter had departed, Josh asked, “What happens tonight, tomorrow and the day after? I would like your ideas. You’ve given more thought to this than I have.”

“I thought we could start dating like any other couple going steady. We can spend weekends together although I may not be able to wait six days for the kind of loving I’ve just experienced.” She broke into giggles.”

“I’m sorry for the giggle but I am so damned happy. Anyhow, our week end base can be your apartment. Once school is out, we can plan some weekends away. We can go Dutch as usual, although I hope you don’t get too sticky about a few dollars on occasion.”

“Whoa. We’re not ready for all that. Making love with you has been beyond my best fantasies but you’re suggesting something more. If we take that fork in the road, we will be moving from friendship toward a love affair. That’s a big step.”

Pat made a funny face. “What are you afraid of? I’m willing to risk it and pay the penalty if I’m wrong, but I am not wrong about wanting to love you.”

“That’s the point. You are easy to fall in love with and that means I will be invited into a world that is alien to me. I’m from the other side of society.”

“Joshua Logue, you amaze me. It has nothing to do about the place you come from. This man whom I have come to know is capable of anything and can be comfortable any place he travels. Deep inside, you know that.”

Josh was silent. Pat waited, taking his hands in hers. She felt the tension that had come over his body. She broke the silence.

“I wish I knew what was going on in your head right now. I will tell you my thinking. I believe I am an attractive woman who wants this exceptional man in her life, even if it turns out to be temporary.”

He kissed the nape of her neck. “You’re right, as you usually are. I have no real reason to deny what you are suggesting. I can’t imagine a future without you around.”

Much later, as they were preparing to live,

“Do we let the sisters know?”

“Sure. They’d find out soon enough.”

“How will Sara react?”

“She’ll be upset but I can smooth that over. After all, it is my life”

He asked, “How about you’re housing once the term is over?”

“I haven’t figured out the best solution. I don’t want to stay at the house. I may look for an apartment near your place. I want to be close and stay overnight once in a while but I am not ready to move in with you.”

Pat was right. Sara was upset and scowled at Josh the day after the news was out.

“Pat, I warned you. He’ll break your heart because he knows that he is not in your league.”

The other co-eds congratulated Josh on his choice and made it clear to Pat that she was a smart woman.

He found it difficult to tell Marie that their affair would have to end. He prepared a rare roast beef dinner for their last evening.

Her response was, “Josh, thank you for these months. You are a real gentleman, especially in the gentle way you break the bad news. I will miss you.”

The school term ended on a high note. After an intense week of tutoring, Delta, Delta, Delta scored the highest grade point average among the Greeks.

Pat and Josh attended the Senior Ball to honor the eleven graduating sisters from the house.

Sara was elected Vice President of the PanHellenic Association for the coming year.

Josh scored 4.0 in all his subjects.

It was Sunday morning, two days before the official ending of the school year. Pat, dressed in yellow shorts and halter, was serving up thee bacon and eggs while Josh poured the coffee.

“Hone; you had a restless night. Is something on your mind?”

Pat hesitated for minute. “I have an obligatory visit coming next weekend. We agreed that once I was on my own, away from home, that I was free to live my life as I chose.

Daddy asked me if it was fair to receive a comprehensive look at my life throughout the school year. I agreed. So, we do this every year.

He and I were tight during all my years at home. That feeling continues even though we see little of each other during the year.

He wants to hear about my studies, my grades, my extracurricular activities, and my social life, meet my current boyfriend and anything else I want to share.

We have a great time together. My step mother stays clear.

Last year, my fiancé didn't have much of a good time because Daddy was unimpressed. He was right, of course, since you're his replacement."

Josh interjected. "I'd be pleased and honored to visit with you. From the few conversations we've had, I think I will like your father."

"Josh, you have a way of making me so happy. I think my father will like you but he may press you as to your intentions regarding the future."

“Don’t worry. I will tell him the truth and answer any questions. He may not like all the answers but I’m guessing he will respect the truth.”

“I hope you’re right because I want you in my life and in an easy relationship with Daddy.”

Pat pulled the rental red Mustang to a stop in front of the main entry just as Henrietta Harris was leaving the house.

“Damn. We arrived two minutes too soon”

“Relax, honey. It had to happen sometime this weekend.”

“Good afternoon, Henrietta.”

“Must you be so gauche, Patricia, driving a fireman type vehicle?”

Pat ignored the jibe. “How are you feeling, Henrietta? Daddy said you had a summer cold.”

“Your father always understates matters. I’ve been in bed for three days but was determined to be gracious during your brief visit.”

Josh thought. “I see what Pat meant about this woman.”

Pat began to introduce Josh, but Henrietta cut her short.

“I’m on my way to tea with some friends. Mildred will prepare tea and scones for you.”

She turned her back and was off.

Pat was outraged. “That damn woman is so rude. It’s always about her. She acted as though you were not present. Damn her, anyhow.”

Josh wrapped his arms around Pat’s shoulders.

“That’s okay, Pet. I was prepared for some stupid act. Let’s go in.”

Paul Harris was stepping off of the staircase as they entered. Pat flew into his arms and buried her face into his chest.

“Welcome home, sweetheart. Let me wipe away the tears.”

As he did so, he said to Josh, “I’ll be with you in a moment. I’m Paul. Welcome.”

A minute later he was offering his hand. “Thank you for coming. Would you join me as I have a sip of good single malt? Pat says she needs a sip or two to remove the dust from the trail to the country.”

Josh said he would as the three joined in that moment of laughter.

In the den, Pal said, “I witnessed your arrival from the window of my bedroom. I apologize for Henrietta’s rude behavior.”

He paused, holding up his hand to ward off any interruption.

“You have seen the last of Henrietta. She stays with friends until the moving van transfer’s his possessions to her new home.”

Pat rose from her chair and went to sit on Paul’s lap. “I’m sorry it didn’t work out.”

“I am too. I must have been blind or maybe too lonely after losing your mother as you know, it was a great love affair and we were a happy threesome.”

“I should have recognized the signals when she acted as though you were in the way when she and I were dating.”

Paul buried his head in her hair and Sid nothing more for a few minutes.

After that long silence, he asked Pat and Josh to raise their glasses to a renewed life.”

“Joshua, I want to thank you again for the way you took care of Pat when she had the appendix attack.”

“Both, Pat and Mrs. Duke were very complimentary about the way you took charge. The Harris clan owes you big time.

“Josh, do you mind telling me a bit about yourself. I have this father’s need to know something of the current man in Pat’s life. Tell me briefly about your life to date.”

“I understand. It’s a very simple story. I grew up in two different small communities south of Albany. I had a happy childhood in a moderately poor family. My dad seemed unable to avoid layoffs in the factories where he was employed.

I began finding ways to earn money when I was fourteen, including a paper route and other odd jobs.

Although I have an athletic body, I had little time for games. I was studious and loved to read. I got good grades in school because my mother expected it and I could not disappoint her.

I attended a community college for two years, and then volunteered for the military in order to get GI benefits for future study.

