

An Honest Man

Book One of
the Donkey and the Wall
trilogy

*Two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the one less traveled by,
and that has made all the difference. ---Robert Frost*

Introduction: Doors of Perception

Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't. --Mark Twain

A first breeze of the new day, laden with the rich odors of the pasture back of the house wafted around him, catching the hair on his neck and tickling his ears. It was wonderfully cool this morning for late July. The yellow and orange shafts of the rising sun were just filtering through the willows around the still quiet pond in front of him, and one lone gray heron passed low, over the series of watery hunting grounds on an early morning reconnaissance.

But the morning was the same as any other in many respects. His body had creaked slowly to the bathroom from the bed, then to the kitchen and the coffee press. The porch was chilly, the sky was a brightening promise, and the cat welcomed a scratch on the ear she had slept on.

The evening before had been grand. It was really encouraging to him that his friends celebrated at the reception of his decision to begin his vocation as a writer. The party was well attended and lasted perhaps longer than anyone anticipated, and each of them threw in their own two cents for his consideration.

Everybody had an idea, he mused. "Just do it," was the most recurrent offering. Yet, lurking there in the shadows of future failure, was a glimmer of the hope that somehow it would happen.

"I've got a world of experience, unlike when I first thought of it an age ago. I've got the time necessary and the skills. It's not exactly the ordinary thing to attempt, but I have never been accused of being ordinary.

I suppose it can't be any worse than taking up golf or fly fishing... But..." And the all too familiar wave of trepidation at the first step of something new washed through him. This time around it wasn't the debilitating numbness or white haze of confusion that whelmed his

thoughts; it was resolution and surrender. Maybe that's what it felt like to everybody else after all when one at last 'just did it' and knew it was doable, possible, even practicable.

“Not the same any more.” He muttered in counterpoint to the purring. “It's even a bit easier; don't you think, Mocha?”

She didn't answer except to expand the range of his scratching her ears to her neck. A bird dropped from the branches of the Tallow tree off the porch to peck at an early bug in the grass. A breeze riffled the water of the pond as if in sympathy with his sigh as he got up to fetch the morning's first cup of coffee.

“Where to begin?” he sighed almost aloud.

'*At the beginning...*' Startled, he looked around for the voice. He peered about uncertainly at the porch, then the kitchen.

“That's odd indeed,” he muttered and sat down again.

'*Stories usually do, you know...*' Again the uncomfortable feeling of intrusion, but still no body to append to the voice. Stopped in mid-sip at this last contribution, he burned his tongue on the hot liquid and splattered himself trying to rescue his mouth.

'*Good stories, anyway...*' and the voice trailed off quietly.

“Uh, thanks?” His forced courtesy was mechanical. Though he questioned his own voice for answering at all. “So this is insanity. Where to now I wonder, catching at imaginary butterflies?” Strangely, he was only slightly unsettled and decided to pursue ordinary activities as the best defense against further lapses. He proceeded to go upstairs and change from his pajamas, going about the normal routine of a morning.

“No history of nutters in the family closet,” he reflected, “never a mention of hearing voices,” nor he emphasized, “of seeing things. Must be a sign of getting older I suppose,” he concluded. As he descended the steps and had almost convinced himself there hadn't been anything out of the ordinary after all...

'*If you cannot think of a story of your own, I have some good ones...*'

“I can hear you, you know! And I am unused to conversations with the

empty air. Where, who... you're..." words weren't coming easily.

'You talk on the telephone,' the voice replied as if making a point.

"So?" he challenged, scanning the room for some evidence of a source for the voice.

'There's only empty air then, isn't there?'

"This isn't a phone call and it is definitely not..." he stammered leaving: "normal," left unsaid.

Mocha chose that moment to scratch at the sliding door. He turned to let her out, then froze. On the other side of the glass was a person. Conflicted by the relief at having a body to append to the voice versus the abruptness of the sudden arrival and manner of the surprise guest, he was only able to feebly reach for the door handle and pull it aside.

The man had already begun to speak as he slid the door open, *"Indeed, I am* not a phone call I'm afraid," he reached down to stroke the cat at his shins, "and I am not normally empty air," he finished with a tone of self deprecation. "May I sit down with you on the porch here?"

It was the same voice.

"The coffee smells good," prompted the man.

"Uh, let me get you a cup," responded the younger man numbly and moved woodenly into the kitchen, fumbled in the cabinet for a mug and went through the motions of pouring a fresh cup. He hesitated as he reached for the cream.

"Yes please, just a bit" came the voice from the porch.

He poured a dab into the steaming coffee and returned to the porch, padding out through the still open door. Mocha was already in the stranger's lap napping. The man smiled up at him and reached out a tanned hand to receive the proffered mug. Sitting down across from the visitor, he stared expectantly not knowing what to say nor what to think.

The visitor began, "It was the Scotsman, Murray, praising Goethe who put it best: 'Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness...'" he paused to fix his host's eye, "Concerning all acts of initiative there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which

kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred." He waited for the words to have an effect and continued, "A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way." The effect of the visitor's words were concrete, he sat rapt, expectant. "Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it." There was a slight inflection on the last words: 'Magic in it,' and the visitor continued to look at him with a gaze that begged an answer or a response of some sort. The host had heard every word, and they felt to him as if he had been parched and the voice was clear water.

"It was your voice," he said at last, then asked unclearly, "But how, uh... where... who..."

"You ask all the proper questions a writer should ask, at least," responded the guest mirthfully and sipped his coffee.

The flummoxed host searched for something to say, then blurted out, still in somewhat of a fog, "You said start at the beginning; like what?"

"Well take any whole phenomenon, say... Music. Pick a note, any note on a keyboard, and it is a beginning that doubles itself; it travels along a definite path to achieve an end."

Still fazed but now feeling he was gaining some composure, the young man retorted, "But, life doesn't have clear beginnings and endings. It's all fuzzy, you know?" Perhaps this last was more reflective of his own condition rather than a sincere expression of his views, but he was rolling now.

"Oh of course it does. Look at our meeting this morning," the guest winked, "it began when you made a real decision and then committed to it."

"And it will end...!?" was the host's only plaint.

"Well yes, when you accomplish this aim," concluded the older man

easily.

“Sounds simple,” conceded the host, “but life's not always like that!”

The stranger stroked his chin absently, and the host began to think he was at last gaining ground on his own sanity. The cat stretched in his nap as if reaching for phantom prey. The guest pushed his hands through the silver hair on the sides of his head in an overture to starting a fresh tack.

“Let's agree to not be silly, and instead adhere to reality in order to avoid lapses into pure illusion,” he offered.

Taken aback by the assertion that the obvious was being obviated, the host insisted, “I'm talking about reality! Work, pay taxes, die! Everybody knows it!”

“No.” The calmness of the guest's simple response was intended to brook any further argument. “The world is more fantastic than is dreamt of in your philosophy. Only because a proposition is commonly held, does not certify its validity. People live in a half-waking, half-sleeping state where things are done through them while no one *does* anything; existing as they do in a dream world of illusion, believing any old tale, and constantly changing the positions of their incomplete attention.”

The host recoiled in the crashing cold of this new wave of information. Feeling his new purchase on sanity slipping from him, he whimpered, “But, I'm not talking about some philosophy! I'm talking about how it is; it's just facing facts---isn't it?”

The stranger sat, the cat slept, the ripples on the pond grew in the breeze, birds flitted amongst the Tallow branches, insects buzzed and reeled, and the stranger just sat quietly, resolutely, calmly smiling reassuringly at his host. After what seemed an eternity, or just a moment, his soft voice affirmed, “What you've related is merely a description of a very poor, very drab, albeit ubiquitous, illusion. That is all.” The finality of the statement came and left and the host was without a lifeline again.

After a further quietus in which they sipped their coffee and gazed into the morning, the stranger recited almost to himself, “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear as it is, infinite. Blake

put it beautifully; don't you think?" mused the guest, then began again, "Permit me to lay some groundwork for our endeavor: there is philosophy, there is theory, and there is the practicable. Each of these has its own merits and each may describe some facet of Reality. Only the Practicable must be based entirely upon reality, for only in the presence of reality can anything be truly done. Do you see the necessity of this?"

"Yeah, I guess so," responded the host blankly.

"Then when we speak together of beginnings, and the gamut of a course to an end, we shall speak practicably. Agreed?" offered the guest drawing the host into the confidence that they should speak more of these things, and that felt as a sort of relief; though he couldn't explain to himself why. The stranger continued.

"Your lack of understanding on this point is wholly understandable." The guest continued gently, "Modern man is besieged with a barrage of misinformation and half-truths to such an extent that where he should have a functioning conscience able to discern the actual from the mistaken, he has only hearsay and old wives tales as his guide through a complex world. His defense is always to blame another, or to blame fate itself when things go wrong, and then blithely accept as his just reward the accolades for any success he encounters, which however is often the result of coincidence, then at best: haphazard." Depressing as it sounded, the young man listened carefully in spite of himself. "And to add insult to injury, he claims for himself the most unjust prize of all---that he is, de facto, a unified individual. Simply because he uses the same name throughout his life, because he sees the same image in his mirror morning after morning, and refers to himself always as 'I'. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. It is therefore no wonder that when recounting any remarkable event, he is lost. Unsure of his own participation, unsure of the agencies involved outside of himself, and almost always unclear as to any event's exact importance, unless he was perhaps impacted intimately."

Unable to bear the weight of any more debilitating news, the host whimpered aloud trying to use any means to deflect the stranger's assertions, "And what does this have to do with a story and where to really

begin?"

The old man answered, "That is the gist of this conversation. To make this information clearer let me provide an illustration of my meaning and you may take notes of the methods and content employed so as to better understand it. Does that sound to you like a good course of action?" asked the guest, then he waited as the young man deliberated the proposal.

"Yes, that actually makes sense; thank you. I'll just get some paper and a pencil." With something at last to do he went into the house and returned in a moment ready to write.

The earlier chill of the morning had given way to a comfortable warmth pleasantly punctuated by an occasional breeze. Across the pond a couple red eared turtles were dragging themselves up onto the bank into the sunshine. From where they lolled, the porch of the house appeared as a stage upon which two actors played the parts of teacher and pupil. One with the silver hair of age looking to a distant screen for his cues, the other, young and studious, diligently scribbling notes as his elder spoke. The backdrop of empty, fallow fields below the sharp blue Texas sky held the titanic shadows of tall clouds gliding across the landscape as if it really were a grand stage set in motion.

Gazing long enough, one might begin to descry the story of the land. The seas which once covered it dotted here and there by short expanses of archipelago, and the gradually receding waters leaving the silted river deltas and fertile soils for new grasslands and forests. Next came the rise of animals to graze and hunt its bounty. Then the cataclysm that ended it. Rising from the ash and dust, life tenaciously resumed its march to dominance once again. The earth rejoiced once more in its bounty and awaited the coming footfalls of its new master. And the old man began a tale of Man.

1

Life

Life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent. We would not dare to conceive the things which are really mere commonplaces of existence. If we could fly out of that window hand in hand, hover over this great city, gently remove the roofs, and peep in at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings, the cross-purposes, the wonderful chains of events, working through generations, and leading to the most outre results, it would make all fiction with its conventionalities and foreseen conclusions most stale and unprofitable.
--Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

“It seldom appears to the casual observer that any thing is truly out of the ordinary, save on those rare occasions when the extra-ordinary sneaks into everyday life; then even certain well adapted places aren't immune from this phenomenon. Take for instance Fred Livingson and his Mercantile store in Tahoe City, California,” the old man began as the young man jotted notes.

“Fred started at the Mercantile when he was ten. A legitimate age for the heir apparent to begin training for his role and purpose in life. His father inherited the shop from his father, and his father from his father who sold mining and panning gear in the 1870s to those daring souls looking to strike it rich in silver and gold out west. Every several years a new demand in the market took hold so that each generation of Livingsons had to meet the cyclical vagaries of supplying needed 'thingies' to a ever more fickle public. Gadgets and tools which were essential one year may become useless inventory two years later. The Livingson family motto seemed to be: Never throw anything out; it'll sell someday. That was the prime reason for the ever growing stockrooms and the every decreasing showroom. From floors to ceilings, on many levels, in many rooms, closets and cupboards, over nearly the entire block were the tools and widgets of Americana spanning a large swath of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A person and a place with a history, indeed.

Fred was at the store each morning at 6:30, save Sunday when he opened for afternoon hours only after church. His routine varied little. The

store varied little, but for the aforementioned inventory cycles. The townfolk knew the shelves and stock as well as he himself did so most of his real attention-to-business-time involved special orders and balance sheets, which is what he occupied himself with from 6:30 until he unlocked the door at 8:00. Ordinary days doing ordinary things--so it appeared." Thus the story began.

"Fred's Great-great-grandfather sailed into San Francisco harbor as Wang Fu Kong, the youngest son of a Chinese entrepreneur. He inherited a portion of his father's fortune and in order to avoid losing it, or his life, at the hands of his greedy brothers, he sailed into the sunrise looking to make his fortune in the New World. He promptly adopted the name of George Livingston, a name to which he took a fancy, picked randomly from a handbill in the streets of Chinatown. He made a significant deposit of gold, smuggled in his overcoat lining, into the investment bank of Sutro & Co., one of whose directors was a second generation Cantonese from the British colony in his own Guangdong province.

A bachelor of twenty-two, he quickly found prospects grim for a prosperous future in the city, so he purchased a small stock of durable goods, a small wagon and a horse and headed for the Sierra Nevada to try his hand at prospecting the new Comstock Lode. He made it almost as far as the Great Tahoe Lake when a broken wagon axle stranded him quite a few miles shy of a village with the pretentious epithet: Tahoe City.

His first several weeks in the mountains were fraught with struggle and hardship. His frustrating untutored attempts to pan the local streams were dismal and unrewarding at best. The soil was contemptuous of the seeds he brought for a garden. At least his horse could forage for itself so he was spared the constant and demoralizing threat of dragging another creature into his spiral of failure. Resourceful as he was, he could not command the weather, much to his chagrin. His several initial camp arrangements had been repeatedly modified because of the unpredictably fickle mountain storms.

So finally accepting the verdicts of nature on his attempts to ignore the elemental realities of his situation, he at last decided to surrender his

preconceptions and faulty ideas and fall back on his strengths. Relying at last upon his *actual* experiences as a youth, and the practical knowledge he had acquired over the course of his life, he set about to build a more permanent shelter, now in harmony instead of at odds with the vagaries of the Sierra's temperamental climate. He cannibalized the wagon to build a serviceable pavilion fitted with racks and shelves on which to display the remaining supplies he might now vend to whomever might pass by in need of such things. Thus from his makeshift camp store, set up out of necessity as a result of his native talents rather than long and careful planning, he began trading his meager wares and staples. Stocks ran low while demand for his wares grew among the residents of the nearby village, mountain men, wannabe prospectors and the Indians who seasonally traveled through the forested little valley.

George Livingston had also brought with him some stock which could not be purchased in America. Among those special items were a cache of Tonkin cane poles. When split properly, planed, fashioned and glued, the resultant cane rod was lithe as willow and as durable as oak. With rod in hand George was able to keep himself in trout and salmon, and his camp store in dried varieties of same. Each Saturday afternoon he ventured into the hills and mountains, up creeks and streams, returning late in the evening Sunday with enough for himself for the week and more to add to his store's largess, or trade for other merchandises when the opportunities arose.

These walks into the wilderness gave George the invigoratingly solemn opportunity to see his new world from a perspective only a handful of people of the masses teeming on the face of the planet ever experience. With a bag over his shoulder, his rod and a length of rope, and walking stick in hand he strode into the shadows of Ponderosa and Jeffrey Pines. Jays and squirrels, unheeding of his passage, foraged and cavorted between the floor and canopy of the vast forest. The dews of the early morning gave way to the cooling mists and breezes of afternoon as George plied his rod in the eternal waters of the mountain streams, ever watchful for fellow fishers--the black bear, brown bear, the mountain lion and the wolves. Often during the strolls between fishing spots he would practice his English

on the ducks and herons, or else serenade the chipmunks with the English versions of the folk songs from his youth or ballads of his maturity. He felt more at home in this personal wilderness than he ever remembered feeling in the common intercourse of any city.

The summer season was faltering before the chiller airs of early autumn and the evenings arrived sooner and sooner. It was upon one of these abbreviated forays that a serendipitous event unfolded. George had begun to cast up and down the riffles of a wide bend in a stream while unaware of being watched carefully by a silent observer. The watcher moved only to keep the angler in view and made no sound other than frequent silent gasps of surprise and respect for the performance in front of him. When George had landed several good sized trout and prepared to move downstream along the bank a ways, it put him enroute exactly where the observer was positioned. With a moment's surprise on his part, George met the old man courteously and made to pass on. As he glanced up in greeting he recognized a familiar face; White Feathers, the first of what had become a long procession of Indians who frequented his little camp store.

The old man beamed back in admiration and fell in with George as he trekked to a new patch of the water to fish. They spoke of the other streams, creeks and rivers in the mountains, of the prospects George had for his little store, and of his family back in China. They lingered together chatting like this on the bank as George prepared to begin anew when brilliance touched him. With a flourish of rod and line, he offered for the old man to have a go with the tackle. Delighted, White Feathers held the rod firmly and made a couple false casts to feel in his own hands the gentle power of the cane and line he had so recently witnessed in action.

Then with a few pointers offered by George, he moved into the stream and made an inaugural cast. An hour and a half later, the old man had landed two good sized fish and allowed himself to be coaxed out of the water, grinning like a boy all the while. He wasted no time in trying to discover what would in good trade be acceptable to George to build for him a rod like this one. They wrangled and laughed as they walked, and as they finally neared the camp store, they agreed to terms. George needed

some special assistance to more permanently establish his store, and White Feathers, well, he said he only wanted the fishing rod.

True to his good word, White Feathers used his influence to get George something he needed and could not get himself: a courier--in this instance, a mountain man. His name was Bridger, and he set off immediately upon receiving the special request of his long time acquaintance and friend, ready to fulfill the promise to White Feathers, made between them long ago. He arrived at George's camp store a week or so later prepared for anything. George entrusted to him a letter personally addressed to a Bank Director at Sutro & Co. in San Francisco, which had to be delivered in person. Bridger hadn't been prepared for this and it took him some few minutes to be sure he had heard correctly. George explained that, through this letter he had instructed the Director to procure certain merchandise, sundries and wares, and to release those goods into the care of the trusted courier, Bridger, for return shipment to himself in Tahoe City. In addition, a second letter attached to the first was to be posted to his only trustworthy Uncle in Haiji County, Guongdong Province, China requesting a shipment from him of a quantity of high quality Tonkin cane. Payment was to be made on terms of his uncle's own choosing and arranged through the aforementioned Director.

The mountain man made him repeat it once more, not because he hadn't understood, in fact he memorized everything the first time. He needed this mission to sink in: Escorting settlers, he understood. Guarding gold shipments, he had done. Hunting Buffalo, Bear, Elk, Moose, Wolves, Mountain Lions, Deer, Raccoons, Rabbits, or Squirrels, anything you name, he'd done that. What he'd never done was venture into San Francisco, into a wealthy Bank, as a courier to deliver a letter. That stymied him, but he shrugged and accepted the letter. He'd try anything once, however crazy.

During the months of waiting and worrying over the shipment venture, George built White Feathers his own rod and added an excellent reel at his own expense; not anticipating even once how this tackle would prove so important to the great good fortune of his future. It so happened that the old Indian was very highly regarded by all who knew him, and had

earned an excellent reputation with the White authorities in the territory as well as with his own extensive family relations. When he arrived at George's little camp store one autumn afternoon to receive his treasure, he brought along one of his nieces. It was actually one of her aunts who had herself promised the girl the outing weeks before as repayment for some undisclosed favor the girl had masterfully managed for her---Though it seemed to have been promised without thinking it at all necessary to consult White Feathers at the time! The girl was simply waiting at his door, dressed as if prepared to go off on a shopping trip when he emerged from his home to embark on the short journey. It took him a bit to realize she wasn't following him toward some common, local destination, but was in fact meaning to be his traveling companion. Really, he only realized it after they stopped for the first night's camp, and she was *still* with him. White Feather's never rushed to judgement about anything. They proceeded on their journey the next morning. White Feathers, now, paid more attention to his great-niece. She was near as tall as himself, 'statuesque' he decided; she preferred linen blouses and woolen skirts and dresses to buckskin or beaded doeskin. Her long dark hair was kept up off her neck, and she walked with the poise of a dancer. She easily negotiated the rough country over which they trod with an elegance borne of long experience on the mountain trails and paths.

George had left for an impromptu hunting expedition in search of a break in his diet of fish. So instead of his rod, he carried a bow and a few arrows. The bow was constructed from a slightly curved Tallow branch, which had been cut for this purpose from a grove of the trees discovered on one of his previous forays into the forests. The longish section of wood had been shaped to a suitable form and made the backbone of the bow. He had expertly laminated tapered strips of tonkin cane to the spine, and after glueing and binding the assembly with light tough sinew, he had fashioned a very stiff bow---tall as himself and needing all his formidable strength to draw. The arrows were also split cane, fletched with the pinion feathers of a magpie, and lethally tipped with silver heads. The expedition had been a success, meaning he hadn't lost an arrow, and he was laden with a grown big horn when he started the trek back to his camp.

When White Feathers and Belle arrived at the deserted camp store, the old man set to searching for his new fishing rod. He came out of George's tent carrying a leather tube tied with a bit of paper, his own name scribbled thereon. Beaming, he opened the tube and disgorged its contents before the astonished and curious eyes of his niece---Astonished at his brazen behavior, and curious at the package's contents. The silken bag that issued from the tube contained a rod of exquisite manufacture and White Feathers immediately assembled it and tested its flex. Elated, he attached a borrowed reel already wound with line, selected a few flies, also from George's collection, and bid his niece a quick instruction to begin a fire for supper; he was off to test his newest treasure.

Belle was left by herself in a stranger's camp and his little store. Without dwelling upon the oddness of the situation, she set about inventorying her resources for accomplishing the given task. George's little compound was meticulously organized, as she very soon realized. She had no difficulty finding precisely what she required to ready the evening fire, set water to boil, choose spices and other ingredients for a fish stew, and begin cutting vegetables. In fact, before any time at all she felt quite at home here, perhaps even more than in any of her relatives' homes. She shortly knew intuitively where every item was to be found, and was continually astonished at the extent of George's implements, tools, and pantry. While the pot simmered she began exploring the wares of his little store, and after studying its merchandise with a practiced eye to quality, it met with her hearty admiration. Emboldened by her uncle's own display of audacity and encouraged by her own curiosity, she inspected his private quarters and came away with the same opinion of his adeptness, skill and reasonableness---which she already held for the rest of his compound.

George, meanwhile, was almost within shouting distance of his camp as Belle completed her erstwhile inspection of his world. The first thing that caught his attention was the smoke rising from where his camp should be. He quickened his pace and was soon close enough to sniff aromas of such subtlety and deliciousness he had to wonder at what might be awaiting him. 'Surely this was no interloper come to ravage my stores,' he thought. Besides the rich smells, a song of joy was gently mingled with the

voices of the breezes and leaves of the woods. A lilting and haunting melody borne by a voice both sweet and strong. If there is such a thing as love at first smell or sound, George had it bad.

When White Feathers returned to within earshot of his friend's campground, he heard the voices of Belle and George in pleasant conversation. The subjects of their discourse were of courtesy and pleasantries, but the spirit and tone of the dialog was unmistakable. He smiled to himself and resumed his approach, adding some unnecessary noise to his steps so as to herald his imminent return. The two looked suddenly up at him when he emerged from the path into the compound, and he thought he caught a glimpse of the briefest blush on their cheeks as they smiled back him in welcome.

"I was just about to dress the big horn sheep which I was most fortunate enough to kill today," said George, and quickly moved off to the carcass hanging over the little creek nearby.

"How was your fishing, Uncle?" asked Belle in a more formal tone of voice than he had just overheard her using.

"Well..." he started to answer when she quickly came closer to him and lowered her voice.

"You must arrange for me to stay with this man," she pleaded, "I will live here and merely serve him if he will not have me for a wife," she stated unabashedly.

"Uh..." responded White Feathers with eloquence.

George then rescued him in a loud voice of forced nonchalance from over near the creek, "How did the rod behave for you?"

White Feathers, glad to be interrupted, went to his friend's side smiling and started to say, "It was a dream to cast. I..." George also interrupted him speaking in a low voice before the old Indian could get out another word.

"I would have your niece for my wife. Whatever it takes, whatever is required of me I will gladly do. Would you speak to her for me... but casually... don't make a big deal about it. Just find out if she likes me... see

if she could consider someone like me as a husband... but don't make it seem to direct though. Don't..."

Without trying to respond, White Feathers rolled his eyes and turned on his heel. He had heard enough from both of them. He left George pitifully looking after him as he strode to the fireside and dropped to a seat, slumped forward, and covered his face with his hands.

Belle and George both saw him slump down and heard his sighs. They looked at each other, then to White Feathers, then back to each other. While gazing into each other's eyes---time stopped. At the sudden sound of the old man loudly clearing his throat, all the while watching them both carefully, the spell was broken and they each looked away. White Feathers chuckled, then laughed, and soon was doubled over with tears in his eyes and gasping for breath. He peered from time to time at their uncomprehending faces staring back at him. When his fit of hilarity had abated, so that he could once again breathe evenly, he straightened up and in a mock-official-sounding voice said, "George you are permitted to petition this young woman's family for marriage. The positive response to which, I assure you as the one to whom they shall appeal for approval, will be positively forthcoming. I myself am aware of my niece's own true wishes in this matter." He fell back to merely chuckling to himself again and he went about disassembling his new rod and returning the reel and flies to George.

'The most wonderful meal they had ever eaten' was how George and Belle always referred to that first supper any time they were coaxed to recount it. Before the sun had set that day, they were hand in hand strolling along the banks of the stream and leaving no footprints because their feet no longer touched the ground.

Fred's Great-great-grandmother, Belle, was a Shoshone princess. She came with a substantial dowry, plus her own accomplished skills developed over the span of her brief lifetime. Although her own father was unknown to her, and she never found out from any relatives who he had been; from her mother she had learned more than many her age. Her mother was the eldest of four sisters and had mastered the arts of weaving, pottery, plant

lore and leather craft as a girl, excelling the abilities of her younger sisters. All these she taught Belle and she was not a gentle teacher, as Belle's Aunts found long ago and consoled Belle in sympathy. Though perhaps overly harsh in correction, it was as if she knew her own time with the child was measured, for when not in instruction she was loving to the point of doting. When she died of natural causes Belle made all the arrangements and accoutrements of the ceremonies held for the family. She had a keen eye for quality workmanship and had looked forward to perusing the reputed quality supplies at the Camp Store, and truth be told she was more than a bit curious about "the Livingson" her Uncle had spoken of so often--hence the trip with White Feathers.

The San Francisco arrangements were executed without hitch or hiccup, and the trusted courier was handsomely compensated. George purchased a vacant lot at a crossroads near the edge of the nearby village and after a few short months established Livingson Mercantile. George and Belle took up residence in the rooms attached to the back of the store set aside for that purpose, and went about preparing for a family. The rooms were setup thus: a hallway from the stock room of the store proper led into a little sitting room from which two doors opened. One to the kitchen and one to another hallway, broader than the first. From the wide passage were two rooms used for sleeping, one for the couple and one for the frequent guests—relatives mostly. This hall opened into a large open room furnished with chairs, rugs, stools and two tables. Belle entertained their guests primarily from this room. In a deep alcove at the far end of the room, George setup his work bench and tools. The kitchen was simplicity. There was a wood fired stove and cooking top. An island in the middle of the room offered food preparation and the luxury of a pump and basin. The well was dug on the very spot and access made through the floorboards for maintenance. The storage pantry looked more like a wardrobe than kitchen furniture with the exception that each of its four feet were settled in brass cups kept filled with water to deter six-legged intruders. The remaining room which accessed both the kitchen and great room was a spacious entrance hall leading to the front door opening to the side street of the crossroads. Plain steps led up to a generous porch and lacquered solid

cedar door to the residence. The porch stretched round the building to the store front's covered entry. The scale of the humble establishment belied the depth and richness of its appointments. George was able to turn his hand to carpentry as easily as Belle could weave prize-winning rugs and blankets.

White Feathers came often, and George soon resumed his Sunday fishing trips. Those early months were a honeymoon of sorts with George and Belle finding out about each other's peccadillos and peeves, preferences and prides. Something that cemented them into one perhaps more than anything else was their true harmony in their respect for the living world around them. Then there were their spiritual pursuits. Probably no two cultures on the planet at that time venerated spirits and ancestors more than the Chinese and the Native American. So from one standpoint it wasn't too surprising that over time the young couple came to learn and appreciate, even revere and practice the particular aspects of each other's heritage and customs.

Daily devotions to ancestors in the form of food set aside at meals, to niches devoted to individuals and groups from their combined pasts adorned hallways, corners and prominent shelves in the couples' frequented spaces. They each might be overheard deferring questions or the everyday dilemmas to the appropriate deceased relation who had some skill or noted affinity for the given poser. Not unlike how any devoted Roman Catholic might defer to the catalog of saints for their present ills. Belle often consulted her Grandmama Lizette Charbonneau—daughter to Sacagewa and niece of the great Shoshone Chief Cameahwait. While George often deferred to his Grandfather. Wang Lung had begun as a poor dirt farmer and through a fortunate series happenstances and shrewd negotiations amassed great wealth in land speculation and rich farmlands only to have his sons leave farming for the more lucrative speculation markets and enterprises of the great Chinese cities. The devotion Belle and her husband evinced to the memories of their respective very accomplished forebears was both genuine and sustaining. It was a harmonious merger of richness, of mystery, and of power.

At the proper time Belle gave birth to a son. George was closing the store for the evening and had just rounded the corner of the hallway into their residence side when he was immediately assailed by first the cry of his newborn son, second the pleased and reassuring voices of midwives and Belle's sisters, and third a cacophony of triumphant voices speaking rapidly in Shoshone and Cantonese. Unfazed, George went straight to his wife's bedside. Her proud glowing face reflecting his own joy. The womenfolk cleaned and clucked over the healthy infant, but those other voices just got louder and clearer in obvious jubilation. Belle muttered something in Shoshone, George whispered a non-response in Cantonese and they both stopped suddenly to acknowledge the other in a stunned, but momentary silence.

"What did you say darling," asked George in his ever-improving English.

"I was just agreeing with my grandmama, that our boy is indeed strong and healthy," she replied absently.

George stifled a gasp for he had just made a similar response to his own long dead grandfather about the same point. He cautiously ventured a query aloud to his grandfather and the voice came back loud and clear so that both George and Belle heard him distinctly. Startled, Belle did the same with her grandmama and again both clearly heard her crisp response. Meanwhile her sisters and the midwife chatted quietly, oblivious to the bodiless celebrating voices and to George and Belle's surprised glances to each other, to their company and back to each other. That is the never before told story of Fred's Great-grandfather's birthday.

The annual activities of the small mountain village centered around two occasions. One was the Tahoe Fishing Tournament in the spring when the swollen creeks and streams, unlocked from their icy dams, began to spill into the lake. And the other was the summer tourist trade of city folk escaping to the natural beauties of the region which picked up in mid-May and lasted through late August. Livingston Mercantile was a must stop for anyone visiting the area. Not only for the misplaced and forgotten necessities and niceties, but for touring pointers, picnic accessories, fishing

and hunting supplies and all the other jetsam of holiday excursions. Business was good. Belle grew more beautiful. Little Harry grew stronger, and George proudly pointed out the same to every customer with a willing ear.

White Feathers spent more and more time in town with his niece and George, often spending long weekends stretching into weeks. He played with little Harry, sat with George in front of the store, or accompanied him on his still weekly fishing trips. George began the construction of a modified sampan to reach some of the more remote fishing spots on the lake.

He had never built a boat before and admitted as much to passersby when asked about his design plans and such, as his work area was in open view of the side road beside the store and house. So it was with some astonishment to those who kept up with his progress to watch his efficiency and skill at shaping and assembling the forms then the skeleton of the craft. What went unnoticed to everyone was the constant instruction George received from his grandfather, great-grandfather and great-uncle. Not so much from his grandfather, as Wang Lung had been a farmer and not so informed of vessel construction. But his Great-Uncle Fong Li was an amazing resource and had been the inspiration for the extra-broad beam and the extended length of the boat so unlike any traditional sampan. George ordered the clearest-grained cedar timber from an acquaintance with a sawmill in exchange for a contract of sharpening services and replacement parts, etc. It was, however, in the execution of the design and the shaping of the planks which amazed the curious.

Each time George was convinced he couldn't plane the wood any more, Fong Li would whisper, '*Go around and work from the other side of the grain back this way,*' or, '*You almost have it, bevel the lower edge a bit more it will mate better.*' Or when fitting the planking over the forms, '*Wet the plank in the morning and only fit it to one rib a day, you can work both sides at once; it may be slow, but so was growing the tree.*'

George was understandably a bit impatient with the rate at which the boat and other projects he had proposed for himself were moving. It was

his own experience that when he set himself to a task he considered the requirements and materials, the effort and time required and once satisfied, 'knocked it out,' then moved on to the next task. All the while he was engaged in this construction job he maintained his store and tended dutifully to his domestic responsibilities. His grandfather, sensing his unease, began a tale one evening as George was affixing another plank to the boat.

'Once upon a time, there were two mountains that stood right beside each other. They were named, the Yellow Horses. Both were over ten-thousand feet high, and together, they were fifty miles wide. Facing the mountains lived the Old Man, who was over eighty-years-old and also known throughout the county for his foolishness. Every morning, as Old Man walked to the village, his wife would shake her head as she saw him make yet another detour around the two mountains. As the years went by, he found it a great inconvenience to make these daily detours. So one day, Old Man finally decided that the twin mountains would have to be moved.

He then called a family meeting and told his wife, sons, daughters, and their families of his intentions. "I will move these two mountains," Old Man cried, "and you will all help me do it!" Old Man's sons and grandsons thought it was a terrific idea. They cheered and gave him their undying support. Old Man's wife sneered, "You are a foolish old man indeed! Just how would you go about moving two big mountains like the Yellow Horses?" she continued, "never mind two mountains, I do not think you can even move two piles of cow-dung! And even if you could move the mountains, just where would you dispose of the dirt and rocks from the mountains? Hub?!?" she cried.

Old Man thought for a moment, and without backing down answered her, "I will throw out the dirt and rocks into a faraway place. I will throw them into the sea!" Once again, Old Man's sons and grandsons thought that it was a terrific idea to throw the dirt into the sea. They cheered a second time and pledged to him their undying support. Even the neighboring widow's son named, Little Turnip Boy, gave the old man his support although he was only eight-years-old.

Off went Old Man, his three sons, his many countless grandsons, and Little Turnip Boy to work on removing the Yellow Horses. It was such grueling work that in a year's time, Little Turnip Boy was only able to make one trip to the sea to dispose of the dirt and rocks. Nonetheless, no one lost their enthusiasm, as they all held steadfast to Old Man's dream of having the two mountains removed.

Now on one of their trips to the sea, they met a man who lived along the Yellow River, who was known throughout the county for his cleverness and his arrogance. The clever man, who lived by the Yellow River mocked Old Man saying, "You foolish old man! I have seen you, your three sons, your many, countless grandsons, and even Little Turnip Boy making trips to the sea to dispose of the dirt and rocks from the mountains. Do you think that you can actually remove two whole mountains? And look at you! You must be over ninety-years-old and closer to the grave as each day passes. How do you expect to move two mountains in your lifetime?"

Old Man looked upon the Yellow River Man with pity. "You are known throughout the entire country as a clever man. Yet, you are a man lacking in vision. Regarding this matter, even Little Turnip Boy has more wisdom than you." Old Man continued, "You are correct in saying that I am an old man who is closer to the grave as each day passes. But I have three sons, and many, countless grandsons. In time, my grandsons will bear their own children, who, in turn, will bear even more children. So in time, my dream of removing these two mountains will become a reality. As each day passes, my dream can only increase, as these two mountains can only decrease.'

And so it went on, day-to-day, a bit of work in the morning or evening efficiently executed, tending the store during the day and lavishing his every spare moment on Belle and Harry. Since his son's birth, George was too pleased with his new found assistance in his every endeavor to hazard a question as to how it came about. It felt normal to him, made their lives better, and that was enough.

Belle had a different take on the experience. She had helped in the care of her sisters when they were small, but her 'training' took the bulk of

her attention, so she was a bit lacking in the particulars of infant care: how to swaddle, when and why, how to supplement her own milk for the baby, with what, when, ad infinitum.

“Isn't he supposed to poop everyday, he's not pooping... I think there's something wrong.” She worryingly questioned one late morning while nursing in the big rocker in the great room as was her wont.

'Well, to be sure every child is special and unique,' was her Grandmama Lizette's start to most answers, *'though most lil'uns will go a week without more than a bit of pee and some gas. It is nothing to worry over, yet.'*

“How long before I should start to worry though?” worried Belle in simple practicality.

'One of us will let you know what to do, and when, should it come to that. You focus upon his immediate needs, and yours, and your husbands, and we'll watch the dangers. Alright Princess?' had been repeated so often in answer to Belle's anxious questions she almost didn't listen anymore, but she still asked.

“Grandmama?”

'Yes, dear.'

“How is it that I can hear you, and Great-great-aunt Nittca, and Great-great-grandmama sometimes, and Great-great-aunt Umpqua, and sometimes the others? Did you talk to my mother? Did your ancestors talk to you?”

'Well, those are very large questions and we have discussed them also; for no, I didn't hear my grandmama or her sisters, nor did any of us, yet we have always spoken to each other when freed from the flesh and bones of Earth, and at last become the air and sky of the Great Spirit.' Then her great-great-grandmama responded also, but with this story:

'Both the spider and the silk worm spin silk. One day the spider said, "I admit your silk is better than mine, your silk is both yellow and white, dazzling and bright. You use the silk that you spin yourself, to make a beautiful cocoon, then live inside-- thinking falsely you are kings.'

In your little cocoon you wait until the women come and put you in scalding hot water ,and peel your silk off strand by strand. Then your beautiful cocoons are all gone. What a shame, though you have the ability to create such beauty, you die because of it, is this not stupid?"

The silk worm thinking about what the spider said, answered, "Our actions are actually like suicide, but we spin silk so that people can weave beautiful brocades, giving all the people the ability to look beautiful, can you say, then, that our labor is a waste? Look at you spiders, all that you weave for is to make a trap that will let you eat the cute little bugs that fly into it. You don't regret it either, but don't you think that that is a little cruel?" she finished. The story's last question hung like a caution in the quiet room. 'You see,' she explained, 'like the silk worm...'

Belle interjected, "You have left life behind, though your 'silk' need not be lost with your flesh and bones. Your wisdom can go on being useful. Not like the spider, whose achievements are for himself alone."

Lizette said simply, '*Precisely.*' The room was again calm and silent.

Belle thought more about the story and what her counsellors had said. But then in a moment of weakness, said, "It has all just become so valuable to my husband and me. We would be in very great despair if our dialogs with you should cease."

Tenderly, like the touch of Belle's own fingers on her child's face, '*It was your mother who placed such fear in your heart. Not her fault you understand, just her nature and destiny.*' Then Lizette intoned,

*"Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.*

*And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend
Suspect I may, but not directly tell;
But being both from me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's bell:
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out."*

she finished.

"That's lovely," whispered Belle.

'It is as good a description as any, of the struggle in your heart; in the hearts of any person, when they are faced with the despairing fear of loss. It was written for one of our lineage, 'the dark lady' of a poet called Shakespeare who loved her very much. He didn't want to ever lose her and his passion made him a bit crazy.' explained Lizette. *'Our folk have long had such power as the dark lady had, and it is our highest responsibility to always use it well.'*

The room became a lot brighter of a sudden, as if a scuttling cloud had just passed. The light was made into a voice that seemed to come in through the open window from the lake and mountains. *'And it shall be this way,'* Great-great-aunt Umpqua began, *'As each new generation comes of age, they shall inherit the family work, and upon the birth of the first-born child, they shall be opened to our counsel and succor.'* Her voice trailed off as if it had been an extreme effort of will to put words to the view of life and time from that most lofty vantage point, and she was exhausted at the effort.

'Well spoken Auntie,' said Lizette.

"Thank you each," Belle answered simply, and shifted little Harry to the other side for the rest of his morning feeding. A smile of confidence and satisfaction rose in her face, and like her husband, no one the wiser for all the extraordinary advice, encouragement, tales and songs they daily received.

The host interrupted unable any longer to stifle his incredulity. "What kind of story is this anyway? They talk to dead people?" He stressed 'talk.'

The visitor yawned and stretched. "This is a story of remarkable people, not the average Joe or Jane. These people have the power and energy to meet reasonably and effectively the tasks life sets them."

"Especially the whole 'ancestor communication thing.' That's for sure not *average*," responded the young man lightly and with a bit of sarcasm.

"From one point of view, perhaps..." qualified the guest, "there is another perspective though. Let's examine the chief cause of an average person's powerlessness to achieve the vast potential and abilities which are the birthright of man." He said pointedly, "We leak energy."

"Huh?" responded the host clearly.

"The human machine is a factory for the transmutation of energies. Did you never ponder how a sandwich becomes electricity---a thought or dream? That's a powerful transformation. Wouldn't you say?" He continued, "And the only thing keeping the factory from running properly is the constant loss of energy due to waste: Unnecessary muscle movements, dwelling upon illusory thoughts and ideas, talking just to fill the silence, negative emotions, always seeking self-aggrandizement and putting selfish desires over the needs of others, and most common of all: lying."

"Oh come on," the young man started at this last. "You can't mean to tell me that simply not telling the truth causes the cosmos to debit precious energy from some sincere, but misguided schmo?"

"It's not usually the lies we tell others which cause so much destruction, though there's plenty of that to go around. It's the lie we tell ourself, often and with conviction, which dooms our chances." The guest conceded. "The lie that: 'we already know;' that we are: 'Captain of our own ship;' that we are: One. When the truth of the situation is: we are legion." His voice was final. "As Shakespeare described in part, '...all the interim is like a phantasm, or a hideous dream: The genius and the mortal instruments are then in council; and the state of man, like to a little

kingdom, suffers then the nature of an insurrection.' But the bard was speaking of only a snapshot, if you will, of the greater picture. It's far more pervasive than that. And all of the 'I's with each their own ambition and will rend the psyche of man to such a depth that his only defense is to shutter his eyes to the truth and insist on the pretense that he is whole." He paused then added, "We can't help but leak; so how can we achieve the promise of our birthright?" The old man fell silent. The last question ringing in the air like a faraway bell.

2

It's an Art

*"When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."
-Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

"Are you getting all this?" asked the stranger after the lingering pause and he straightened his legs. The cat leapt down and padded off after her own business.

"Yes, thank you," answered the young man promptly, glad that the silence was broken at last and anxious to shift the topic a bit. "So the beginning was when George and Belle had Harry?" the host ventured, still scribbling.

"You missed it by a bit. This story began when Wang Fu Kong, George, committed himself to the journey to a new world, then the trek into the wilderness, and when he finally surrendered to the harsh beauty and rewarding wonder of the natural world in which he found himself."

"Wait. Are you saying little Harry and his son, or daughter, or whatever, all the way down to Fred Livingson, whenever he lived, is all the same story? So, no *one* person had an individual beginning or end? That doesn't sound quite fair or right somehow."

The guest stood up and walked to the door. He looked out into haze of the growing Texas day and the harvested hay fields across the pond, then he thought aloud, "You know, that's an interesting point... like 'What is the tree to the forest?' or, 'Is the story of the river in the melting ice and snow of the mountain?' or..."

"Well, yeah, or 'the chicken and the egg'," added the young man, "But how can you say: 'It begins here!' and not here, or here, or here?" Then he groaned in exasperation at his infirm grasp of what the stranger was getting at.

“The simplest way to answer that is to remind you that humans have the unique capacity to dream and to choose, which stands them in contrast to the rest of the life on this planet. Yet even with that great birthright, so few people develop the ability or make the attempt to swerve even a bit from the whims of the winds of fate or of cause and effect.” He paused, assessed the effect of this last on the young man and continued. “So when on that rare occasion someone commits to a decision made of his own understanding and aspiration, acts on that commitment, and affects the lives of others in a positive way which would not have occurred otherwise... *That* is a beginning.”

“And it doesn't seem to be ending...” muttered the host not so silently while sharpening his pencil for another round.

“It ends; its life however is mapped, not measured,” offered the guest, “Shall we proceed with your map?” The stranger sat down, and picked up the tale again with a conversation between George and White Feathers.

“The canoe offers a sleek profile to the water and moves swiftly with little drift...” White Feathers was again propounding his preferences for the canoe, a traditional lake vessel, as opposed to George's penchant for the shallow fishing boats he grew up piloting for his great-uncle.

“Yet the flat bottomed shallow boat allows you to get further up the inlets and even into the marshes where the lazy old fish live,” countered George assertively.

“The canoe will do as well and is easier to get off the sand and gravel shoulders with which the Tahoe protects those fish,” replied White Feathers without enthusiasm.

They had iterated this and other practiced debates of a similar nature for the last few years with no movement from either toward anything resembling a compromise. Uncharacteristically for them, as each in their own right were reputed as the most tactful at negotiation and compromise of any in the territory. Yet when they were together they seemed as

intractable as twin boulders in a stream.

“I have only to lacquer the hull and fit the *yulob*, sorry, the oar and oarlock and it will be ready for the tournament,” announced George.

“I will be looking forward to not paddling this year so I can catch all the fish,” smiled White Feathers who in spite of his preferences in vessels was obviously proud of his niece's husband for his industry and skill in building the odd craft. Not to mention that he really would be able to do most of the fishing this time around, which likely pleased him nearly as much. To this George harbored a quiet satisfaction. He had cultivated this relationship with the old man for years and enjoyed very much being able to bring him the pleasures that should be afforded so venerable a person.

“I am hoping you are able to catch many, but hopefully something a bit larger than the bait fish you often come back with,” needled George tongue in cheek, not glancing at White Feathers to see his reaction.

“Bait fish! That Salmon we ate for dinner last Sunday was a bait fish? What would you be a catching with that, I'm wondering?” mused White Feathers in kind.

Their conversation was interrupted for George by an insistent chatter in his ears. His great-grandfather, great-Uncle, and grandfather, as well as the voices of Lizette, Nittca, Umqua, and the others were all arguing about the arrival of '*a...stranger, a fisherman, a scoundrel, a thief...*' the epithets were confused and undetermined. They had just become aware of the approach of a foreigner whose intentions boded ill for George and his family. At last it was his grandfather's voice which won out and he continued alone without interruption.

Wang Lung was reminded of a story, which to him seemed apt and instructional, '*There was an old hermit who lived deep in the mountains. He had few possessions and his home was a humble hut. One day a vagabond, a once good man, now fallen upon difficult times, happened near the valley in which he saw the old hermit digging in the side of the mountain, apparently building a tunnel. He thought to himself, 'I shall come again to this rag tag shack while the old man is out and take whatever is of worth. For everyone knew hermits guarded some secret*

treasures kept hidden, for why else would they live so far from civilized people. The next day while the hermit was again away, the vagabond stole into his hut and there found silver plates and a golden candlestick. As he bundled these treasures into his knapsack, the hermit returned. Seeing the vagabond in a desperate state, he offered the thief new clothes and shoes and invited him to sit for a meal. Taken aback by the hermit's sincere humanity, the thief exclaimed, "I have stolen your silver and your gold, and yet you offer me food and clothes. You indeed are a crazy old man." "Not at all" was the hermit's reply. "I have a home and gardens of food, the few possessions I have still I'll gladly give you, as you seem to be in greater need than I." With that the thief fell down at the hermit's feet and repented his loathsome ambition of robbery, swearing to never again to take what he did not earn.'

This same tale was being related to Belle also, and her great-great-grandmama interjected sweetly, '*I know this story,*' she continued, '*The reformed thief was still bemused by the old man's daily occupation of digging, so he asked, "Why do you dig a tunnel through the great mountain, old man?" The hermit said, "The road through the pass is treacherous and my son fell to his death from the precipitous cliffs when returning with supplies from the city. So I am building a tunnel in order that no other father must mourn the loss of a child on account of the mountains." This explanation so overwhelmed the guest that he made an oath right then to assist the old hermit in the construction of the tunnel, and so atone for his foolish life. It came about that the old hermit died a few years later, the tunnel was only halfway through the great mountain, meantime, he and the reformed thief had grown close as family. After burying his dear friend, the man continued the tunnel until, seven years later, it was finally complete. And as travelers passed through on their way, they would remark upon the dedication of spirit shown by the man, and used him as an example to their children to always finish what they started, and other morals so lacking in society.'*

Their tale was told, and its effect had the desired result, that the household would act in concert in the face of this unexpected event. George and Belle translated the precepts into action and made hasty

preparations for the imminent arrival of their guest. White Feathers sat quietly as George apologized for having forgotten until now the arrival of a guest. He invited White Feathers to join them for supper, to help welcome the newcomer. The old man had become inured to George's odd explanations and hijinks over the years. He even sorta looked forward to them now.

As foreseen, along the village road came a carriage, notable only in the burgeoning trunks and equipment lashed to the roof and rear. The driver slowed the horses as he passed the store and halted the team in front of the Inn several doors up. Out from the back sprang a curiously dressed man. A British businessman, a scotsman at that, who might appear overdressed when side by side with a villager of the Sierras. He smiled broadly and looked about him in a manner that suggested calculated appraisal rather than simple admiration.

Samuel Allcock was a good father, a generous boss, a formidable businessman--shrewd in deal-making--and he loved fishing. Which was well, as his factories produced some of the finest tackle in Britain. He had grown up a Wesleyan Methodist, and at the age of thirteen had himself chosen to join the congregation. He was scrupulous and fair when dealing with competitors and had come to Canada and the States to scout a setting for a new factory in the burgeoning markets of North America.

After arriving in New York Harbor he soon set out for the famous rivers and trout streams of the Northeast, plying his Greenwood rod with great effectiveness, to the admiration and chagrin of the locals in each village and town through which he travelled. Reaching the far west of Pennsylvania near the Great Erie lake, he enjoyed an evening's meal and entertainment at a local pub. There he met a fellow angler who told of his personal encounter with a mountain man during a brief adventure out west back when he had still been at University. The mountain man, Bridger by name, fished with a rod so light and strong that the college boy had to inquire of its origin. Bridger explained at the time, "It's a cane rod, lithe as willow, strong as oak, given me in payment for a favor I performed for a store proprietor in Tahoe City." The young man was so impressed with the

rod and Bridger's skill in using it that the memory had lasted quite clearly to this day.

Allcock fell victim to the greatest of temptations for a businessman: Avarice. Although upstanding in most every other way, the gnawing worm of greed for gaining exclusive markets and profits began to cloud his reason. He wanted that rod for his own and left his conscience behind in the rationalizations that made him even 'Just' to pluck such fineness out from the obscure and barbarous wilderness. Soon he was planning a trip out West on the ostensible purpose of entering the Great Tahoe Fishing Tournament. A likely reason for the journey, as all who had met him recognized his prowess and zeal plying his Greenwood rods.

As the carriage drew up in front of the Tahoe City Inn he bid his driver dispose of his luggage, asked that the rig and horses be tended to at the livery up the street, and made arrangements for their dining together later in the evening. He supervised the unloading of the baggage then ambled back down the street. When he came abreast of the hardware store he turned to the two men sitting in front of the humble village shop.

"Hallo gentlemen, I am pleased to meet you. I have but one question..." opened the scotsman with such bravado it was difficult not to imagine that here was a man who was used to having his way, and brooked no argument to the contrary. "Can either of you point me to the vendor of the finest fishing gear who lives hereabouts?"

George looked at White Feathers and White Feathers looked at George. The old man stood and approached the still grinning visitor.

"I've met him, sir. If you look down that river bend over there," pointing back up the road from which he'd already traveled. The scotsman squinted as if to see through forest more clearly. "Then he'll be just off your left elbow on that porch right there," he finished with a straight face. "Good evening George, I'll be 'round in a bit, I've a quick errand to which I must attend. Good evening young stranger." White Feathers waved over his shoulder without looking back.

White Feathers hadn't fully accepted George's explanation about the sudden visitor, and decided it would be worthwhile doing a bit of

reconnoitering on behalf of his friend and family. So circling behind the shops and offices of the main street he came to the Inn through the side door. He caught the eye of Mandy Hill behind the front desk and motioned for her to join him as he moved into the saloon adjacent to the foyer of the Inn. There for several minutes he plied the questions to which he most needed answers. Satisfied, he looked up the Scotsman's driver and made a few more innocent-seeming inquiries which revealed more than the workman had intended, and it all confirmed White Feather's own suspicions.

But back in the street, as the old Indian strolled out of sight, the scotsman watched after him. His grin faded, his head cocked quizzically, then he slowly turned to face the oriental-looking gentleman on the porch. They looked at each other for a brief time and at the same moment smiled, accepting at once the peculiar introduction made by White Feathers.

“Well laddie, I've a proposition for you; but let me introduce myself. I am Samuel Allcock. I have crossed seas, hills, plains and mountains, in carriage, wagon, train, and steamship to enter the Great Tahoe Fishing Tournament. And I would engage yourself, for a handsome fee of course, to guide me on this lake of yours; which will in turn guarantee my winning the competition. What do ya say to that?” He planted his hands on his hips and assumed an air of unforced confidence.

“Please just let me lock up my store for the day,” responded George abruptly. Then he added almost as an afterthought, “And may I invite you dine with myself and my family presently. We may discuss your, ahh... proposition.” He started to turn to the door, caught himself and added, “What do ya say to that?” in a close imitation of Mr. Allcock himself. He took more time than usual checking the till, straightening the nearest shelves and finally producing his keys for the door, all under the watchful eye of the stranger.

The native scotsman, undaunted, casually hailed a young boy who had been staring bald-faced at the odd visitor. He paid him a silver coin and gave him instructions to run up to the Inn, find his driver and change his previous arrangements for supper. Then Samuel turned back to George

and gladly accepted his kind offer to enter into negotiations over supper. George led him around the corner of the porch to his own front door where, after graciously accepting Samuel's compliments on the architecture and construction of his home and shop, he opened the cedar door and ushered him inside. He introduced himself at last, his wife Belle, and then he presented Mr. Allcock to his wife as a guest for the evening.

Belle had already made the hasty preparations, thanks to the ministrations of her grandmama and Wang Lung, for the Scotsman's arrival and the portents it signaled. She held a pitcher of beer in one hand and motioned them into the great room with the other. Harry was playing with a little toy boat with wheels on a thick woolen rug of kaleidoscopic colors. The larger table was set with three mugs and four chairs while silverware on linen napkins for five rested neatly in place. A platter of cured salmon steak was set in the middle adorned all round with crackers and cheeses. Small bowls of nuts were set thoughtfully beside each of the mugs and a vase of wild flowers in yellows, reds and deep purples held court over all. Belle placed the pitcher on the table, gave her husband a peck on the cheek, patted Harry on his head, and went to the kitchen.

Samuel was so quickly seated, a mug put into his hand, and his 'good health' saluted, that as he swallowed his first draught he was for a moment unsure into what situation he had let himself. It had always been his part to 'Act first, Act fast, and Seal the Deal,' but the tables had been turned and he was pressed hard to keep up. Had he inadvertently let on about his ulterior motives at that pub in Pennsylvania, or perhaps misspoken at some point on the journey? They seemed to have been waiting for him and he had a most uneasy feeling at present which ever only accompanied his being late for an appointment---an extremely rare occurrence at that. He looked again at his host and the room, and reassessed the prospects.

Around the room were displayed rugs and blankets of such richness and luxuriance he was forced to question his previous notions as to the humble nature of the Livingsons, which in turn began to counter his rationalizations that he was here to wrest a trophy in the wilderness from a backward folk. In niches and corners were set little altar-like pieces which

at first glance appeared to be merely artistic vignettes. The river rock fireplace and expansive mantle were modestly adorned with two pictures of aged folk surrounded with small items which complimented the images and frames. There were also children's toys, a few letters and a volume of *Shakespeare's Complete Works*. A drapery of finely woven silk brocade half concealed an alcove off one end of the room wherein he recognized a work bench and attendant hand tools. The large framed bay window filling the next wall looked more like a living painting of the highest caliber, with its view of the deep green late evening woods barely swaying in the dusky breeze and the glimmering lake visible just beyond, sparkling gold and orange and red over the vast deep blue.

On the wall opposite to where he sat were displayed two of the most exquisite rods he had ever laid eyes on. One single handed and one spey, each of two-piece hexagonal cane construction, polished madrone reel seats fitted with turquoise and polished silver rings, brass guides, jade strippers set in brass, crimson wraps, both varnished and hand-rubbed to a high sheen. The tooled leather covered grips were finished in swelled butts inlaid with redwood and nacre. Upon the ornate reel seats were secured brass reels well proportioned to their respective rods and meticulously crafted--the likes of which Samuel had never seen. He had lingered a tad too long on the rods, for Belle had re-entered and with George waited patiently for their guest to notice them again. Harry made some snort of amusement in his play, Samuel thoughtlessly glanced at the source of the noise and out of the corner of his eye caught George and Belle's patient stares.

"Dinner will be just a moment," said Belle promptly to excuse their rudeness, a knowing smile playing at the corners of her mouth.

"Loovely," was all Samuel could muster at this. They'd done it to him again. Caught him out; he was definitely off his game. "Ahem, well Mr. Livingston, let me get to the terms I am willing to offer for your services."

"More beer, Mr. Allcock?" Belle was at his elbow with the pitcher raised.

"Thank you Lady, please." He looked up into Belle's face and her

piercing green eyes as she poured, then he turned back to his host but he found only a vacant seat. George had gotten up and fetched something from the workshop alcove. He sat down again with a well crafted, sealed wooden tube, inlaid expertly with an exotic design. He proffered the object to Samuel for his inspection.

Obviously taken aback in surprise, Samuel mechanically reached over the table to receive it. He looked at George blankly, who was motioning him to open it. Obediently, Samuel uncorked the tube and tipped it up to reveal a silk bag sliding out the end. Another glance at George and he was urged to untie and open the wraps. With a sharp intake of breath, Samuel withdrew an unparalleled spey rod from the silken sheath. Finished and fitted to make the ones on the wall in front of him blush with plainness were they able. George stepped from the table after smiling in satisfaction at his guest's reaction.

"Permit me," cooed Belle and set a plate in front of her guest of what appeared to be sliced prime rib arranged around a small cup of horseradish, a garnish of fresh green beans tossed with white corn, and a hearty serving of butter potatoes, then placed the same at her husband's seat.

"Oh, yes, of course, thank you ma'am, yes indeed." Samuel slipped the bundle back into the tube and set it near his elbow at the table. "Mr. Livingson, I have ne'er seen its equal," he called aloud recovering his presence of mind. Belle set her own plate at the table, motioned for her son to fetch his plate and to take a seat, then she pulled over a chair for herself and joined them at the quiet table.

George was coming back to the room from the kitchen with two more plates, one filled as the others and a smaller one containing some rice, a bit of corn and some large beans which he set near the middle of the table with reverence. Then just as he set the fourth supper dish at the empty place, White Feathers entered at the front door, and grabbing a fifth chair, he joined them sitting at his usual seat as if simply having stepped outside for a moment and expected all along. Samuel peered hesitantly, inconspicuously around the table waiting to see if there were any ceremony

to beginning the meal; a sense of formality so pervaded the company he did not wish to appear uncouth. George and Belle spoke together but so softly that he couldn't quite catch it all, and at once they were cutting into the meat and passing butter, fresh baked bread and seasonings round.

They ate with only the occasional exchanges of courtesy interrupting the quiet relish each took dining on the exquisite meal. Belle quit the table and soon returned from the kitchen once more bearing a tureen of Apple Crumb Cobbler, dessert plates and a serving spoon. White Feathers spoke first, "I see you found the master rod-maker you were searching for..." he said matter-of-factly to Mr. Allcock as he accepted a fresh plate. The 'master rod-maker' had not been a part of the Scotsman's professed, simple request for a 'vendor and guide,' and was set as bait by White Feathers.

"Indeed," admitted Mr. Allcock without a thought, and the subtle trap snapped shut. All eyes now turned to him, and even the little boy peered steadily up at him. He felt in a rush that all at once his ulterior plans were completely transparent and absolutely undone. "But I must admit I am at a loss as to what I am to do now." He paused after this cryptic phrase; his Wesleyan upbringing at last reasserting itself, and the shame of his intended ruse rose mockingly before him. These were good and civilized people, honest, generous and sophisticated, not mannerless bumpkins. The conflict in his heart overwhelmed him. So there he sat baring his soul to strangers, confessing his utter shock at the prompt welcome, of the miraculously brief dinner preparations, their warmth and candor, and he just kept talking. "I came here with the definite aim of, uh... 'procuring a sampling' of Mr. Livingston's rods to replicate to the best of my factory's ability and to market them under my own brand. I had additionally expected to use one of them to win the Tahoe Tournament, proclaim the victory was due in large part to the newly adopted rod, take it as my own--- a trophy if you will---and use it as a selling point for the new line." The rush of words abated as suddenly as they began, and the table was quiet save the sounds of eating. Again Samuel was struck by their nonchalance, even in the face of this unprecedented news. He looked down at the excellent meal only half-eaten, and realized his appetite was gone.

George broke the spell of silence with, "You cannot steal what is freely given," as if reciting a favorite proverb. It was his only comment after he had washed down a few bites with a mouthful of beer.

"We do have one condition," added Belle promptly, "You must return to visit us in ten years time and accept the responsibility of educating our son Harry. We have limited access to higher learning here, for various reasons." She subtly motioned with her chin to the 'Shakespeare' on the mantelpiece. "Under your administration, a proper British University education is acceptable to my husband and to me."

Samuel set with his mouth agape, his foolish ambitions obviated, and the charge of these new conditions not fully settled yet in his mind. He was for the first time in his adult career, overwhelmed and out-classed. Not only had he been wholly out-manuevered, but it seemed he was negotiating with the *woman* of the house instead of the man and this alone was enough to flummox him completely. "I..." but as suddenly he closed his mouth and sat mute for a few moments. The Princess had not finished.

"You shall remit three per cent of the profits from this venture to an account we shall name, and another three per cent to a fund for Henry's education, invested of course as you see fit." She concluded as if she had just recounted the next week's shopping list.

The other two men continued their meal as if nothing out of the ordinary in the least had occurred. White Feathers pushed back his plate and chair and coaxed little Harry to abandon his chair for his own lap and sat happily whispering and making faces at the youngster. George asked solicitously if his guest would like more of anything, which was greeted with a shake of the head. Only Belle still held her eyes fixed on Samuel, patiently waiting for an answer.

"I am... that is to say, I accept your terms without reservation and shall endeavor to fulfill your wishes at whatever cost to myself and family," he responded succinctly, "I have one caveat as well... I will do as I have said..." he added hastily, "but may I ask one favor."

"You may ask," admitted Belle easily.

"Would your husband be willing to instruct me in the building of one

rod so that none of his own need be destroyed in order to inadequately, I'm now sure, learn its secrets?" Samuel finished, his voice sincerely supplicant.

Without even glancing to her husband, Belle answered clearly, "He would be most happy to have your company for as long as it takes for you to understand his absolute mastery of his craft, and that, to your own satisfaction." George and White Feathers both smiled at each other then at Samuel, and Belle poured the rest of the beer into their glasses and rose to clear the table.

Raising his mug, George said, "To profitable negotiations!" They all drank. "And that rod at your elbow is a gift by the way," he finished.

Samuel was now in tears.

White Feathers imperceptibly shot his eyes toward the door for George to follow him onto the porch, and once they were out of earshot of the others, in a low voice he made the following observation: "You don't have to confirm or deny it, but I am now convinced that you have not been entirely honest with me."

George felt a moment of anxiety at what was coming.

"You are in contact with unseen informants; I suppose they must be ancient and somehow related to you." He paused to assess his accusation's impact, noting nothing, he continued. "This evening's shinnanigans take the cake. *I* know what Allcock came here to do because I just interrogated his driver who knew things about his master he didn't realize he knew; but how could you and Belle have known these things, and been so prepared?" He proceeded to list specific instances over the last few years which he had mentally cataloged as too remarkable to be due to the ordinary powers of one man, or one woman for that matter because he elaborated innumerable instances of similar occurrences involving his own niece. When all was laid before him, George was agog at the old man's powers of observation and capacity for details. "My conclusion is that both you and Belle are in actual direct contact with your own ancestors, informing and advising your various decisions and actions. Of Belle, I am sure of the sources for I knew a few of the strong-willed women who came before her

and recognize their hand quite plainly in her influence. For yourself, I can only surmise that the wisdom and careful planning you have exhibited over the years may be from your native talent, yet it also bespeaks the experience of great age." White Feathers stood there, with arms crossed, "What do ya say to that?" he finished in close imitation of their guest inside.

Still stunned, George had to laugh at that last. Then his great-grandfather's voice answered, plainly impressed, *'This is one great man and a good friend, indeed, I have not known his peer. Speaking for all of us, embrace him now and trust him with your life.'* Without hesitating, George hugged the old man and with tears on his face, admitted to the verity of his suspicions, and as he promised to tell him all he wished to know they went back inside arm in arm.

The next morning Samuel was seated beside the door of the hardware store eager to begin his apprenticeship. George nearly tripped over him rounding the corner from his front door, unused to such early customers. They greeted each other warmly and waited for the arrival of White Feathers who had agreed to watch the store while they were occupied with rod building. When the pleasantries were over George asked to see the rod Samuel was wont to use. He thought it would be a good launching point for his own instruction--if he saw what methods and techniques with which Mr. Allcock was already familiar. He added, "I expect I'll learn a thing or two by looking through another's eyes, so to speak." Samuel was back in a thrice, his own Greenwood under his arm. Happily, though with a bit of modesty, he presented it for inspection. "This is good workmanship..." George began as he turned the pole this way and that, examining the shaft, the wraps, the fittings, "Very good craftsmanship indeed." Samuel's smile at the praise was genuine.

White Feathers arrived, took up his usual position in the rocker at the door and waved them off. The master rod-maker kept up a stream of questions for Allcock regarding his use of tapers, to adhesives and threads. When George was at last satisfied he could easily build its twin, he introduced Samuel to the uncut aged Tonkin cane poles. He explained their qualities and their unique origins. He demonstrated sectioning,

slicing, selecting the most compatible pieces and how they should be mated to become more than the sum of their parts.

The hours went by quickly and turned into days. Samuel made notes and assisted. "Unlike the sturdy Greenwood's constant taper," George indicated with deference the product of Allcock's factory workshops, "Cane tapers may be infinitely varied depending upon the desired flex and use." He described the shaping of Samuel's gift spey as an example. The needs of the angling technique dictated the tapers employed with that rod versus the different action and demands of its single-handed cousin.

Immersed as they were in the task at hand, they nearly forgot the upcoming championship. George and Samuel had spent every moment together in the workshop, and for his part, George had begun to pick up a bit of Samuel's brogue which never entirely left him through the remainder of his natural life. Samuel Allcock, that Captain of Industry, once under the tutelage of George Livingston, gradually became curious about the smallest of details and began to relish even the subtler joys of simple pleasures--an attitude which grew in him over the length of *his* days.

It was to be a record setting year for the Great Tahoe Tournament. Although to his dismay, Mr. Allcock's lessons were interrupted by the arrival of the day appointed for the competition. Closing the shop early on the eve of the challenge, the three men hastily prepared their gear for the event. Samuel Allcock chose to use his new spey with a borrowed reel of similar brass construction to the ones he'd admired in the great room of the house. Instead of the horsehair line to which he was accustomed, George suggested a fly line of his wife's manufacture. Early in their marriage, Belle had turned her nose up at the coarse horsehair line George used and set about to remedy the breach of aesthetics. Commandeering some stock he had of fine silk sewing threads, she cunningly wove fishing lines of such strength and beauty it was a pleasure to cast them, whether he caught fish or not. A specimen of her work, salmon-colored and expertly woven for a spey with a weighted tip of crimson, was already wound onto the proffered reel and Samuel Allcock, not for the last time, was transfixed by the merging of beauty and utility that pervaded all that had to do with the

Livingson's every endeavor.

As planned, George would mostly propel and pilot the boat, giving White Feathers and Mr. Allcock opportunity to cast at will. They woke early, enjoyed a brief breakfast, accepted the provisions of a meal for later on the boat from Mrs. Livingson, and George set a direct course for one of his favorite coves. One which had been good luck on previous ventures and would serve as an apt beginning for this day's adventure. White Feathers was equipped with the spey rod of the pair from the wall display; his reel was wound with an amber and umber spey line. The old Indian had only recently become more adept at casting the longer pole. The two-handed grip seemed to agree with his age and abilities.

George was confirmed in his confidence in the modified sampan. It glided evenly across the lake with uncommon speed. When they reached the borders of the first estuary, the wide bottom and negligible draft saw them smoothly to even the shallowest shoals. Beyond his satisfaction with his vessel, George watched with unabashed pride as White Feathers and Samuel plied their fly rods with such grace and effectiveness. Before an hour was through, each had landed enormous eighteen to twenty-five pound Mackinaw lake trout and Cutthroat. They kept the catch in a tub brought for the purpose, and satisfied with such an auspicious start, they agreed to move to another favorite hole.

George's cane rods fitted with Belle's woven silk lines cast further than any other of similar length. They were able to cover greater stretches of water from a single position than any of their competitors, and so did not have to lose precious casting time constantly repositioning the craft to get to other un-fished waters. So it continued. The older men casting to their heart's content, and George wetting a line at odd intervals to keep his hand in the mix. The mountains in the Sierra springtime were shimmering with nature's most extravagant palette. Wherever they looked, the grandeur which met their eyes seeped indelibly into their souls, invigorating the union of man, lake, earth and sky.

After a break for a well-deserved lunch, they took up the tasks again. When finally the trumpet blared signaling the close of the competition, the

three companions set course back to the marina, renewed in spirit and with jubilant expectations of victory. They were not disappointed. As the judges at last came to their decisions once the weighing and measuring was complete, only ounces and fractions separated the champion from the runners-up. The Grand Prize went home with a Scotsman, who had come to win but was more humble in victory than any who knew him would ever have believed. He made the Tahoe Tournament Silver Cup a gift to George and Belle for their generosity, and to White Feathers for his faithful companionship, not to mention the half ounce separating his own Lake Trout from the winning Mackinaw.

Cool spring afternoons warmed gradually over the next few weeks and before long Samuel Allcock's late apprenticeship drew to a close. He had assisted in the construction of the 'instruction' rod, had all his various questions answered clearly, received measured drawings for the replication of the brass reels, accepted a sample of Belle's silk line to be used as a model for others, and made copious notes on the transition of manufacture for each. Through his own contacts within the East India Trading Company of England he had made inquiries and tentative contracts for the acquisition of a quantity of quality Tonkin cane from none other than George's own Uncle Li in Haiji County, Guangdong Province, as it so happened.

One of the other perquisites of having a foreign guest in temporary residence, besides news and ideas, was the exchange of contemporary culture. For his part George's state of the art hardware shop inventory and indoor kitchen water supply were the height of local luxury. Samuel, whose travels put him in proximity of innovations across Europe and now in the citified eastern U.S. and Canada, mentioned a new fixture recently developed in Scotland and now spreading throughout all of Britain: A toilet. The two men discussed the technological aspects and requirements of the device and George began mulling over its possible application in his and Belle's own house. The conversation turned to electricity, then to telegraphy and telephony, which Edison and Bell were advocating at the time, and their last evening together drew to a quiet close.

Before the carriage arrived next morning, his luggage already lashed aboard, Samuel spent a final morning in the little house behind the hardware store. They finalized his plans for his next visit--to escort Harry to his own home in Redditch, England where University enrollment and admissions paperwork will have been submitted and tuition made. George gave him letters of introduction to his own bank director in San Francisco, Belle assured him that Harry would be prepared as best they could manage to begin his studies abroad when next he graced their home. Samuel smiled at this, knowing if Belle and George set their mind to something it was as good as done.

He promised to correspond and keep them informed of any pertinent developments. He graciously accepted a basket with edibles from their garden and a bottle of the beer they had recently brewed. Then with firm handshakes, and the gift of a Meershaum pipe for White Feathers from his own valued collection, Mr. Samuel Allcock left Tahoe City. His back was a little straighter and his head held a little higher after his time spent here than from any place he had yet visited. They stood and waved to Samuel's carriage as he passed the bend in the River Road, then they went inside. The large silver trophy cup looked somehow right at home between the framed pictures of Wang Lung and Lizette on the mantelpiece over the hearth.

The next winter pursued the autumn like an ardent lover, and almost before the village had sufficiently recovered from the excitement of the biggest Summer Season boom anyone could remember, snow began dusting the pines as the days grew shorter and dimmer. The merchants and families of Tahoe City had only just refilled their pantries and shelves for the singular needs of the little village left to itself until the next spring. By the time the Christmas spirit moved through the community, Belle and George were already celebrating their own joyous news.

“George, I want little Harry's room to have more light and we'll need some fresh insulation on that side of the house anyway.” Belle explained to her husband once the grand news of the approaching stork was broken to him.

“Yes, yes, good, good.” he stammered excitedly with no small feeling of pride and good fortune still lingering in his voice. “I’ve given the remodeling a great deal of thought already, but haven’t had a sufficiently compelling reason to order the materials.” He added, “But this seals it. Yes indeed, this is beyond compelling.” And he mumbled dreamily to himself, “Another child...”

“We’ll need another crib, but a little bigger than the one Harry used--the one that we gave to the Rogers. And if possible,” she continued, “a few more chairs in the great room and another rocker...”

“You know,” he shook off his reverie and popped into designer mode, “I saw drawings for furniture that was hung up on the walls when it wasn’t being used. Seemed a very clever and uncluttered approach to keeping the floor space open and easy to sweep or mop...” He was already scanning the walls, imagining pegs holding the suspended furniture.