I spent two years in Afghanistan and will be a senior at Columbia this fall.”

“Do the benefits cover all your expenses?”

“Not quite. I work part time, as Pat can attest.”

“I hear that’s a tough grind these days, especially with the entire collier reading expected by most professors.”

Pat cut in. “Daddy, he is brilliant He even tutored some of the sisters at the house and answers their question almost every evening.”

Paul raised his eyebrows. “And Mrs. Duke let the hired help fraternize with her charges?”

Pat laughed. “That’s another story. It’s part of his charm.”

With a warm smile on his face, Paul asked, “All right, Prince Charming, are you sleeping with my daughter?”

“I am, sir, or, rather, we do sleep together when it seems right.”

Pat asked, “Daddy, may I tell this part of his story because I want it to be part of report this evening?”

Paul nodded.

“Josh and I have been good friends since he saved me from embarrassment by agreeing to escort me to the Ball after my breakup. You know about that.

Together, we tutored my sisters during finals. We worked at Riverside Church during Christmas break. I help him with English Composition and he helps me with Political Science.”

“We became very close and still are. I have not been dating since my break up. One evening I asked him to kiss me. The result of that kiss surprised both of us, enough for

us to say we would like something more in our relationship.”

She paused, waiting for her dad to ask or to comment. He simply waited for her to go on.

“As I looked forward to the end of the school term, I was getting depressed. I knew I couldn’t come home as long as that woman was here. I figured my friend, Josh, would look for work near his home. I realized how much I would miss him.”

This was shaping to be a lonely summer.”

She paused wondering how this sounded to her dad. A quick look at his smiling face encouraged her.”

“I was so elated that I wanted to celebrate by taking him to dinner. Although we always went Dutch, I conned him into letting it be my party.”

“What surprised him was my reserving a suite where I would get him to make love to me.”

Paul took his time before asking. “Pat, are you in love with Josh?”

“I don’t know. I thought I was in love with Michael, but this is nothing like that. I am not thinking marriage but I

do miss him when he is not with me and I was afraid that he would not be around for the summer.”

Paul switched subjects. “Josh, what will you be doing this summer?”

“I have a summer training position with TWE here in the city.”

“That’s Johnson’s outfit, an excellent company. They have a great summer program for students. You have a chance to evaluate them while they size you up. That was an excellent choice.”

“Now, I need to relax. You two find something to do while I nap. Later we can take a walk before cocktails

At dinner, after desert, while finishing the last of the coffee, Paul asked, “Pat, may I presume that of you plan to spend your senior year living at the Tri-Delt house?”

“That’s the plan except for some weekends with Josh. Why do you ask?”

“I’m planning on selling this house, unless you want it for the future Pat.”

“No objections, Daddy.”

Paul continued. “I just bought a large apartment in Maharani and plan to create two units with a common kitchen. I was thinking you might want to live in one of the units.”

Pat gave the idea a brief thought, and then said, “I think I will stay on campus. I have so many activities and need to use the library.”

Paul said, “That makes sense, but I want to make up for the time we missed since I remarried. Perhaps you and Josh might spend some of your weekends at the apartment?”

Pat looked at Josh. “I think we would be please since that unit is separate from yours. We can be pretty noisy at times.

Paul laughed. “I’ll remove my hearing aids except for meal time, if that is all that keeps you away.”

Chapter 5.

Josh was welcomed by the staff in Marketing Research. He had chosen this department, feeling that he could learn more about the company operation and the customers, whose products they marketed and sold

He was not disappointed. Being a fast learner, he was making a contribution within the first month.

He was surprised to learn that most of TWE's contracts were with related to farming. Two were chemical companies, two were specialty farm equipment manufacturers and two were farm equipment parts suppliers.

The first week consisted mostly of classroom work, listening to lectures and watching videos related to various subjects

Brands were the first of three. The instructors covered positioning, concept testing, brand equity research, perception and awareness, shopper research, brand health, advertising and message testing, and brand tracking.

The second set of studies involved customer satisfaction and loyalty, digital feedback, voice-of-the-customer programs, event feedback, customer service studies, and more.

Each day was filled with excitement of new learning.

Although not required, he stayed after hours when the department was in overtime mode.

He did like the fact that he was home at six thirty each evening with no required studies to worry about.

Pat, with evenings free, decided to take in some Off Broadway theater productions and soon had Josh coming along to “broaden his arts appreciation development.”

She bought tickets for a series of three “Student Concerts” for beginners put on by the Philharmonic. His surprise was the vast knowledge she already had and shared with him after the sessions.

There was a reverse side to the learning. The apartment was in need of minor repairs. The landlord made a deal with Josh. “I’ll give you a month’s rent if you want to do the job yourself.”

Pat volunteered to be his carpenter’s helper. She dressed in new overalls and brought her own set of tools.

At breakfast, Josh taught her the art of measurement to allow for saw cuts, how to sand with the grain and how to make the cuts.

She was a quick study and a full partner by the end of the first day.

The physical work took its toll. She nursed couple of glasses of wine while Josh made dinner. She opted for bed immediately after the meal.

Cuddled next to him in bed, she said, “I had no idea that I had all those muscles. What I need at the moment is some TLC and a gentle massage that will put me to sleep.”

Josh awakened to the sound of sizzling bacon. Five minutes later, he was patting her fanny and planting a kiss on the nape of her neck.

She laughed. “Not this morning, Marine. It took a great effort to rise and now I want to keep working. We have a lot of work ahead.”

She fell in bed right after dinner but recovered by midnight. Josh came awake when he swatted at what he thought was an insect that was crawling up his inner thigh.”

She giggled. “All work and no play makes for a dull couple.”

They finished the project at noon the next Sunday. After a long soak and some fun in a deep bath, Pat suggested a walk to the subway for a ride to Columbus square.

She said, “I am dying for a good steak and we know a hotel dining room that can meet the challenge.

Josh started to say something but she put her index finger over his lips.

“You promised a long time ago not to be too prissy about an occasional use of my money.”

“Besides, I owe you for a brand new experience with hammer and saw. You have no idea what it means to me”

“Josh, you have provided life experiences for me that few if any privileged girls could ever encounter. Since you came into my life, I look forward to each day with excitement. Also, thank you for those daily ten minute phone calls.”

Josh thanked her for the dinner as they sat side by side in the booth.

“Pat, I need to visit my family. Would you like to join me next weekend?”

“I would love to but I was about to tell you that I have this invite to the Hamptons. You’re invited but I don’t recommend coming. It’s a bore with lots of booze and food and some very snooty people.”

Josh laughed. “Thanks for letting me off the hook. I do need to go this weekend because we go to your father’s apartment the following week.”

“Right, let’s take a walk while you tell me about those scars on your chest and back.”

“Pat, I was hoping you had forgotten about that.”

“You know I haven’t. I play my fingers over both of them every night we sleep together and I kiss the one on your chest after we make love. It’s my way of thanking God for your survival.”