“That is an interesting innovation,” said Belle distractedly. She had delivered the news of their upcoming arrival, made her wishes for the preparations known, and now she was already engrossed in her weaving once again, confident of her husband’s abilities to design, organize and execute with style any plans he set into motion. Her attention turned back to her own tasks without a care or concern.

George’s morning was now brighter than the cloudy sky admitted. He went to the store-side where the catalogs and bulletins were kept on the shelves of his little office. Little Harry followed along and both of them were led by the cat who walked behind the boy, as cats are used to leading--more by example than position. Harry climbed into his father’s office chair and swiveled around and round as George poured through the thick books searching for bay windows, pegs, piping, buckets, tubs, pumps and mattresses. Not that he was going to order everything he looked for, the catalogs often offered him ideas and suggested design tricks he himself might not have considered.

“Let’s see,” he said under his breath as he flipped through the stacks, “ten weeks along, two and a half months. It’s mid-December, so, six months into the new year, June. The ice gives up by early April sometimes, that

gives me a month to a month and a half, six weeks at the most of decent weather to..." and he fell again into silent calculations as his son twirled in the chair and the cat batted at the passing little feet.

The boy grew hungry and went off to the kitchen leaving George in the office of his restocked store. Breaking the silence of the chilly room he exclaimed, "Grandfather, we are going to have another child!"

'Yes, we knew. Good fortune and congratulations,' the ancient responded. *'Of course it was Belle's place to tell you, not ours. And now that you have 'this' happy news, we should talk about how to handle the responsibilities of twin girls.'*

George stopped. His hands ceased to turn pages, his eyes wouldn't focus, his mind went blank, and his breath slowed to nothing. The first sign of life he evinced after the pause was the grin spreading wider and wider across his face.

'Well, you took that pretty well,' said Lizette, relief evident in her voice. *'Belle was in tears by now, when we broke the news to her, of course her body is producing the life-forces necessary for three people, so her tendency toward over-responding to things is understandable, to say the least. Yes. Two healthily growing baby girls are indeed just cause for thoughtful planning,'* she concluded with the understated observation.

George suddenly began mentally revising the remodeling ideas and plans he'd actively begun. Then it struck him to ask, "Will they be born on-time, or late, or too early, or will Belle suffer overmuch. Will Belle be OK? She won't be..." his worries were now flooding straight from his mind to his mouth without censor or filter.

'We don't see the future. Actually it's that we see clearly what is, and from our long experience and wisdom can anticipate certain happenstances and turns of events.' Lizette tried to explain, hoping to ease his heart's sudden disturbance and forebodings.

It was his grandfather's turn to assure him, *'Belle is strong, you are thorough and meticulous in your care of your family...All will be well. We are sure. Do not borrow trouble from a tomorrow that no one can see.'* George relaxed into their confidence and calm.

“Twin girls. Girl-'s' he restated for his own benefit, trying to grasp the concepts firmly in his mind. His previously modest plans for renovation erupted into the extravagant proportions consistent with the scope of his dreams for his children. Then he turned a new corner in his planning, “You all waited for Belle and me to find out on our own, so to speak... I mean about the pregnancy at least,” he stated and they conceded. “Might I ask a favor of you, that you would hold your tongues in a similar fashion?” He paused hoping this gamble would play out.

Lizette was first to respond, '*What is it you propose?*' skepticism evident in the background of her voice.

Sensing the only opening he was going to get from his unseen allies, George explained the ideas he had long considered and now could appropriately begin with justified zeal. The exact details and precise timing was still a bit fuzzy, but the proposition was still met with reassuring approval.

'We will oblige your wishes, since our cooperation could not in any way decrease our appointed responsibilities to either of you, or to your children,' Lizette announced, to George's relief.

He filled the rest of the morning and into the afternoon, drawing up designs and considering materials, checking lead times and costs, and staring at the projects as if he were performing them in real time in his mind to be sure he overlooked no hindrance and omitted no key process or ingredient.

Harry was a great help to Belle over the next several weeks of the snowy season. For instance: After the decorations for Christmas were stored, eaten or burned, she turned her attention to baking and to cleaning the vegetable bins and their contents. She made a game of it with the eager little boy.

“Pull out the potatoes and arrange them on this table cloth,” she spread it across the floor beside the bins. “Be careful to count out five into each pile and place the piles in groups of five. Then when all the potatoes are counted and piled, write the total on our storage list.” She pointed to the little chalkboard which kept the tallies of their kitchen provisions.

“Now, what are you going to do?” She'd ask him to repeat her instructions any time they set about beginning a new project.

Harry held out his fingers, in obvious imitation of his father's same habit, and ticked off one by one the instructions as he had heard them, forgetting nothing. Pleased with himself at her reaffirming smile and nod, he set to his task with all of his attention. While her son was thus engaged on one side of the kitchen, Belle brought out the bowls, spoons, measuring cups and ingredients for her baking projects.

Harry's voice, counting and recounting softly, was a rhythmical cadence along with which she soon was humming and quietly singing a song her mother had sung when she was a little girl; when her mother had set her a task, like Harry was doing, and gone on to baking as she was doing. The sounds of the happy kitchen weren't reaching the porch where George swept away the patches of snow. Once the porch was cleared, he began shoveling the paths around the back of the house which led to the wood piles and the outhouse. He counted his footsteps and tallied the numbers as he criss-crossed the spaces, making note to himself of the spans and distances.

As he came back in the front door and removed his wet boots, the sweet smells and joyful sounds of Belle and Harry greeted his rising spirits and warmed his heart. He looked in at the two of them, each busily rapt in their tasks. They glanced up at him only briefly to offer a smile of greeting, and then resumed their activity. He walked to his workshop and unrolled the drawings he'd begun, jotted down the measurements he'd just figured and rolled them up again, then tucked them aside out of view. Just a couple more weeks, he reminded himself and went to his office in the store to complete the material lists he had compiled for ordering. He folded the orders up and sealed them in the envelopes already addressed for each supplier. Once he was back at the front door, he waved the envelopes at Belle, in lieu of interrupting her song, and she smiled back at the gesture. He put the letters into his coat pocket, donned his fur hat, and headed out through the chilly afternoon to the post office.

After the chores and tasks of the day were over, the little family stood

bundled in furs on the front porch and enjoyed the view of the season's thick white decoration of the town. They sat down in the porch swing and looked toward the lake. George was saying, "I can take the drain water from the kitchen and instead of just letting it meander down the hill into the lake, direct it into a holding pond, just there..." he waved his arm over a swath of ground beneath and between two of the nearest Tallows they had managed to start.

Belle added, "And water hyacinth is perfect for clearing murky and dirty water."

"A nice walkway or two and a little deck space for sitting in the shade on summer evenings would be a nice addition," suggested George.

"That would be lovely and it would be a most practical way to keep both: our feet out of the mud, and runoff out of the lake," she pointed out. "It is important to keep the Tahoe clean. If we can do anything, we should." Belle was pleased with his ideas, and George smiled.

He couldn't dig in the frozen ground because of its hardness to lay pipe, excavate a pond, or erect piers for the deck, but he could begin measuring and cutting the beams and planks for the decking. So after the initial timber orders arrived, he and Harry set to doing just that.

"Measure twice and cut once," he reminded his son as they prepared the next batch of planking. Harry was becoming very good at carefully stretching the measuring tape along the raw planking and marking the intervals that his father dictated to him. "The job worth doing is worth doing well." chanted George.

"How long until we get to nail all these boards together?" asked Harry before measuring the next plank.

"Well once Old Man Winter decides to go home, and Spring gets a chance to clean up after him and warm the ground a bit, we'll be able to: trench the courses for the drainage pipes," George ticked off on his fingers, "excavate the soil where the holding pond will go, and then dig the post holes for the piers of the decking." He held up his three fingers as the milestones he described.

“How long until Old Man Winter makes up his mind?” asked Harry, a little unsure of the 'old man's' trustworthiness.

George answered the question with a question, as he so often did, “What day and month is it now?”

The boy looked up at the pines as if reading a chart in the branches, “Today is the twelfth of March,” he stated confidently.

“Good. And when is the Vernal Equinox?” posed George in response.

“The twenty-first of March.” Harry recited.

“Then the days will get longer, Spring will nudge the drowsy Old Man to start his walk back to his home in the north,” answered George.

“So...” Harry again consulted the pine boughs, “Nine more days before the old man can't sleep late anymore!” he concluded and brightened a little at his new found knowledge.

That evening, after Harry helped his Great-uncle White Feathers clear the table and clean the dishes, he asked, “How *long* does it take Spring to convince old man Winter to leave, so she can get started cleaning up around here?”

White Feathers chuckled, “And why are you ready for her to get back to work, young Harry?”

“I want to dig and hammer nails, so we won't have to walk through the mud all the time, and we can have a pond, and I can sail my boats across it...” said the boy impatiently.

“Hmm, I see. She's holding *you* up, isn't she,” agreed his Great-uncle. “You remind me of a man I heard about when I was about your age,” he began,

“In the mesa country to the south there once was a foolish farmer, who was also a very impatient man. After he'd sowed his corn seed, he ran back to check their growth four times a day. A few days had passed and still the seedlings had still not sprouted.

One day he went to the cornfield depressed and hanging his head, but to his surprise here and there were green shoots. Grabbing the seedlings, which had at last begun to peek their heads above the earth, he

methodically pulled them up row by row, checking their root growth. That night he said to his family,

"Today almost killed me! I worked the field all day and I am exhausted. I can't even straighten my back. But all in all the effort wasn't in vain. All the seedlings have grown," he announced, finally satisfied with his crops.

His son thought this to be strange, so much effort by the impatient man that even his back ached, and for only the knowledge that the corn had sprouted? So he ran to the field to look the next day. What he saw were rows of seedlings uprooted, and all were withered and dead."

Harry laughed at the old farmer's foolishness. "I won't be like him, I'll wait patiently for Spring to do her job," he said and went to the big table to look at the drawings, again, that his father had drawn up for the project.

Spring did indeed do her job. The ice began to turn to slush and the air became a little warmer each day. The drifts of snow, except in the shadows of walls and such, disappeared in no time at all. They finally opened the windows for brief periods and let the mid-day breezes waft through the house. Belle was growing rounder and rounder, and Harry was more and more fascinated by the tumbling and kicking of the babies every time his mother let him press his hands to her belly for an inspection. "They're wrestling again," he'd announce proudly, and his mother would smile back, "Yes, they are so ready to play, they will no doubt keep us all very busy."

When not monitoring his sisters' antics, he was beside his dad, finally: excavating and lining the pond, digging post holes and setting the piers, leveling beams, laying the planks, and at long last--hammering nails! He was in noise-making heaven.

With four and half weeks to spare before the girls arrived, the decking and pond, the pipes and planting was finished. Now, from the end of the porch a step led down to a deck landing, that stretched a few strides to the second step down onto the deck proper. Its longest edge was against the lake side of the house, and it horse-shoed out from the wall, like two wide arms around the ample drainage pond. The new space offered a variety of

seating arrangements and well-shaded views of the lake. A narrower decking was extended to the outhouse, and another wider one led round the corner of the house out of sight.

George and Belle sat out with White Feathers under the spreading pine boughs one May evening as Harry played with his little boats in the pond. "The overflow channel is graveled," George traced its winding course in the air with his finger, "but I'd still like to set larger stones along it at the turns to reinforce the sides. I know the pond is deep enough to hold quite a bit of rain, but when we get a downpour..." he waved his hand as if wiping away the channeling.

"Please till the vegetable, herb and flower plots in the bends before we get one of those downpours, George." Belle reminded him, "I want to get the planting done as soon as possible. The garden area we've been using is already overburdened, and we have to have more food put up for next winter than we needed this last one."

White Feathers, who was watching Harry blow against the sails of his little flotilla of ships, remembered something he was supposed to ask his niece, "Have you heard back from your sister about your visit?"

Belle lightened, "She is expecting me a week from Friday..." she answered brightly, "plenty of time to get the other gardens planted," she smiled to George, hammering in her request like Harry on a nail.

Her uncle continued, "The reason I ask is that James, over at the livery, owed me a favor, so I took the liberty of asking to use his Chaise for a few days on your behalf. I just need to tell him when, and he'll harness up your horse and bring it round for you."

George was very thankful to White Feathers for his foresight and connections, and said so.

"Yes. Thank you uncle, thank you very much. As big as I am now, I really wasn't looking forward to bumping along on that horse's back," said Belle, clearly relieved from the thought of it.

"Well, if you're content with *that* arrangement," and he winked unobserved to George, "Will it be acceptable to you for me to ride along?"

“Oh!... that... is... w-wonderful,” she stammered and began to tear up. She snuffled back a sob and continued, “Every little thing just sets me to tears, or hysterics these days... I'm sorry,” she apologized. “It's just so thoughtful of you and George to take care of me so well... I just feel so... I-lucky,” and she whimpered a happy little laughing sigh.

The appointed visiting weekend came and White Feathers rode off down the road with Belle at the reins, leaving George and Harry to 'batch it' for a couple days. They had far more fun during Belle's absence than White Feathers had. But it was a good cause, and he actually liked spending the long weekend traveling with Belle. It reminded of the fond memories he had of their last journey together, years before to a little camp store.

When the visit was over, as they came round the bend in the river and could see home at last drawing nearer, there on the porch were George and Harry, grinning and waving like two witless simpletons. White Feathers handed Belle down from the chaise and said he'd take the rig on up to the livery. George and Harry were still just standing there with big dumb smiles on their faces and not saying anything. Belle suspected something but couldn't imagine what to expect from the two clever rascals following her in the door. She hung her shawl in the entry and went to the kitchen pump to wash her face and neck, but the pump handle was unpinned and just flopped uselessly in her hand. Her boys just burst out giggling at her expression of frustration. “Maybe you should use a different pump; that one's broken!” blurted Harry and walked through the great room and disappeared behind the hanging blanket in the corner.

“Okay George what's going on here?” she demanded, but George just looked up at the ceiling and hummed. Unsatisfied, Belle crossed the great room after her son, “Come out from behind that blanket and explain,” she pulled back the hanging herself and was suddenly facing a door that wasn't there when she and White Feathers had left. She heard Harry giggling on the other side, so she cautiously turned the knob and opened it half expecting to fall outside.

“Oh, George!”

While her tears were still rolling down her cheeks, Harry continued

her tour of their new 'bath' room, pointing out with pride the oval wooden washing tub and the new pump, which he just had to demonstrate as if nobody there had ever operated one before. Next was the 'terlett' that you could sit on and poop and not have to go out to the outhouse, 'ever again!' He just had to demonstrate this magical device. He pulled a chain hung from a tank on the wall, and water whooshed around and down in the seat-bowl and disappeared through an outlet in the bottom. "We have to fill the tank back up again after flush-uh-shing," the beaming boy explained. He climbed up the steps built in next to the toilet and refilled the tank with a bucket, already filled for that purpose.

Belle just shooed them out of the room and shut the door behind them. "I've been waiting to do this for the last ten miles," she shouted from behind the door in explanation.

"I am beginning to see what you're saying about 'a map'," said the young man, interrupting the tale.

"That is good. I suppose you will then observe how like it is to the progress of that musical analogy I mentioned earlier," answered the old man.

"Uh... no I don't follow you there. I mean, I get how such a web of events may ensue from a single point or condition," said the host, convinced at last of his understanding at least this bit.

"Oh, very good. Then let me point to the parallels to which I have just alluded--since you have that 'bit' under your belt," continued the guest. "Any note struck on the piano keyboard is a 'do' of a new octave, it proceeds a whole step to 're' and another to 'mi.' Then something curious occurs, it requires only a half step to achieve 'fa,' the next note in the series." He was pointing in the air with his fingers indicating the relative distances. "It is at this juncture that, for the course of the octave, a 'something' must enter, adding its own force to that of the already rising

progression. You can almost hear it in the tones.” He looked steadily at the young man's eyes for reception; it was not forthcoming.

He shifted tack again, “In the course of coming of age, marrying and having children, several 'octaves' are begun and run their gamut. It is with the children, the parents come to a place of needing some outside help. You have heard the expression perhaps: 'It takes a village to raise a child?' That in essence is very near the truth. Take the lifespan of one person as the years of an octave, say of seventy-two years, the length itself is irrelevant but for simplicity's sake, the intervals of the smallest whole numbered octave are: three, three, two, four, four, five, three---an octave of twenty-four. Do to Re is an eighth of the span of any length octave, in our example, in a life of seventy-two years...”

“So, nine years of age,” chimed the young man.

“Good. Re to Mi, another eighth of the same, up to eighteen years. Then the Mi-Fa interval, the half step that is harder to pass than what came before it.”

“Why should it be harder; it's a shorter distance, a smaller gap to cross?” queried the young man.

“I promise to explain that curiosity to your satisfaction, but for now let it be so; six more years to traverse, and often the hardest for anyone. Eighteen to twenty-four years, or so, of age. So much to consider, so much to remember, to plan, to choose.” He sighed. “Does one strike out on their own as did George, stay at home as did Belle, do what your parents did, or do something different with your life? Everyone comes to this gate, although many do not recognize it as such. If you are the parents, you must prepare your child for this eventuality, help him or her learn to reason, to see the world about them clearly, to expand the range of their options and therefore of their possible choices, and the list gets long but you perhaps have the gist.” He surveyed the young man carefully.

The host was clearly following his meaning plainly thus far, having clear memories of that time in his own life. “This is the responsibility of the parents,” he repeated, “to train their children to see clearly and to reason, to make sure knowledge is incorporated into their being, their own

experience, so that it becomes inextricably their own, thus ensuring that their world is expanded. This is what prompted George and Belle to negotiate for the 'education' of little Harry, not so much for the 'book-learning' but for the broadening experience, before they had lost the opportunities that this situation presented. People of true conscience always see ahead, while watching each step." He paused to allow the younger man to digest this much, then proceeded, "Once the 'Fa' is achieved, the octave of a man's life continues through Sol and La, about twenty-four years in which a man may have started a family and pursue the occupation, or sometimes vocation, he had already begun. However it is around Sol that another 'something' may enter, and he may begin to question his purpose, his direction: 'Is this all there is?' or something like it. Then over the next fifteen years, or so, he might also pursue answers to that nagging question, and thus have another line of his life initiated. Depending upon his resolve and effort, results from that pursuit may yield a path toward his own fulfillment. Thereby arriving at the 'Ti,' and his remaining years of life, continuing the role of grandparent, or service to his community and the like. Now, this is a very general picture of an average life, and as such, it can only point toward the usual occurrences of the life of a man. Different experiences in the midst of the life of any one person may allow for the commencement of any given stage earlier or later, but this is the broad outline which describes the majority of people."

"That's amazing. It never occurred to me that it was that complicated, er... simple... uh, you know. That when George and Belle struck that deal they saw the BIG picture, how did they do that?"

"As I told you, this is a tale of extra-ordinary things, people, and places. Yes, it is amazing; only that is, once you begin to see with informed eyes. Without real knowledge the world remains ordinary, commonplace, and random. Kind of drab actually."

3

Home

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”
--Benjamin Franklin

The guest continued, “In order to rise above the commonplace, to see the reality of the world around you with unfettered eyes, has been the aim of all philosophies, all religions. To know, means to know all; to know a part of something means not to know. It is not difficult to know all, for in order to know all you must have this very little, but to know this little—you have to have pretty much. So, we must strive to gain this pretty much with the idea of coming to this very little which is necessary for the knowledge of all.” He paused without a glance to his host. Looking into the horizon he recited a passage, first made public just after the turn of the century in the Caucasus Mountains by a most venerated seeker of the truth, “The Great Knowledge is handed on in succession from age to age, from people to people, from race to race. The great centers of initiation illumine the world with a bright light. The revered names of the great initiates, the living bearers of the truth, are handed on reverently from generation to generation. Truth is fixed by means of symbolical writings and legends and is transmitted to the mass of people for preservation in the form of customs and ceremonies, in oral traditions, in memorials in sacred art through the invisible quality in dance, music, sculpture and various rituals. It is communicated openly after a definite trial to those who seek it and is preserved by oral transmission in the chain of those who know. After a certain time has elapsed, the centers of initiation die out one after another, and the ancient knowledge departs through underground channels into the deep, hiding from the eyes of the seekers. The bearers of this knowledge also hide, becoming unknown to those around them, but they do not cease to exist. From time to time separate streams break through to

the surface, showing that somewhere deep down in the interior, even in our day, there flows the powerful ancient stream of true knowledge of being.” The chant-like quality of his voice mesmerized the host, who had also looked out into the horizon, trying to see the march of the ages come into focus before his own eyes. “It is this knowledge of being, this 'how' which has always remained so lacking in the various 'ways' pursued by so many. A balanced method provides the ideal path, whereby both halves of the whole individual are developed simultaneously. As being increases, knowledge may be added, with additional knowledge, being may grow... It is the reciprocal maintenance of the machine of man.”

After allowing for a sufficient pause to let the ideas settle into the young man's thoughts, the stranger cleared his throat and returned to telling the story.

“The girls were born, just as Harry had been delivered, with midwife and Belle's sisters in attendance. Again the ancestral voices were jubilant in well wishes and congratulations. George presented Titania and Hipolyta to Harry who was excited and proud at the same time when he held each sister as his father laid her his arms. White Feathers held each in turn, then both together, then passed one off to George, held one for a while, then traded with George, then took the one in George's arms back again so he had both once more. It went on like this for a few hours, until only Harry, who had been watching carefully, could say which twin was which.”

The bath room proved a great blessing to the growing family. Belle wasn't hesitant to bathe the girls every other day if it suited her, and she did. Even White Feathers liked to use the tub every week or so, which he often simply used as an excuse to nap. For the first week or so George was constantly checking for leaks. First the tub, then the toilet tank, then he'd go outside and crouch down under the addition and check the pipes. All was well.

Tania and Poly's crib was in their parents' room for first month or so and Harry wanted to know when they would get to stay in his room with

him. Belle looked to George to answer this poser. George took his son into the alcove with the workbench in it and set him on the stool in front of it. Laid out on the surface were plans for another room. Harry had spent so many hours studying the deck plans last winter, he could easily judge how big and where the new addition would go.

“Why do you need the workshop to be so much bigger?” asked Harry at length.

George was slow to answer, “Well, I tried to think about it as if I were you! I thought, if I were almost five years old again, where would I want another room to be?” he rubbed his chin as if reliving the thought. “And I thought, I’d want it beside my father’s workshop. Because, I thought, if I were almost five years old again, I’d try and talk my mother and father into letting me have ‘my’ room right there---where all the gadgets and shelves and tools and projects were always sitting.” He paused just a moment, “So that’s why I thought of putting the new room next to the workshop.” He finished by shrugging his shoulders and raising his hands, in exact imitation of Harry when he offered a solution of which he wasn’t completely certain.

Harry didn’t say anything to this, but continued to examine the plans in front of him. Then without a word, jumped down from the stool and ran through the great room. When he got to the kitchen, he cried loudly, “Mother! Can I please give the twins my room, because they don’t have their own room, and please may I have my room be in the new addition to father’s workshop... Please!?”

Belle stifled her giggle and kept a straight face as she said, non-committally, “You’ll have to make sure it’s alright with your father.”

Harry turned on his heel and before he took two steps, “Father! I can, can’t I? I can please have that be my new room.?”

George nodded his approval.

Harry turned back to his mother, “He says I can.”

“Well, I suppose you and your father ought to get started!” answered Belle with a grin.

Long before the summer had allowed the autumn to begin stripping the trees of their shade with cooler winds and rain, Harry and his father were moving the furniture around between rooms. They set up the girls' crib, chests of drawers, a rocker, and shelves in the room that had been Harry's. Then Harry arranged his new room to his own satisfaction, and then again, and then again. It seemed to be becoming his new past time, until he at last had used all the arrangements he could devise. He even made sure the workshop shelves stayed tidy and neat, and kept all the tools always in their places.

White Feathers sat in a chair out on the deck and watched as Belle and Harry harvested the produce of the additional pocket gardens which George had constructed at Belle's behest. He was very proud of his niece's husband. Each turn in the meandering overflow channel had been deepened so that when the pond spilled into it and ran down its course, puddles collected next to each of the plant beds. Then through a looser collection of gravel and rocks at the bottom of each depression, the collected puddles seeped into the ground beneath the fertile soils. No one had to carry buckets of water to keep the plants productive and thriving, except when they went for longer stretches without rain.

George was closing the store for the day and straightening his office. He had locked the door and turned for the house when his grandfather asked, *'When are you planning to start Harry's training? Your father and his brother chose not to pursue the tradition, they followed their desire for gold. It was very difficult for me, my heart nearly broke in two, I would spare you that pain, grandson.'*

George had been hoping to let their daily life settle into its new tempo before adding another set of rhythms to them. "You are, of course, correct Grandfather. Harry is sufficiently prepared internally, his heart and mind have been opened to the needs of others, his body is pliable, he is ready to begin. I taught and trained Belle before the children were born, I need not have postponed Harry's training so long."

'Be that as it may, remember:' Wang Lung recited, *'Once upon a time there was no donkey in the Guang. So someone from the Heavenly Court*

sent one there, but the farmers and peasants finding no use for it, set it loose at the foot of the mountain.

A tiger ran out from the mountains. When he saw this big tall thing, he thought it must be divine. He quickly hid himself in the forest and surveyed it from under cover. Sometimes the tiger ventured a little nearer, but still kept a respectful distance.

One day the tiger came out again. Just then the donkey gave a loud bray. Thinking the donkey was going to eat him, the tiger hurriedly ran away. After a while he sneaked back and watched the donkey carefully. He found that though it had a huge body it seemed to have no special ability.

After a few days the tiger gradually became accustomed to its braying and was no longer so afraid. Later the tiger became bolder. Once he walked in front of the donkey and purposely bumped it. This made the donkey so angry that it struck out his hind legs and kicked wildly.

Seeing this the tiger was very gleeful, 'Such a big thing as you can do so little!' With a roar he pounced on the donkey and ate it up.'

Wang Lung finished the story and George remembered how that story was told to him as a boy before he accepted his own training, and then he heard again the explanation he heard so long ago. *'We master the art because: in order to be able to unite the machine of man, all his lower centers must be active, strong and willing to surrender to the higher center's will. This must be trained in a man, it can not be left to chance. Otherwise he will be like the discarded Guang donkey, helpless before the forces of nature, and never recognized as the helpmate to mankind he was meant to be. We are the faithful, and humble bearers of truth. The wall around the house isn't only for the thief or the tiger, but to keep honest men from the temptations of riches they can not bear unassisted.'*

"I shall begin Harry's training presently," acknowledged George humbly. So, after speaking with White Feathers that evening at supper, and gaining his reluctant assent to *at least* sit at the store every day for while, and George was careful not to hint at what a *while* might mean, he began formulating Harry's study plan.

After breakfast the next morning George announced that he and Harry would go across the lake and be back in the afternoon. Belle smiled in relief that they would begin at last, and prepared a basket for their journey. When George had set the basket and fishing rod in the boat, he bid Harry to join him. As Harry settled himself in the bow, George began to row them out into the lake on the single oared craft. As he rowed, he told Harry the story of the Guang donkey, gave him the explanation and then continued to row silently until they reached the side of the lake. They anchored and George opened the basket, offered Harry bread and cheese, then began to fish.

Harry had listened to the story and its explanation which his father told, very carefully, and finally asked, "What training must I have, and how shall I build this wall that that keeps out the tigers, and protects honest men?" George wondered for a moment how many generations of his family had asked those very questions. He put away his fishing gear and explained the state of man's being, and the structure of man's machine, that it was a microcosm of the great world, and how it was supposed to function. Then he detailed the necessary steps which enabled it to perform as intended. At length, he sat quietly as his son absorbed as much of the information as he was able.

"When may I start?" asked Harry at last.

"Your mother and I have seen to the foundations of your internal training, you may begin external training when you wish." George added, "But it is not an everyday wish like, 'wishing for more pie,' it is a wish that commands your whole attention. When you decide to begin, there is no turning back, it would waste what you have already acquired and endanger your future desires." This was perhaps a lot for an 'ordinary' six year old to digest and accept, but Harry was not born to 'ordinary' parents and hadn't an 'ordinary' bone in his body.

"Today, I want to begin today." Harry resolved simply.

"Very well, you shall row us back then," answered his father.

Harry climbed to the stern of the boat and proudly grasped the oar and prepared to row. "Hold the oar like this." George leaned to him and

adjusted his hands. "Good," he said. "Now stand with your feet here." George set each foot into position. Harry dipped the blade in the water and pushed the handle out, then pulled the handle back. "Wait." George stopped him again. He got up behind Harry, and, reaching around him, placed his hands near his son's, then went through the movement once more. This time Harry could feel the boat propelled through each push and pull of the oar's motion. George sat back down and let Harry continue unassisted.

He pushed with all his strength, keeping his hands and feet 'just so.' Then he pulled back with all his strength, watching that his body remained in its posture and position. And so he kept at it, until his leg and back muscles ached and his arms and hands were sore. Every so often his father would direct him to repeat a push stroke, or repeat a pull stroke to keep their progress on course. Then ahead of the prow, he could see their tiny dock and their house in the trees beyond the edge of the lake. He pushed himself to greater efforts and got them back home at long last. As Harry settled the boat next to the dock, George commended his strength and his spirit before they tied up the craft and went up to the house. Harry slept very well that night.

The next morning before sunrise, George roused Harry from sleep, told him to splash cold water on his face, arms, and legs and meet him at the boat. George packed the basket into the boat and waited. Soon Harry joined him, took up his position at the stern, set his hands and feet into position and rowed them away from the little dock.

George instructed, "Aim for those two large boulders at the foot of that aspen copse just there, he pointed." Harry sighted along his father's arm and began the steady push and pull on the single oar, always keeping the craft headed for the two boulders. George lounged in the bow feigning sleep; but he kept careful vigilance on his son's form and progress without Harry noticing.

They finally reached the boulders. George roused himself and pointed to another spot even further up the lake to which he would next like to go. After the briefest rest and only a bite of bread, Harry was compelled to

begin rowing again, but this time with the oar on his left side instead of his right. A few moments of adjustment to the new position and they were making for the next destination.

Once again they arrived, and as before, George roused himself and pointed to another spot further up the lake to which he would next like to go. And again after the briefest rest and only one bite of bread, Harry was compelled to begin rowing once more, and this time with the oar back on his right side again. Three more destinations and three more changes from his right to left and left to right, three more bites of bread, and all the while with George seeming to doze in the bow. Then they were back at their little dock. It was only a bit after noon and Harry was ready to have some lunch, which his mother provided: a piece of fish, a hunk of goat cheese, and a small potato. Harry was too ravenous to question the menu. He set upon it at once and devoured the meager morsels.

When he finished, his mother asked him to please till a certain portion of the garden so that they could begin planting their autumn season vegetables. Harry fetched the gardening fork, with its long handle and tines and walked to their large garden area first, to begin his chore. Belle waited for him and with a smile, exchanged the garden fork in his hands for the small hand trowel she carried. He looked up at her in confusion.

“Dig this way,” she said simply, and setting the trowel in his hand 'just so,' showed him the expected motions. She left him squatting like a frog, tilling the garden. “Be sure to change hands every twelve strokes or so,” she called back over her shoulder, and he tilled the garden.

The shadows were lengthening and the air was becoming chill when Harry dragged himself back into the kitchen. “Clean the trowel please,” came his mother's voice from the great room. He dipped the tool in the bucket and washed the dirt and grime until it shone again. He laid it carefully on the counter and went into the great room. A plate of food was set out for him so he set down at the table raised a forkful to his mouth. He began to chew but promptly dropped off to sleep with the fork still suspended over his plate, his head only slightly drooping.

George smiled to Belle and she returned it with the pride they both

felt for their boy. He went over to where Harry still sat, took the fork from his hand and set it down, lifted him into his arms and carried him to bed, tucking him gently in under the sheets and quilts.

Next morning, and the next morning and the next, the routine repeated. Until a week later, when George went to rouse him as usual, Harry was not to be found. He searched the house, but there was no sign of him. As he passed the bay window and looked out, there was his son waiting for him on the dock, his hair still wet from the cold morning water.

George walked down to the boat, took up his position in the bow and they started off toward another part of the lake. Before they had gotten too far, without waiting to arrive where the boat could be steadied, George told Harry to shift sides of the oar. With a bit of fumbling, Harry switched to the other side of the oar.

“Wait.” George said aloud. “Shift like this.” He traded places with his son and demonstrated the movement. It was a fluid transition in which during his pull stroke he lowered his body, kept his back straight, swiveled on the balls of his feet and rose up on the other side of the oar without a splash nor the blade losing its powerful stroke through the water. “Here.” he said simply, and they traded places once more.

Harry took up his position made a couple usual strokes, then at his father's command he shifted sides nearly as he was shown. “Almost,” said George. “Set your feet first, then be sure the oar doesn't notice you've moved. Try again.” This time Harry complied smoothly and was on the other side of the oar with very little wobble. “Better,” his father commented. “Watch where you're going,” he added as they were drifting quite a ways off course. Harry had no sooner brought them back in course when George called out, “Shift.” Harry made the maneuver as smoothly as before and resumed from the new side. George settled into his usual posture in the bow and every odd moment or so would call 'Shift,' to which his son would readily comply.

Belle started Harry on planting. It was similar to his previous procedures and employed the same tool as before, but she asked him to begin from the same side of the garden each time. He followed her

directions and started to walk round to the other side when he had finished the first row.

“Wait,” his mother said, and he stopped mid-step. “Don't walk all the way around; walk back the way you came.” She demonstrated once. It was a squatting walk, though backward and without being able to see where she was stepping. “Mind you don't squish any of our tender new seedlings.” With that she went back to the house.

Harry found that it wasn't quite as easy as his mother made it look. He finally noticed that if he picked a spot beyond the garden, which was aligned with the row he was walking, he didn't wander so far off--Just like the way he piloted the boat.

Once more his routine didn't vary for days on end. Days became weeks and the weeks were looking like months. The gardening chores became floor scrubbing, and then became stick collecting. Instead of covering the ground in his squatting walk backwards and forwards, he was supposed to cart wheel or hand spring and pick the twigs with his hand, or hands, as he passed over. Then from his new spot do the same again without taking a step in any direction. It took several days before he was able to collect enough for one morning's fire, let alone enough tender for the winter as he had been directed to do. Every morning he was at the boat waiting for his father; every evening he could now stay awake through his supper. He was, however, growing bored with the lack of excitement his 'boat training' offered. And this built up inside him.

His stick collecting progressed, and he became very adept at always getting the twig he aimed for, sometimes two or three at a time. One afternoon several days later when his mother set him to his task, and as he sprang to his first twig, she called, “Wait.” He knew something was coming. “Do it backwards.” she directed and went back to the house. 'Do it backwards' he repeated sullenly. 'How am I supposed to see what I'm aiming for if I spring backwards?' he mused. He peeked over his shoulder and looked at the ground behind him. He fixed on a twig and leapt. Then he tried again. And again. And again. Although his first several attempts were miserable, he tried yet again. He looked over his shoulder once more;

after so many repetitions of going forward, he at last relaxed and let his trained gaze spot a succession of twigs amidst the chaos on the ground which would be in his path if he began to spring a particular direction. He leapt in a back handspring; a twig was under his left hand. He sprang again; another was in his right. He shifted the twigs to one hand in mid-air and grabbed the next one with the free hand, then landed. He looked into his hands at the twigs and smiled. He was still springing around the yard, backwards and forwards, squat-walking a bit between and leaping off on another tack, when Belle called him in for dinner.

The next morning when his father strolled to the little dock to begin his rowing practice, he didn't get in but stood immobile, not letting his father pass to the boat.

"Father," he began, having decided that he was not willing to row another stroke. "What is the point of 'rowing the boat' and 'just so' and 'shift'? He punctuated the commands in a vague mockery of his father's voice.

George didn't answer. He turned to the side of the little dock and grasped the fishing gaff leaning against a pier post. He held it by the gaff end with the handle pointed at Harry's stomach. Harry didn't know what to expect. George shoved the butt end of the handle into Harry's solar plexus in a sudden and quick short jab. The boy winced and bent over. "What did you do that for?" he exclaimed.

"Let's try again," said George calmly and without expression. "This time 'row the boat'." He jabbed again and said loudly, "Row the boat," as Harry's right arm deflected the wooden handle aimed at his chest. But George didn't stop there, he jabbed at the boy again, "Row the boat" he called, and Harry deflected the pole again, but from the other side. George pulled the gaff away and made a swinging arc aimed at Harry's head, and once more he called, "Shift." As the pole slashed at him, Harry went through the motion of shifting from one side of the oar to the other. His hands caught the arcing pole and tossed it harmlessly to the side. George swung quicker this time, calling "Row the boat," again it was deflected. The gaff in George's hands was a blur of jabs and arcs and heavy blows. Each

time he called out, "Shift," or "Dig garden," or "Pick up stick," "Scrub floor" or "Pick up stick backward." Harry was leaping and twirling, deflecting, blocking and dodging with every new onslaught. When after a half hour or so George at last paused, he set the gaff back against the pier post. Harry stopped too, still poised, balanced on one foot atop the last pier two feet above the deck of the little dock, the lake washing rhythmically below him.

"That's the point," said his father without any inflection of emotion, and he turned and walked back into the house. Harry blinked, realized his precarious perch and stepped down still stunned at the morning's developments. He steadied himself, went over to the boat, stepped into his usual position and cast off for a point of his own choosing across the lake. Every now and then he 'shifted.'

Autumn had indeed arrived. The girls were almost sleeping through the night. Harry did his chores and spent afternoons reading or practicing writing by making inventory lists for his father's store. Belle tended the growing girls, and wove silk fishing lines for the store, or blankets, or rugs. George ran the store and inconspicuously attended meetings of the village elders just to keep abreast of any developments which might impact his business. He and Harry built rods or bows and arrows by special order. White Feathers spent days, sometimes weeks at a time with the family, helping here and there with little tasks and offering advice, always graciously received. The ancestors had voiced their genuine approval of Harry's successful and ongoing training in mind, heart, and body. The gardens produced sufficiently for their winter needs. In short, life for the Livingsons was set to a pleasant cadence of peace and productivity.

The model of the Livingson's new additions---the bath room, holding pond and decks---sparked a local surge in home improvements through the village. Business at the little mercantile was up, along with requests for building suggestions and planning advice. Old Man Winter returned for another year and forced a hiatus in most outdoor activities and projects. Several other homes in the village and valley now boasted indoor bath rooms, and far less muck ran down hills into the rivers, streams and ultimately into the Tahoe. Belle was very pleased.

Over the dim cold days of December before the Christmas season was in full swing, Harry made an interesting discovery about his little sisters. While they were admittedly only six months old, they were sitting up and babbling to one another as they rolled a spool of silk back and forth to each other between their pudgy little outstretched legs. Naturally, Harry didn't find this so startling as when he picked up the ball of silk and hid it in his mother's weaving basket. When he came back a few minutes later, they were at it again with the same ball of silk.

He repeated the ploy four or five times before calling his mother to watch the remarkable activity. She observed the girls from the kitchen doorway as Harry repeated the experiment, and they did indeed wait until Harry was out of sight, fetch the ball of silk, and begin their play anew. Belle was smiling broadly when Harry came back to the kitchen for her comments on his discovery.

"Well," she said, "it's not really so different than what you used to do with your father's spools of thread in his workshop when you were about their age." Harry looked at her trying to visualize the event. "He was constantly searching for where he'd mislaid the things, and there you'd be rolling it off and scooting after it," and still smiling, she went back to preparing the supper.

The next time Harry just had to call his mother's attention to the girls' antics was just after the New Year. He had just changed their nappies and set them on the kaleidoscopic rug in front of the hearth with their blocks and wood rings scattered round them. He went to his room to get a book; he was going to read to them. When he returned, they were each at opposite ends of the large fireplace standing against the walls and gazing at the neatly stacked blocks and teetering wooden rings balanced atop, all on the rug they had just abandoned. Belle did voice a bit of surprise this time, but about the girls teamwork, then related to Harry some similar anecdote about his own toddlery. Harry decided that whatever his sisters did henceforth, he wouldn't trouble his parents with his own observations. This decision would lead to some singularly entertaining events for his parents in the months to come.

The first occasion, in early February, Belle had asked Harry to take lunch to his father in the store. Harry laid the book he was reading to the girls on the table as he left for his brief errand. When his mother came out of the kitchen a moment later to go to the bath room, her daughters were sitting on the table top flipping through the pages of the book. Belle quickly set them back on the floor and made a mental note to chide Harry for leaving them in such a precarious place. Next was when his father walked through the great room from the store to the workshop and nearly tripped head over heels from one of his cane blanks having been set between two chairs in the middle of the room while the girls were trying to wrestle down a hanging blanket from the wall near the window. As he caught himself and recovered his footing, they stopped and stared up at him with big green eyes and innocent expressions across their little faces. He reminded himself to tell Harry not to leave chairs and such in the walking paths of the house. The third event absolved Harry of the careless acts of which he had been blamelessly accused.

The vernal equinox was in two days and a celebration of sorts was in preparation at the Livingson house. White Feathers was helping George with inspecting the inverted boat hull for any needed repairs and preparing it for this year's coat of varnish. Harry was sweeping the gravel path from the house down to the boat dock. Belle was pruning boughs from the Tallows and dragging them to the wood pile for chopping. Tania and Poly were left to their own devices on the deck---Oversight One. Belle had left the front door open to the house in order to let the warmer breezes waft through it and freshen the rooms---Oversight Two. No one was keeping a constant eye on the twins---Oversight Three.

Each of the chores were completed nearly the same moment, and they each turned to survey the accomplished yard work, thinking one of the others were still watching the twins. A screech from the cat inside the house brought them all scrambling. The once tortoise shell-colored cat came flying from the kitchen completely covered in flour and streaked passed their legs. When they looked in, Tania was standing on the countertop near the pantry, a large sieve in her hands and flour still falling powdery to the floor while Poly was standing on the floor nearby with a

basket in her one hand and a spatula in the other. The white tracks of cat's paws made a confusing and complex path all over the space of the floor.

The breathless moment of silence and stillness while all six people looked at each other and the room was suddenly broken by Poly's voice saying clearly, "Cat ga-way!" Tania stood defiantly on the counter and nodded her head in solemn agreement. White Feathers broke into side-splitting laughter that soon infected the whole audience---All except the cat of course. The girls put down their weapons and allowed themselves to be carried to the bath tub where Belle began a cleaning project unlike any she'd ever expected. George and Harry started sweeping and cleaning the kitchen and White Feathers sat in the great room repeating, "Never seen anything remotely, ever even sorta nearly like those girls, 'Cat ga-way!'" and he'd burst out laughing all over again until he lost his breath and had to relax. The New Year had definitely begun upon some very uneven steps. It would be remembered as the 'Year of the Twins' hence forward.

The Summer Season descended upon the village with gusto in early June that year. The streams of carriages and carts approaching down the River Road from the train depot in Truckee flooded, then abated, then resumed again in sync with the schedule of the railway stops arriving from the west and from the east. The bungalows, summer houses, inns and hotels filled quickly and the streets were again a buzz with the ebb and flow of well dressed tourists and visitors sporting the latest fashions.

Harry sat in the chair White Feathers usually occupied, with his sisters on the bench next to it in front of the store. They sat quietly and watched the traffic as if it were a staged production on a grand scale. At last Tania was ready to do something else and grabbed Harry's hand pulling him into the store. Harry took Poly's hand and the three entered the doorway with the little bell above it jangling in welcome. Once inside, they loosed their grip on Harry and toddled around the counter into the rows of shelves. There among the bins, baskets and boxes they contentedly played with whatever fell in reach. Every now and then Harry would gather up the flotsam and jetsam, return it to its various special places and go back to sit on the stool at the counter.

June crept forward to the twenty-first and the twins' birthday arrived. No celebration in their honor would be complete without due homage given the long-suffering store cat who merited and received a plate of flake fish. The gifts went through a refined process of presentation and uncovering. Tania would bring it to Poly who would pound it on the floor then return it to Tania who would put it aside and go to the next one. The process repeated until all were thus inspected. Then one by one they surrounded each present and with little hands a flurry, revealed the contents before the wrapping paper fully settled back to the floor. The actual gifts themselves were of secondary importance and were pushed away to begin the next attack.

Surprisingly, when it came time for cake and they were seated on fat books at the big table with the rest of the family, Tania and Poly were the models of manners and courtesy. Merciless beasts moments before, now demure coquettes of haute culture at the dining table. The transformation was not lost on anyone in attendance, but no one said a word lest the spell were to be suddenly broken and the beasts returned with a vengeance.

Such was the Livingson's new home life. It was understandable then when one morning at breakfast Harry proposed they all go for a boat trip and picnic upon the gravel shoals at the southwest arm of the Tahoe. George visibly shuddered, and Belle sucked in her breath involuntarily at the casual suggestion; each looked at the other, shrugged and in surrender, assented. That afternoon was the twins' inaugural voyage.

Harry took the stern and oar without a second thought, George likewise the bow, and Belle sat amidships with a hand ready on either side in case of any suspicious movement made by the girls. The further they got from shore the more relaxed Belle became, lulled into a sense of ease by the twins' indifference to the passing waves and water. It seemed, like at the dining table, they had their own rules of conduct befitting any given situation; however inscrutable perhaps those rules might be and ever so mysterious in application. They seemed to calmly and genuinely enjoy the boat trip, and then they arrived at the shoals.

As the boat was beached and the picnic spread, Belle never once let

loose their little hands. They all sat down under a crystal blue sky in the shifting breeze of the warm afternoon to a pleasant nosh and nap. When Poly had eaten her fill and Tania was ready, they pulled on Harry's hands to go exploring along the shoreline. After a look of caution from his mother and a shrug from his father, the three adventurers ambled off. Everything was fascinating to the fresh eyes of the toddlers. Rocks were jewels, branches were boats, mud was makeup and leaves were for filling pockets. Harry was at least relieved it hadn't been some other combination. At last, bored with the treasures of the beach, the water beckoned. Harry tensed, poised to spring at the slightest provocation of need. But it didn't come. Poly splashed Tania who splashed her back. They plopped down waist deep in the shallows with their little legs kicking and splashing some more. They flung themselves onto their backs and lay there half submerged staring into the blue sky, a cat-shaped cloud looking back down at their beatific faces. That was their first of many excursions onto the Tahoe.

Another prosperous Summer Season for the village; the flood of requests and special orders resumed for Livingston Mercantile. Each customer hoping to have their order filled and delivered with enough time to build before the late autumn. Harry was needed more than ever to help man the store or to supervise his sisters when Belle managed the counter. In these capacities he was of course exemplary. Although it was a relief of sorts to simply be assigned to the office for balancing books, posting orders, and maintaining stock levels. White Feathers too, was pulled in from time to time as Sporting Goods Adviser, Extraordinaire. The title seemed to satisfy him as he lent advice from selecting worthwhile merchandise suppliers to employing his vast network of contacts for procuring hard-to-get items.

However much the village strove to avoid the season's stealthy approach through frenetic repairs, remodeling and renovations, Autumn, with its cooler nights and mornings, at last blew through the mountains in defiance of the protests of its quarry. Business slacked some and the pace of the little hamlet returned gradually to its former sedate tempo. Harry and his sisters were minding the store during a particularly un-busy early September afternoon when a certain letter arrived with the usual collection

of bills and receipts.

It was addressed to a *Mr. George Livingson, Livingson Mercantile, of Taboe City, California, USA*, and it had a return address on the back embossed on the envelope itself, from a company in Guongdong Province, China. As Harry admired the feel of the paper and exotic postage, his father came from the back of the store wiping his hands on a rag and smiling at his daughters' attempts at reaching the taller shelves by perching on one another's shoulders.

Harry offered up the unique envelope and watched expectantly as his father examined it. Although it first appeared it to be a routine receipt for a shipment of Tonkin cane, George noticed a familiar ideograph affixed below the return address and looked at Harry with an expression his son had rarely seen upon his father's face. He turned quickly and abruptly, then hurried to the residence side of the building. Tania and Polly looked after him, surprised, and Harry's mind raced to know what this could mean.

After locking the shop door, as they probably would have no more customers that day anyway he told himself, he pushed the girls toward the back of the shop, urging them to 'Find Papa and Mama. Quickly!' He entered the kitchen; his father was already reading aloud to his mother:

"...thanks to the attention of a trusted assistant and through direct mention of your being an instrument of referral; it is the usual practice of this company to reward our sales staff by commission for accounts added to our ever-enlarging business. It is therefore our intention, aligned with our established company policies, albeit qualified however indirectly, and in light of your own continuously regular orders and transactions, that you are to be awarded a like, one-time-compensation for the substantial export account established between our company and the Allcock & Sons Company of Redditch, England for the contract term of ten years, from date of signing, to which we now dutifully attend.

Propitiation has been assured by way of deposit to your Sutro & Company accounts in the amount of..."

His father suddenly stopped reading aloud. He simply stood gazing at an unremarkable area of the ceiling with the papers dangling from a limp

hand now hanging at his side. His mother was caught unawares it seemed by his sudden catatonia; she reached slowly for the letter which her husband still held, obliviously. She continued aloud:

“...to...accounts...the amount of £1.785 pounds sterling which at the rate of conversion, on the date of this writing, is approximately \$7,142.85 US dollars,” her voice rose perceptibly, *“this being our standard four percent commission on anticipated average annual income generated by the account, over the duration of the contractual term of that account, before possible renewal. A rate, by the way, only recently increased as a result of our own increased prestige and influence in this market.*

Please sign and remit the enclosed receipt for the said amount, that we may have a certified personal verification of your acceptance of this transaction and its terms.

Imperial Resources Export Company

Owner and President,

Wang Li Fong

encl. SASE”

Belle then stopped reading aloud. She simply stood gazing at an unremarkable area of the ceiling with the papers dangling from a limp hand now hanging at her side...

George and Belle recovered themselves enough to hear his great-grandfather relate to them:

“Once in the Song Kingdom there was a farmer, he always wished all good things would by chance fall in front of him. One day he was working in the fields when a wild rabbit ran headlong into a wooden post, snapped its neck, and died. He happily bent and picked it up thinking, 'If I can find a rabbit every day like this, I won't ever need to farm again.' So he discarded his hoe and everyday sat by the wooden post and hoped for another stroke of luck like the first. Days past ---but he had no such luck, and more and more people ridiculed this foolish man for his naivete.”

Harry, for his part, sensing that this was somehow a “good thing,” although not grasping the meat of it, never-the-less clapped his hands and nodded for his sisters to do likewise. His father and mother, roused once more to their children's presence, searched for the words to help the children understand their uncharacteristic reactions to this correspondence.

George began, “One of your Great-uncles still living in China has had to swallow his pride and give his renegade nephew a legitimate payment according to his own company's rules,” then aside to Belle he added, “That had to chap his miserly, soft little hands.” And he grinned in spite of their trying to always impress upon their children that it wasn't nice to revel in another person's pain.

Belle quickly followed with, “We have been given a gift, children, which your father and I did not expect. We were surprised by this sudden good fortune.”

“Well,” said George, “the first thing I need to do is send back the acknowledgement. If I don't handle that promptly, my uncle will sprout a few new grey hairs in that balding head of his.”

Their parents decided it would be appropriate for them to at least celebrate their new found wealth, a little. The kids could not have been more enthusiastic. They packed up provisions for an excursion and then laden with the necessary accessories set off in the boat for an overnight camp across the lake. They loved the opportunity to romp in the woods and splash in the water to their hearts content, away from under the curious eyes of the town folk. The children enjoyed it too.

After they were exhausted from the afternoon's fun and supper was cleaned away, they tucked the children into bedrolls and sat next to each other by the glowing campfire.

“Really George, besides the girls' education, what *should* we do with this money?” asked Belle evenly.

George's reply was slow in coming, “Lizette, what do you think?”

Well, this is not the first time in our memory that there has been

silver from heaven, so to speak... she began.

Then Wang Lung said in agreement, *'Indeed not. Yet the question before you isn't a simple one, for the consequences of any given event that enters our lives remain, often, as unforeseen as the event itself.'* That was thought provoking.

He continued, *'Once upon a time, there was a wise old man who lived in the steppes. He owned many horses. One evening, after a long day of working in the fields, he came home to discover that one of his horses-- a mare--had run off. His family and his neighbors searched the surrounding area. When they finally gave up, they sent him their condolences, "We are sorry that this unfortunate incident happened to you." The old man of the steppes remarked calmly, "The loss of my mare is not necessarily a bad thing. All will be shown for its true worth in time."*

The next morning, the old man of the steppes looked up in the horizon and saw two horses coming towards his house. The first horse was his mare that had run off, and the other was a stallion following the mare. Even from a distance, he could see that this stallion was a war horse of great stature and worth. He quickly inquired at the county office whether anyone had reported the loss of their stallion. The county magistrate advised him to keep the horse until someone had reported it missing. That evening, the old man's family and his neighbors celebrated the return of his mare as well as his newly acquired stallion. At the celebration, he was called upon to make a speech. The old man of the steppes stood up and remarked calmly, "The acquisition of this stallion is not necessarily a good thing; all will be shown for its true worth in time."

A week later, the old man's son took the stallion out for a ride. Not being skilled in maneuvering a great war horse, the boy suffered a terrible fall. As a result, his leg was broken. The old man's family and his neighbors crowded around the boy and commented, "This is an awful thing that has happened. This stallion has brought bad luck to the family." The old man of the steppes stood by the boy and remarked calmly, "This accident is not necessarily a bad thing. All will be shown for its true worth in time."

Sometime later, the kingdom was involved in a cruel and unjust war with a neighboring kingdom. All the young men of the kingdom were called upon to enlist in the army. The old man's neighbors lamented as all their sons were called off to fight in the war. It was impossible to escape the draft as the enlisting officers moved from county to county and house to house in search of all the young men. Inevitably, they finally came upon the old man's house.

Seeing the stallion in the yard, they remarked to themselves, "This must be the home of a great warrior. But why has this coward not gone off to war? We must seize him at once." When they searched the house, they found only the old man of the steppes, his wife and their crippled son. The enlisting officers then remarked, "This young man would have been a fine soldier if it were not for his broken leg. We cannot take him with us." And thus, their son was exempted from fighting in the war. The old man's neighbors, observing with amazement then declared, "What wisdom this old man has, that he can foresee both good and bad incidences for what they are truly worth!"

Belle and George were sincerely appreciative for the 'advice' their counsellors gave them. Although inwardly they felt as uninformed as before. It was a while before they settled upon the proper way to approach the decision. It was clear at least, that the sudden windfall wasn't *necessarily* the great boon they initially presumed it to be, but that they must act as good stewards of the unexpected addition to their resources.

When they got back home and the chores had been tended to, an idea which had been forming in the back of Belle's methodical mind finally took shape as she gazed at the empty field across the side road through the kitchen window. "George," she called, and her husband came in from the porch prepared for the next episode in his daughters' ongoing parade of mischievous antics.

"What, what is it?" he said looking quickly round the room.

"George, I think I've found a use for some of the windfall at least." She briefly sketched out her plans, which formed spontaneously as she gave life to her latent ideas by speaking them aloud. When she concluded, she had

explained the need, the response, the costs, the effort and the maintenance of her proposal. George was impressed.

The time-consuming plans and operations' directions were at last ready for presentation to the Tahoe City Elders for their consideration. George registered his name and purpose for request to the schedule of deliberations for the next Council Meeting, then resumed his not unusual daily activities until the appointed afternoon arrived. When it did, White Feathers walked in, a little late, and caught some of George's presentation.

"...At no profit to myself or business." George was saying, "I have provided a list of supply contacts and materials, so that you may organize and execute this plan without fear of any perceived partiality.

For our part, Mrs. Livingston and myself will push ahead with the construction of the bungalows, to be situated in the empty field across from the Mercantile, which shall serve as both a test case and working model for your own deliberations and actions regarding the adoption of a village-wide water supply and sewage project."

George thanked the panel for hearing him out, gathered up his papers, and handed the secretary the lists he mentioned. The Elders, in name only, discussed the matter amongst themselves and adjourned the meeting to retire to Mandy's for a drink and further talk. White Feathers came forward and gave George a pat on the back and said, "Even if they don't go for it, Belle's idea for a Bungalow Inn is outstanding. Wait until the tourists discover they have running water and bathrooms in their own little homes away from home! It's a stroke of brilliance." George agreed, of course, and they walked back to the house to break the news that it was a "Go."

"...And we could have a couple goats, and a few sheep, so we'll have our own wool, and cheese..." Belle was excitedly promoting the enterprise to Harry, Tania, and Poly, when George and White Feathers joined them in the great room. She turned to them without pausing, "We'll need a fence around the bungalows to keep in the goats and sheep during the day. They'll keep the grass low and such. We'll have to install boardwalks, like out back, for the patrons. Sheep will be sheep! Tania and Poly will move

them to the fold at night and to the grounds in the mornings.”

She had definitely been working out some of the little details, George thought delightedly. All George had to do then was create a plumbing system. Great. “Right up my alley,” he mused. White Feathers was just pleased to see Belle so excited and in command. He was instantly reminded of his sister, Lizette Charbonneau, a formidable woman to say the least.

George had been musing over the water supply issue. The plans he'd given the Council were for tapping the springs well above the village in the mountains and piping the supply to a series of holding tanks which would provide plenty of constant water pressure. That option wasn't available to Belle and himself, property rights issues and all. His first inclination was to pump from the Tahoe, but because tourists and other visitors generally came for the natural beauties of the area, that seemed a little crass. The next thought was the Truckee River, yet again how to install a waterwheel or other equipment without spoiling the fishing and scenic qualities. At last it was down to 'old reliable'---a well and pump. But as the goal was running water, not hand-pumped water, the solution had to be a windmill and elevated tank instead of the pumps they were used to using. The railroads had brought down the costs a bit through the sheer volume of their business with drillers and manufacturers.

“What's on your mind, George?” White Feathers was looking at him. “You worried about keeping sheep and goats? Because I have some experience with them and it's not so formidable and you might imagine...” he chuckled.

“No, sorry. I was thinking about the running water for the project. I think I'm gonna have to use a windmill and tank.” answered George.

“I know it can't be that difficult a process, the railroad's been using them for years without a hitch. Seriously George, have you met some of the railroad fellows over in Truckee? If they can make a go of it, you *surely* can.” White Feathers assured him.

“You don't happen to know any drillers among your vast network of contacts?” asked George off-handedly, not really expecting a reply. He was

just thankful that White Feathers was always so encouraging of his plans and ideas.

"S'matter of fact, there's a nice fella, just outside of Truckee, owes me a favor of sorts. He's a driller, well, uh... that's kinda part of the favor... it's a long story. When do you want him here?" smiled White Feathers.

Surprised again by his long time companion, George replied, "The sooner the better." Although first he'd need to order the windmill head and pipe, casings, packer head, rods... He went to his office and searched for that Halladay catalog.

Since the water supply was the last puzzle piece for Belle's Project, and he'd already drawn up the plans for the structures; if they could just get the septic 'tank' pits excavated, post holes dug for the piers, trench for pipes, and if White Feathers's driller 'fella' was available so that the well got drilled—all before the first freeze; well that would rate as a modern miracle, he concluded. "September tenth today, first frost mid-October, freeze soon after... barely a month!" George and Harry began ordering the lumber from the local sawmill, he found the Halladay order materials and sent off his requests. Then made orders for sixteen basins and faucet sets, four toilets and tanks, four bath tubs with shower hardware, and eight wood stoves. He sent Harry to the village's coopersmith with his specifications for the water tower tank and cover. Belle was already making curtains, tablecloths, sewing linens for sheets and other bedding niceties, and miscellaneous what-nots for the four double bungalows.

"Your driller will be here day after tomorrow," announced White Feathers when he came in for breakfast the next morning. "I hope you know where you want it to go," he added.

"The part of the field that gets the steadiest breezes is up near the main road; so I suppose that'll have to be the spot," answered George.

"At the road!" Belle exclaimed, and George thought he'd made a glaring faux pas. "That's wonderful. We can paint the name of the "Livingston Bungalow Lodges" right up there on the tank! It's better than a street level sign by a long stretch." She was very pleased indeed; George sighed in relief.

“White Feathers?” George began, disliking to wear out his friend with endless requests, “Do you know where I can get a couple carpenter crews, say... twelve men, on very short notice?” he asked sheepishly. “We were going to just put up one bungalow, at first, before the Winter shuts everything down. Harry and I could have done that... barely within time. But since the best way to recoup the initial investment on this venture is to take advantage of next Summer Season's business... well it just makes sense to have all four doubles ready to go.” He added in defense.

“Twelve!? Are you sure you don't mean forty?” countered White Feathers, his eyes widening.

“Well of course forty men would make it go extraordinarily fast, but I think twelve skilled men would do just as well.” George tried to sound positive.

“I can get twelve, so long as you don't mind Chinamen and Indians...” answered White Feathers with a straight face.

Belle and George looked at each other then at White Feathers, who couldn't keep his straight face any longer. “No,” said George evenly, “We'll take what we can get.” They all laughed at the group self deprecation.

“I suppose you want *them* here by tomorrow as well?” challenged the old man.

“Well, the lumber orders *are* already with the saw mill, and the first load *is* due, so... we *could* start any time...” muttered George.

“I've said before that 'Knock on the biggest door' is a good rule of thumb. I'll see what I can do,” concluded White Feathers. As soon as he had finished his toast and coffee, he announced, “Gotta go move a mountain,” excusing himself from the table.

By the start of the last week of September all the digging had been completed. Both the supply and the drain piping runs were in place, which included the deeper trench under the crossroad to their own house and their own now-larger septic pit. George had insisted upon repeating the gray water holding pond idea at the bungalows; it caused less stress on the septic pit, and it was pretty. Belle had no argument with pretty. All the

piers were set and the foundation beams were affixed, including those for the boardwalks and commons deck. The carpenters examined George's plans while he explained the stages of construction, adding that once all the pier and beam foundations had been finally checked for absolute square, all the structural pieces could be pre-cut and stacked at each of the four pad sites. "Then it will be left to each team to assemble the structures." He mentioned that the team with their structure up first, and provided that it met his quality inspection, would receive a bonus. That met with everyone's hearty approval. The morning after the pre-cuts were stacked in their places, the friendly competition would begin. They wasted no time setting to the first task.

Meanwhile, George assembled the windmill, its tower, and the elevated tank's structure. He had a stroke of luck again in that the cooper offered to erect and install the tank himself, for a very reasonable additional fee, and would then warranty his work against defect. That was one less worry for which George was glad to be quit. The Halladay equipment was, as White Feathers predicted, not at all difficult to install, and promised to be relatively simple to maintain. When those structures were up and functional, George turned to re-piping his and Belle's house. It just made no sense to fit the bungalows with running water and not have the same available in their own home.

The four bungalows, with their eight front doors, faced into the center of the 'commons' deck. Each bungalow was divided into two suites, one per side, with a common bathroom between. Each suite consisted of a generous sitting room/kitchenette furnished with a wood stove and wash basin, table and chairs, and an ample bedroom with large bed and wardrobe. There was a connecting hallway at the front of the bungalow between the two sides, which allowed each suite access to the central bathroom. That wonderful room was furnished with two basins, a toilet, and a single large tub/shower. Large windows and transoms brought in plenty of light, and offered pleasing views of the surrounding mountainsides and forest.

By October twelfth, the first bungalow was 'provisionally' completed.

The anxious team members followed George through the structure as he took measurements, checked for piping alignments, opened windows, swung doors, stomped on floors, pounded walls, and to be absolutely sure, set the twins loose on the place.

The other crews ramped up their own efforts on the off chance the first team's attempt failed inspection. Tania and Poly, monitored by Harry, were surprisingly unable to visit any substantial damage to the building. And so to the artisans' delight, George announced that: it 'Passed.' The remaining buildings were very soon completed as well since there were additional hands available when each building in turn was 'Passed.' On the afternoon of the fifteenth of October (after the morning of the year's first frost), the wages were paid, bonuses awarded, and the Livingston Bungalow Lodges would be ready for the Summer Season.

When they crossed the street for home that evening and walked into the kitchen, White Feathers and George gathered Harry, Poly, and Tania between them. After all the arranging, planning, ordering, and the weeks of construction, they watched in silence as Belle turned the faucet handle for the first time and clear water spouted from the tap. Belle's beaming grin was worth every moment of all the efforts made to pull off the 'modern miracle.'

“But when will we get...” began Poly.

“The goats and the sheep?” finished Tania, which prompted both laughter and tears of joy. Dinner was a real celebration that night.

Over the next months, George, Harry and White Feathers installed the wood stoves, fixtures, and faucets while Belle began decorating, with the help of her two assistants. George and Harry set the picket fencing, side gates, and erected the Grand Entrance. It was decided, by Belle, that a massive arbor gate would be the appropriate welcome onto the Bungalow grounds, with a graveled entry area leading to the stepped boardwalk and commons deck featuring, as at their own house, the hyacinth bordered ponds and sitting area.

They finished out the nearest Bungalow first, as a permanently available residence for White Feathers. He was so overwhelmed at the

gesture, he announced his acceptance unconditionally. George and Belle just gaped at this. “And, if you need a manager in residence, I’ll consider that too!”

“How much do we charge for the other rooms?” asked Harry innocently.

Belle was ready. “Nothing’s for sure until the money is in the bank, but as a projection, and knowing no one else has indoor plumbing: it’s three dollars a day up at the Inn, and their weekly rate is twenty dollars, but Mandy has the restaurant, tea room, and saloon right there as a convenience, but not included in the rate. No one, even the proprietors over in Glenbrook or McKinney’s have monthly rental rates. So, if we contract with Mandy’s restaurant for a meal plan per bungalow at five dollars a week, purely as an additional amenity, we could charge a total per suite of at least thirty dollars per week. *And* if we take her overflow, she can keep the five and we still end up with twenty-five dollars per week, or four dollars daily booking... without meals naturally.”

The glazed expressions of the family, forced her to rephrase. “If we are full during the Summer Season, we’ll be putting \$1,400 against the costs we incurred building the bungalows...”

“\$1,828.57 for all materials, labor and bonuses,” contributed George, promptly.

“Leaving \$428.57, after the first season, still remaining to repay ourselves from the loan we made against our windfall deposits, which are for Titania and Hipolyta’s future education and must be repaid,” she stated. “I posted advertisements a week ago to the papers in Sacramento, Virginia City, San Francisco, Reno, Salt Lake City, and Carson City. I thought that would be a good start.”

It was a really good start. Letters of intent, with deposits, from across the three state area and beyond arrived in short order. By the first week of the new year, they were booked for the Summer Season, and had additional bookings for the Tahoe Tournament in the Spring—an unanticipated additional \$175 to defray construction. Belle reorganized the office in the hardware store to do double duty for the ‘Lodge Office,’ and

with Harry, she set up the necessary account ledgers and booking sheets.

The rhythms of the household gradually settled into the domestic cadence, mildly interrupted over the late Autumn and early Winter. The Tallow seeds had been harvested by Belle and the girls early during the construction weeks, and now could be rendered for candles and soaps. George built up the supply of blanks and rods for the store racks. Harry had a new list of books. Mr. Allcock, true to his promises, had forwarded the required reading for aspiring College entrants, which he acquired from the University directly. To this 'down payment,' Mr. Allcock added a package which contained the *American Dictionary of the English Language, Webster-Mahn, Unabridged*. On the inside cover he had endorsed:

21 April, 1876

*For Henry Livingson,
upon his Seventh Birthday,*

*The chief virtue that language can have is clearness, and nothing detracts
from it so much as the use of unfamiliar words.*

---Hippocrates

Use this constantly and it shall, over time, become less needed.

Mr. Samuel Allcock

White Feathers took up his residence of Lodge One, "Just to be sure everything works before the guests arrive," he justified to the knowing smiles of George and Belle, who were very pleased he was comfortable. Tania and Poly shadowed anyone doing anything and they watched everything.

There were those few who lived in the little village of Tahoe City who had not embraced the Livingsons as full members of the community, but had merely grudgingly accepted their lesser place in the economy of the town, though with unreserved suspicion. The inauguration of the Livingson Bungalow Lodges was a step too far for that cadre of individuals who, through ignorance, fear, or arrogance had long suspected that the continued encouragement of the 'Chinaman and his squaw-woman,' by the rest of the civic population would lead to dire consequences. The

announcement from George at the Council meeting, after his presumptuous offer of assistance as 'adviser' for dubious civil improvements, and that he would then 'push forward' to become a hotelier, as a *model* for the rest of them, was the last straw. He had finally shown his true colors, 'exceeded above his tolerated station' to compete with the established families of Tahoe City for a share of *their* tourist dollars.

The hurtful comments and slurs directed toward the Livingsons, by those same shallow people which had for years been seemingly benign, now began overnight to rise in pitch and derision. It should be acknowledged and understood that this was truly a small minority of the villagers. All, but those few, not only accepted the quirky little family but enjoyed their company and respected their accomplishments as peers in the common struggle with the elemental forces: time and nature, which dogged all of humanity alike. But that small minority, as has so often plagued the history of societies from ancient times, were also the wealthy power brokers of the little village, and though the town was small, their wealth had grown immense from the annual advantages taken of the affluent tourist trade dollars. They were a club of elitists and jealously guarded the gates of admission into the folds of their number. They were also, of course, the body of the Town council. Yet they were faced with a conundrum: how to sabotage the upstart's enterprise without soliciting collateral damage upon the stability of the village's good reputation as a welcoming and pleasant retreat, as it was still viewed by the flocks of visitors for whom they yearly played host.

George and Belle busily carried on with preparations for their first guests, soon to arrive for the Great Tahoe Tournament, not once suspecting the undercurrent of resentment rising toward their newest endeavor. Until one morning,

White Feathers had not yet joined them for the morning's coffee and chat; Harry was rousing the twins and helping them dress for the day. George had just swept the porch and Belle was in the kitchen when Wang Fong offered a story to accompany them in their early chores.

'One day a tiger was hunting around in a forest. An unlucky fox was met and caught by the tiger. For the fox, the inescapable fate was very clear -- death. Despite the danger, the fox thought hard to find a way out. Promptly, the fox declared to the tiger, "How dare you kill me!" On hearing the words the tiger was surprised and asked for the reason" The fox raised his voice a bit higher and declared arrogantly: "To tell you the truth, it's I who was accredited by God of the forest as the king of all the animals! If you kill me, that will be against the God's will, you know?" Seeing that the tiger became suspicious, the fox added: "Let's have a test. Let's go through the forest. Follow me and you will see HOW THE ANIMALS ARE FRIGHTENED OF ME." The tiger agreed. So the fox walked ahead of the tiger proudly through the forest. As you can imagine, the animals, seeing the tiger behind, were all terribly frightened and ran away. Then the fox said proudly: "There is no doubt that what I said is true, is there?" The tiger had nothing to say but to acknowledge the result. So the tiger nodded and said: "You are right. You are the king."

“What a clever story,” remarked Belle to the ancient, in kindly appreciation. For his part, George was uneasy by his grandfather's choice of timing and subject. But as he didn't have any cause to doubt that the venerable one's intentions weren't mere entertainment, he also thanked him humbly. Lizette then was a bit more direct:

'In the long years before any European first set foot upon the trail to this land, a great chief, who was a cunning warrior and man of knowledge, led his braves to attack the treacherous people of dark mountains. As their stronghold was strategically located and very difficult to access, the great chief's braves could not take it in spite of great efforts. The chief got extremely outraged and said, "Once I get into the stronghold, I will have all those in it buried alive."

Soon his words were spread throughout the dark mountain stronghold. As the defenders feared that it would really happen to them, they waged a desperate resistance. As a result, the great chief's band of braves found it even harder to win the battle. They made months of attempts to get in but in vain. The great chief became more uneasy and consulted with his wisest advisers for a scheme.

At that council, an ancient and revered elder rose from his seat and said, "The 'hunt after the badger' tells us that we should not put the enemy in too tight a corner, that the enemy should be left a way to survive. But now we have been trapping our enemy in a deadly noose. What's more, you have declared to have them all buried alive. This will only make them battle desperately against us, for they would rather fight to death than be buried alive. I perceive the enemy has almost run out of supplies. If we now give them a ray of hope by leaving an opening in the noose that tightens upon them, they are very likely to surrender to us, for they would rather survive than fight to death for nothing."

The great and wise chief thought the idea quite sensible and ordered his braves to do as the ancient one suggested. As had been foreseen, the defenders in the stronghold soon crossed over to the great chief's side, and the dark mountain was finally seized without a cruel fight.'

Once again Belle voiced her appreciation, but this time, like George, she was uneasy about the subjects and timing of their counsellors' anecdotes. White Feathers strolled in to take his accustomed seat at the table in the great room. Tania and Poly carried his coffee and plate of toast and jam from the kitchen and served him like an honored guest. His eyebrows rose a bit at their ministrations; Harry told him confidentially that they were practicing 'courtesy' in preparation for the coming guests.

Almost as if on cue, they received an impromptu visit from the restaurant proprietress, Mandy Hill. It wasn't wholly unexpected, as Belle had made an a tentative appointment with Mandy to discuss the 'meal plan' arrangements earlier considered for the Lodge's patrons. Mandy was welcomed warmly into the house, and seated at the table in great room. Tania and Poly once again served coffee and offered her plates of toast with butter and jams. Miss Hill was charmed and delighted at the attentive service presented by the adorable girls and said so as she graciously accepted the proffered victuals.

Mandy Hill was the still unmarried, and only child of Horatio and Betsy Hill, Council members and owner-operators of the Great Tahoe Inn. They had once tried their hand at matchmaking 'on behalf of their

daughter,' when Mandy was in the early blossom of her young womanhood. They had unsuccessfully paired her off with the son of a wealthy San Francisco family who annually frequented their Inn. Although the young man was handsome, promising and attracted to the young beauty, her tastes were for a more wholesome and ruggedly capable ideal for a mate, not the moony-eyed heir to wealth and fortune. So, in disappointment of the hopeful schemes of both sets of parents, the match fizzled and faded without consummation. Mandy was then consigned to working in their restaurant as her parent's revenge for her blatant and insensitive ingratitude toward their sincere attempts to secure an advantageous alliance with the prestigious family. Mandy however exceeded everyone's expectations through her exceptionally level-headed thinking, and eventual prosperity in the restaurant business. Mandy Hill was now a respected restaurateur with no little acclaim in the circles of gourmards and critics alike across four states.