Josh felt tears welling behind his eyelids. He pulled Pat into his arms, “All right, but at the apartment not during a walk.”

They were seated next to each other on the sofa. Pat was holding Josh’s hand.

“Our battalion was stationed in Kandahar; strategically the most vulnerable area to Taliban attacks from the training bases in Pakistan.

The Taliban, as you know, seek to control all of Afghanistan. I’m sure you know about the atrocities they commit in the name of Allah

Pakistan, our supposed ally, continues to support the Taliban, or at least some local warlords do.

Kandahar province in the south is like a sieve, Taliban soldiers moving into Afghanistan

Our battalion was training Afghan regulars and fighting alongside to stop the influx.

On this one day, the temperature is over a hundred, the humidity high and dust swirling creating tiny tornadoes. Vision is very limited.

Suddenly, out of the dust, a horde of enemy soldiers come running and shrieking “For Allah.”

They are spreading out, right and left. Bullets are coming from all directions while I am trying to find an enemy in my gun sight.

Suddenly my back and chest are hurting like hell and my body is on fire. I passed out.

You met Pete, my brother-in-law now, but my buddy on the battlefield. Pete pulled me into some bushes and called for a medic.”

Pat tightened her grip, her nails biting into Josh’s flesh.

“I awoke in sick bay. The doctor was befuddled. He could not understand how I survived a bullet through my heart.

He finally decides I had taken two grazing shots almost simultaneously but neither life threatening.

I was back in the field within a short period. They needed my bed for more serious patients.”

Josh pulled out his handkerchief to dab at her tears and then pulled her into his arms. He nestled his face into her hair while they sat in silence.

“Does it ever hurt?”

“Not really but I get a twinge every once in while just to remind me how precious life is and how close to death we are every day.”

“Do you think of that day often?”

“Almost every day, particularly when I rise in the morning to greet a new day.”

She said, “I noticed that several times and figured you were having a private moment of prayer, just as I do.”

Josh tightened his hold. “I had no idea.”

She smiled. “We still have so much to discover about each other.

The entry to Paul’s apartment was wide open. Pat called out, “We’re here, Daddy.”

“Turn left. I’m in the kitchen with Aunt Susan.”

Pat whispered. “That’s my real aunt, his much younger sister.”

Susan was waiting with open arms. Josh found himself gaping. This could have been Pat’s slightly older sister.”

She broke off the embrace and looked at Josh.

“Patrice, you vamp, you finally did it. You captured a real

one. Hi, I'm Susan. If she doesn't treat you properly, I'll be waiting in the wings."

Josh was briefly taken back until he saw the grin on all three faces."

"Hands off, Susan. You didn't want Michael. Besides, you have ten others begging you for a date."

"Michael, phooey. He was nothing compared to this man."

Susan reached for a hand shake. "Nice to meet you, Joshua. Paul told me a bit about you two. She's a wonderful woman."

Paul was holding a pitcher of orange juice. "Have a seat while I pour. Josh, I want you to get to know Dr. Susan Harris my sister, who manages to lift both of us during our tough moments."

Josh learned that Susan was in Pediatric surgery. "When I complete my residency, I plan to work a few years with Doctors without Borders, hopefully in the Middle East. I'm fairly fluent in some dialects of Arabic."

"As you can guess, I don't need the money although I may find it useful in my vocation."

“Has Patricia told you much about our family?”

“We talked about the immediate family and her problems with Paul’s second wife. We never talked about grandparents or other family members.”

“Is it true that you are just dating, not living together? How serious is this?”

“We’re still working on that.”

“Hmm. I’m guessing, but it is that damn money question again. You don’t have to answer that. Take your time, but don’t wait too long.”

She stood. “I need to help Paul in the kitchen. We are doing the family open house. There are only three of us until Patricia and I decide to populate this horrid world.”

Susan dominated the conversation at lunch. She kept the mood light with stories of the lighter side of life in an operating room and some of her faux pas in the early days of her residency.

When the second cups of coffee had been poured, Pat said, “I just registered as a democrat. I’m running scared with all those running for the Republican nomination, especially Trump.”

“I’m trying to convince Josh to change. He is an Independent, which seems a waste.”

Susan said, “I’ve been registered as an Independent from the very beginning. Paul, are you still a Republican?”

“Yes, but I haven’t voted that way since I saw what trickle-down economics has done to our nation. I’ve made a lot of money but at the expense of our poor and even our middle class.”

“I’m ashamed to say that today’s Republican Party has deserted me and old time moderates.”

“If I may suggest, let’s move on to another subject.
“

Pat asked, “Daddy, are you planning on using your Philharmonic tickets this season?”

“No. You may use them if you want.”

She beamed. “I’ve been trying to help Josh broaden his exposure to the arts. We could use them when he has the time. We’ve been going to some Off Broadway theater productions.”

Paul smiled, saying, “I’m always expected to contribute to a variety of events and organizations. Feel free

to call, be it the opera, special concerts, art shows or any special fund raising events. Please don't use your allowance or Josh's earnings for such activity."

Susan was on duty starting at five. As it neared three, she rose from the table. "I need to get to my apartment and change. If you clear, I can rinse and stack the dishwasher."

Josh said, "Not necessary. That is one of my specialties. I'll do both while you say your goodbyes."

Susan chortled. "I need that kind of a friend. Do you have an older brother for me?"

She came close for a good bye hug and a whisper that was a reminder. "Don't wait too long to commit."

She said the same words to Pat during their good bye.

Minutes later, Pat came up behind Josh and put her arms around his waist and laid her head on his shoulder. "I love you, handsome. Aunt Susan was impressed with you and approves of our partnership. She said she would call to set a date for dinner at her apartment on Riverside Drive, a few blocks south of the church."

He turned and pulled her into his arms. “I like her. She is fun and also deeply serious when she wants to be. I look forward to seeing her again.”

Pat was pressing her breasts tighter and slowly rotating her hips.

“Am I being seduced by a woman who has beautiful breasts, a well curved waist line, long shapely legs and luscious lips which are about to be crushed?”

Two bodies merged into one, then separated so that two power arms could carry her to the doorstep of nirvana. She was nipping his earlobe and opening his shirt during the long walk.

As he turned down their wing, she said, “Second door on the right. Since I started this, I’m in charge. Joshua may have been the leader in charge of the Israelites but this Joshua is now my sex slave.”

She had Josh laughing so hard that he almost dropped her instead of gently placing her on the bed.

She couldn’t stop giggling but managed a weak, “You may turn down the bed before you undress me very slowly.””

When he finally slipped off her panties, she said, “I see by the shine in your eyes that you like what you see.”

Josh opened his mouth to say something but she held up her hand. “I did not give you permission to speak. Now, it’s your turn to undress until I command you to stop.”

“Stop. I demand the right to remove the briefs.”

Neither could stop laughing when she finished uncovering her Adonis.

She pushed him onto the bed and fell on him, still laughing. “How can I make love to you while you’re still laughing?”

“Slowly, Aphrodite.”