"I wanted to get to talk with you sooner, but last minute preparations for the Spring Tournament business has detained me," she opened sincerely once Belle joined her at the table.

"I am beginning to appreciate your position;" sympathized Belle, "we have not yet entertained our first guest, and I'm finding less and less time to accomplish the few tasks remaining."

"I'd like to say, 'you'll get used to it,' but that would be disingenuous, there is always 'something else to do' in the service of public hospitality which one has not anticipated," assured Miss Hill from long experience.

"Thank you, Miss Hill, for the forewarning. I had suspected as much; it is very kind of you to confirm those suspicions," answered Belle tactfully.

"Please call me Mandy. Only my staff and gentlemen are constrained to address me as 'Miss Hill'," she confided with warmth. "Now, about the proposition you said you wished to discuss?"

White Feathers, who had followed the ladies' tete a tete without interruption, rose and excused himself with his compliments to each for their hospitality and attractive company, then he was out the door.

Belle laid out the ideas she'd formulated for the conveniences of her

future guests. Explained clearly, as she had done with her family, the costs, benefits, and allowances which might be arranged, and then sat quietly for her new friend's considered response.

Mandy simply surprised Belle then with a counter request to first inspect one of Belle's bungalows, "As I mull over the proposition," she added. They walked together down the front steps, across the side road, around the white picketed fence and up to the Grand Entrance beneath the water tower emblazoned with: *Livingston Bungalow Lodges*. It was a more circuitous route from the house to the bungalows, but designed so that Belle could show off as fully as possible the realization of her hopes and designs. Tania and Poly, naturally, followed along as erstwhile escorts for the ladies until they reached the entrance where they bounded up the couple steps onto the boardwalk and scampered toward the sitting area of the commons deck around the hyacinth rimmed pond.

"This is an impressive and at the same time pleasantly inviting gateway you have contrived for your entrance," remarked Mandy candidly.

"Thank you for saying so," answered Belle, obviously flattered. She described, as they went forward, the designs behind the situated bungalows and her and George's plans for further landscaping and decorating. They reached the door to Bungalow Seven and producing her keys, Belle unlocked the door and held it open for Mandy to enter.

Mandy walked into the suite's sitting room and at once began to admire the careful attention to décor Belle had lavished upon the room since the completion of construction. The windows on either side of the reassuringly immovable cast iron franklin stove were dressed in expertly woven curtains of traditional Shoshone patterns and colors, augmented by the appealing designs in the hanging blankets and spacious area rug over the polished hardwood floor. All of that in turn complimented the warm hues filtering through the un-shuttered windows and transom. The humble items of furniture were likewise adorned and though of un-dimensioned fir and cedar were none-the-less alluring for the expert craftsmanship of their construction and polished finish. An appropriately proportioned matching table stood between them holding a single oil lamp. On one of the side

walls was set a cabineted sink-basin with attendant knob and faucet, which Mandy immediately went to test. The clear fresh water spouted into the basin and chased itself into the sink drain. White linen hand towels hung within ready grasp and a dish with hand-cut marbled soap sat also in close reach.

Delighted with her guest's reactions, Belle said, "In here is the bedroom," and motioned to one of two brightly lacquered doors on the wall to their left. Once again, Mandy was enchanted by the native design and inviting comfort of the appointments. The bed frame echoed the sitting room's furniture design and manufacture; the quilts and pillows carried on the patterns and colors introduced in the other room as well. The wall opposite the door was dominated by a wardrobe whose dark, lustrous woodgrain shone in counter-point to the amber tones of the floor, valise stand, and night table with its reading lamp and small book of verse at the bedside.

"Enchanting," cooed Mandy as she was led on.

"Through here is the shared bathroom," Belle intoned as she opened the passageway door and moved proudly toward the main attraction.

Mandy stepped through the second threshold into the tiled room beyond. A large claw foot tub with shining steel shower head, faucet and knobbed valve, all curtained in white linen greeted her immediate gaze. On the wall near at hand, on either side of the doorway were cabineted sink-basins, each with its own knobbed valve and tap, and again accessorized by the hand towels and dishes of hand-cut soap. Then her eyes took in the last object. There it was; that marvel of modern engineering: the toilet. Mandy moved with unabashed curiosity to the piece of porcelain furniture and without a moment's hesitation, pulled the little chain dangling from the tank. 'Whoosh,' water spun into the bowl and after swirling round and around, disappeared into the drain at the bottom, then gradually refilled itself with clear water until it was again as it first appeared.

"Ta Da" said Belle in humble pride.

Mandy Hill was atwitter. "May I... I mean would you mind if I...?"

Belle recognized the nature of the unformed plea, intuitively

acknowledging that a woman's practical interest in the modern achievement stood in contrast to a man's academic appreciation; she said, "If you don't mind, I'll just go and check that the twins aren't into any mischief." Thus excusing herself, she left Miss Hill by herself in the little room. Miss Hill quickly closed and bolted the door behind her hostess when she was merely a pace or two away down the passage.

She emerged from the door of the bungalow a while later, smiling broadly in satisfaction and ready to resume their discussion of the dining propositions. Soon they rose from their seats arranged around the hyacinth rimmed pond. They shook hands on the mutually successful negotiations and strolled back to the Livingson house proper. Poly and Tania now walked as vanguard to the ladies as they mounted the porch steps, bid each other good day and parted.

Miss Hill walked along the boardwalk next to the house and store and came to the street at the front of the hardware store. George and White Feathers were in conversation at the open door. George raised his hat in greeting to Miss Hill and she returned his smile. "Mrs. Livingson has graciously taken me on a brief tour of your new bungalows. I am thrilled for your prospects of success."

White Feathers smiled at this. George thanked her profusely for her kind words. Another exchange of well wishes by each party and she continued up the boardwalk toward her restaurant. A few doors up she was greeted by Simon Hasting, one of the village's struggling business owners and long time friend of her father's.

"Good morning Mandy," he began, "and how have you been getting on with the chinaman and squaw?" he said with open contempt for the Livingsons. Then he looked away from her to George and White Feathers still discussing something of import in the doorway of the Mercantile.

"*Notoriously*, I should think, by your tone and vulgar language," retorted Mandy, then she sniffed and wrinkled her nose as if catching whiff of an offensive odor and pushed past him without a backward glance. Mr. Hasting grinned unchastened at the back of her and went on upon whatever errand he was bid. The next villager to cross Mandy's path before

achieving the doors of her own establishment was the grocer's wife, Eunice Stubbins. Mrs. Stubbins asked about the absence of potatoes in Mandy's most recent list for the restaurant's resupply.

"...Taters are a flexible backbone to every versatile menu..." she prattled, unaware of Mandy's rolling eyes and quiet sigh. Eunice then looked down the street to the new water tower and its painted marquis advertising the 'Lodges.' Mandy followed her glance and was about to boast of her recent tour in the new bungalows, anxious to to share her experience with some friendly ear; when the woman remarked snidely, "I can't see where they get off, putting on airs and assuming they can just buy a station in the community that's so obviously above their rank or right place!"

Mandy shivered. Mrs. Stubbins, still oblivious to her affect on her listener, added, "Can you believe it?"

Mandy Hill, in an exertion of will to remain civil, said, "I have just come from an inspection of the Livingson Bungalow Lodges," she carefully phrased, "and was graciously received, properly entertained, and handsomely impressed with Livingson's sophistication and good taste. Lavished, as it were, on the upholding of this village's standards of excellence and good reputation;" she paused, "So valuable to our native industry," then curtly added, "Don't you agree?"

Mrs. Stubbins opened her mouth as if to rebut Mandy's observations, but being without any other ammunition than her own myopic prejudice, ignorance, and baseless claims to superiority, snapped her jaw tight, turned on her heel and waddled back to her store, wagging her head as if in heated abuse of some mutton-headed underling.

Miss Hill entered her dining rooms and looked over the linen clad tables and meticulous place settings, unpinned and lay aside her hat, flopped down into the nearest chair and brushed her hands briskly across the fabric of her dress as if trying to dislodge the narrow-minded balderdash spewn upon her by the 'respectable' folk of her home town. Mandy had never succumbed to frustration in any form, and promptly marched through the kitchens to her office and wrote out a contract of

services between herself and Mrs. Livingson.

After explicitly listing the terms to which they had agreed; Mandy included a caveat: *On at least one weekend per month, Miss Mandy Hill shall be entitled to the use of Bungalow Seven, when absence of prior bookings make it available; in fair exchange: the Livingson family shall be entitled to complementary meals of equal value, from the current menus, and in the comfortable dining rooms of Mandy Hill; at times of their own choosing.* Pleased with her contract and amendments, she sealed the document into an envelope, addressed it to:

*Mrs. Belle Livingson,
of the Livingson Bungalow Lodges
Main Street and Lakeside Road
Taboe City, California*

and marched back to the front entrance.

Mandy waved to a young boy playing at hoops with a little friend and bade him carry the letter down to the hardware store and deliver it to Mr. Livingson. She pressed a nickel into the boy's eager hand and told him get some candy for himself and his pal after they made the delivery. The boy nodded enthusiastically, waved his pal to his side, and they both scurried off down the street waving the letter like a flag in their haste. "That's 'one' for us Belle!" she said with a gleam. "There'll be no misinformed provinciality here, by god; or they'll answer to Mandy Hill about it!"

White Feathers came round the corner from the front door, reached into the kitchen and handed an envelope to Belle. He grinned and left again. As he passed the window to the kitchen, he saw her reading the envelope's address. He whistled a little tune and crossed the street to the lodges in search of Harry on an errand he had too long put off. He had watched, months before, as the boy and his father spent weeks rowing around the lake, which had culminated in the amazing display of gymnastic prowess before his own eyes as sole witness to the performance down on the little boat dock. Meanwhile he had also observed the curious antics in which Harry engaged during each episode following his great-niece's

directions for his accomplishing the otherwise unremarkable chores around the house. His thoughts had matured to concerns, and his concerns finally moved him to action. White Feathers never rushed to judgement about anything. He found Harry dutifully finishing the white washing of the fence pickets at the far side of the Lodge grounds. He waited for the last plank to get its coat of white paint and walked with him back to the house.

“I couldn't help but to have noticed your ongoing athletic pursuits of late,” he remarked evenly, “and I was reminded of a story that was already old when it was told to me as a boy.” He continued as they sat on the deck behind the house, looking over the hyacinth-rimmed pond, and out to the lake. Then he began, “In the long years before any European first set foot upon the trail to this land, a great chief, who was a cunning warrior and man of knowledge, led his braves to attack the treacherous people of dark mountains...”

Belle opened the envelope and carefully read through the contract's terms she and Mandy had agreed upon. Then she came to the caveat. Belle's good humor and constant smile which she carried all the rest of the day was the product of the pride she felt at being party to an understanding between two like-minded women: Mandy and herself. She looked forward to surprising her family with the fruits of that relationship when they sat down to some future meal.

Unfortunately it is in the nature of some predators, that they will prey upon the weakest and most vulnerable to sate their desperate hunger. With people, it is not so very different. A person obsessed with the vindication of insantly held ideas or prejudices will often select the convenient surrogate for venting their tensions of the built up frustration. That victim will, as in the rest of the examples from the animal kingdom, be the one perceived to be weakest or most vulnerable; a child instead of the parent, a pet instead the family for example. Perceptions and reality rarely match.

The next indicator of the rising tide of ill will toward the Livingsons, which if it had been at all anticipated they did not need to wait long to encounter, occurred on the first evening after the arrival of the Lodges' inaugural guests. Each of the aspiring Tournament competitors, four with

wives in attendance, had been settled comfortably in their bungalows and informed of their dinner arrangements at Mandy Hill's, whose dining rooms opened at 6:30 for dinner guests; the saloon adjacent the dining hall was of course almost always ready to entertain customers, though only remained open until midnight. Harry was appointed by his mother to gather the diners at a quarter to seven at the commons deck and, at least for their first evening, escort them up the street to the restaurant.

At the designated dining hour, Harry dressed nicely and announced to the assembled guests, "If you wish, I shall be most pleased to escort you to your evening's suppers; those of you not otherwise engaged may follow me." And with that he led the little party out the Grand Entrance and up the boardwalks of Main Street toward Mandy's. Some of the shop owners were just locking up for the day as Harry strode by them with his entourage in tow. Simon Hasting, seeing the boy dutifully in service to the out-of-towners, commented to Augustus Stubbins after they passed, "Well at least they know what there place is: serving! Nothing good may come of the 'Lodge,' but it's a good sign at least the mutt knows *his* place." The grocer nodded in agreement, muttered something about 'probably should make sure,' put his keys in his vest pocket and shuffled quickly toward his own home not far away.

Harry brought the group to the front entranceway of Mandy's and held the door for them as they filed in, then closing the door after the last was through he passed around the little knot of people in the foyer and looked for Mandy. He caught her eye, waved an arm to indicate the guests he'd brought for dinner and returned outside. He'd almost gotten to the corner of the building when he was stopped by some winded youths coming out from behind the corner he approached. He recognized the three as: Tom Stubbins, Jake Hasting, and Barney Edelton. They were often seen around the candy shop extorting a fee of candy from the smaller children as the littler ones exited the shop, or they could be found over at the main lake dock throwing rocks at geese and ducks.

"What've you been up to *boy*? All dressed up, and so far up the street from the hole where you belong?" interrogated Tom.

“I was just escorting our guests to dinner was all. And now I am going home for my own supper,” answered Harry evenly. He edged towards the gap left in the circle around him between Jake and Barney; he instinctively glanced just over his shoulder down the boardwalk.

“Well you best get on home and don't ever be up this far on the street again, unless you want some trouble...” finished the bully with a shove that pushed Harry through the little gap. Harry sighed and started to walk away.

“Young Harry!” Mandy had put her head out the entrance to her restaurant and without looking around at all, called out, not knowing if she had caught up to him in time.

Jake Hasting grabbed Harry's sleeve and said loudly, “Hey mutt, she's talking to you! Don't ignore a woman when she's aspeakin' to you! You need to larn some manners!” The hand grasping Harry's sleeve wasn't even disturbed as the youth who so misspoke was slapped so violently, he, for a moment, lost memory of his grandparents. Harry turned back and looked at the shaken miscreant that had slurred him and then up at the imposing figure of Mandy Hill, hands upon her hips and venom in her stare.

She gave the young man a moment to relinquish the sleeve still tight in his fingers then stated clearly and loud enough for his mates and anyone one else out at that time to hear, “You will keep a civil tongue in your foul little mouth, or there's more where that came from! Don't even begin to tell any one else about 'manners!' I don't know from whose foolish talk you picked up that misapplied epithet, but you will do well to remember this: you and your little friends are not even civilized humans yet and until you learn to treat others as you would be treated, I pity you the knocks and bruises in store for you, and not just at the hands of a 'woman' next time;” she glared at them one at a time, “Now get on back to your homes and don't *even think* of repeating such a foolish stunt!” she added.

Turning to Harry she said in a *much* gentler voice, “Harry please take this envelope to your mother; it contains a set of schedules for the restaurant's hours and a set of menus which I will be sure to update for her as needed. I thought it would be useful to both of us if they were made

available in the bungalows for your guests.” She smiled, placed the package in his hand and bid him, “Good evening now.”

Harry returned the smile with a, “Thank you Miss Hill,” which broadened her own still happy expression and he walked in a steady and unhurried pace back home for dinner. He couldn't help but look into the shop windows as he passed along the boardwalks, and enjoyed a little 'window shopping.'

The next event in the village's education came the next day. The Tournament was still a couple days off, and the stream of hopefuls continued to fill up the remaining vacancies in the hotel, inn, and boarding houses. During the interim, until they might try their skills on the lake, many of the men and women entered for the competition spent their late mornings and afternoons going on hikes or boat tours around the Tahoe, gaily brunching together at the cafes, or browsing the shops of the village. It was on one such occasion during this last mentioned avocation, that two visiting gentlemen who had arrived only that morning, accompanied by a third--one of the bachelors staying at the Lodges--happened into Hasting's Equipment Store to peruse his stock of angling tackle. It should be noted that these three were long-time acquaintances from shared fishing and hunting trips made together over the years. Each was a fine sportsman in his own right, but to Mr. Hasting's chagrin he approached the one sportsman in his store, perhaps then present in the entire Tahoe lake region, who had for several years made his living as Wilderness Guide and Instructor, in short: a Professional Sportsman.

“This rod is one of the best crafted fishing equipment in the state of California,” said Hasting and handed a pole to one of the gentlemen for his consideration. The Sportsman received the proffered rod, noted the brief specifications inscribed on it indicating its intended line weight, length, and date of manufacture, then he carefully looked over its construction, made a flick of the wrist gesture to test its flex and handed it back to Mr. Hasting.

“Not only is this poorly crafted--note how the threads of the wraps bulge over the burrs left on the guide feet, and the gaps between reel seat,

grip and hardware---now listen:" and he pulled on the rod to separate the two pieces which made not a sound at the parting.

"Smooth as glass," Hasting said with relief, thankful that at least the product had some redeeming quality.

"But it shouldn't be!" the Sportsman countered, "There *should* sound a pop like the uncorking of a bottle of wine. As I said, this is a poorly crafted specimen. And to address your second claim, namely that its equal can not be found in the reaches of the entire state. I am indeed surprised by your ignorance of the presence in your own community of an internationally renowned rod-maker, *and* not fifty paces from this very spot! Might I direct you just down the boardwalk to the Mercantile? There you will find not this sad pole's equal, but its lord and master!" The Sportsman exclaimed; then added, "I'm sure the tackle you sell is adequate for the leisure fishing interests of the tourists or stray visitor who might of caprice decide to 'go fish a bit, since there's a lake here and all,' but do not impugn the truly exquisite work of master craftsmen by putting *these* on offer for anything but what they are."

Mr. Hasting excused himself quickly but politely, "I must attend to the other customers." Although the few 'customers' in his shop at that moment were all staring, transfixed by the Sportsman's invited commentary of the fishing pole.

Once outside, the Sportsman led his two friends as he had just indicated, fifty paces to the hardware store. There he introduced them to George as avid fishermen who, although they might not be ready to purchase, would still enjoy admiring his available supply of finished rods. George smiled and indicated a rack of rods inconspicuously set between a shelf of painting supplies and a rack of gardening implements. The Sportsman glanced in the indicated location and looked back at George with an uncertain grin. "The rods of your own manufacture, please."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. This time of year and through the summer I just set out the equipment I've taken in trade. You know, get rid of it to tourists and such who don't really fish, 'but as long as the lake's here and all,'" in imitation of the typical off-hand comment from the casual tourist. "Follow

me please gentlemen; again I apologize for the misunderstanding.” George led them between shelving to the hallway and sitting room which led to the house proper, and there on individually carved stands were displayed six completed rods, and next to them, in a rack of their own, unfinished blanks.

“Take your time gentlemen, I must return to the counter, 'business to run and all'.” George excused himself.

They watched in surprise then as George absented himself of their inspection to tend his other duties. One of the two men who had been led to see these specimens, observed, “Well, he *definitely* has a different take on peddling his wares than did that Hasting fellow.” His companion nodded vigorously in agreement.

The Sportsman then, with just respect, removed one of the finished rods from its perch. “And look at this; you'll see why he doesn't need to 'peddle' anything!” He carefully put it into the hands of the friend nearest him who received it in the same reverent manner and began an inspection like the one in which they had just been tutored at the other store.

“It's so light!” was his first comment.

“Good. Go on,” encouraged the Sportsman.

He commented aloud as he began. He looked closely at the wrappings—all so tight as if having been painted on instead of painstakingly wound in crimson silk, and he pointed out with admiration the barely three threaded intermediates—extraordinary precision there. He noted the lack of any indications of misalignment or gaps. He was fascinated by the inlaid dark wood designs fretted into the lighter woods of the grip and reel seat, the glow of the polished silver hardware, and the subtle power in the simplest flex.

“Very good, indeed!” responded the Sportsman to his companion, who smiled in spite of himself at the praise. “This, sirs, is one of the finest rods made in America. Then he received the rod reverently back into his own hands, and with a deliberate motion pulled the two segments apart at the ferrule. 'POP,' echoed in the little room as if a vintage champagne had just been uncorked. “I have tried many, but none compare, to this.”

"You've been here before!" The up until then silent companion exclaimed. "Why did we have to be dragged into that Hasting fellow's shop at all if you knew Mr. Livingson already?" he insisted, clearly rankled.

"But I had not laid eyes on Mr. Livingson before we walked through that door." The Sportsman defended himself, "While on holiday in Scotland, I was offered a go with one rod of Livingson's construction, by a British gentleman who boasted of its unparalleled performance. Skeptical to be sure, I used it with admirable success and devout appreciation. It was he who informed me of the rod-maker and his 'little hardware store in a little village in California.' No name for the craftsman, no specific name of a town given. Cagey, I thought him. He must've had his reasons for the mystery." The Sportsman continued, "Then this Tournament; I was entered and rooms arranged for me by a former client in repayment for services rendered. I am staying in the Bungalows across the street---by the way, very modern. It was only then that I noticed the hardware store here, in this little village, situated in California."

"But that's mere coincidence; there's a hardware store in every town from here to the Pacific," pointed out one of his companions.

"True," the Sportsman allowed, "But do those stores have a Cantonese proprietor and a Shoshone wife? Those were the only specifics I could wheedle from my curious British friend," he intimated. "So when we passed the hardware shop window this morning and Mr. Livingson appeared to be oriental, and I already know the proprietress of the Lodges is an elegant Indian woman with adorable children by the way. This just had to be THE hardware store, in THE little village. Therefore Mr. Livingson—THE world-renowned master rod-maker!" He rested his case, as it were.

"Well reasoned sir!" "Indeed, very well thought out." congratulated his friends.

"Of course," the Sportsman continued, "You may imagine my momentary dismay at seeing those 'trade rods' he at first indicated..."

The three gentlemen returned to the front of the store and Harry, who had been listening carefully to every word at the kitchen door, and struggling to keep his sisters from barging through, went round outside to

the storefront also. As the gentlemen gained the counter and faced George, Harry came quickly in and sat on the stool near his father. The Sportsman was carrying the same rod they had just inspected. Harry stared up at him unblinking.

“Mr. Livingston, I am most interested in negotiating for the purchase of this rod,” the Sportsman began.

“Would you also care to see a small selection of reels?” was George's response.

“You build reels as well?!” The three gentlemen almost said in unison. Harry was sent to the workshop for the four brass reels they had finally finished during the last winter.

The Sportsman and his companions, after completing satisfactory negotiations and making due payment for rod and reel, went back to the Hasting's Equipment Store. Harry again followed discreetly. He heard through the open door the Sportsman's voice as he called Simon Hasting to inspect 'the lord and master' of fishing rods. Harry pressed his face to the corner of the shop window and could just see Mr. Hasting's face next to the Sportsman as he was guided step by minute step through the inspection. Harry saw his eyes grow large and unblinking at the craftsmanship being explained and reviewed in front of his blank face. Harry looked away as the gentlemen approached the door to exit the shop, but heard clearly, and remembered ever after as long as he lived, the parting words the Sportsman left with all in earshot, “Mr. George Livingston is a Tahoe City treasure. To have as your own neighbor: a world renowned, internationally acclaimed Master Rod and Reel Craftsman should fill every citizen in this village with immense pride---just at his residence here, let alone his acquaintance.” Harry was nearly in tears he was so proud of his father he could have whooped and yelled in elation, but that his throat was so choked with emotion any noise louder than a squeal was quite out of the question.

When the three gentlemen departed and had gone on to their own entertainment, Harry heard Mr. Hasting growling to anyone who'd listen, “Who does that guy *think* he is anyway; to tell *us* who's important and

who's not?!"

The tall man next to him, who had listened to the entire exchange from when the Sportsman and his friends returned and left, said simply, "He *thinks* he's Buffalo Bill Cody, and he's right! You didn't recognize him? He's in the papers often enough?" The tall man shook his head in pity at the shopkeeper and walked away.

It took more time for a squirrel to run out of the road in front of oncoming traffic than for the news of the Sportsman's lecture to Mr. Hasting, nearly word for word, to spread through the village into the ears of every citizen and almost all the visitors. Harry ran home, tears streaming down his face and with a grin that might become fixed, to tell every one in his family who the Sportsman was. Too late of course. His mother knew; she had checked him into his Bungalow. His father knew; he'd accepted a bank draft signed by the famous scout. White Feathers already knew because he had ridden with the young Bill Cody years before in 'Johnston's Army' through Utah.

"Well here's what you don't know then!" And Harry related all of the overheard conversations, word for word as he'd heard them. The family was jubilant. Poly and Tania danced in little circle holding hands and chanting one after the other, "You're adorable. You're adorable. You're adorable. You're adorable." The others looked on and laughed.

"Well, *Mr. Adorable*," said White Feathers to Harry in mocking humor, "Suppose you and I go and take the boat off the stands and fit it out for its maiden voyage of the season." He looked to George, "The varnish should be cured now?"

"I should think so; I'll come along," replied George as he rose to follow.

"Come on 'Dorbles,' we have a few chores of our own," Belle called to the girls as she headed to the doorway. "We get to plant flowers this afternoon." She reached for her gardening apron which hung on a peg near the front door with the hats and scarves and such. Poly and Tania skipped passed her through the front door and gathered up three garden trowels from the bench outside the entry.

Belle had spent the morning assembling trays of assorted flowers from beside the meandering overflow that emptied the pond when heavy rains filled it past its rim. They were still planting and arranging beds when a few of the guests returned to their quarters preparing to freshen up for the evening's dining occasions. The Lodge-Mistress and her two little helpers had already laid Mandy Hill's Dining Hall schedules and menus on the sitting room tables in each bungalow, as Mandy had bid them, before tackling the landscaping projects they were now finishing.

The Tournament came and went without incident, dispute, or accidents, and the village gradually settled into the final preparations for Summer Season. Only in fairy tales does 'a *whole* village fall in love with its new favorite son, and live happily ever-after.' Those who already enjoyed George and Belle's company and advice had now a sense of validation for their historical intercourse. Some of those who merely held grudges due to business competitions, now welcomed the celebrity of the little Mercantile and talked about 'how much better business has been this year with the Livingson folks' store just down the street and all' whether a real uptick had occurred or not. And those remaining, very few, who through bigotry or sheer ignorance had despised the little family's presence in the village, now had to be very cautious indeed to at least never *publicly* hint at any lingering misgivings regarding the Livingsons they might still privately harbor. So whether it was from new-born genuine respect, or 'the Tiger behind the Fox,' villagers who once avoided Belle's eyes when she strolled the boardwalks on her errands for 'Home and Lodge,' now greeted her and the girls genially, warmly even respectfully. The effect was not lost on Belle, and new-found pride swelled in her breast for her husband's elevated status and recognition among the citizens--so long overdue. Harry, too, was able to walk the length of the Main Street up one side and down the other, care-free as you please.

One weekend in mid May, Mandy Hill at last was able to exercise her option on Bungalow Seven and so enjoyed her restful and rejuvenating stay, she couldn't wait for the next month. She did feel some remorse and conflict at hoping against hope there'd be a cancellation that would give her sooner access, but she rose above it. The next incident of note arose

from so unexpected a source, it set the family on their chairs, so to speak. It was still a week or so to go before the first round of tourists descended upon the village. George and Harry were transplanting a few of the Tallows and installing 'locally obtained' shrubs, ones they'd relocated from around the lake that is, into the bedding areas Belle and the twins had prepared. Belle had taken Tania and Poly on a walk to gather certain plants and roots to restock her pantry and medicines chest. This left White Feathers to his own devices at the store and in the house.

As the various projects and expeditions wound down and the family came at last back into the house to clean up and change for supper, White Feathers sat at the large table in the great room with a glass of tea in his hand. Not just a glass of any tea--Iced Tea. It took a little while of jangling the glass and tinkling the ice shards before all eyes were upon him. He pretended nothing was out of the ordinary in sipping the cool suspension, until they surrounded him at the table.

“What's that?” asked Poly.

“This is Iced Tea,” answered White Feathers simply, “May I get you some?” he offered in a humble voice of service. In answer to her nods and those of Tania and Harry, he stood up from the table, stretched languidly, and slowly took step after slow step into the kitchen. The pantry cabinet had been moved over just a bit and now tucked between it and the counter was an unfamiliar new wooden cabinet. He pulled on the latch handle of the top of the two stacked doors, reached in with a scoop and filled three glasses with clear tinkling shards. He hung the scoop back on the inside of the door and re-latched it. He reached for the pitcher on the counter, and then filled the glasses with tea. It wasn't until the children were each served that George and Belle stopped holding their breath.

“Where did that come from?!” demanded Belle once she'd resumed respiration.

“Which?” White Feathers intentionally vague, “The cabinet?” he paused, “Or the ice?” still keeping his lack of expression innocently.

“The cabinet,” “The ice,” said George and Belle at the same time making the response sound like 'cabinice' or 'iceinet'.

White Feathers and the kids laughed at that and he repeated the performance. He put glasses of the refreshing beverage into their hands and walked back to the large table in the great room. The family sat around him waiting for the explanation. White Feathers definitely knew how to work an audience.

“Well, I got to thinking. What does a family with a modern, up-to-date home and luxurious bungalows still lack which might push them into the highest reaches of advanced civ-il-i-za-tion?” he punctuated. “An 'Ice Box,' I answered to myself.”

He admitted in an aside, “Actually, I got the idea from Mandy, she has *huge* ones.”

His expressions had been the model of salesmanship until that last gaff, “In her kitchens!” he added quickly. Hoping to recover himself, he pressed on, “And how are they to have ice whenever they so wish? I responded.”

“Yeah, how are we to have ice whenever we wish, Great-uncle?” asked Harry, pulled into the story hook line and sinker.

“Good question, young Harry,” the old man praised with a hint of a smile now creeping into his delivery.

“Last winter before the spring had stolen my opportunity, I went round to that shallow sheltered cove, one of the few places where the Tahoe freezes each year. I cut out block after block with a saw, bundled each into straw and greased burlap, added more straw then nestled each into its own hide bag. I borrowed that trick from a surveyor I once assisted. You see once when he was compelled to survey across a lake for the feasibility of a bridge or something or other some engineer had dreamt up, he filled these bladders with air, tied them to ropes with weights dangling from them and had me place them at intervals along the water to assist him in his solving distances or such. Anyway, I paddled out into the Tahoe and one by one, making trip after trip, I submerged my treasures in the lake. It took me a while to figure out how much weight to use...” he held up his glass of tea and pointed near the top, “Ice floats, you know.”

“What about the Ice Box Cabinet?” insisted Belle.

“That was the easy part.” He leaned back in the chair as if relaxing from a hard day's work, “I had the entire resources of the store at my disposal last autumn on all those days y'all were busy on the Bungalows. So, bit by bit, slowly, day after day, I assembled the cabinet. I just covered it with a stretch of cloth and left it next to the plaster sacks and mortaring equipment against the wall. Thankfully, no customers ever bothered to look under there for anything.”

“You have been planning and preparing this over the last six or seven months!? And we never even noticed or suspected!” whistled George, inspired by the story.

“Not a hint.” White Feathers finally grinned wide in his victory.

“How can we make this available for our guests, too?” mused Belle aloud. For her, most everything still revolved around her latest and on-going project.

“I've already taken care of that.” If possible, White Feathers grinned even broader. “There are now smaller versions of your Ice Box in each of the Bungalows!” He waited for the cheers; there were once again only expressions of wonderment to meet his gaze. “I suggest you leave notes on top of them, or something allowing each guest to indicate their wish to have them filled or not, day to day.” He added resignedly.

“In all the bungalows...” whispered Belle with resumed shock. “We were just over there this morning. When did you take them in without our noticing?” She challenged, stumped by the information.

“Last week, actually.” answered White Feathers casually resuming his posture of relaxation. He started to add, “I hope you'll like where I positioned them,” but no one was listening; they had all gotten up suddenly and were bolting to the Lodges to see the additions for themselves. He took his time getting up from the table and ambling after them.

They wandered from room to room around the Lodges. Belle was delighted to tears. George pointed out that after the experiences with their first round of guests he thought it would be instructive to post signs in the bath rooms as well, indicating the need to avoid putting anything other

than the guests' personal contributions and *only* toilet paper down the bowls. He had become the village's first 'toilet unstopper' and he was pondering some method which would preclude his own hands being soiled in the efforts.

It became, coincidentally, one of the warmest summers the village had experienced. So the Ice Boxes were always filled. White Feathers's supply of ice blocks was nearly exhausted before the last week of August, which prompted discussion of an alternative plan to the tedium of retrieving the blocks from beneath their scattered holding buoys in the lake. He and George excavated a deep cellar and after sealing it against leaks then further insulating bins within it to receive the next summer's supply, decided they would also reuse the initial method as well, though with fewer buoys.

George did come up with a way to unclog a toilet which, in spite of instructional signs, would every so often demand his attention. His inspiration arose during one family outing upon which Tania and Poly snapped up some reeds and with laughter and a good deal of collateral soaking, sprayed water supposedly at each other through the hollow stems. It acted like a elementary lesson for George's quick mind. When they got back home George assembled a gasketed bulb, a pipe and bellows into an effective de-clogger. When the device was submerged to cover the drain in the toilet, working the bellows forced air and water through the drain to dislodge 'whatever' kept the thing from draining. *And* he no longer got his hands dirty.

The gardens were harvested for the last time before the late fall frosts and the family prepared for the winter. George had custom rod orders to fill and set Harry to the task of sectioning and planing the strips while he directed the girls in wrapping the guides, strippers and tips. Belle introduced her daughters to the amazing craft of weaving to which the twins took with enthusiasm and creativity. White Feathers turned his hand to cooking, encouraged by Mandy to turn simple dishes into feasts. He'd never given it a go before but was ready to try anything once. It turned out he was pretty good at this too.

“It's getting late, we can stop here for the day if you wish,” the host offered encouragingly.

“That is a reasonable suggestion,” answered the guest; he stood up and stretched again before asking, “How may I help with supper?”

“Well, I do have a few questions... if we could chat as we prepare the meal?” queried the young man.

“Again, a reasonable suggestion.” And the elder man followed his host into the kitchen.

“I'm not clear on 'what is being?'" asked the younger man.

“Hmm, let us take as axiomatic that man has a dual nature: His physical and his spiritual self. Let's also say that these two over-arching aspects of himself may further be examined as the dual nature of his physical self and the dual nature of his spiritual self. A human is born with certain features present from birth: his hair color, skin tone, eye color, etc. all the genetic make up of his corporeal existence. And there is what he may acquire: a refinement of movements, responses to his environment, and such. These two subcategories of his physical nature, we can call essence and personality, what he is given and what he acquires.

It is similar when we examine his spiritual nature. He is given the capability of emotions and conscience, and he may develop intellect and reason, respectively; we can also call these two subcategories of his spiritual nature essence and personality, something given and something acquired. Essence is a 'given,' it should not be expected to change over a lifetime, at least in regards to the physical being of a man. But that is not exactly the case with the 'given' of his spiritual nature. It can easily be observed how a person's emotional construction may evolve, his belief systems shift, that is to say the *meanings* of his knowledge can change. This 'given' may indeed be modified. While the acquired information itself, the repository of data, whether correct or incorrect, comes and goes through the doors of memory ad infinitum if you will.

After emotion, conscience is the other spiritual, or inner world 'given' of human nature. Yet herein lies the rub. A conscience, in the strictest

sense, is that faculty of man from which compassion, sympathy and empathy, remorse, and the noumenal force of love proceed and which lead inevitably to selfless actions in response. It is also the seat of self-consciousness and through proper use, knowledge of self--the springboard to acquiring impartiality and objective reason. Unfortunately, man does not know how his machine is put together, let alone its proper function and use, so the conscience of man is buried under an individual's crust of 'civilization,' dormant for all intents and purposes. We do not feel as we *ought* to feel, think as we *ought* to think, and so can not act as we *ought* to act. I do not mean according to some preconceived standard of feeling, thought, or action—I mean our machine doesn't function properly, it is flawed, and so we *can not* feel, think, and act as we could if the machine ran well.

“So it stands thus: our conscience is buried, so our *being* is merely the sum of the entire machine's processes occurring at any given moment. A common denominator so to speak, of who we are. We are incapable of reigning in our feelings through direct access and so we are slaves of our own caprice. However, we *can* control our thoughts with effort and practice. Therein lies our salvation from the abysmal state of affairs that is our inner world of being. Through the 'digestion' of right knowledge, the Great Knowledge alluded to earlier, right meaning can become part of a man's inner world. Meaning, or emotion, is the scaffolding for the maintenance of knowledge which leads to understanding. So we must unlearn very much before it can be possible to organize the proper bits that will remain, and so come back to Conscience.