While she was toweling his back after the shower, she said, “I am going to lie in bed, playing over those words I heard you whisper. ‘I love you. “There is so much meaning and promise behind those three little words.”

“Daddy would like to talk privately with you over cocktails.”

Paul had prepared some cheese and crackers and poured the drinks.

He got directly to the point of the meeting.

“Josh, Susan and I are convinced that no matter what your and Patricia believe, the two of you are deeply in love with each other.”

“We also believe that you are afraid to admit this because you worry that it may affect your friendship. I agree that may be a risk although knowing my daughter and the little I know about you, I doubt the risk is real.”

“I’m guessing, and Susan agrees, that Patricia’s wealth is what is blocking a decision to commit.”

“As Pat’s father, I am not trying to rush her into marriage. I hope she experiences life in a variety of ways and has some adventures in the process.”

“I hope the same for you. You’ve already missed part of that because you’ve carried part of the burden of your family. I know a bit about that because I had to do the same during my teens and early twenties.”

“How am I doing so far?”

“Right on, Paul, but your last information surprised me. According to all I have learned about wealthy people, the accumulating takes more than one generation.”

I'm sure your facts are correct except for the sprouting of multimillionaires and billionaires have grown exponentially in the last twenty years."

"Back to my point, I am making an assumption that love leads to a union that begins before and during marriage"

"Now, if I am guessing right, your goal had never been to accumulate wealth."

Josh nodded.

"Since that my guesses have been correct, I would like you to think about a question and initiate a conversation with me, when you are ready."

The question is this. Are you securing enough n your own right and confident enough to spend your life with Pat, pursuing your individual and common goals while managing the wealth that comes with my daughter?"

"I would like you, when ready, to talk this out with Patricia and then both of you with me"

The question set Josh's mind whirling.

Back in the bedroom, Pat couldn't sleep but was in a state of reverie. In the center of the scene was Josh with his

arms holding her close after coitus? His left hand was caressing her back. She loved those rituals of intimacy during which both were thanking each other for this joy in their relationship.

This afternoon's moment had produced a surprise. She heard Josh whisper, "I love you."

She thought, "I was so taken back that the only word that came to mind was, "I'm glad."

"I can't wait for him to get back."

She opened her eyes to see Josh's eyes caressing her from head to toe. She felt a flush starting at her neck, the usual reaction when Josh's was talking with his eyes.

"I was just picturing us in bed after making love earlier. "

She held out her arms.

Josh shook his head. "I'd love to but your dad is expecting us in fifteen minutes. He's practicing his culinary skills as a bachelor."

Paul was off to his den shortly after dinner. The kids cleared and staked and went to the den in their wing.

Josh lay on the sofa, his head in Pat's lap.

Pat asked, “Do we talk about your conversation with Daddy, unless it’s some secret? Or do we talk about my reaction to your loving words this afternoon?”

He took a deep breath. “Actually they are both parts of the same subject, so I’ll start with the conversation.”

Josh related every detail of his afternoon with Paul. He closed with the following, “Both your dad and Susan believe that we love each other and neither wants to see us get hurt.”

“What is he asking of you?”

“His challenge is burned into my brain.

“The question is ‘Are you securing enough n your own right and confident enough to spend your life with Patricia, pursuing your individual and common goals while managing the wealth that comes with Patricia.’”

“Wow. He is putting both of us on the spot. There is one bright side to this. Both Susan and Daddy see something special in you that make you right for me. That’s very affirming.”

Josh agreed. “That gives me a good feeling but why do they feel that way. Moving in moneyed circles makes demands on a couple’s social life. I may learn to do that but I can’t see much pleasure in some of that.”

“I’ve heard Daddy say the same thing. He avoided the worst and boring situations but found a way to get through those he could not avoid. You could explore some of that with him or with Susan. She has some experience with that.”

Josh listened. His love for Pat was so compelling that he wanted to make this work but he wanted to be sure that Pat would not be hurt.

“How about people in your social circle who would not appreciate people from the working class sitting at their dinner table? I see some of that in a few of your sorority sisters.”

“That’s their problem. You notice that those few always stay to themselves. Since I am not old money, I never get invited to their events and I’m glad.”

Josh, it’s time to tell you about my family. Is this a good time?”

“Any story that will help me understand is welcome.”

“Here it is in a nut shell. My paternal grandparents were definitely working class. Dad’s father was a shoe maker and repairman.

Dad and Susan are the two surviving children, the two in between having died. One was a still birth and the other a victim of SIDS.

Daddy was driven to make life easier for them and live a better life, himself.

After two years in Community College and working part time, he went to work as a stock broker.

He fell in love with the daughter of his firm’s founder, who was modestly successful.

When Mom’s dad died, she and Daddy inherited the small firm. They worked together until I was born. Mom and Daddy were risk takers and were very successful.

She continued her interest in Daddy’s ventured ad encouraged him to back two young men starting up two different electronic firms. Both were enormously successful.”

The firm, Jones, Harris & Associates that he heads now, is a large firm with a seat on the New York Stock Exchange. They paid Daddy and Mom as lot of money for their brokerage just to get Daddy to be their CEO.”

So, in a way, you and I are a parallel story.

While our goal is not creating wealth, like my parents, you and I have been talking goals that have much in common.”

“That’s true, Pat. I had never thought it possible that I would share a dream with anyone on fraternity row. When I came to work at the sorority, I figured I would perform my duties, be ignored as waiters are. My life would be entirely outside that work place. I was wrong, of course.”

“Here I am, a good friend, and now in love, with the prime mover of the sorority and heir to a fortune. Life is ironic.”

Pat smiled. “How about looking from another vantage point? Our life journeys are made up of problems to be resolved and blessings to be received with grace.”

Josh laughed. “We use the blessings to dissolve the obstacles to a meaningful lie.”

Pat said, “Exactly.”

She lifted his head from her lap and slid down to lie face to face.

“Let’s deviate for a minute. In the midst of a beautifully intimate postlude to lovemaking, I heard your words, ‘I love you’. I was so surprised that I missed a great moment in which to respond with those same words”

She went on. “I came to understand my love for you weeks ago but hesitated to say the words, fearing I might lose you.”

Her voice choked and her tears flowed soon to mingle with Josh’s tears.

Eventually he was able to say. “It just happened. There was no way to avoid the inevitable.”

“The marvel of this day is that your dad chose this day to challenge me.”

They lay in each other’s arms, lips locked and tears of joy dampening their shirts.

Much later, Pat said, “Now that we have something to say to Daddy, he will be interested in some idea of our long range plans.”

“You would have no way of knowing, but you are the first boy or man I brought home, who Daddy is taking seriously. In the past two years, I have brought home a variety of guys but Daddy politely dismissed them. I was upset but later discovered that he was right to do so.”

“Josh, given your choice, what would be your choice of making a living for us? You do know that you will be a success at whatever you choose. That is a given.”

“I guess you may be right. What I need to know, I can learn quickly. That much I have proven to myself.”