Does that help?” asked his guest at last.

“But I have had sympathy for others and I have experienced remorse and compassion,” responded the host plaintively.

“And did those feelings then result in a selfless endeavor on your part to put things to rights? Or was it more often than not, a fleeting brush with the feeling which when interrupted by some other event or happenstance soon passed and left only the memory, or trace of an encounter with those feelings? That is the experience of most people. I am not saying we *never*

experience conscience. In moments of great distress, trauma, or other powerful occurrences, the crust is broken and our conscience rises from deep within us. Then just as suddenly, habit, distraction, and old postures resume and all is as it was before.” The older man looked at him with genuine and most sincere sorrow in his eyes that might easily be taken for pity.

4

Home Again

*"Any idiot can face a crisis - it's day to day living that wears you out."
--Anton Chekhov*

The new morning for the young host began as the last, minus any startling parts. His guest must have awakened quite early as he was just walking back up to the porch from down the road when his host called out to him about his wish for coffee, or no. They settled into the chairs and sipped quietly, enjoying the crisp air and smells of the dew enlivened cut grasses and willows.

"Besides the response you offered about 'being,' I also thought about what you said about preparedness," remarked the young man, broaching the conversation once again. "Wouldn't a person already need to know what was coming along, I mean in the big picture, to be ready for any opportunity that arises? And let's say they have such knowledge, it makes my head spin but wouldn't that make a person constantly and always determining the present and future possible worth of each and every little incident, news, and happenstance they encountered, every moment of every day? How could anyone get anything done? It would make me crazy." He rubbed his forehead as already in the throes of such a conundrum.

"I'm glad you gave it some thought," responded his elder companion, a faint smile playing at the corners of his eyes. "And you're right as far as you are aware of it thus far. It would make anyone nuts." He paused to allow the young man to enjoy his brief satisfaction at the corroboration. "However, with real knowledge, the knowledge that is the inalienable property of a man such that he is his knowledge, the consternation with which you have concluded is no more likely than if you were suddenly unable to remember how to make coffee in the morning." He paused again, "Let me see if I can illustrate..."

He thought in silence for a moment and began, "Let's say you drive to work on a particular route, and over time you no longer actually notice the various specifics of which turn to take, when to slow, where to stop, etc. Then there is a week during which you must stop and wait for some construction delay at some place along the route at which you have not stopped before. As you wait for the 'go ahead' from the workers, you begin to see the particulars of the area in which you are waiting and it is as if you were seeing it for the first time. The newness of it is a little surprising. Now, it could also have occurred differently. You are a competent driver and instead of occupying your mind with the multitude of other matters with which one is constantly reviewing once one becomes inured to a usual routine, you might have looked upon each trip as new and fresh every time you journeyed it. Your driving would not have suffered, in fact it could be posited that it would be better due to the added attention you were giving it. An increase in consciousness always improves a situation, not the opposite as you suspected and described. We are so often unable to imagine what it would be like to be more conscious of our inner and outer world, moment by moment, because it is such a foreign experience from our ordinary life of half-sleep, or half-waking. Does that help?" asked his guest, sincerely wishing to assist.

"Yeah, it helps some. Maybe I'll just have to wait and see if some other pieces fall into place during the rest of the story..." said the host resignedly.

"Very well," then the guest picked up the story again as if it were a favorite book and relished the memory of the next pages.

"George resumed his Sunday fishing excursions once the bungalows were completed, he took turns every few weeks with Belle. They alternately took each of the children into the mountains to fish and to learn--Just as they had learned--the interconnectedness of all life around them. How every bug and plant, beast and stream, each were part and parcel of the web of life on the planet. Just as the caterpillar devours the plant it will return as a butterfly to pollenate, the Livingsons utilized and nurtured the

forest, the mountains, the meadows and the waters. Harry, Tania, and Poly became as familiar with the personalities of the land, animals, plants and weather as well as they knew each other and themselves. For part of their training was to recognize that what they saw around them in nature was to be found, in some way, inside them and as they grew to know the one better and better, they grew to know the other. This was the way George and Belle had been raised and educated and they passed their love and understanding on to their children---always balance, always respect.

During the spring and into the summer, George, with Harry's assistance, built a new boat. It was similar in design to the modified sampan but was much wider in the stern and quite a bit longer, but there the similarities ended. They built into the midships sole a sleeved, retractable keel which when deployed extended to a depth of more than three feet, and from leading edge to following was also about three feet. Attached to the keel pocket they fitted a mast step and installed the necessary hardware around the gunwales to secure the intended mast. George had been very thorough in explaining about the more curious aspects of the mast's construction to Belle. When near the end of that summer it was varnished and rigged, the little family launched it for its maiden voyage.

It was of course George's Great-uncle Fong Li who had directed the construction, and it was Fong Li who meticulously explained the subtleties of sailing a small craft to Belle and George during the long construction process. So although it was their first time on a sailing vessel for which they had to trim sails, steer, and navigate through the wind, they were exceptionally capable sailors from the outset. The boat still had plenty of cargo area just as its smaller cousin had, into which they stowed their camping gear and headed off with the kids. But it wasn't only for pleasure excursions that the boat was too fulfill its intended purpose.

Tania and Poly were just about seven years old. Harry was now, almost the de facto store manager, with erstwhile help from White Feathers. He envied his sisters' next few months. It was certainly about time for them to begin external training, even overdue, and he looked back on his own

beginnings with fondness. Yet for the girls it almost didn't begin at all.

George and Belle had waited for the nod from their ancestors to begin the twins' lessons. They waited and waited; their girls' fifth birthday came and went, then their sixth, and still no prodding by the old one's to initiate the program. Finally, out of sheer impatience Belle asked George to discover the cause for the oversight. When were the girls to begin?

'*Unprecedented.*' '*Unnecessary.*' '*Imprudent.*' Such were the responses Belle and George received from his forebears when he announced his intent to begin his daughters' external training. For her part, Belle remained silent in the face of their ranting and simply waited for the squall to settle.

George reminded them, "I taught and trained Belle..."

But before he could finish his argument's rationale, they had already interrupted. '*We were not pleased about that event either, if we had been able to make our wishes known then, we would have made the attempt to stop that from occurring as well.*'

Belle remained impassive. George tried to continue, "And while I know the training has been passed down through our lineage through only our men..."

Again he was cut short, '*Because it is our tradition proceeding down through time out of memory from the first Wang, in the dimness of ages past, who after a lifetime of dedication and extreme sacrifice, developed the means and technique to actually see the realities of the world, and so designed the training which prepared his 'sons' for their responsibilities in taking up the challenges,*' and the confirming voice of another ancestor finished the explanation, '*We have ALWAYS passed the great knowledge from man to boy. Never to our wives and never to our daughters.*'

At last Belle asked simply, "Why?"

'*Because young lady, it has always been the way of our family to do so, men are the...*'

This time it was Belle who interrupted, "Forgive me but, this is a matter of 'tradition'? That's what this comes down to? Tradition? Perhaps

you have failed to fully appreciate the uniqueness of the situation we are at present engaged.”

She chose her words carefully, not wishing at any cost to show disrespect. “George and I are able to converse with each of you, *and* those of my own lineage who during their lifetimes acquired, however incidentally, the strength of Spirit to allow them also the capacity to extend their life's wisdom well beyond the threshold of death.”

She paused for comment, but had at last succeeded in gaining their considered attention. “We are the beginning of a *new* tradition. Whether the external training is integral to the raising of *our* children in this oddest of new circumstances or not, we will not debate. It is working for all of us. Leaving such a boon for our girls to the whims of chance, as the women of my lineage have---as demonstrated through the untutored achievement of a few; *that* is Unacceptable! Titania and Hipolyta *shall* receive full training. And our children's children shall be given the choice as well---regardless of their gender.” After a silence which was so prolonged George and Belle both began to wonder if communication had at last been severed with their cherished counsellors, finally Lizette spoke for all. “ *Let it be so!*”

The girls' external training proceeded a bit differently as had Harry's. In the first place it was Belle who told them the story of the Guang donkey and the explanation of their purpose and the seriousness of their choices. It was Belle who, once the twins accepted the task, began directing their lessons on the new boat and arranged the course of exercises at home with George. It was Belle who most fully understood Tania and Poly's natural bent toward teamwork, not just their apparent preference for each other's company. This she both encouraged and enhanced, so that while each must rely on the other in an activity they could not perform individually, neither required the constant assistance of the other to accomplish those tasks which were just within the capability of one. In this way each girl became more of herself and both girls became more than the sum of their parts---to borrow a metaphor from George and his rod building.

George's part in their training was as Belle's had been for Harry: seemingly simple, straightforward tasks, with almost immediate reward of

accomplishment; all the while augmenting the flexibility of body and mental acuity necessary to act accurately and without pause in the face of ever-changing circumstances. And of course, to wear them out.

It began like this: Belle announced one morning that she and the twins would be 'taking the boat out today.' She delegated certain of the Lodge tasks and chores to the men and, remembering the picnic basket, walked the girls to the little boat dock. When they had gotten quite a ways offshore, Belle began an introduction to what lay in store for them.

“Every so often, certain of the women of our lineage have for generations developed within themselves the necessary strength of spirit which allows them to conquer the silencing power of death and carry their wisdom forward for the benefit of themselves and for following generations. I learned from my mother a part of this knowledge and from my Grandmama, and Great-grandmama the completion of it, just as they had learned from their own mothers and completed by their grandmothers. Always it took at least two generations to accomplish the task. But our days on Earth are not guaranteed to last and there were some generations who lacked fulfillment of training, it has not been so with your father's ancestors. From the shadows of the great ages past, with few interruptions, the great knowledge has been passed down. This you must remember:

“Once upon a time there was no donkey in the Guang. So someone from the Heavenly Court sent one there, but the farmers and peasants finding no use for it, set it loose at the foot of the mountain.

A tiger ran out from the mountains. When he saw this big tall thing, he thought it must be divine. He quickly hid himself in the forest and surveyed it from under cover. Sometimes the tiger ventured a little nearer, but still kept a respectful distance.

One day the tiger came out again. Just then the donkey gave a loud bray. Thinking the donkey was going to eat him, the tiger hurriedly ran away. After a while he sneaked back and watched the donkey carefully. He found that though it had a huge body it seemed to have no special ability.

After a few days the tiger gradually became accustomed to its braying

and was no longer so afraid. Later the tiger became bolder. Once he walked in front of the donkey and purposely bumped it. This made the donkey so angry that it struck out his hind legs and kicked wildly. Seeing this the tiger was very gleeful, 'Such a big thing as you can do so little!' With a roar he pounced on the donkey and ate it up."

Belle finished the story and then she began the same explanation always conferred upon the child before a decision should be required of them. "We master the art because: in order to be able to unite the machine of a human, all her lower centers must be active, strong and willing to surrender to the higher center's will. This must be trained in a person, it can not be left to chance. Otherwise she will be like the discarded Guang donkey, helpless before the forces of nature, and never recognized as the helpmate to mankind she was meant to be. We are the faithful, and humble bearers of truth. The wall around the house isn't only for the thief or the tiger, but to keep honest men from the temptations of riches they can not bear unassisted."

They continued to sail silently until they reached the other side of the lake where they anchored and Belle opened the basket, offered Tania and Poly bread and cheese, then began to take down the mast.

The twins had listened to their mother carefully and finally Tania asked, "What training must we have?" then Poly continued, "And how shall we build this wall that that keeps out the tigers, and protects honest men?"

Belle wondered for a moment how many generations of George's family had asked those very questions and she swelled with pride and resolve that her family would now both carry on the old, and begin the new traditions of so remarkable a lineage. She had taken the mast completely down and was disassembling it when she began the explanation of the state of man's being and of the structure of man's machine, that it was a microcosm of the great world and how it was supposed to function. Then she detailed the necessary steps which enabled it to perform as intended. At length, she sat quietly as her daughters absorbed as much of the information as they were able.

"When may we start?" They asked together at last.

“Your father and I have seen to the foundations of your internal training, you may begin external training when you wish.” Belle then cautioned them sternly, “But it is not an everyday wish like, 'wishing for more pie,' it is a wish that must command your whole attention.” She looked at each of them in turn, “When you decide to begin, there is no turning back, it would waste what you have already acquired and endanger your future desires.”

“Today, we shall begin today!” was their unanimous resolve in response.

“Very well, you shall row us back then,” she answered.

The girls looked at each other in confusion and back to their mother as if she were obviously confused. “Mother, this is a *sailboat*,” said Poly, as if it were up to her to correct her mother's delusion.

And with that, Belle took apart the last brace keeping the two members of the mast together as one, producing as a result, two full length oars. The girls were amazed. Belle fitted them into matching oarlocks at the stern, so that there was now a tandem platform upon which her daughters could perform their exercises. She asked them to hold steadily one oar's handle, lowered to them as they sat in the sole looking up to her while she demonstrated the proper grip, stance and stroke she expected them to emulate, 'just so.'

The demonstration having been given, they traded stations with her and set themselves to the task. They dipped the blades in the water and pushed the handles out, then pulled them back.

“Wait.” Belle stopped them. She got up behind each in turn, starting with Poly, and reaching around her, placed her hands near her daughter's then went through the movement once more. She repeated the demonstration with Tania and each girl could feel the boat propelled through the strong force of each push and pull of the oar's motion. Belle sat back down and let them continue unassisted.

They pushed with all their strength, keeping their hands and feet 'just so.' Then pulled back with all their strength, each carefully watching that her body kept its posture and position. It wasn't easy going at first, their

strokes were different lengths of pull or push, so they bumped and knocked at each other sometimes. Gradually though they assumed a rhythm and concert which kept them unbruised. Although they were two, the boat was large; soon their legs and backs ached and their arms and hands were sore.

After what seemed to them an eternity, ahead of the prow they could at last see their tiny dock and the Lodges' water tower rising above the far shore of the lake. They pushed themselves to greater efforts and finally reached the dock. As Poly held the oars out of the water, Tania settled and tied up the boat next to the dock, Belle commended their strength and spirit before they walked up off the dock. As the long shadows of evening allowed them a dimmed view of their steps up the graveled path, they walked slowly up to the house. The twins slept very well that night.

The next morning before sunrise, Belle roused them from sleep, told them to splash cold water on their faces, arms, and legs and meet her at the boat. She packed the basket into the boat and waited. Soon Poly, followed by Tania, joined her, took up their positions at the stern and each girl set her hands and feet into position and commenced to row them away from the little dock.

Belle instructed, "Aim for those two large boulders at the foot of those Ponderosa pines, just there, she pointed." They sighted along their mother's arm and they began the steady push and pull on the tandem oars, always keeping the craft headed for the two boulders.

Belle, as George had done years before with Harry, lounged in the bow feigning sleep under her parasol; but she kept careful vigilance on both of her daughters' form and progress without them noticing.

They finally reached the boulders. Belle pretended to rouse herself and pointed to another spot even further up the lake to which she would next like to go. After the briefest rest and only a bite of bread apiece, they were compelled to begin rowing again, but this time with the oars on their left sides instead of their right. A few moments of adjustment to the new position and they were making for the next destination.

Once again they arrived and as before, Belle roused herself and

pointed to another spot further up the lake to which she would next like to go. And again after the briefest rest and only one bite of bread apiece, they were compelled to begin rowing once more and this time with the oars back on their right sides again. Three more destinations and three more changes from right to left and left to right, three more bites of bread and all the while with Belle seeming to doze in the bow. Then at last they were back at their little dock. It was only a bit after noon, they were famished and ready to have some lunch, which their father provided to each of them: a piece of fish, a hunk of goat cheese, and a small potato each. Tania and Poly were too ravenous to question the menu, they set upon it at once and devoured the meager morsels.

When they had finished, George asked them to please begin painting the walls on the outside of the bungalows. They went to the store room and fetched the large paint brushes and rags, then went to the wall of the nearest bungalow where their father waited for them to begin the chore. George smiled as he opened the paint cans and exchanged their large brushes for the smaller ones he brought for them to use. They looked up at him in confusion. "Put the paint on the wall this way," he said simply and demonstrated the strokes. He put the brushes in their hands reminding them as they started to keep their feet, arms and hands: 'just so.' "Be sure to change hands every twelve strokes or so," he called back over his shoulder, and they began putting the new coat of paint on the first bungalow wall.

The shadows were lengthening and the air was becoming chill when Poly and Tania dragged themselves back to the house and into the kitchen. "Clean the brushes, please," came their father's voice from the great room. They went out onto the porch and dipped the brushes over and over into the bucket of water, left beside the door for that purpose. When they were finally certain no more tinges of paint would come from the bristles, they gave them a final slap on the edge of the porch. They laid each brush carefully on the bench beside the bucket and went into the great room. A plate of food for each of them was set out on the table so they set down, Each raised a forkful, began to chew and set the forks down again. They repeated the labor twice more then promptly dropped off to sleep where

they sat. Their forks were still suspended over the plates, their heads only slightly drooping forward.

George smiled to Belle and they smiled to Harry who returned it with the same pride they all felt for their girls. He and his father went over to where the girls still sat, took the forks from their hands, lifted them into their arms and carried them to bed, tucking them gently in under the sheets and quilts. When they returned to the great room and went back to their previous occupations, Harry looked up at his parents and asked, "Was I that tired after my second day?"

Belle answered without *too* much mirth, "You don't remember because you were asleep after the first bite; Tania and Poly at least got in three."

The next morning and the next morning, the routine repeated. Until on the fourth morning when Belle went to rouse them, they were not to be found. She didn't need to search the house; she went from their room to the bay window and looked out. There they were, waiting for her on the dock, their hair still wet from the cold morning water. She mused as she went down to join them, how many times these same activities had been performed with nearly the same schedule and expected results over the countless generations before them. But her daughters only took half as long to adopt the early morning rituals for themselves.

'Don't become too impressed with them, so soon. There is a long path ahead of them to go, yet. But they are doing well.' Fong Li both cautioned and commended.

Belle, walked down to the boat, took up her position in the bow and they started off toward another part of the lake. Before they had gotten too far, as the training dictated: without waiting to arrive where the boat could be steadied, Belle told them to shift sides of their oars. With an anticipated bit of fumbling and rocking of the boat, they switched to the other side of their oars.

"Wait." Belle said aloud. "Shift like this." She traded places with them and demonstrated the fluid movement she expected them to perform. It was a smooth and seemingly effortless transition in which, during the pull

stroke she lowered her body with her back held straight, she swiveled on the balls of her feet and rose up on the other side of the oar, all without the boat wobbling, without a splash or even the blade losing its powerful stroke through the water. "Here," she said simply and they all traded places once more.

Poly and Tania took up their respective positions made a couple usual strokes and at their mother's command, shifted sides nearly as they were shown. "Almost," Belle observed. "Set your feet first, then be sure as you make the shift so that the oar doesn't notice you've moved. Try again." This time they both complied smoothly and were on the other side of the oar with as little wobble as Belle had executed. "Better," she commented. "Watch where you're going," she added as they were naturally drifting quite a ways off course. They had no sooner brought the vessel back to course than Belle called out, "Shift." They made the maneuver as smoothly as before and resumed from the new side. Belle settled into her usual posture and position in the bow and every odd moment would call 'Shift,' to which her daughters, in a synchronous display of agility, would readily comply.

The first bungalow was at last completely painted and the second beckoned them when they returned from rowing on one of the following afternoons. They retrieved the necessary tools from the porch and prepared to tackle the new walls. When they began applying their usual 'up and down--just so' strokes of paint, George called, "Wait."

They looked at him, ready to defend their brushstrokes and form as he held there wrists, brushes still against the wall. He gently turned their hands just ninety degrees. Now they were to brush the paint on side to side, the grip was the same, just the direction had changed. They resumed painting. George put the ladders they would use again when they reached the upper parts of the wall on the ground behind them, "Remember to change hands every so often," and he went back to the house.

The routine of their days continued unabated, only the afternoon tasks changed after they had repainted the bungalows, always alternating 'up and down' with 'side to side' from one wall to the next. When they were docked for the morning and after they had eaten the meager lunch, George

put sanding blocks in each of their two hands and led them to the decks behind the house. "The weather has been hard on the deck planks, but before we can re-varnish them they have to have all the rough spots and old varnish smoothed off."

The girls got to their knees and each started to push the blocks in their hands pell mell over the planks. "Wait," George said. They stood back up, shoulders sagging already. George borrowed a block from each of them and demonstrated the posture and motions he expected them to use. Then he placed each girl at opposite corners of the deck, and like Harry's 'frog work' in the gardens, they squatted and made large circular patterns with the blocks over the deck's surface. The right hands: clockwise, the left hands: countering in alternating cadence in front of each twin as she moved very, very slowly away from her corner down the length of the deck. "Good," he announced once they began. George then went over to a stack of long timbers next to the wood shed and began a new project, always keeping an inconspicuous eye on his daughters' progress.

The next afternoon, with more of the deck still to be sanded, he set them to task once more. This time he positioned them such that they covered narrower stretches of the deck and had to start a new direction more frequently. "Wait," he called after they had barely finished one pass, "When you reach the edge, don't turn around to face the new direction, just go backward the way you came." Going backwards they veered this way and that at first, until like they did when piloting the boat, they sighted above the deck in the direction aligned with their destination and gradually began to maintain straighter lines once more. When that deck was completely sanded, they varnished. Now they were supposed to use the squat position from the sanding chore, but with a heavy towel grasped in both hands in front of them. They had to push forward almost as far as they could reach, without collapsing face down on the planks, then pull back to their starting position. Forward and backward across the deck they pushed and pulled like giant inch worms, rubbing the thinned varnish into the grain of the wood, being careful not to step on the deck planks already coated. In a not so surprising coincidence George finished his tower project just when they had completely varnished the decks. Next the decks

at the Lodges.

Every morning they were at the boat waiting for their mother, every evening they could now stay awake through supper, even helping to clean up afterwards. Tania, at first and soon after her Poly, grew increasingly bored with the lack of excitement the 'boat training' offered as compared with the at least changing chores at the house. And this slowly built up inside them though neither of them mentioned a word of it to the other, lest she be outshone by her sister. It wasn't the first time they had competed for the approval or praise of their elders, just the first time it went so completely to their core as individuals.

When at last the Lodge boardwalks and commons deck were renewed like their own back decks, George set them to a new task. The tower he had constructed by the wood shed was the shorter cousin of the great water tower at the street in front of the Lodges. George had affixed a crane of sorts to the roof of the twenty foot structure, and attached a cross beam to the end of the arm. From the ends of the cross beam he attached two very thick ropes which reached all the way to the ground. So the next day when they returned from their rowing 'excitement,' but before they had a chance to leave the little dock to come in for lunch, he pointed to the four buckets sitting on the deck of the dock and asked them to please fill them and carry them up to the deck before coming in to eat.

After lunch, he led them to the tower, placed the four buckets in front of them and said, "I have been waiting for a pipe connection to repair our plumbing but it is unfortunately on back order with the manufacturer, but we still need to have this water tank..." he gestured up to the top of the tower, "...filled before the first freeze." He paused to let the information sink in. "Remember last winter the pipe under the street froze; so it's best that we have a back up supply system. You two will fill the tank." Having said all that he intended, he went back to the house and store.

The girls stared after him, then looked up the ropes to the top of the tank, then down at the four buckets, then back down the path to the dock. They stared blankly at each other for a moment. They hadn't been given any directions, no 'just so.' Only a: 'You two will fill the tank,' and that was

that! Tania grasped the nearest rope, pulled herself up to over Poly's head and reached back to receive a bucket. Poly handed up a full bucket, grabbed the remaining rope and climbed to a position a little above Tania, who handed the bucket up to her. And so they passed the water back and forth, rising a bit at each pass until, exhausted, they reached the top and dumped the unspilled water still left in the bucket down into the tank. It hardly made a noise.

They looked at each other, looked into the tank, looked down to the three buckets remaining and out to the dock. Poly descended the rope with the empty bucket, tied the ends of each rope to a handle of one bucket apiece and Tania pulled hand over hand on each rope until both were emptied into the tank. Poly attached the remaining bucket to the first rope let back down, carried the two empties to the dock, refilled them and returned. She tied on the full ones and took the empties to refill. After quite a while they exchanged positions and Poly pulled them up and dumped while Tania refilled and tied them on. It was a long afternoon. Harry watched the girls at the beginning of their attempts and saw how they shifted plans to the method used throughout the rest of the afternoon. He found new respect for his little sisters that day.

Each morning they did rowing exercises and each afternoon they filled the tank. They grew stronger and more accustomed to their growing strengths as time went along. One afternoon over a week or so later they came into the house long before sunset. "Father," they called, "the tank is filled."

George came from the store room into the great room, "Very good," he said simply, a grin spread across his face in obvious pride. "Go sit out on the deck and I'll be out presently." They did as he bid them, and in a few minutes he brought out a tray laden with plates, glasses, a pie and a pitcher of milk. He set it on the patio table in front of them and they proceeded to enjoy slices of pie with milk as if it were a formal high tea.

Belle and Harry joined them and sat down with the girls and George. They each took note of Tania and Poly's poise, posture and demeanor as they dined. Then to the surprise of each, the girls gathered up the dishes

onto the tray and took them to the kitchen, cleaned everything, put it all away and rejoined the little impromptu family gathering. The only noises were the soft rustle of the trees and the dwindling traffic out on the main street. George broke their reverie, "Tomorrow, you will dig post holes for the new fence. The posts we have already; the lumber for the rest is to be delivered in the afternoon."

As he paused, Poly said in a voice of resignation, "I suppose Tani and I will be using 'spoons' to dig the two and a half foot deep post holes." Tania adopted the same resigned look that matched her sister's. For a moment only there was silence then all but the twins broke into genuine laughter both at the girls' expressions and at the image of them performing such a task. Tania and Poly wanted to laugh but were unsure what the joke might be, really. 'Were they really to use spoons?' or was it just 'that *they* would *expect* to actually use spoons?'

Harry rescued them, "That sounds like something they'd think up for you to do; doesn't it!?" and his own laughter infected them.

"Actually, I was hoping that you would use posthole diggers, although I had to convince your mother; she wanted you to use your hands and fingers," said their father without expression. A sideways glance to Belle and she too kept her face impassive. The girls looked from their father to their mother and were almost as unsure of what to believe as they'd been to start with.

As arranged, after they departed the dock the next day and had eaten their little lunch, George put posthole diggers in their hands, gave them a brief demonstration of how he wished them to use the tools and went back to the house. Poly started on one side of the house and Tania the other. They went to each of the evenly spaced little stakes marking the next post's location. With their feet just wider than shoulder width apart, they raised the lever poles of the diggers, straightening their arms above their heads and in a single motion: both lowered their hands and with straight backs, lowered themselves by dropping into a very controlled near squat, almost a horse stance. Then immediately spread the lever poles to grasp the captured soil, returned to the initial posture--but now with their hands

wide apart instead of together---pivoted on one foot, disgorged the captured soil, pivoted back on the same foot and repeated the process. They were instructed to alternate pivot feet but other than that it was an unvarying task.

Harry followed behind them setting and plumbing the poles in their excavated holes. Once he was satisfied of their plumb he wedged their positions with rocks jammed and tamped down into the narrow spaces between the poles and the hole walls. As each new hole was created, measured and left to begin the next one, Harry was there to fill it and fetch another pole for the next. He was constantly crisscrossing the soon to be enclosed space, apparently unfazed by the ten foot fir poles he hoisted above his head and carried much like a waiter with a tray of food, or a drum major leading a parade band. George came from the house after the project had advanced sufficiently and mixed concrete to fill the remaining spaces of the posts' holes as Harry moved on to the remaining ones opened up by the twins. In this manner the posts were installed and ready for the next day's delivery.

On that next morning while Belle and the girls were on the lake, George and Harry installed the vertical receivers to both sides of each post. Once again Tania and Poly ate their morsels for lunch and were then instructed in their task: lift the designated stacks of planking above their heads and deliver it to George and Harry for installation between each set of posts. When they reached each new station, they were to keep their arms raised without locking their elbows, and with their backs straight. They were to lower and raise the materials using almost their legs alone, essentially more squatting and horse-stance exercise. George lowered each plank down through the channels of the consecutive posts, Harry nailed the once leveled planks into place and once again put on quite a show---He made one hammer blow per nail. With that operation of teamwork they were able to install the entire side next to the side road in one afternoon.

The girls were dismissed to help their mother with supper while Harry and his father erected the entry gate just down a bit from the house's front porch. It was in smaller proportion to the Grand Entrance to the Lodges

and was framed in with a door, unlike its bigger brother next door which had a simple gate installed. The next day the process repeated itself and they had at last established a modicum of privacy for the grounds behind their house.

Then as it was anticipated, though far more delayed than expected, Tania and Poly at last stood on the dock one morning refusing to budge without some explanation. George and Harry had been in the habit of late to watch the girls actually row away from the dock each morning. Sure that each morning would be THE morning. So when they noticed the twins not boarding as Belle approached from the house, they were ready.

It happened like this: Harry walked not far behind his mother, George behind him. Belle reached the dock and made to get aboard when Tania, her feet planted and hands on her hips, said simply, "We want to know something or we won't get on that boat or row anywhere."

Poly, who had waited at the foot of the dock not even going out as far as Tania, asked plainly, "Yes. Mother what is the point of 'row the boat' and 'shift,' for endless hours on the lake going nowhere?"

Belle turned on her heel saying not a word. Harry walked passed her as she left the dock and he stood out with the girls, a long cedar pole balanced in his hand. He turned slightly so that the pole spanned the gap between them, then without any effort popped each of them in their solar plexus with the two ends of the stick. Naturally, they winced and slumped forward in surprise and more than a little uncertainty. 'Had they truly crossed the line this time?' they wondered.

Belle had taken her place near George a little ways off, and called out, "Let's try that again."

The girls were now visibly unsure as to what she meant. "Poly go through the motion of 'row the boat'." Poly complied without any enthusiasm.

George called out to Tania, "Tania, 'shift'." She also complied with a similar lack of enthusiasm for the odd demonstration.

Harry put both hands to the pole and pulled back for another jab at

Tania. Just as he began the lunge, Belle called "Row the boat," so as the pole was about to repeat its previous damage, Tania shifted her foot and made a push of the imaginary oar; the pole flew harmlessly off to her side. Harry pulled the pole back along the path it had taken and pivoting, sent the opposite end flying back at Poly.

George called "Shift," and Poly fluidly performed a shift maneuver and the force of the pole was deflected beyond its target. It was then that the exhibition began in earnest. With Belle calling to Tania, and George calling to Poly, Harry began what could only be described as 'riding a tornado.' The pole in his hands never rested; it twirled at Tania's knees, then was swooping at Poly's side, then without losing momentum, turning its power into an arc at their heads. All the while Belle and George were calling to each girl, 'Sand the floor,' 'Paint side to side,' 'Row the boat left,' 'Varnish the deck,' 'Shift,' 'Sand the floor backward,' on and on.

The engagement moved onto the grounds from the dock. The twins were as quick as their brother was dangerous. As for their parents, when their voices became weary of directing their daughters' defense, they simply watched and Harry redoubled his onslaught in leaps and spins which at times seemed to defy gravity in their height and duration. The girls were no less spectacular and each successful deflection, dodge, duck, leap, handspring, or somersault gradually brought them nearer to each other in order to unite their force and neutralize the near invisible staff that Harry wielded like a master. He made a daring movement to strike both girls at once, the staff was screaming in his hand. Tania and Poly made a simultaneous grab and leap, a little like lifting horizontal fence planks actually but exponentially quicker, their hands grasped the ends of the pole and they used it as a trapeze to vault over Harry head, never letting loose of the pole. Their combined momentum yanked Harry from his feet; he released his grip on the staff at the perfect instant and in a towering tucked back flip, flew spinning over the hyacinth-rimmed pond and landed one-footed onto a bench. He stood there poised for a moment then stepped slowly back down to the ground, walked back round the pond, stood before his sisters---and he bowed.

When he raised his head again, he said simply, "*That's* the point." He retrieved the staff from their acquiescent hands and strolled leisurely back to the house.

The twins looked to their mother and father, who likewise bowed to the girls then also walked toward the house, hand in hand. Alone, they looked at each other. Titania's stunned expression met that of Hipolyta's. With their backs straight and their heads held higher, they marched back out to the dock, took their positions on the tandem stern of the boat and rowed off across the lake toward a destination of their choosing, every now and then 'shifting.'

On their walk to the house, George and Belle glanced back over their shoulders to see the girls rowing further out onto the lake; they heard the voice of George's great-great-grandfather, '*You have vanquished our worst fears and exceeded our best hopes in this endeavor. We offer you our humble respect.*'

George and Belle walked onto the deck still holding hands and sat on the same bench so recently vacated by their son. With tears streaming down each others faces, they whispered of their love and pride for one another and then with their great passion for each other nearly unchecked, they tenderly kissed.

Harry, meanwhile, had leaned the staff near the front door, gone into the great room and stood next to his teacher in the art of wielding the staff. White Feathers looked down at the young man and said, "It appears you have won two new students today, young master."

Harry looked up into the face of his Great-uncle and replied, "And today they have won the rest their lives." They turned back to the bay window and looked passed George and Belle sitting on the bench, heads leaning together, and with them gazed out over the sparkling brilliance of the great Tahoe lake.

Another, and another season of spring followed by summer came and passed. Autumns bowed to winters and the Livingsons were prepared for almost anything with which nature, or the vagaries of commerce might challenge them. Titania and Hipolyta grew and became less disposed to be

constantly in their own company, as each took upon herself her own responsibilities and temperament. Harry's dictionary became dog-eared and worn through constant reference and the texts of his book lists had all been crossed through as he devoured the information and insights each had to offer. The twins turned ten going on twenty once June came and went; their brother was hurtling toward his fifteenth year--his last winter in Tahoe City.

For eleven of those years, White Feathers had spent quite a bit of time up at James Connor's livery stable when other family matters weren't pressing. James's wife had died shortly after giving birth to their only son. She had insisted on naming the child after her husband whether it were a girl or boy, so: Jameson. This all happened a year and a bit before the twins were born to George and Belle, and White Feathers at once began helping the new father care for his son while James also kept up his livery stable business. Under White Feathers care the lad had been brought up and taught nearly identically to the upbringing Harry and his sisters received from George and Belle. It was not uncommon for Jameson to be included in family outings and he was often seated with them at their supper table. White Feathers and James were anxious that 'their' boy have some strong feminine influence and neither of them could imagine a better influence than Belle.

Then when the girls began their 'training,' White Feathers embarked upon a training regimen for Jameson which followed a similar paradigm of seemingly ordinary labors. With special attention to postures and positions, tasks requiring endurance, focus and creativity, and of course at last he gave the lad the opportunity to understand the significance of his labors--allow him surrender to them, *and* to the will of a teacher.

When Harry had begun to be highly proficient with the staff, White Feathers brought young Jameson to him for training in the techniques and purposes behind such an education. Harry had befriended Jameson long before and the Connor lad was especially fond of Harry too. They were an odd pair to see, Harry tall and dark-haired with those piercing green eyes, and Jameson already nearly as tall and lanky like his father, with his shock

of red curls---an inheritance from his mother. His hands and feet were already large for his age and strong. They gave him the appearance of a rather gawkish Newfoundland puppy. Never-the-less both boys were disciplined and adept at any physical challenge presented them.

So their staff practice flowed as naturally and easily as any other two boys playing catch, as might occur in other places under different circumstances. Unbeknownst to anyone, Jameson had secretly observed, when his own training permitted, Titania and Hipolyta as they performed some of their own challenges and tasks. He never thought of them as twins as did almost everyone else in the village; he knew Titania from her sister by the way she moved, walked or spoke, as distinctly as he might tell a mare from a gelding at a glance. And he was of course delighted whenever Titania followed White Feathers up to the stables to visit or care for the horses. It wasn't so very long before the three of them, each upon their own horse, would go for short rides along some of the Tahoe's many trails. Titania proved to have a good sense for horsemanship. So after several months of her continued interest, White Feathers made a gift of a saddle to her, just her size with room to grow. She was jubilant. Jameson was pleased too; he had built it at White Feathers's request.

When White Feathers took up cooking as a hobby for himself, he encouraged Jameson to also experiment with the activity. To the Livingson's astonishment he turned out to have some real talent in the kitchen and was soon assisting whomever made meals the evenings he was invited. Belle mentioned his abilities and interest to Mandy, so Mandy dropped round to James at the livery one afternoon.

“Mr. Connor, I have lost an assistant chef to a restaurant in Sacramento and am now short-handed; would you consider allowing Jameson to help out on weeknights and the odd weekend in my kitchens?” She inquired tactfully of the Livery proprietor.

“Well so long as he keeps up with his chores in the stables, I can't see what harm it'd do 'im,” answered the tall man.

“I assure you he will be paid for his efforts and more importantly, if what Mrs. Livingson tells me is true of his native talents, he shall benefit

greatly from the experience.” Miss Hill concluded, pleased that this seemed to be working out well for all concerned.

“How much pay? I don't want him to get it in his head he can go slack on his stabling responsibilities,” added Mr. Connor, skeptically.

“What would you suggest? Would a dollar, or two dollars a week be too much?” offered Mandy, trying to placate his father's genuine concern.