“I think I could be happy as an executive of a non-profit in which I could help people to help themselves financially and emotionally.”

“One of the problems is the few agencies that can afford to pay the money that I will need to support you and the two little girls that I hope will art of our life together.”

“Josh, I once asked you not to be too fussy about using some of my money. If we’re feel your public contribution is satisfactory, then we will be happy in our family life.”

“The wealth is there and no amount of washing is going to make it go away. I want nothing in our life

together that irritates the relationship. Josh, if it was up to me only, I'd make it vanish. However, we have to deal with the income of a trust that is irrevocable.”

“What does occur to me is that the challenge may not be great enough to keep you stimulated. But it's a starting place for conversation. Daddy will certainly raise the question. If you give him a chance, he may have some suggestions, although he will not try to force you into any one direction.”

Pat said, “Let's talk about the school year. Have you decided about your part time work?”

“Yes. As much as I enjoy the work at Tri- Delta, I want to expand my experience and make a little more money. TWE has offered me work on Friday afternoons and all day Saturday, Actually, this is fewer hours and, of course, a lot more pay.”

“Good. How about your class schedule? You must have a choice of electives.”

“I have some ideas but I'll wait to make those decisions later.”

“Josh, I think this is the greatest day of my life. I can let the world know that you love me. We faced the issues

that have muted our love for too long and we will be receiving Daddy's blessing tomorrow."

She rose and took him by the hand.

Chapter 6

Paul listened carefully as Josh reported the details of their meeting last evening, interrupted by explanatory comments from Pat.

He smiled as Josh tried to reconcile his hope to manage a non-profit and still have enough income to support a family."

"That's a hard thing to do these days, Josh. Let's not worry about details. You have a year to make your first choice, which probably will not be your final choice. That's almost a given."

"I like the way that you two faced the question. By the way, I share Pat's view that you will succeed at whatever you take on. It's just part of your nature by now."

"If I may, I have a suggestion. The Business School at Columbia offers a class in Foundations and Non-Profits. See if they will accept you for the year. They may balk at

your being an undergraduate, but your 4.0 record may prove to be a help.”

“Blessings on both of you, remember my counsel. Don’t rush into marriage or even living together. Give your love and romance a chance to mature.”

“I would like Pat in the summer after graduating to accept my standing offer of a long trip to Europe and Africa.”

He smiled. “Her absence may make the heart grow fonder.”

I hope you can spend some weekends at this apartment. I’d love to see you.”

Their senior year seemed to fly by. They attended ever important dance or ball during the year. Josh missed all the Saturday soccer matches but was there to see Pat flip the ballot Sara that won the league championship.

Sara’s Nick was more cordial at the Pan Hellenic Ball now that Josh was tied to Pat.

There was the usual table hopping, more than a dozen co-eds dropping by their table but only a few males.

Josh noticed but shrugged it off. He enjoyed dancing with their dates.

Josh joined Pat in January during finals week, helping any of the sisters who needed assistance with Political Science, Physics, or World History.

Mrs. Duke had to shoo them off to bed at eleven, so that a dead tired Josh could get some rest.

Up until Christmas, Pat and Josh spent a weekend each month with Paul.

Pat spent the Christmas weekend with her dad while Josh drove to be with his family.

As planned, he returned to Paul's apartment. No one was there but he found a note. "Col. Univ. Med. Ctr."

He set a speed record and, fortunately, avoided a traffic ticket.

Pat was waiting outside the suite on the top floor of the hospital. Words were rushing from her mouth before he could embrace her.

"Daddy is going to be okay. He developed a high fever the day before yesterday. He was so weak that he almost collapsed. He had no color in his face."

“Fortunately, I was at his side just after calling for an ambulance. There was no room for me in the ambulance so I followed in a cab.”

“I was worried for Daddy and confused. Did his high fever mean pneumonia which can be life threatening?”

“Emergency was full and Daddy’s personal physician was out of town. It was four hours before I received word that he had the flu and was in no danger.””

“Oh, honey. I missed your strong presence but I kept my cool in spite of my feelings.”

Pat finally paused for a breath.

Josh asked, “May I see Paul?”

“He’s asleep but we can sit by his bed. I want to hold his hand.”

A very weak voice said, “Hello Josh. Welcome back. I gave Patricia a scare but the doc says I just need rest.”

“How may I help, Paul?”

“Patricia will spend the night with me. If you chose to stay at the apartment, you could let the housekeeper know I won’t be home for a few days.”

He faced Pat. “Honey, write a check to Mrs. Hornak for five hundred. Josh, you can explain that this is her regular check and Christmas bonus.”

“Consider it done, Paul.”

Through a weak smile, he said, “Thanks. Why don’t you two hold hands someplace else while I nap. I am very tired.”

Fifteen minutes later, they were sipping coffee in the cafeteria and holding hands.

“I was shocked when I saw the note at the apartment. It was hard to think of Paul as ever being ill. He takes excellent care of himself and looks so great.”

“I agree. That is what surprised me, especially when he lost his balance. I almost panicked, wishing you were there and then recouped.”

“When will he be going home?”

“His personal physician is not here and the Resident suggested we wait until tomorrow afternoon when his doctor is due.”

Josh thought. “That doesn’t feel right. I wonder if there is some complication.”

He asked Pat, “How about a walk. The air is not too cold. I see a light snow falling, the first this winter.”

Pat took his hand into hers and led the way. She was soon telling stories of her childhood in the snow during Vermont vacations at Christmas time. Lost for the moment were her worries about her father.

In the suite, Paul dozed off and on again while Pat held the hands of the two men in the world that she loved.

She was embracing Josh when it was time for him to leave. “You, handsome, are just what the doctor should order. You bring peace and love into the room when you enter. I shall dream about you tonight.”

Josh came by in the morning before going to work.

Pat said, “Daddy’s personal physician said, they want to keep him for another day or two to do some e tests on his heart. He was pretty cool, so I didn’t get an impression of any immediate danger.”

“Thanks honey. I’ll be late but I will get here before visiting hours are over.”

Pat rushed into Josh’s arm that evening. “Daddy has something called congestive heart failure. The doctor says

it may be serious but it sounds worse than it is in reality and it is treatable.”

“I guessed that it might be and did some research on the internet today. The doctor will start with prescription medication, which can dramatically alleviate symptoms. He may make some changes in Paul’s exercise program and put him on a diet that will lessen the possibility of coronary artery blockages.”

“If the symptoms indicate more drastic remedies, there are intravenous operations that are minimally invasive and very successful.”

“If his doctor is up-to-date on his reading, he may even use over the counter supplements to enhance the work of prescription medicine. “

“That is more than you wanted to know but you can relax. There are thousands of people living very good lives who have congestive heart failure.”

“Thank you, darling. As I said, you have a talent for bringing peace into my life.”

Pat stayed with her dad every day since she was still on the holiday break until January 2nd. Josh came each evening and stayed the night.

If the three were not engaged in a cut throat game of Pinochle then Paul and Josh were playing cribbage or chess. It seemed that each evening ended with Paul the big winner.