Mr. Connor smiled, “That will be grand; I'll leave that up to you and himself then,” he answered, satisfied of their mutual understanding.

“Excellent, I shall approach him about the position when next I see him. Thank you very much for your time, Mr. Connor,” she said and extended her hand.

He grasped her hand and they shook in a firm clasp, “Thank you for the offer; and for passing it by me before the lad. Thank you, indeed.”

Miss Mandy Hill ran across the lad on the boardwalk shortly after leaving the stables, and so she explained to him about the kitchen position she had just discussed with his father, Jameson was thrilled. Meanwhile, Harry was manning the counter at the store and not so thrilled. It was one of the last weeks of this last Summer Season and Arnold Gehring came in asking after his special order. Harry politely checked the receipt logs knowing what he wouldn't find. Arnold liked dropping by the store and sometimes made the walk when he had nothing else to do.

“I'm sorry it's not in yet.” Harry looked up from the log book to Arnold's smiling face. He didn't add that it did take more than one day after placing an order to expect the post to have even picked it up.

“That's O.K. I actually came to look at those twist drills George put out last month.” And he moved over to the hand tools shelf and methodically picked up each displayed tool, twisted, waved, or pushed it through the air. “This is a good hammer, Harry.” He announced and moved on.

Harry was more than familiar with Mr. Gehring's habitual inspections. He had long since ceased to pay anymore heed to the nice man's announcements about this or that 'fine quality' gadget or tool, than he attended the cat's prowling round the end of a shelf. “Take your time Mr.

Gehring,” said Harry over his shoulder, “Mrs. Gehring's still in the bank.” Mrs. Gehring was also a nice person; she often asked after 'those precious sisters' of his when she came by to fetch her husband, whom she knew would be in the aisles of the little store. He'd always smile, sincerely proud of the girls and happy to be asked.

“You know Harry, this was a very hot summer, I wouldn't be surprised if we may have a record on our hands. Mr. Watson is so sure, he's sent a letter to the those Sacramento fellows to register his readings from July!” Arnold was finishing his appraisal of the wall racks and was waving a weeding fork at Harry, punctuating his words with it to emphasize his declaration.

“Yes sir, Mr. Watson keeps very good records... Oh, Mrs. Gehring just came out of the bank, Mr. Gehring,” observed Harry.

Arnold was a gentle enough man, although Mrs. Gehring had given up long ago trying to get him to wear any but his coveralls, whether to town for shopping or church on Sundays. Although in fairness, he did change hats and put on a tie on Sunday. In contrast, his wife was never seen in the same outfit twice and was the envy of some of the other ladies in the village for her versatility in the creation of her ensembles.

“Good afternoon, Harry.” She greeted him as she came as far as the threshold to the store. “How are those precious girls in this heat? Dreadful, isn't it? If there were some breeze perhaps it would be less insufferable; but then there'd be all that dust blowing about...”

“They are doing very well, thank you, ma'am,” responded Harry and glanced at the thermometer on the wall above the counter. 82 degrees Fahrenheit, yeah, what a scorcher.

“Come along Arnie, we have a few groceries to get yet and I need you to carry them for me.” She called to the seemingly empty aisles and shelves. Mr. Gehring came around from behind the sickles and hoes, his shoulders a bit slumped like a child being called in from the garden. “That's a good man.” His wife encouraged. “We'll be back in town tomorrow.” She added to both--To Harry, as forewarning and as consolation to 'Arnie.'

That was what manning the counter amounted to more often than

not. "Give my regards to Mr. Watson; I hope he gets that record." Harry called after the couple as they left. He went back to reading the play he had started and stopped throughout the morning.

Titania came from the back of the store. "Are they gone?" she said peering uncertainly around the shelving. Harry nodded. That was the other endearing trait Mrs. Gehring had lavished upon the twins: cheek pinching and chin squishing. "Good. Harry, mother wants me to order a color of paint for the entry gate that will go with the foxgloves. Where is that Sherwin-Williams catalog and the paint chips father sent off for?" she asked as she began to look in a stack of tractor part catalogs.

"Their on the shelf above the desk in the office, but they haven't sent order forms, we still only have the Calumet paperwork." Harry pointed absently. Titania brought the materials out and set them across the counter, careful not to disturb Harry's book. She pulled a clipping of the foxgloves from behind her ear, and started matching it to paint samples.

Hipolyta came to the front door, her face wet with sweat and soil. She used her wrist to wipe at a stray tress hanging in her face and announced, "Better find a match for the bearded irises while you're at it, Tani. The bulbs are now thinned out around back and I planted a bunch of them along the fence next to the entry gate." She delivered her message and popped right back out onto the boardwalk, then headed for the back, tracking the mud from her boots outside, rather than through the store and house.

Still looking down at the palette of colors, Titania asked, "Which one's did you move to the gate, the purple or the salmon ones?" There was no answer. She looked up to the empty doorway, shrugged, and picked colors for each.

"Almost six, what has Great-Uncle planned for supper?" asked Harry.

"Nothing, we're to dine at Mandy's this evening." Titania made a gesture imitating Mrs. Gehring whenever she spoke of fashion, her hand poised as if extended for a kiss by a gentleman. "Mother told Father, and Father told White Feathers, and I think he was invited along so he wouldn't feel like we were trying to avoid his cooking or anything. These should

match close enough.” She pulled two samples and closed the catalog, returned it to the office and called over her shoulder as she went back to the house, “Supper's at seven; you probably should close up soon to get ready, Hipolyta's gonna be in the bathroom a bit longer this evening... a word to the wise.” And she was out of sight.

Harry had a good idea what she meant. A package from Wards had come yesterday for a *Miss Hipolyta Livingson*, and it was unlikely to have been anything other than new shoes or a dress. He put a bookmark in the book and reached for the keys hanging at the office door. After locking up and walking back to the house, he quickly ducked into the bathroom while it was still vacant.

The Livingson's were a good looking family as they strolled up the Main Street to Mandy Hill's Restaurant and Tea Room. The long shadows of late summer and the freshening breezes coming off the lake made the walk a bit more pleasant than it might have been earlier. Hipolyta had indeed received a new skirt and made a point of waving the flouncing hem every few steps. George and Belle walked behind their children, amazed again at how fast they were growing up, and getting so tall. George was soon to be surpassed by the girls, and would at last be the shortest in the family, which bothered him not at all. Harry held the door open for his family as they entered Mandy's.

Miss Hill came over to greet them and seated them at a table which had over the last few years become *their* table. Harry held the chairs for both girls, then he sat down himself. Belle said, “White Feathers informed me he will not be joining us this evening,” and she looked to George suspiciously.

“He said he wanted to practice some recipe before he served it to us. That's what he said,” pleaded George innocently.

“Hipolyta, that is a lovely dress.” Mandy made special notice of the girl's outfit with a warm smile. Hipolyta thanked her, pleased at the compliment. “Titania we have your favorite dessert this evening, if you still enjoy chocolate cake...”

“With ice cream?” Titania added hopefully.

“Yes ma'am. Now, I'll send William around shortly to receive your orders, and Beth will be along with your beverages momentarily. Enjoy.” And Mandy was off to another part of the Dining room and then to the kitchens. It seemed she rarely stayed in any one place too long except when she stayed at Bungalow Seven. Titania had seen her sit in the same chair unmoving, just reading a book all day, days at a time. Beth was at George's elbow in no time, placing glasses before his and Belle's places, and a bottle of Sonoma Sauvignon between them. Iced tea for Harry, Hipolyta and Titania, and a pitcher with more on the table. After William took their dining orders, Belle tinkled her fork on her wine glass.

“This is a dinner in honor of Harry's last Summer Season with us in our little village for a few years. To Henry Livingston!” She raised her glass and the rest of the family followed suit.

“Cheers,” the girls added and they all clanked glasses together.

Harry was surprised and a little embarrassed as some diners were turning their heads from other tables. They smiled and nodded then turned back to their own conversations. “Thank you.” He offered simply. “I hope you can get along without me at the store.” He tried to sound nonchalant, but they each knew he was both excited and reticent to go at the same time. Titania and Hipolyta kissed him on his cheeks simultaneously, and he finally did blush. But that wasn't the end of it.

The entire wait staff led by Mandy *and* White Feathers processed from the kitchens bearing trays and singing. In the crowd of waiters, waitresses and chefs, stood Jameson Connor in his new white kitchen jacket, beaming with pride. Every head now turned and stared at their table. “For he's a jolly good fellow...” rang out in harmony from the assemblage. “... He is our very own fellow, though he is bound now for England; Yes, he's a jolly good fellow, Which nobody can deny.” They stood around the family, and as the shouts of 'Good Luck' and 'Do us proud, Harry' gradually lessened, his sisters called for a speech, which got hearty seconds from the crowd.

Harry stood, looked up to his Great-uncle, who nodded, and with a wave of thanks said, “Thank you so much; I didn't know half of you could carry a tune. Well done.” This got immediate applause and laughter. He

continued, "I shall represent our village proudly, and I accept it as a great honor to always call this home and each of you: my friends." He began to sit down, then seeing a tear in his mother's eye, stood again and finished with, "If you didn't know already, it was my Mother and Father's wish that my sisters and myself have the finest education possible, and it has been through their constant and careful efforts over the years, with the assistance and guidance of my Great-uncle, which has made this all possible. Thank you Mr. And Mrs. Livingson, and Great-uncle White Feathers."

Cheers and more applause rang him into his seat. George and Belle gave a bit of a wave for the congratulations now directed to them. Mandy Hill was tearing up, she kissed him on his cheek, shook George and Belle's hands and directed the setting of the meal. White Feathers gave him a hearty pat on the back and returned to the kitchens.

"That was really well done." Titania and Hipolyta whispered into his ears after the crowd around the table thinned. He smiled in appreciation, they were each silent for a moment in reverence for the meal then began to dine. The food tasted delicious, the conversation was sparkling, and his sisters actually began to look to him like the grown up young women they pretended to be. Until the chocolate cake with ice cream arrived delivered by their Great-uncle. "I hope you enjoy this as much as I enjoyed making it." He commended them to their plates, and there was no mistaking their childlike joy over dessert. It was a memorable dining experience.

Harry was actually compelled to shake a few gentlemen's hands as they departed after dinner. So, with more pats on the back and more well wishes, Harry's debut of celebrity was officially inaugurated, and it wouldn't pass until he boarded that train next June. There was, however, still more for his sisters and parents with which to surprise him before then.

The bungalows were cleaned thoroughly at the end of the first week of September, a few repairs made, and piñon wood stacked at each door for any off-season guests. Bungalows One and Seven, of course, had firewood installed in the logboxes inside near the franklin stoves. Down comforters were added to all the bedrooms, and three Chimineas were set up on the commons deck, for evening chats and gatherings. Bungalow Two

also received additional special attention. While George and Harry were busy in the office, bringing the store's account books and inventory up to date after the summer rushes, Belle and the girls made trip after trip from the house to the bungalows.

After the busy afternoon, Harry went to his room to change for supper only to find all his things had disappeared. Bewildered and a little disturbed, he stepped back into the empty great room, then went to check the other bedrooms; he looked in the kitchen, on the decks, no one. He looked back at the front door of *their* house where *his* existence seemed to have been eradicated. Then he heard from across the side road, his sisters' laughter. Intrigued, he followed the sounds to the commons deck where his family was sitting, evidently enjoying themselves in discussion. He stood there gaping, ready to ask the whereabouts of his things, when White Feathers, who was sitting behind him unnoticed, cleared his throat. Harry wheeled, a bit startled, as his Great-uncle wasn't there when he had walked up. Harry followed the old man's gaze through an open bungalow door. He noticed one of his own coats hanging on a peg inside the door. As he turned to investigate, his family rose from their seats and quietly followed him into Bungalow Two.

Harry's books and notebooks were carefully arranged in a new bookcase under one window. His own two fishing rods were mounted prominently on one wall, and his k reel and fishing jacket were hung beneath them. He went to the bedroom and there on the bedside table were his only jewelry, two rings, and his bathroom kit. He went to the wardrobe and inside were hung all his own clothes, his polished shoes and boots setting neatly on the floor of the tall cabinet. As he closed the wardrobe door and turned round, Titania and Hipolyta, his Mother and Father, and Great-uncle stood at the bedroom door watching him. Harry wanted to say something, but he was at a loss for words. Belle stepped forward to answer his unspoken question.

"Harry, you are going to be in a faraway land and without having ever been on your own before. So your sisters and I thought perhaps you might get some practice at it while you are still near enough for us to enjoy your

independence, too.” Titania and Hipolyta rushed forward both to hug him and jump up on the bed.

“I...” Harry stammered looking from one to the next of his smiling family. “Thank you, it's wonderful... it's just that for a little while I wasn't... I mean...”

“It was Hipolyta's idea, actually,” began Titania, “to move all your things at once without your knowing.”

“I just thought,” added Hipolyta, “it might be like what you're going to have to experience when you go away, first on the train, and to College, and all.” She looked earnestly at her brother, hoping for approval.

Harry went to his sisters and held them close. “I just wish I could put you two into a trunk and take you with me.” He was sure he was the luckiest of brothers in the world.

“Well, let's get ready for supper, shall we?” said White Feathers, sounding more than a little choked up but recovering.

The next surprise came a few months later. Hipolyta and Titania had begun keeping the curtains over the workshop alcove closed all the time, but as they also made sure no one was usually around to notice when they went in and out, it didn't raise any suspicions. They were also in and out of Bungalow Two, when Harry wasn't there. If anyone had noticed, the only oddity that might have met their eyes was the notebook and measuring tape they kept with them on these forays. Also a bit unusual was their frequenting of the haberdashery across the street from the hardware store. When Titania was in charge of the store counter, Hipolyta would duck across and into the clothing store then emerge a while later, always with that notebook in hand.

Besides their covert activities, each also, as Harry had before them, always had her face pressed in some textbook borrowed from Harry's stacks at the bungalow. Belle not only encouraged this behavior but had them make reports, synopses and essays over the information, concepts and conclusions drawn from their readings. They kept journals and files of their assignments in their room and gradually had to begin archiving their results in crates kept under their beds then finally in the workshop as well.

The Christmas season brought merry hearts and goodwill towards men once again into the village. Holly and red ribbons, fir boughs and cookies were to be found at every store counter and in every home's kitchen and mantelpiece. The Livingson's home was not immune. The solstice arrived and wrapped presents were presented to family and friends. The girls had made all their gifts, well nearly all, and insisted upon directing the holiday's main event. To their mother they presented wooden signs, or plaques; one for each of the bungalows, and carved in relief that bungalow's number and each was painted in its own color scheme. Belle was delighted indeed and looked forward to mounting them. To their father they presented two new sails for the sailboat; one mainsail, sewn with two broad red and one white horizontal stripes with the name of the boat embroidered in the white space: "MUUDA'NEE" (donkeys). They supplied a foresail, or jib, in the same pattern. "Thank you very much indeed my little donkeys!" said their father gratefully.

Titania made Hipolyta a silken toilette kit with individual pockets for several combs, hair brushes—one coarse and one soft, teeth essentials, rose water, handkerchiefs—with her initials: H.B.L on each one. She had loaded it with a few homemade cosmetics, soap in a tonkin container, and nail care essentials. It rolled into a handbag-shape and had a sturdy handle for hanging in a bathroom. "Ooh Tani! It's wonderful, just wonderful!" bubbled Hipolyta. Everyone in the family knew of Hipolyta's special attention to her personal grooming and to her elegant taste in wardrobe.

Hipolyta presented Titania with a handwoven leather hackamore and saddlebags—also tooled with Titania's initials: T.B.L on each flap of the bags. Titania had been so much in the company of White Feathers and the young Connor lad on horseback trips around the lake of late, it was an inspired gift. Titania was ecstatic and clearly blushing. "My own hackamore and reins, with matching saddlebags! This is just so perfect. No more borrowing space in Great-uncle's bags!"

For White Feathers the girls presented a carved ivory pipe with a manzanita stem. Into the bowl were fashioned the stylized likeness of three eagle feathers which seemed bound together on the stem side and wrap

themselves around the bowl, then projected just a bit from the end in the likeness of wings and tail feathers. It was truly a masterpiece of craftsmanship. White Feathers was nearly speechless in appreciation for the utile sculpture.

At last it was Harry's turn. They disappeared behind the curtain across the alcove and in moments they carried out a large rectangular box, a sister on each end holding a handle. They set it on the floor in front of Harry and each kissed him on the cheek in turn. "Open it, silly!" goaded Titania. Harry looked at the gifts already displayed on the table and in hands around the room. He untied the ribbon holding the brown paper closed around the box and pulled away the paper. There before him was one of the most magnificent traveling trunks he had ever seen, and they had seen a great number over the years. The sides were all tooled leather over cedar panels and two sewn down wide black leather straps which encircled the trunk and secured it when closed with brass buckles. It was trimmed in the same black leather at its edges and around the opening. Contour formed brass balls for feet were fashioned onto the corners as added protection from idle scuffing and a brass locking latch was fitted to the front center. "It stands up like this," and Hipolyta and Titania raised it on one end where it stood balanced and sturdy. "Open it, Harry" said Hipolyta and held out a fob chain and key for the latch.

Harry accepted the key and unlatched the trunk. It opened easily and noiselessly. On the left side were two drawers and a small cabinet below them. "The drawers are for whatever you need to pack away that may be fragile," said Titania, pulling one open to reveal a padded lining. "And the cabinet is for books and stuff," Hipolyta turned a knob to swing open the cabinet door. Adjustable straps were fitted into the sides to secure whatever might be stored there. On the side facing the drawers and cabinet of the trunk was an embroidered stiff curtain which could be untethered at the bottom and pulled over the top of the trunk's side. There, hanging in the compartment, was something they had not made themselves: a new charcoal black sack suit and vest and two linen shirts from the village haberdashery. And sitting on the floor of the 'closet' were a pair of new black dress boots with polishing kit. In a compartment at the top of the

closet was a new slouch hat, also black, to complete the outfit. A suit brush hung to one side and a repair kit with extra buttons, needles, and matching threads.

Harry just gaped at the traveling trunk/closet with all the eyes of the family watching for his reaction, each smiling broadly in satisfaction. "Hipolyta, Titania... I have never seen anything to match the craftsmanship and quality of this luggage." He kept stroking the trunk's various surfaces and staring in admiration, too choked up to say any more. "We are *sure* the suit and boots fit," started Titania; "And the hat and shirts we had made from samples in your own closet in the bungalow," added Hipolyta. George, Belle and White Feathers, who had been in on the secret for weeks, were still justly impressed with the results of the girls' labors, even as much as Harry.

When the spring at last freed the village and roads from the ice of winter, George and Harry took a train trip to San Francisco and then to the Sutro & Co. Investment Bank. Harry knew what the hardware store grossed each month; he'd been doing the books for years already. The same for the Lodges, although the girls had taken that job over recently. So he knew without his father telling him that they had deposited approximately, \$5,500 from the store into the Tahoe City Bank, and \$14,000 from the Lodges over the last nine years into an account at Sutro & Co. for a combined total of \$19,500. Harry didn't have a firm grasp of even modest compound interest earned over time with monthly and annual contributions, otherwise he might have been prepared for the sums he ogled as they sat with George's Bank Director friend in his office. From George's original deposit of two hundred gold coins in 1864--- converted to US dollars---his twenty years of interest on that initial investment, with a bit taken out now and then, amounted to: \$16,700. The Lodges' account, into which they had been annually contributing about fifteen hundred dollars was now, after nine years of also modestly compounded interest: \$25,400. Then there was the account created for the receipt of funds derived from George's 'partnership' with Samuel Allcock. The final installment from Allcock & Sons Co. was just deposited that month, bringing that account, with a modest interest rate also compounded, to roughly \$13,000. Allcock

& Sons had enjoyed a healthy business during those ten years. With the store's account in the Tahoe City Bank at: \$13,700 after sixteen years or so of invested profits, the Livingson family financial worth was almost \$68,800. Harry had to get some perspective. He remembered that building the *four* bungalow cottages, furnishing them, and installing the water/wastewater systems had cost them over \$2000. They could build those lodges thirty times over and still have money in the bank. His mind swam at the numbers.

“Harry, just sign where the Director has indicated please.” George was nudging him out of the whirlwind of his thoughts. “This will give you direct control of these funds should something catastrophic occur either to us or to you while you are overseas.”

The Director explained, “Although I myself am retiring soon, I have groomed my replacement; your dealings will therefore likely be with him and he shall be in contact with you before long. In any event, we have weekly dialog with several prominent banks in England and transfers of funds may be made nearly instantaneously. I am sure our service of your accounts here will not suffer in the least even with the Atlantic Ocean intervening.” He made a little laugh, pleased with his own idea of humor.

George then continued to Harry, “Titania and Hipolyta will be added as signatories as they reach adulthood, so that should anything unforeseen occur to your mother or me, you each will be provided for directly. The Tahoe City Bank accounts will continue to serve the needs of the Mercantile, Lodges, and our home.”

It was a lot to take in, but Harry had, once he got some perspective on the issue, been able to acknowledge his new role in the family's finances and hoped someday to be able to also contribute significantly towards them. It was dawning upon him how much time and effort, planning and sacrifice had been made over the years by his mother and father on behalf of their children and he was emotionally overwhelmed with the enormity of the realization.

When they were almost home from the brief trip, and bouncing along the River Road in the borrowed chaise, George explained in an apologetic

way that, "...of the thirteen thousand dollars in the village bank, nearly five thousand is rightly yours, Harry. Your mother and I didn't see any pressing need for you to have a separate account setup, or even now for the twins. Not because we didn't trust you with it, but that the interest was accumulating nicely on the bulk sum." George waited to gauge his son's reaction to this news. Harry was as yet impassive at the information, so he continued, "That figure was determined by allowing for three dollars a day, for every day that you worked on the account books, or at the counter, or in the stock room over the last nine years or so." Again, George waited for some response from Harry. "Therefore in a real sense you have been making serious contributions to our family's wealth for years, just as your sisters have begun to do." Finally he got a broadening smile of satisfaction from the lad. "Your needs while you are away will of course be coming from the San Francisco accounts as they are more of our 'family capital' you might say." Harry was very glad that he was in some small part, helping in the security of his family.

George now chose this opportunity to explain certain important things. "Harry, money is very useful, but it is also of very limited use in the broad scheme of things. Your mother and I have given you knowledge and opportunities to apply that knowledge. Your reason and skills will always be your greatest assets, *whatever* money may or may not be in the bank. On a related topic, your mother had no idea how successful Mr. Allcock would be in translating my rods into his own commercial ventures, when she made the contract with him so long ago on behalf of your education. When I last had word from a mutual acquaintance of ours as to the current rates of tuition, books, uniforms, room and board, and travel for an English education... well, let's just say when your graduation arrives we will very likely be refunding to Mr. Allcock about two thousand pounds sterling. We aren't Vanderbilts, but we are well-off and intend to repay our debt, especially when it is a debt we accept for ourselves though no one else recognizes it as such. Do you understand my meaning, Harry?" asked his father at last.

"Yes sir. I believe I do understand the meaning to which you speak, father." Harry accepted his own debt to all the people who had helped to

shape and form him into who he was becoming, and the knowledge of that did indeed sink into the fiber of his being and never left him throughout his life. He was so choked with emotion, he could hardly see the road ahead of the horse-drawn chaise.

White Feathers was on his own journey, although he went east while George and Harry went west. He went to visit and pay his respects to the matriarch of his tribe; who was, after nine-six years of hard life, and the successes which accrue over such a span, at last dying. She had taken final residence with her own Shoshone on the Wind River during her final ten years. She greeted him, thankful that he was near. She asked after the girl he'd brought to her, so many years before to raise and educate. He said she was fine, and had children of her own now. Strong children in whom she would find great joy. He was in mid-sentence, asking her to please remember her little Pompe, when she breathed her last. He stayed at her side for a long time looking into the face of the woman for whom he had such tender feelings and depth of respect. When the others of his clan entered and began preparation for her ceremonies, he rose and left without looking back. His sorrow mounted and his heart was leaden as he began the homeward journey, yet he surmounted the darkness and once again was himself. Now glad that he'd made the timely trip, he wondered how to tell Belle that the old woman, she knew only as Great-grandmama Poriva, who had given her the strength and training that made her who she was, had now passed to air and sky. But he needn't have spent too much time on that poser, for by the time he had returned, just after George and Harry, a new voice was counseling and offer succor to Belle and to George.

He stepped into the great room, weary of the road, and Belle greeted him, embraced him unexpectedly and informed him that that was from Great-grandmama. She told him about the sudden new voice, which sounded like a woman just rising in the morning, "Honestly, I thought I heard her yawn before she spoke. I knew the voice at once, although it is stronger now and she's in a much better humor than when I remember her as a little girl." White Feathers wiped a tear from his eye and smiled warmly at Belle, who had gone on about her morning's tasks. He envied her for the length of a moment, knowing she would always have his mother's counsel

and ear. But he always had her, so the moment passed and he was contented once more that he had made the journey.

The host asked at last, "You have referred to it twice earlier and again in this adventure. Each time the children are first told about their external training, which sounds like... just a second I can find it..." And the host leafed back through pages of his notes, he read: "the explanation of the state of man's being, and of the structure of man's machine, that it was a microcosm of the great world, and how it was supposed to function. Then... detailed the necessary steps which enabled it to perform as intended... What about that?" asked the host, then added, "You have already told me about how our 'machine' *doesn't* work right---though I have a little difficulty thinking of my body as a machine; it sounds so Cartesian---But what about that, 'microcosm of the great world' and the 'necessary steps to make it perform as intended'? You haven't told me about that yet." He finished and sat patiently for an answer.

"Please realize, before we go down this road, that I can not give you my understanding, even though I would dearly love to do just that. I can, however, provide you with knowledge. Knowledge you can yourself verify and thus perhaps begin to make your own. In that way you may approach understanding on your own," explained the elder man.

"I think I see that. Go on," answered the younger man.

"Well, the 'pretty much' of it is this: the great knowledge I have referred to is nothing less than a view of the world which accounts for everything from how atoms fill their orbitals and the periodic table of elements, the construction of the building blocks of life, to the inner world construction of man and his relationship and responsibilities to and with the Universe at large. It is a mathematical construct which can be verified with simple skills and it is ancient beyond fathoming." He paused as if still unsure whether the younger man was ready to begin this journey at all. "It is not a magic wand and will not, just by knowing it, make any difference at all to your life. There is no missing link, nor mystical rite to perform. It is

knowledge only. Yet the structure implicitly indicated by it may be acted upon with confidence and thus yield understanding. That will in turn lead to a reorganization of a person's inner world. It is as it always has been, up to you to do something about it, and as with all things real: it begins with *UN*-doing more than any *doing* per se. The undoing of what you think you know, or think you have been doing.

Now, you said you have a little difficulty thinking of your body as a machine... You should make certain of this before we go further. It does no one any good to hear about something new to them, if they do not fully acknowledge any need for that information. I suggest, if you are really interested, that you perform some simple experiments. We can take up the rest of our story and the explanations you have asked for after you've decided for yourself whether it would be of any worth to you. Does that sound like a proper course of action?" The guest sat quietly and waited patiently. It was a big question and the young man should make up his own mind, after all this was *his* journey to make or not.

The younger man thought for a while, what amounted to a bit of soul-searching. 'Was this really something he wanted to pursue? Do I actually have so little contact with what he describes as 'conscience'? Am I just a mass of 'I's, each pulling this way and that? Don't I have my own independent will? Do I actually have possibilities I should have, but don't see right now? Do I even trust this strange old man anyway? I wonder who he is and where did he come from? He reminds me of an old guy I worked with at that Government contracting job... same odd way of answering a question, same wrinkled face. That was a tough job and without him I probably wouldn't have lasted a week there. I wonder where he is now... Geez, he was already almost retired when I knew him. I suppose I could dig up his phone number and see. I haven't had to remember a phone number in forever... just look on the contacts list of the phone and 'viola.' Oh, that reminds me I need to have my phone plan changed, save a bit of money wherever I can. My bills really need a good going over; I'm bound to be able to cut some waste somewhere. Probably need to start with...'

"Ahem..." The older man cleared his throat and brought the host

abruptly out of his reverie.

“Sorry, I was just thinking...” he blushed at that as he suddenly realized his thoughts had wandered so far afield. “Uh, you may have 'something' about parts of what you've told me. I'll give an experiment or two a go.”

“You get out of anything only the effort you put in,” cautioned the old man.

“I understand. I will try to do them,” answered the host with more resolve. “What do you want me to do?”

“Three things over the next couple days. Each experiment should only be attempted for brief periods at a time; don't try and do them all, all day.” The guest lowered his face and raised both eyebrows to stress the condition. “First: when you are in conversation with someone, anyone really, try not using the word: “I.” Try to notice; it will be difficult but you may catch yourself. If you have someone to help that's even better.”

“That sounds easy enough,” said the host.

“Second: I notice that generally your shoulders droop forward. Give yourself the command to “keep your shoulders back,” and every few minutes or so check to see if they are still back, posture straight.”

“Okay, that doesn't sound like a deal breaker either,” said the host confidently.

“And third: try to control the movements of your hands with your mind in realtime. Just roll your hands over and over slowly like this,” And the old man slowly revolved his hands around an imaginary point in front of him; the younger man imitated. “You'll have to start *really* slowly, directing their motion intentionally with your thought, then try to speed up and see how rapidly you can roll them and *really* keep up mentally.”

“And these experiments are it?” asked the host, a little surprised at the simplicity requested.

“Yep. You could try a bunch of others, but these should be enough,” answered the elder guest sincerely. “I promise I will return in three days tim--just in case you decide to continue after all. If you do not, no harm

done. Okay?"

"Three days. Okay," agreed the young host. His guest smiled and extended his hand, when the younger man clasped it the old gent said, "I'm pulling for ya," and he turned and stepped off the porch and headed up the road toward town.

The young man sat back down and looked at his notes for his 'experiments.' Out of curiosity he straightened his shoulders and told himself to hold them there. 'That actually feels pretty good. I should have been keeping my posture better all along. I certainly did when I was younger.' When he looked again, he noticed his shoulders had already drooped back in the short time it took to think of his youth. 'Okay, but I wasn't really trying that time. Again.' He gave himself the directive a second time....

5

Abroad

"To prefer evil to good is not in human nature; and when a man is compelled to choose one of two evils, no one will choose the greater when he might have the less."
---Plato

True to his promise, on the third morning the stranger was again sitting on his porch when he came out of the house that morning. "Here's your coffee." The host proffered a cup to his guest. After a moment or two, the host steeled his resolve to admit, "I was a miserable failure at those 'simple' experiments!"

The older man didn't smile, didn't react at all other than to ask, "How do you mean, 'failure'?"

"At first when I tried to keep my shoulders back for example, I'd no sooner think of something else and when next I remembered about them, they had long since drooped. I told myself I wasn't really trying and so I tried not to think of anything else and then they stayed---But only as long as I continued to ignore any distractions, which was never very long. Either something would catch my eye or a thought would carry me to another stream of thoughts and I was lost again. Then with that 'not say 'I' thing,' I asked a friend who was over for a visit, to tell me if I used the word 'I.' He didn't mind, but before I'd even finished getting him something to drink he'd spotted 'I' several times and I swear I thought I was watching myself carefully! And forget that spinning hands thing. I can't move my hands with my thought, watching and guiding every movement any faster than at a snail's pace. Spiders could build webs on me and not notice I'd moved." The young man slumped back into his seat, convinced that he was in fact not a candidate for anything that had to do with man's potential being fulfilled; not if it depended upon him.

The older man then allowed himself a look of sympathy for his host. “I applaud your genuine sincerity with yourself and your endeavors. Was there no improvement at all in two and half days?”

“Well sure. I can now hold my shoulders back for a whole minute and a half on average. Whoopie. Oh, and I was able to not say 'I' when talking to my cat for maybe three minutes... Of course the cat didn't stop me if I goofed.”

“Anything we practice we will improve upon with time,” encouraged the guest.

The host then had to ask, “I know I'm pretty dense, and I realize you've probably explained this, but I couldn't hear it. What was the point of those experiments? Besides to get me to see that I am not the wunderkind I would like to believe I am.”

“You said, the other day, that 'you have a little difficulty thinking of your body as a machine...' Well, is it?”

“I don't know about programmed obsolescence or anything, but I definitely have buttons that can be pushed, and I just go... off somewhere. If that is the activity of a machine, I'm the poster child,” acknowledged the host.

“That is a start. We have difficulty dissuading ourselves from the habit of thinking we are 'one;' so to not acknowledge our presumed 'unity' by avoiding saying 'I' is tantamount to denying our existence. We are legion, and our only shield against that reality is our illusion of wholeness. If you go to bed one night and think, 'In the morning, I must do thus and such, it is very important.' And the next morning, you go about your routine without a thought to that 'important' thing you were convinced of the night before... What has happened? Simply that it may have been important to one 'I,' but another 'I' was there when you woke up--an 'I' with its own memories and important matters, different from all the other 'I's in our machine. And they exchange places, without order, at a moment's notice, constantly, all our waking days.

That is one reason why keeping your shoulders back was so difficult. Our moving center is supposed to deal with our physical world in response

to the sensory perceptions of our instinctive center: to move or stay still. Unfortunately, our centers and the 'I's that comprise them have co-opted each others jobs. Our moving center *thinks* when it should simply *move*, our intellectual center tries to *control movements* when it should *think* and plan, our instinctive center *feels* when it should simply *sense*. How else could a 'thought,' a function proper to the intellectual center, intrude upon a moving center task? And then there is the fact that the intellectual center moves at a much slower rate of process than the moving center. You discovered that by revolving your hands. Obviously your hands could spin around themselves almost faster than the eye can follow without hitting each other and even to a tempo or rhythm, but not if managed by a center which cannot currently process at that speed.

We are built of several centers or brains, each with a capacity and function for which purposes it alone should be utilized. Yet the state of man, 'like unto a kingdom suffering an insurrection' is so mis-wired, so scrambled in its service of our wishes, that we are not able to genuinely 'do' anything."

The host had nodded to parts of the explanation, some of it making great sense in light of his own experiments. "How then, if I am a microcosm of the great world, and I am not functioning as I am supposed to function... Is there truly some practicable way to enable me to become as a human was intended?"

"Yes," answered the old man without reservation.

He then took up the story again. "The long train trip from where they boarded in Truckee all the way to their terminus in New York harbor was to take twelve days since Mr. Allcock had business to attend to along the way and their delay at those junctions was unavoidable. Still, Harry had only ridden a train once before and that was seated for the trip to San Francisco as a third-class passenger. Mr. Allcock spared no expense to book their passage on the 'Overland' in a first-class state room; that and he would now

be traveling further than he'd ever been. This was an adventure.

The Union Pacific Railroad, on the Overland Route, began for Harry at three in the morning on Tuesday, the seventeenth of June, 1884. His father, mother, and sisters escorted him to the depot in Truckee, where he and Mr. Allcock were to board the 4:50AM eastbound train. He looked the part of a young traveler in his new charcoal-black sack suit, black boots and dark slouch hat. He fiddled nervously with the watch and fob with its attendant key in his vest pocket while he waited on the platform with the few other travelers. The watch was a birthday present from White Feathers. Inscribed inside the cover was:

*To the young Master,
Henry Livingson,
Time is the Uniquely
Subjective Phenomenon.
your Great-great-uncle,
White Feathers, J.B.C*

His trunk waited on the trolley with Mr. Allcock's luggage (far fewer in number than on his last visit). His sisters held onto each of his arms and barely kept back their tears as the steam whistle of the train pierced the cold Sierra morning on its approach to the little station.

Titania and Hipolyta were dressed up for the send off, they had insisted that since *he* wore nice new clothes, they definitely would be wearing their best dresses. The way Belle saw it, this would be the last time he would see them for at least four years, maybe more, and she wanted him to leave with the memory of his sisters as young women, not the tall skinny girls they still were. In this endeavor she was assisted by the girls' Aunts and, truth be told, primarily by her Great-grandmama who had related a story to her that impelled her to have everything ready for her daughters' transformation. The tale was:

'Long before all the tribes of the great plains came under the sway of the first great chief, far away in an open field beyond the distant mountains, two groups of young men from 'the people' armed themselves with spears, sticks, and bows and excited each other to the verge of a

violent fight. Suddenly, a young woman dressed in a beautiful skirt edged with lace came between them. The sharp spears almost touched her body, but she, with an air of disregard, remained calm and simply shook her skirt as if clearing the dust of the road from her hems. The fighters were all astonished by the sudden scene. They stopped advancing upon each other, and even slowly lowered their arms, transfixed as under a spell, watching the woman's waving skirt. After a moment's silence, the captain's of both sides, seeing that their men had lost the spirit of the fight, ordered their soldiers to withdraw, and the battle was averted.'

Belle told George and White Feathers the story and what she planned, eliciting both their encouraging consent. Her son was soon to be parted from the only world he had known and in the company of a man he knew only by reputation, carried away to a faraway place. She intended that the separation would cause him as little distress as was possible under those conditions. She set about to sewing and altering.