In the end, they were all winners because of the deepening friendship between the two men.

Pat and her dad had hours in which they made up for all the times Paul had to beg off during her teen years.

She went with him for his doctor visits. They had lunch out and shopped for Patricia's wardrobe.

The conversations were deeply personal in a way not many fathers and daughters express their relationship.

At lunch New Year's Day, Paul said to Josh, "Patricia and I have a request to make. Would you consider moving from your apartment and moving in with me?"

Before Josh could respond, Pat said, "The doctor said that Daddy should have someone present twenty four, seven."

"So it's more serious than first expected?"

Paul answered the implied question. "That's part of it but since I have never taken prescription medicine, the

doctors think there is a small chance that I might have a negative reaction.”

Pat said, “When he is strong enough, the doctor plans to clear some coronary arteries and insert some stents.”

“Meantime, he has been planning to hire nurses to be here evenings and nights. I suggested you would be more fun and provide more interesting conversation.”

Without hesitation, Josh said, “Consider it done. The only problem is I see is the occasional evening I may be later than the housekeeper can stay.”

“That can be handled. We are going to move my office to the apartment, temporarily. Either my Executive Assistant or one of the clerks can be induced to stay a little late.”

Josh said, “I probably should get some instruction from your physician.”

Paul laughed. Doc Waters and Jane are old friends who drop in each New Year’s Day. We can talk then.”

Doc Waters approved of the plan and spent an hour citing notes to Josh. Pat accompanied Josh to pack the first load of personal items and books from his quarters.

Josh was in and out of the apartment, having decided that his study time could be at home unless he needed to get into the library stacks.

The two of them ate lunch together most days, occasionally joined by one of Paul's associates. It was rewarding conversation for Josh who had, recently, opened a small invests account with Charles Schwab, a discount broker.

Paul became aware of Josh's interest and asked, Josh, "Are you interested in learning about investments?"

"I am. I have a small account with Schwab with some growth recently."

"Good idea. If you want, on days we are alone, let's talk investments. Patricia isn't interested. I would be thankful if you were well enough informed to represent Patricia's funds in the event I am unable to do so."

Josh nodded his understanding.

Paul taught him how to interpret market trends read and understand company financials reports and grasp information provided by market analysts.

After a series of instructional sessions, Paul then pulled up Patricia's accounts so they could read the history of her growing assets

The next step was learning how her unused income was reinvested to increase her assets.

Paul said, "While Patricia isn't interested in how we provide the funds, she is always looking for more income in her charitable giving account. She keeps finding reasons to donate beyond her planned giving.

"Paul explained, "While Patricia and I have not been regular church goers, we have deep religious roots that go back generations on both sides of the family."

"What I want to do today is to set up your lap top to down load this information. I would like you to stay on top of the account. When you see a trade being made by the investment team, I would appreciate your bringing it to my notice so that together we can second guess the team."

"When I see that you are ready, I will turn over management of the account to you."

“You could use what you learn to manage your own account at Schwab.”

“We’ll talk about Patricia’s other investments after I have coronary angioplasty at the end of April.”

One Saturday night in early April, Pat was cuddled up on a couch with Josh. Out of the blue, she asked, “Joshua Logue, will you take me s your wedded wife right after graduation?”

“Wow! Where did that come from? I thought we would wait a while. Your dad wants you to take that tour and I want have enough money to join you two weeks of the tour.”

“I know but, for some silly but real emotional reason, I don’t want to live with my fiancé. It doesn’t feel right although I can’t tell you why but I want to live with my husband. I want to be your wife, not your significant other.”

“What triggered the idea?”

“I’m not sure. Are you against the idea?”

“I’m not sure but I understand the difference. I just need to get used to the change of plans.”

He pulled her closer as he his mind dealt with the challenge to his plans. He could find no real reason to object.

His lips were suddenly searching for hers. She made it easy for him to find her lips. She knew his answer.

The theme for the Graduation Ball was Memories. The music covered four generations. The last three numbers were Glenn Miller classics from the 1940's, ending with Moonlight Serenade, the epitome of romance.

Josh and Pat were merged into one as they floated across the floor.

It was almost one A.M. when Pat fell across their bed, fully clothed. Josh chucked his jacket on a chair and began his slow and gentle removal of all that covered this beautiful woman.

After removing her shoes and nylons, he gave her a foot rubs to ease the pain that came with high heels and dance steps.

Every move he made thereafter was subtly putting Pat in the mood for more romance.

She couldn't help laughing. "Damn you, honey. You do it every time. I arrive home from a Ball, tired, looking forward to a good rest and what do I get but a gentle pair of hands that have me panting to jump your bones."

Much later, "Don't move. I want to luxuriate in the arms of my Adonis, soon to be my wedded husband. How do you feel about this crazy idea of a double wedding?"

"I thought it was brilliant. We are four very small families with a large group of friends, most of whom are both of your sisters."

My parents will be overwhelmed but my sibs will have the time of their lives. Are you certain about inviting my sister Jenny to be one of the bridesmaids?"

"Definitely! I will ask her when we drive up next weekend. I will let her know that I am buying a simple blue dress for her and Aunt Susan, something they can have in their regular wardrobes."

Pat slept until eleven so Paul and Josh shared duties getting brunch prepared.

She entered the kitchen in a burst of yellow shorts, shirt and tennis shoes. "Have I blinded my kitchen slaves? If so, I'm sorry because it smells scrumptious."

After a fatherly kiss for Paul and a bit more for Josh, she giggled, saying, “You may serve the princess but she gets to do the dishes”

After Pat served up the last of the coffee, “Josh”, asked Paul, “Have you decided to work full time at TWE?”

“No. I worked out a half time position for the summer, morning’s eight thirty to twelve thirty. I want to take a second class at the Business School, actually a seminar, available only at four o’clock. I have been accepted.”

“Great. Since Patricia is working part time at our family foundation, perhaps you can work with her for a couple of hours. It doesn’t pay much but you can get a feel for what goes on in a small foundation.”

“I should be able to do that.”

Good. I’ll make the call. Now, about the wedding. I talked with all the dads. The wedding and the reception will take place at Riverside Church. The caterer is waiting for the two mothers to plan the food and decorations...”

He turned to Pat. “That was your request, Patricia, wasn’t it?”

“It was, Daddy. I just want a chance to say, “I do” and hear those words, “You may kiss the bride.”

Paul and Josh smiled, both pleased to see that Patricia was focused on the meaning not the frills.

Josh was thinking, “Thank you, God. You have given me this marvelous partner for life who will keep my spirits high while she works with me to make this world a better place.”

His thoughts were interrupted when Paul addressed him. “Josh, will TWE be okay with your interrupting your work period while you and Pat complete the honeymoon trip?”

“Everything is fine, Paul.”

Chapter 7

At the graduation ceremony, Patricia and Paul both were beaming when it was announced that Joshua Logue was graduating Magna cum Laude and was now a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

At the graduation party with the families of Sara and Sue, Paul was glowing. His stories were hilarious, as were his toasts to the graduates.

There was no doubt that angioplasty served him well.

The following morning, Pat slept in. Paul had orange juice poured while the housekeeper was making coffee and breakfast.

“Josh, I promised to tell you about Patricia are other investments. They consist of three properties. She holds a quarter interests in three Sorority houses on campus, one of which is the Delta house. She chose them herself”

Of course, they are managed by a specialty firm. She meets with the firm quarterly. This is for information only. There is nothing for you to do unless she makes a request.”

“Now, tell me, if you choose. How are you doing with this new responsibility?”

“Honestly, I wish Patricia were Patricia without all the assets, but then she wouldn't be Patricia. I'm in a hundred and ten percent and appreciating the challenge.”

“Thank you, Josh. I am so relieved to hear those words, even though I never doubted your willingness.”

“I hope this will not embarrass you but I have a need to tell you.” His voice choked and he closed his eyes for a minute.

“I see you as my son, more than a man married to my daughter. You are family, even before the ritual of the weddings.”

Silence reigned. Josh was totally choked up.

Pat, who had walked into the room a moment earlier, practically shouted, “Daddy you are the greatest.”

She flew into his arms, her tears soaking his shirt front.

Josh had a momentary thought. “God has a way of leading us into places we never dreamed of invading.”

The tender tableau was broken when Josh’s strained voice announced; “Margaret is waiting to serve breakfast.”

Margaret poured the last of the coffee and left for the kitten.

Patricia said, “I miss going to worship. How about coming with me Sunday morning? I would give thanks for so many things such as Daddy’s recovery, Josh in my life, getting through graduation and the new life ahead.”

Both men were in agreement.

The scripture and sermon were focused on the Matthew quote, “As you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me.”

On the way home in the taxi, Patricia said, “Let’s lunch at Butler Hall after a walk around campus. I want to say farewell to this place that gave me so much.”

It was a leisurely lunch accompanied by some series conation.

Paul initiated the talk with a comment. “I couldn’t help feeling some satisfaction that my two children are so involved in doing for others, not unlike the message from Matthew.”

Patricia said, “Unfortunately, not enough. There is so much to do.”

“I agree with that. Things keep happening to slow down progress. Mac, the Chief Operating Office of the family foundation told me that we are losing the young man in training for the number three slot on staff.”

“He asked me if I would object to his inking Josh for an interview. He was just being kind. He had no reason to ask my permission. I guess you are getting a call, Josh.”

“Paul, I’m not ready for anything like that.”

“Maybe not, but an interview can’t hurt and it may be another learning experience.”

He continued with his original point. All types of roadblocks can frustrate our staff especially working in underdeveloped nations.”

Paul grabbed his chest and cried out. Josh was out of his chair in a flash, easing Paul’s slumping body to the floor.

“Pat. Call 911.”

The waiter stepped in. “I’m a former corpsman in the navy. With your permission, I can start CPR.”

Josh nodded. The waiter was already opening Paul’s shirt collar.

Josh took a tearful Paul into his arms. “He’s in good hands, honey.”

Ten minutes later, Paul was in the hands of the ambulance attendants and soon on the way out the Presbyterian Hospital with Pat going along.

Josh settled the account and gave a hefty tip to the waiter.

Two hours later Doc Waters was telling them, “Bypass surgery is set for an hour from now. You won’t be able to visit him for at least six or more hours. I suggest you rest at home and call the number and extension at eight.”

They returned at nine, stayed for an hour but only waited and prayed until the nurse said, “You need rest. Please rete turn after nine in the morning.”

Pat was determined to call of the wedding.

She spent the night with little sleep and loads of tears. “There is no way that I will walk down that aisle on anyone else’s arm. Daddy and I made a pact three years ago when mother died.”

Josh found himself at sixes and sevens. “This was to be Pat’s big moment. I can only wait for her to explain this to her dad and the other brides.”

He thought, “This I call a crisis and I am not able to do a den thing.”

It wasn’t until their third visit the next evening that Pat said, “Daddy, we’re going to cancel the wedding and the honey moon trip.”

“I wish you would reconsider. I want you to get married. Doc Waters has already agreed to stand in for me. I’m not out of the woods and I want Josh to be a legal member of our family.”

“I appreciate you’re not taking the trip, but we can make up for that later. Your mother and I didn’t take our trip for three years.”

Pat’s tear flowed like a stream. She finally squeaked “There’s goes my dream. I always visualized handing on your arm down the long aisle.”

“I know and I had the same dream. In fact, I made you a promise that I am now breaking, but life has a way of challenging one’s dream. Please, honey.”

Paul was home in bed during the ceremony waiting for the phone call from his children. He could hardly hear their voices because of the party noise in the background.

His kids opted for the honeymoon suite at the boutique hotel where they first discovered each other in intimacy.

The spent two days doing the tourist thing. The rode the Circle Line, visited the Lady with Torch, had lunch in

Chinatown and bought some street art after having their portraits done by a street artist.

They repeated their wedding vows before and after making love.

“We’re home, Daddy. It was absolutely glorious.”

Paul beamed. “Patricia, you look beautiful and glowing. Honeymoon seems to become you or maybe it’s Josh.”

His grin was met by blushes.

George Macintosh, President and CFO of the Harris Family Fountain said, “Josh, I know you feel like a greenhorn and you are but you already know more than the gentleman who is leaving us. Your studies at the Business School and a lot of reading have made you well- informed. I would also guess that Paul has told out a bit about this foundation. Am a right?”

Josh grinned. “Naturally. He never says so directly but I know he would like to have me directly involved in Harris family fiancés.”

Mac smiled. “Yes, you’re right but he wants it to be your decision. He made me promise to be objective.”

“Are you?”

“In this case, yes. You are a hot prospect, as they say at Yankee stadium. I would want you on my staff even without the studies and reading you’ve done. You are an obvious quick study but you also have an innate desire to serve people. That is an asset in our business.”

“I need to discuss this with Pat and Paul.”

“Would you like to discuss terms?”

“Only if you think the compensation is not enough to raise a family in Manhattan.”

“That won’t be a problem.”

Josh knew that the position was right for him and Paul and Pat agreed.

Paul was making excellent progress. He called Susan to have dinner with the family. “Come early for a private chat.”

When Margaret served the dessert and coffee, Paul said, “I invited Susan to ask a favor and she is obliging me. Since Josh does not have to start working for three weeks, I

asked Susan to stay with me while you two take a part of your honeymoon trip.”

“Are you sure, Daddy?”

“Doc said I could stay the night alone but Susan is willing. She has arranged for day time duties during that period.”

Susan asked, “Where do you start? I don’t suggest France because nobody wants to work during August, especially the last two weeks...”

Josh said, “We could do Russia and the northern European countries this trip, including the British Isles if there is time.”

Pat looked adoringly at Josh. “My hero comes through again.”

They started with a few days in Berlin, flew to Moscow and then to St. Petersburg, which, to them, was the highlight of the trip.

Stockholm and Oslo were interesting and then the beautiful trip over the mountains to Bergen and the west coast of Norway.

After visiting the sights, including the home of the composer, Grieg, they decide on a five day ferry trip up the coast of Norway.

By then, it was time to fly home.

By the end of the year, Josh was deeply involved researching African countries in which the Foundation could launch a series of test programs designed to promote self-development within the poorer villages in Mexico.

Mac did a performance review twice a month and was pleased with Josh's progress.

Paul had rebounded beautifully and was working full time the markets were erratic which was when Paul was at his best.

Josh, who long ago recognized Paul's desire to share his days of excitement, encouraged Paul to talk about his day during the cocktail hour.

As a result, Josh was getting a firsthand lesson in investments by osmosis. There were times when Patricia had enough money talk and introduced other subjects.

They spent Christmas with Susan in Palm Beach and returned to a snowy New York on New Year's Day.

Patricia arranged the entire vacation trip .She set one rule. “No shoptalk once we are seated in the plane.”

Josh had forgotten that Pat was very athletic. Within an hour of arrival in Palm Springs, she was teaching him to water ski. That afternoon, she was teaching him to sail a fifteen foot, single sheet sail boat.

On the second afternoon, they joined a group playing beach volley ball. After resting and teasing each other at the water’s edge, Josh watched Pat swim out to sea and ride some waves back to shore. Meanwhile, he was into his Tai Chi exercises.

Each day was filled with outdoor activity in the sun. Pat’s skimpy Bikini String resulted in the perfect golden body.

Christmas afternoon found the couple and Sudan serving Christmas dinner for two hundred guests of the Presbyterian Church in West Palm Beach.

Her gregarious nature had new friends from the beach invited for cocktails. She arranged a dinner date for Susan and invited an elderly woman in a wheelchair to join their party on Christmas day.

Josh scheduled a two week trip to Liberia in January. Pat insisted on accompanying Josh who insisted that the trip to the back country was too dangerous.

Her response was. We're in this together, honey. If you die, I am going with you."

The trip was success and they were in no danger at any point.

The evening they returned, it was to a somber Paul and Susan, who had just returned after a visit to the emergency room.

Susan met them at the door "Paul's asleep.

Pat rushed to his bedroom for a quick look but came back teary-eyed.

Susan said, "He's fine for the time being... He worked himself into a frazzle despite Doc Water's orders."

"Doc is coming for lunch and a powwow withal with us. We have a wheel chair for Paul."

Pat asked, "Are you holding back, Susan?"

"Nope. That is serious enough."

Doc was saying, “Paul, you have to rest. A significant part of the day must be spent on your back, say about two thirds of the time. You need help getting up and down.”

“I know I can’t keep you from some work but it can’t be at your usual pace or even close. You must have someone else to do the work for you.”

“The healing will take a long time and you probably will never be a hundred percent, but with care, you will become fully mobile.”

Now, let’s eat. I’m starved.”

A minute later, Margaret, who was listening at the doorway, was bringing the food.

“Daddy, do you have a plan to do what Doc suggests?”

Susan interjected, “That was not a suggestion. That was an order and I am charged by Doc to see that it is followed.”

Paul said, I know what I would like to have happen but it may not be possible.”

Josh said, very intensely “We’ll make it happen, Paul.”

Paul managed a weak smile while he chose his words. The room was absolutely still.

Finally, he said, “I hope you mean that, Josh. I am about to ask you to make a major shift in your life vocation. I would like you to be the proxy, working side by side with me, carrying the burden that has been mine.”

Josh felt as though he had been sucker-punched. He closed his eyes. “Lord, tell me that I heard incorrectly.”

He felt Pat’s arms around his waist. She knew that he was dumb-struck and needed her support. She was trying to convey that she was with him no matter how he responded.

She was thinking, “This is what he always feared.”

Everyone seemed to be holding their breaths, waiting for his response.

“Paul, I would do anything I can for you but this is beyond my ability. First, I do not have the skill set. I’m a novice. Secondly,”

Paul interrupted. “That is not so, Josh. You’ve spent hours with me discussing fiancés, investments and Wall Street. I have subtly tested the extent of your knowledge and I am well pleased.”

“But you have associates with years of actual experience who will do a better job than I.”

“That might be the case if I were being replaced but I am choosing someone to act on my behalf. You are the best bet to do so.”

“Experienced men and women have their own approaches and theories. You are opening minded.”

“Paul, I am willing but scared. I am actually shaking as I try to picture myself in that role.”

“I appreciate the shock that has overwhelmed you but I am so confident. I want to tell you how long it has been a part of my thinking.”

“Margaret, please bring some fresh coffee.”

“Even before I had my first attack, I liked the way you thought and presented yourself. In fact, I sensed that the day that you came to Greenwich with Patricia.”

“You may not remember my words the day you told me you were postponing the wedding. I urge you to get married even though I could not attend. I wanted you, Josh, to be officially in the family.”

“I was pleased that your love for Patricia was so great that you were willing to enter this world of wealth, a world you didn’t trust. That meant that you trusted me as well as your loved my daughter.”

“I watched you to accept responsibility for Patricia estate when you would rather not. I watched your quick grasp of finances during our many conversations.”

“Don’t be embarrassed at my compliment. You are exceptional and I am ambitious to create more wealth for the Family Foundation. Lord knows, we already have more than enough for our own use.”

“I’m sorry I rambled but it is my way of saying why I want you. I want this operation to be strictly within the family while we choose outside professionals to find the most effective way to use the fund.”

Pat rose and went to Paul and warmly embraced him. When she took her seat, he reached for a cup of coffee.”

Josh said, “You, dad, are one hell of a salesman. How can I possibly deny your request? I will do my best.”

Doc and Susan gave them hand claps and raised their coffee cups to salute the two men.

Beyond the three top executives and the Board of Directors, the financial world did not know the extent of Paul’s illness.

Paul’s condition stabilized and gave him the strength to play with his twin grandchildren, Pau and Susan, during the next two years.

The firm flourished, with its secret for twenty seven months until Paul suffered a major heart attack that hospitalized him.

Jones, Harris & Associates called a press conference and gave the financial world the history of those months, explaining Josh’s role.

The Board of Directors elected Josh to be the new CEO and Paul as Chairman Emeritus.

Two weeks later, the New York Times published the news of the death of Paul Harris, the highly respected Wizard of Wall Street.

Pau was surrounded by his family. His body was weak but his eyes and mind were as sharp as ever.

He kissed each of the twins, Susan and Josh. His embrace and kiss from Patricia seemed to go on forever.

“Josh. Life has a way of challenging us. This was not what you had in mind for your life but you accepted the challenge with grace. Thank you. The responsibility now rests on your shoulders.

“Thank all of you. I’ve been blessed to have your love to sustain me. It’s time to dry our tears and rejoice for a good life.”

“Now, I need to sleep. Patricia, hold my hand.”

He closed his eyes for the last time.

The end.