As soon as the women folk were all huddled in the girls' room the afternoon before their last night together, the transformation began. When they were done, very late indeed, the twins emerged to the raised eyebrows and appreciative whistles of each of the men lounging in the great room. George, White Feathers, Mr. Allcock, Jameson, and Harry all stood quickly up when the ladies entered. Their hair was piled and curled, and their heeled riding boots were barely visible beneath the full black Anabel skirts. Each wore Lady Hadleigh vests to match the skirts. Titania wore a cornflower blue Moire tie-back, in contrast to Hipolyta's salmon colored one. They had somehow or other also gained curves in all the right places and this forced their admirers to retrace their most recent memories for any prior evidence of same. Their desired effect was achieved. Harry spent all his remaining time with them playing the part of the dapper cosmopolitan and yielding to their every whim. It was truly a bittersweet time for each of them.

Handkerchiefs at the ready and resolved against using them the twins steadied themselves on Harry's arms for a moment longer, then escorted him to the boarding ladder. Each in turn removed from under her vest an

envelope and placed it into his hand, kissed him on the nearest cheek and backed slowly to join their parents under the platform lamps in a final wave of farewell. Settled in their state room compartment on the Pullman Palace Car, Harry looked out through the window and thought if he only had a photographer around, that this was the picture of his loved ones he would surely treasure forever. He waved back. With a burst of steam from the Engine the future rolled at him faster than ever before, miles and hours at a time, mountains and prairies and fields he'd never seen.

Harry gathered his memories around him like a gardener transplanting a sapling: trying to keep even the smallest root attached and vital.

He had been the center of attentions in Tahoe City from the day Mr. Allcock's letter arrived and the dinner at Mandy's in celebration, all of which signaled the absolute end of his childhood. His father and mother and Great-uncle White Feathers weren't alone in giving 'last minute' advice and final words. Everyone in town, it seemed, was anxious to pass along special counsels to the 'kid going abroad,' whether they themselves had ever even been any further than Truckee.

His single refuge from the inundation of celebrity was the time he still cherished with his sisters. Very nearly four years younger than himself, the twins were his ever-present reminder that he was just a young man and still quite human. Titania and Hipolyta were also his biggest fans and when they were younger, his constant shadows. They knew his every secret and dream. Fortunately for Harry, he knew each of their special desires and hopes as well, at least the last ones they professed—the lists still changed often it seemed.

They cleared the turn of a mountain shoulder outside of Reno when the first rays of the June morning sun swept away the murky shadows of the pre-dawn and set the open valleys aglitter. “Breakfast is served in a few minutes in the Dining car, laddie---If you've an appetite. Your father assures me you have traveling money for this journey,” said Mr. Allcock, the last almost as a question.

“Yes sir, I do; and I have. We were very appreciative that you included

sums and such with the itinerary for the trip,” replied Harry.

“Well, I suggest you only carry what you think you will need for any one day in your purse. Leave the rest secure in your trunk drawer in our locked compartment. That's the safest, I've found,” he added in a fatherly manner and a gentle smile.

“Thank you, sir. I'll see to it presently,” smiled Harry, and began to think Mr. Allcock would be a good traveling companion, from whom he may learn quite a bit. He separated out daily expense funds and then locked the bulk of his bank away as directed, and so joined his elder companion on the walk through a couple coaches up to the Dining car. Once seated, Harry surveyed with some admiration the dining hall and their accommodations. Velvet drapes over the windows let in the morning light which reflected brightly from polished brass fittings on the lacquered wooden poles and ceiling ribs, from which hung ornate lamps and tasseled bell cords. The tables were dressed in linen and set with white china place settings, accented with silverware bearing the engraved initials of the Union Pacific Railway on each piece. The goblets and glasses were crystal, and the cups and saucers matched the china plates, all decorated with the Railway's own designs.

They ordered and coffee was poured, juices delivered with the morning edition of a 'recently local' newspaper set at the table within reach. The aromas of the meal arrived before the server returned laden with a tray of steaming biscuits, eggs, a rasher of bacon and sausages, toast and bowls of jams and butter. They set to the meal in a leisurely manner, Harry trying to imitate Mr. Allcock's deliberate and studied manner and movements, making sure not to finish before his benefactor. His attention went back to the room in front of him, and he noticed how even the plush and intricate designs in the carpeting complimented the décor.

Their meal finished and the empty dishes removed, Mr. Allcock lifted the bill and went over the listed items of fare with Harry. After establishing its accuracy, he offered pointers for determining the appropriate surcharges and tip. They left the proper sums at the table and retired to the smoking car where Harry had to again admire the forethought and design

of the traveling hotel. More velvet window dressings, more well apportioned seating and carefully placed book shelves integral with the walls of the long cabin met his gaze. The elder man produced one of his hand-carved meerschaums, tamped an aromatic blend of tobacco into its bowl, lit it and sat back into the cushioned leather chair.

“So,” he opened, “What do you think so far, Harry?” and he drew a bit on the pipe stem and let out a stream of sweet smelling smoke.

“I am very impressed, sir,” said Harry genuinely. “I had not conceived how rich were the appointments of the Pullman coaches.”

His companion smiled, “Well said young Harry, well put indeed.” He gestured with his pipe as a professor might use a pointer in a lecture. “Now how have your studies been proceeding; one of the first tasks you'll be set to upon our arrival will be your entrance examinations.”

The train rumbled on beneath their feet as the landscape flowed by the windows and Harry outlined his courses of study to the receptive British gentleman before him. He confessed that he was still uncertain of some of the information contained in no few of the texts, as he had not completely memorized those sections, yet. Confident that, like the rest of the material, once digested he would be able to make a more critical exposition of it. The elder man nodded in satisfaction, knowing that Harry had indeed been applying himself to the required studies. Mr. Allcock hadn't really any doubts on the matter since Harry was the son of George and Belle Livingston, after all. When Harry finished his 'report,' Mr. Allcock offered his observations and commendations to Harry's parents for ensuring that he was sent off properly prepared. Harry's thoughts returned to them as they settled into their stateroom and he gazed out at the passing world.

When he was little, Harry learned quickly the techniques his father employed in fashioning cane rods. From the selection of the best tonkin specimens for splitting, to the temperatures for the curing oven. He could wrap guides and strippers as well or better than most, and intermediates no longer stumped him with their mere three or four turns. George set him to hand rubbing and polishing as soon as he was big enough to hold the

rags, and he spent hours sanding the glued and cured rod blanks, reel seats, and grips until his handshake was near as firm as any grown man. He was often set the task of sharpening tools, and soon learned to respect the sharp edges and fine points of the variety of metal tools they relied upon.

His constant 'education' wasn't ignored by his mother either. Belle set him to sorting yarns and threads for her blankets and rugs and stringing them on her traditional looms. When he was three, he had already made a hanging for one of the niche 'shrines' that honored one of Belle's Aunts who had passed into 'Air and Sky' the winter before. One of his chores as soon as he could walk was to help prepare for, and clean up after, the family meals. When she went to market she explained to him what she was choosing and why. When they walked to the nearby stream on washing days, or when they were due for a bathe, it was then she directed Harry how to gather the wild herbs and wildflowers for the medicine chest and pantry. She pointed out the various qualities of the little shrubs, weeds, grasses, trees, and other growths of nature's bounty; she described their uses and seasons. In fact, anywhere his mother or father went, Harry was a constant shadow, and he watched... everything.

When he was tall enough to see over the counter in the hardware store he was given new chores: counting and recording stock on shelves once a week, restocking, cleaning the shopfront windows and the countertops. He became more than familiar with the accounting ledgers, putting his newly learned maths to practical use. He gradually became the face of Livingston Mercantile to delivery men and wholesalers when they passed through on their rounds covering their sales and delivery territories.

Tania and Poly were a big help, or so he told them. Poly could sit happily and count pegs or screws, or bolts and nuts until drowsy with sleep. Tania knew where every obscure bangle, bobble, thingamagig and whatsit sat on shelves or under cabinets throughout the store and stockroom. Probably from her habit of following around the store cat on its forays in search of critters ever since she and her sister became clever enough to crawl. The shop always had at least one hunter-in-residence whose sole job in life was to keep the place vermin-free, and they took

their position of importance very seriously indeed. When not actively on patrol, it could be found in close proximity of one, or both of the twins, graciously accepting the adoration from whom they evidently considered their co-workers.

They each continued their house chores and learned something new all the time. Whether it was the preparation of a new meal, or a more efficient method to perform an already familiar task, they were like sponges soaking up the attentions and instructions of their parents and Great-uncle. On days when there was a lapse in needed chore business, they sat in the great room and Harry would read from a new or favorite play. He changed his voice to fit the characters and even got used to the accents suggested by the Bard's scripted lines. As they got older, they each took a role in the productions and before long, like Bottom the Weaver, Poly and Tania wanted to play ALL the parts. On rainy or snowy days which kept them inside, they would put on performances for their adoring fans---ofttimes the store cats, sometimes their family, but always an appreciative audience.

Harry gazed sidelong for a moment as the Great Plains smeared past the open state room window situated over where he sat at a small table. The air was warm and smelled of sweet grasses and early summer wild flowers. Harry reopened a text on the cultures of classical Greece and Rome and set to absorbing the nuances of ideals propounded by this or that philosopher, statesman or general whose insights filled the pages of the volume. He could sit for long stretches immersed in the antiquities, imagining himself among the colonnades and odea of the ancient cities, the great architectures and ideas of an age long past.

Dinner would be served around seven, so he had a bit of time before dressing for the event to duck down into the Gent's lavatory to freshen up a bit. He liked using the common lavatory at the other end of the coach; it gave Mr. Allcock free reign of the accommodations in the cabin and allowed Harry a sense of freedom and liberty to which he was gradually becoming accustomed. He gathered his kit bag and, remembering to lock the cabin door behind him, walked through the passageway of fellow travelers' compartments to the Gentleman's closet. It was unoccupied, so he set

himself to brushing his dinner suit, polishing his boot tops, and airing his best linen shirt. With his wardrobe for the evening prepared, he combed his hair, checked his reflection for any necessary grooming, then he crossed the hall to the lavatory to complete his activities.

Mr. Allcock was seated reviewing the sheaves of business correspondence in his hand and looked up as Harry re-entered. "I thought you may be sprucing up a bit, laddie," he said as the young man closed the cabin door behind him. "I have to get these names and figures sorted in my head before we arrive in Chicago, Saturday afternoon, and it takes me longer these days to cement new things into my mind than it once did," he admitted, waving the papers in his hands. Harry, who could commiserate with the activity after his day of studies, nodded in sympathy. "I have meetings with no less than five suppliers and three wholesalers before I even get to review my own operations at the factory in Toronto," continued Samuel in mock solemnity, clearly pleased and proud that his North American ventures were going so well. Harry smiled encouragingly.

"Which brings me to an issue I need not postpone," Mr. Allcock was saying. "I want you to accompany me to all these appointments, Harry, and do me the service of being my adjutant," he paused to assess the reaction. Harry remained expressionless. "It won't do for me to be lugging about all the forms and letters and notes I'll be needing along the way. Would you consider it a favor to perform this office for me, Harry?" Before he could respond, Samuel added, "I know it's not exactly what your folks sent you along to do, but it would be a blessing to me to have someone at my elbow I can trust," he finished.

Harry felt a swelling of pride at the unexpected responsibilities being offered and answered with full voice, "I shall consider it an honor sir and will endeavor to disport myself appropriate to the office you require of me." A handshake on it, and the two companions finished their preparations for dinner while the clackety-clack and whistling windows of the rolling train sounded as background to their quiet communion and each their private thoughts and recollections.

Just before the girls were born, he had been on his first over-night

camping and fishing trip with his father and White Feathers. His mother had clucked over him for what seemed like an hour reassuring herself: 'had he remembered his extra socks, his rain poncho, his hat, his...' on and on. White Feathers had scooped him up onto his broad shoulders to rescue him from the interrogation and set him in the boat as if it were 'base' in a game of tag. He could still see the expression on his mother's face, hands on her hips, and the apron over her huge rounded belly fluttered in the breeze as her uncle turned to face her and promised to guard 'her boy' with his life. His father came out of the house behind her with a pack over one shoulder. He reached for her waist and pulled her around to him, then... White Feathers pointed over the lake at the gentlest of breezes on the water as a 'good sign.' Harry turned away from his mother and father to see. When he turned back, his mother was almost to the house and his father was coming to the boat, grinning and saying, "This as an important day for you, Biggun." They pushed off, set course, and were away.

They fished, and Harry caught a Kokanee Salmon large enough to be his dinner. He helped clean it when they set up camp that evening and assisted in cooking the meal. That fish was the best he'd ever tasted. While they cleaned and tidied up, White Feathers and his father chatted.

"And she never noticed the slits you cut in her living room wall," said his Great-uncle.

"Fortunately, no. I slipped a hanging rug a little to the left and mopped the floor after myself. It was as much a surprise to her as for Biggun over there," answered George.

"And you don't think she suspected a thing when the workmen were digging right outside the bedroom wall?" pursued White Feathers.

"I told her the outhouse was needing maintenance and cleaning. And she said, 'And about time, too. I haven't mentioned it, but that job was long over due---thank you very much.' She said it, I'm sure, half convinced it was her own idea! I about split my vest holding back my laughter at that." George almost doubled up in hilarity just repeating it.

When they had both recovered themselves, the old man patted him on the back, "Having all the bits measured, cut, stacked and hidden, ready to

go was a brilliant stroke my boy, simply brilliant,” concluded White Feathers.

“The hardest part,” said George, “was keeping Wang Lung, Lizette, and the others from spilling the beans while I was making preparations and hurrying to get it completed before our next bundles of joy arrive.”

As the long shadows of dusk settled over their tents, the campfire beckoned warmly. White Feathers, with a nod of permission from George, offered Harry a sip of his beer. The boy accepted the bottle with gusto and tipped it up for a swig. He winced involuntarily and his head shook back and forth against his will, while he tried as best he could to smile as if it were the best thing he ever tasted. The roars of laughter from the older men at his absurdly conflicted expressions rang out suddenly over the lake and echoed through the woods. White Feathers actually had snot dripping from his nose he was so beside himself at the sight. After he blew his nose and regained his composure, he began a story of his first camp and fishing memories of his youth. Harry nodded off into a contented sleep long before it was all told and awoke next morning to the aroma of cooking bacon seeping through the tent flap.

“Good morning Biggun,” announced his father as White Feathers returned from gathering more dry branches to feed the fire. “Do you think you can break up those limbs and keep the fire going for a bit 'til I finish breakfast?” he asked of the boy.

“Sure!” answered Harry quickly. He had often performed this chore for his mom in their kitchen. He knew how much and when to add the fuel so the fire stayed hot but didn't flame up too much. The open campfire presented challenges the cookstove at home hadn't, but he managed admirably and both his father and uncle said so.

When the tent was stowed and the fire extinguished and scattered, they went for a hike a little ways up from their campsite to a bend in a river above the lake. “This is where I first saw anyone turn fishing into a beautiful dance of light and skill.” White Feathers told Harry.

“Your uncle was standing right where you are now, Harry, as quiet as a tree, for I didn't hear a sound. And as I moved to another part of the river, I

nearly peed my pants when this big grinning beast appeared from out of nowhere!" said George.

"Your father graciously taught me to use his fly rod and let me fish with it for a just a few minutes, and I was hooked," added White Feathers.

They moved down to the river, separated, and began to cast, each to their own section of stream. In no time it seemed, first Harry then each in turn had landed a trout. Thus they continued until the sun shone straight down through the forest canopy, dazzling and blinding their eyes, reflected up from the sparkling water. They strung their catch and headed back down to the awaiting boat. As they walked, George sang a folk song from his youth, White Feathers chanted a hunting song, and Harry was bewitched by his being with the 'men' on this most wonderful of days.

The Smoking Lounge was more crowded this evening than it had been in the late morning. They passed through the wispy clouds of gray smoke and emerged at the door to the Dining car. Seated once again in the rolling restaurant, they were offered bills of fare and chose quickly from the selections available. They both had wine with their meal; Harry had the trout and therefore a white wine, Samuel Allcock ordered the roast beef, and so a red California vintage was placed before him. Avoiding any mention of business or studies, Harry asked after Mr. Allcock's family and residence in "...Redditch, is it?"

"Ay," warmed Mr. Allcock, "We moved to Clive House, it's closer to the factory and a bit more room..." He described the gardens, the town, the church, and his factory all with such fondness it made Harry wonder what a toll it must take on him to be away from his home for such long business trips. "Ah, perceptive lad. Yes it is a bother, a necessary bother, but I assure you..." and he explained how capable his wife, by his second marriage, was in handling the house and staff, his daughter, still at home and her interests, "It is in good hands that I leave my kith and kin, and to a welcome homecoming when I quit the road again."

Their supper arrived and they dined very well.

Their bills paid, they ambled with full stomachs toward their own coach. The Smoking car's habitues had thinned by the time they reached it,

so they tarried a bit. Mr. Allcock pulled out the Meerschaum, lit it and puffed lazily. "It's a mark of a good man that he undertakes his duties with focus and efficiency," said he. "I've admired your attention to your studies on this trip when other lads might be reveling in their excitement of such an adventure." Again he was pointing at Harry with his pipe stem in his usual manner, and Harry smiled appreciatively.

"I'm sure it's a trait inherited from my folks," he answered.

"To be sure, two of the finest people I've ever had the good fortune to meet. And your Uncle White Feathers, there's a man of integrity and wisdom, I never met his peer," conceded the gentleman.

"Great-uncle." Harry corrected.

"Tell me," Samuel began, shifting the subject, "what do you suppose..." but he didn't finish his question. He was interrupted by a piercing screech and shuddering jolt in the train; and it began to slow. All faces turned to the windows for some clue to the sudden inconvenience, though from their vantage point within the series of train cars and lacking a proper field of view, ready explanations were not forthcoming.

Mr. Allcock rose, "Come along, Harry. We'll to our cabin. If it's a serious matter they will inform the passengers. If it is trifling, we'll be underway again shortly, but it is out of our control in any event. Follow close," and he started for the passageway to their coach.

They had just gotten to the next car when the crowded passageway slowed their progress. As in the smoking car, everyone was trying to get some idea of what had transpired by gazing out the windows and questioning their neighbors. They emerged between the train carriages and before entering the next, their own, Harry stepped out onto the steps used for entering or exiting the train car. He leaned as far out as he could reach and looked toward the Engine, and seeing nothing that suggested itself as an obvious cause for the delay he glanced at Mr. Allcock who waited for him, hand on the carriage door handle. Harry tried the same on the other side of the little platform and then he saw them. He motioned for Mr. Allcock to see for himself. Several train employees were wrestling the dead carcass of what appeared to be a bull from off the tracks well out in front of

the train.

“Do you think we hit it?” asked Harry.

“Well if it died of natural causes, that was a most inconvenient location for him to choose as his final resting place,” answered the scotsman and he smiled. “A distinct lack of forethought on his part, I must say.” he added. They entered the train car and made for their state room. “That's what I was trying to point out, before we were interrupted; most people aren't any more prepared for what they're doing than that dead beast out there on the tracks.”

Harry recalled one weekend not long before his big camping adventure, when his mother had gone to visit one of his Aunts. His father woke him early and told him they were going to surprise his mother when she returned. He followed him out the door and around to the back of the house where stacks of boards lay in neat rows. Large round timbers were sunk in the ground around a covered hole, and heavy boards attached to the house, boxed in the space above the ground, nearly as tall as himself. His father put a hammer in his hand and set him to pounding nails, attaching long flat planks to larger pieces of lumber. While he pounded and sweated, his father fitted other timbers together and raised the skeletons of walls around the edges of the box.

When Harry had gotten two courses of the planking attached, George was hanging joists for rafters and pinning them at the roof's eave and the tops of the newly erected walls. When Harry had five courses of the floor planking completed, the cross-members of the roof, and all round the upright studs of the walls were in place, and the little room was ready for sheathing. His father brought up lumber from another pile and framed an opening into the floor beams over the covered hole in the ground. He then opened a crate next one of the lumber piles and hoisted up what looked like the cousin of the pump in their kitchen. He removed the cover over the hole in the ground and fitted a slim wax ring on top of it, then set the pump shaft neatly onto the rim plate protruding from the hole, and bolted the connection together. That accomplished, he climbed the ladder and crept up on the roof where he had stacked corrugated metal panels, which

so matched the existing roof as to have been perfectly camouflaged laying as they were. He pulled each panel into place and fastened it over the new roof, then he climbed back down to join his son. He squatted next to Harry and began laying the rest of the floor with him side by side.

When they had finished the new floor, George wiped his brow and said, "Well sir, you've done a man's job here this morning, how about we take a break for a bite to eat," After a pause, he added, "What do ya say about that?" Harry grinned and nodded his head vigorously.

After sandwiches and milk they went back to the new room. His father transferred another bundle of boards onto the floor of the room and re-stacked them carefully. He climbed the ladder and asked Harry to begin handing one board at a time up to him. As a team, they soon had the ceiling of the room up and then they moved to the inside walls. The process repeated itself: Harry holding up a plank, George lifting it into place or nailing on the spot it was held. Soon the walls of the little room were in place and Harry looked around in the dimness and asked the obvious question: "Daddy, how are we getting out of here?" George had waited for his son to ask before simply proceeding to the next step. He wanted it to be Harry who figured out their predicament and come up with some solution.

He answered, "Well son, that's a very good question; what do you suggest?"

Harry thought a bit, "We could take down a couple pieces of the wall and crawl out," he offered. "We could squeeze down through the hole next to the pump, and crawl out under the room," he mused. "Or... uh... maybe we can climb out through the little window opening up there?" he paused, "Father, what's this room for anyway?"

"Excellent question again. This is a bathing and toileting room," he answered without any further explanation.

"What's a bathing and terleting room?" followed Harry.

"It's where your mother can have a bathe, without going to the creek, and pee and poop without going outside to the outhouse," he responded.

Harry was quiet, then asked hesitantly, "Father, can I use it too?"

George stifled the laughter he felt and only chuckled, "Of course you can use it too. I expect I'll use it, and White Feathers may be persuaded to use it. It's for all of us." He felt along the wall of the house and his fingers touched two nails sticking out just a little higher than his head. "Harry reach over there into the corner and hand me that saw, please." Harry, his eyes adjusting to the low light, picked up the saw by the handle and placed it carefully into his father's waiting hand. "Thank you very much, Biggun," he praised.

Lifting the saw above his head and perpendicular to the wall, he slid it through the side of the house as if by magic. He made a few strokes and withdrew it. Then performing the same feat in three more places, handed the saw back to Harry, and cautioned him to stand back. Harry backed away, uncertain of what was about to happen and dumb-struck with awe. George placed one hand against the wall again, felt for something at chest level, then said in a loud voice, "Open Sesame!"

With his hand still on the wall where he had grasped it, a rectangle of the house's wall came toward them at his command! George reached with both hands to keep it from crashing onto the floor. The light from inside their house instantly filled the darkened 'bath room' and George saw it at once. The absolute awe in his son's wide eyes and gaping mouth as he looked from his father to the rectangular hole and back to his father, too amazed to even remember to breathe.

"Well that does it. I think," said George casually, as if he did this sort of thing every day. "Shall we go to the kitchen and wash this sawdust off our faces?"

Harry, his eyes and mouth still wide open, merely nodded his head and like a puppet walked woodenly forward following his father across the great room and into the kitchen, still holding on to the saw. "We'll put up the outside of the walls before your mother gets home tomorrow, alright?" said George as he pumped water into the basin to rinse the sweat and dust from his son's face.

Harry would never forget that day, either.

The next morning, Harry woke his dad, anxious to continue the amazing project. George went into the storeroom of the shop through the back hallway, his son dogging his steps, and returned with a bundle of two foot staves which he stacked on the floor of the new room. He bid Harry fetch the rest of the pile as he carefully fitted the base pieces into their elongated oval shape. Then he set them round with three bands of iron rod, roughly mimicking the the contour of the base, and proceeded to stand the numbered staves around its perimeter. When Harry had brought the last of the stack from the storeroom, George bid him hold upright the fitted ribs he had begun to place. Before any time at all they were coaxing the bands up the outside of the tub, tapping them higher until seated at their proper latitudes round the container. His father handed him a spanner and showed him how to tighten the bolts of the bands until he could tighten no more, as his father then went back to the storeroom for another armful of pre-fitted moldings and boards.

By lunchtime they had finished out the 'bath room' door jambs, put up a hinged door and installed base boards. George built a shelf for a basin and ewer at the pump head and assembled a curiously low boxy bench-like thing against one wall. They went to the kitchen for a snack, George added a half mug of beer, then they went back to work, this time outside.

His father measured from one corner of the addition toward the house proper and made a mark under the floorboards. Then holding the end of a large pipe up to the mark, scribed round its diameter, bore a hole inside the scribed line and proceeded to cut out along the line, leaving a hole large enough for the pipe. They turned to the clapboards for the sheathing. As they had done with the interior wallboards, Harry held up each board in turn as George nailed it into place. After each couple courses were fitted in this manner, his father would take straw and pack it into the spaces made by the studs and the two wall sides. After they were up over George's head with the siding, he fetched the ladder and Harry began levering one end of each plank to within George's reach, and in that way they had soon dried in and insulated the new room.

George came down and backed away from the new addition. Harry

walked over to his side and his father put an arm round his shoulders, "That's a good job we've done there, Harry," he crowed. Harry looked from his dad to the room and back, grinning proudly. "Well, one little chore to go..." George sighed cheerfully and he picked up the large pipe he had fiddled with earlier. He produced a threaded flange and affixed it round the hole under the floor with screws, then began twisting the pipe to mate it to the flange. He fetched more pieces of pipe with other odd bits and then pulled away some boards laying on the ground, heretofore unnoticed by anyone, which revealed a trench leading over to the side of the outhouse. Before any time at all, he and Harry had run piping from the house to the outhouse and recovered the trench with soil to seat the pipe and the boards to protect them.

When they went back inside, George again went into the store room followed by his little shadow and fell to making a racket un-crating something shipped to the shop the week before. When he and Harry returned this time to the 'bath room' they bore a large porcelain object resembling an overgrown fruit bowl. George spread a few strange little packages on the floor and picked up a page of diagrams which he glanced over one last time. Twenty minutes of methodical assembly later, and the Livingsons were the exclusive owners of the first indoor toilet in Tahoe City. A bucket of water sat next to the contraption to pitch hit for the lack of a plumbed water supply, but other than that slight modification, the house was now as well furnished as any in the whole state of California. George sent Harry back to the store room for a couple more items, and himself made a few additions to their handiwork. Harry returned with the items and placed them where his father indicated.

"That will do," finished George then clapped his hands back and forth together a few strokes, Harry imitated the gesture of 'it's done,' and they went back to the front porch. The sun was getting low over the mountains and Belle with White Feathers was just then riding up the road along the river. Father and son waved a greeting, and stood impatiently waiting for her to finally arrive.

Did they have a surprise for her.

Omaha, Nebraska was a city of over 30,000 people, sprawling and alive. The clouds of dust south of the city looked like the gathering threat of an invading army, but it was just the new stockyards refilling, which bore testament to the spirit of a city that wanted it all. As the train pulled into the Union Station at 3:25 in the afternoon, the unending clackety-clack of their journey yielded to the bustling throng and controlled chaos of the station and the streets beyond. Harry and Mr. Allcock stood on the platform as fellow travelers disembarked, some having reached their destination, and watched the hawkers descend on them, extolling the best hotels and restaurants, the finest tours of the city, the most affordable saloons, the shows, the gambling, and on and on. Harry looked for assurance from Mr. Allcock to be certain this was a common occurrence, and not some holiday fever gripping the city. Mr. Allcock was simply watching impassively the scene before them, puffing his pipe and keeping an eye on the conductor as he monitored the ingress and egress of passengers and luggage on and off his train. Harry was reassured.

After returning to their compartment, the train lurched like a racehorse at the gate of a derby and the trip was renewed. A frenetic city searching for an identity looked back at them as they alternately rumbled beside avenues of the wealthy in their bright Victorian enclaves, then through the crowded and filthy streets of broken buildings, poverty and desolation. To some the train's repeated whistle was a trumpet of progress, while to others it sounded the knells of destruction and darkness. Beyond the outskirts of Omaha the tracts of fields led down to the Missouri River, across the bridge, and into Iowa, Council Bluffs and more cornfields. With the smells and sounds of the city still lingering in his thoughts, Harry opened Gibbon's text and struggled to focus on the desperate last days of Romulus Augustus, for which he felt sure he had now a better understanding.

When he looked up from the book a while later, he gazed, as always, first out the window and then over to his room mate. Mr. Allcock was dozing in the upholstered leather chair. The papers he had been reviewing were still held loosely in his hand and though asleep, his head was erect and his shoulders square. Behind him the lustrous, inlaid paneled cabinets,

crimson velvet curtains, and brass knobs and fittings of the state room glowed warmly. The ensemble was ideal for one of those sedate portraits so frequently adorning the halls and mantles of the genteel. Dinner would be served before long and Harry made little noise as he gathered his kit, locked the door behind him and went to neaten his appearance. He didn't really care so much about what he looked like, for himself, but he was the traveling companion of a captain of industry, and his own benefactor. He had few responsibilities, but those he had undertaken, he fulfilled admirably.

Just four days after the first famous camping trip, on a Thursday, with his Aunts still bustling in and out between his parents' room and the 'bath room,' he heard the voices of his sisters for the first time. Harry could tell them apart from that very first introduction. As it turned out, practically no one else, save immediate family ever could. Titania was quick, reckless and loud. Hipolyta was intense, passionate and demanding. Harry could never get his elders to understand how he had arrived at those descriptions from merely hearing the girls the first time, but they had to admit he was bang on. Although, if the girls remained absolutely still and perfectly quiet, a rare occasion at best, even he couldn't tell them apart. That was the beginning of his lifelong attachment to 'his little green-eyed cats.'

They were a bigger family now and he was a more senior member at last. What he hadn't expected as part of seniority was the new responsibility. It hadn't started big, just a diaper here or there, then there were more of them and soon he was doing the washing--- New chore number one. Then there were the evenings when they wouldn't sleep. As soon as one dozed off the other would wake and when she was calm... well, it was a nasty cycle. "They don't do it on purpose," his mother or father would remind him, "they aren't able to plan this for your misery."

But Harry wasn't easily convinced of their benign natures until he was conscripted into night duty also. Then he was soon convinced, absolutely, beyond all doubts: his sisters were innocent of all the crimes he had in his heart accused them. The very first night he was roused up to sit in the big rocker in the great room with Poly, while his dad paced and hummed to

Tania, Harry loved them. They traded off every so often until the girls were pacified. It was wonderful to be a big brother--New chore number two.

That winter was one of the fondest in his memory. The family slept when they could and worked at what needed doing when they were able. They ate, talked, played and read aloud, cooked, cleaned, washed and mended, paced, hummed, sang and told stories always with the twins in someone's arms, lap, or perched on a hip. The snows fell, he and his father cleared the porches again and again. They kept the fire in the hearth and the cook stove always burning for warmth and comfort against the cold and dimness of the days. Harry decided to stop counting his chores. His folks did more than he ever thought people could do. They could work magic and that was that. Harry felt like the luckiest boy in the world.

The train was his library, his office and his dormitory, an apt setting for his transition away from the village life he'd known. The preparation for University which had consumed him for the last year at least, was going to gain him admission to Malvern College. Soon the business training in his family's Mercantile would be tested and augmented by acting as lieutenant during Mr. Allcock's scheduled meetings and Toronto review. He repacked his texts in his trunk and picked up the daunting stack of correspondence, orders, and status logs which Mr. Allcock had entrusted to him for study and review. He appreciated that the scotsman had a rational approach to organizing his necessary paperwork. The documents concerning meetings with salesmen and such were arranged by schedule, so that as one conference was ended, the attendant paperwork might simply be moved to the bottom of the stack or removed to a separate case, leaving the next meeting's documents on top and ready for reference.

Harry checked the items of concern---quantities, terms, estimates, costs, and so forth for each meeting packet. When he was confident he could put his hand on any given document for the information specific to it alone, he set the stacks aside and stood up to stretch his legs. He hadn't been asked to negotiate any of the terms or such, so he didn't at once dwell on the figures and terms he had just committed to memory. As he walked toward the Sitting car however, a few inconsistencies began to niggle at the

edges of his mind.

He made a mental note to remember to ask Mr. Allcock about the details he found curious and he set off to look through the bookshelves of the Sitting room. Once he entered, he paid little attention to the couple by the window, rapt in quiet conversation with expressions of deeply felt sympathy and nearly touching hands. Nor did he give a second thought to the gentleman in the chair near the door, making a show of reading a trade journal but whose gaze wasn't fixed on the pages before him. Harry was just looking for a book of sonnets referred to in one of his texts, even if it was a long shot he was just out for a stretch of the legs after all.

Harry remembered one particular Summer Season in Tahoe City more than many others. He was sitting with White Feathers in the chairs next to the bench in front of the store.

“That one there isn't going to make it through the next winter and look how the owner insists it's such a fine animal, so ideal as a trusty mount for a lady.” They watched the emphatic hands and urgent manner of a man in a vest and shirt-sleeves across the street apparently offending the meticulously dressed gentleman and woman in front of him, as neither of them seemed to be the least bit sympathetic to his cause.

“And do you think those kids,” he motioned up the boardwalk from where they sat, “have ever heard the word, No?” A tall lady in an immaculate skirt and waistcoat was followed haltingly by a boy and a girl. The 'kids' each had a candy in their fists as big as their pudgy little faces and neither of them looked too keen to have the other eye their own candy too long. The 'mother,' it had to be presumed, because in her free hand she carried a little girl's boat hat, and a ribbon which appeared to be the missing tie of the little boy's ensemble, walked with her back as straight as a board. But her gait was driven erratically by constantly glancing stiffly over one shoulder, then over the other at the aliens behind her.

“How do you know that Great-uncle?” asked Harry, giggling at the old man's comments.

“Don't you believe me Harry?” replied White Feathers, feigning injury.

“Should I, Great-uncle?” answered Harry naively. White Feathers

chuckled aloud. "Why no, young Harry, you should not believe me, nor anything for that matter. You should find out for yourself, when you can."

"But how can I find out about the man with the horse and those other people, except when you tell me about them?" Harry pleaded earnestly.

"Here's what you can do..." And his Great-uncle described a plan of action to Harry's wide-eyed, eager face.

"He's just lost something important to him." The old man indicated a lanky young fellow, ambling his way haphazardly along the walk on the opposite side of the street. "Probably a girl," observed White Feathers.

"Why do you say that, Great-uncle?" answered Harry to his cue in their new game.

White Feathers gave his list: "He just left the hotel, but his clothes are splotchy with dust. His tie has nearly come untied, and he doesn't seem to be seeing whatever he's looking at. So: he has neglected to brush his suit before going into public, nor has he taken time to even finish dressing. Yet, he doesn't appear to have any destination in mind though he left the hotel of his own will."

"That's three." Harry announced, then bounced from his chair, crossed the street and began to shadow their suspect, as only a nine year old boy could--without suspicion or notice.

White Feathers watched him, sometimes chuckling, sometimes intently. This was the best way he knew of for the lad to verify for himself from his own experienced and logically informed observations. Then refute or corroborate information and opinions for himself. Harry would soon learn as much or more about the people around him than a Pinkerton knew 'Wanted' sheets.

Harry returned in half an hour or so just as the lanky fellow and another man marched back up toward the hotel. "Great-uncle, you were right! It was a girl he lost. I was behind him in the general store and overheard him tell the deputy, 'I lost the favor of Lady Luck and the rascal I was playing with drew a gun on us. I had to duck under the table and crawl away to escape,'" the boy related haltingly. White Feathers chuckled aloud

at the information as the boy resumed his seat next to him. "Pick another, Great-uncle."

He pointed his chin to a smartly dressed young lady standing near the porch support post in front of a shop two doors up from where they sat. "She is about fifteen, on her first trip away from home," he began anew, "And has escaped her doting Auntie chaperone on the chance that she'll meet a beau."

"Why do you say that, Great-uncle?" said Harry eagerly.

"She's fussing with the ribbons and such of that dress as if it's borrowed, and..." the old man confided in a more hushed tone, "it is cut a little low for a girl of her age." He resumed, "Her eyes are too wide open, like she's expecting a show to start or watching a spectacle; and she keeps shifting her posture and glancing in the store window when she thinks no one is looking." He finished.

"That's three," said Harry and without any prompting, walked casually up past the young woman, sat on the boardwalk beyond her and waited. Before long, she gathered her skirts up in her hands, stepped into the street and crossed, then took up a similar post in front of the haberdashery on the corner. Harry tailed her without notice, making for the candy store entrance with a clear view of her new position. In no time, a pleasant young gentleman emerged from the haberdashery and before he'd even noticed the girl, she snapped open her little fan and flutteringly covered herself below her neck with the tiny thing. If it were possible, her eyes grew even larger round and her cheeks were visibly rosier. In her failed attempts to *not* look over her shoulder at the newcomer, he noticed her and approached removing his just donned bowler hat. She appeared to giggle nervously and was unable to look anywhere but up into his eyes, which was too bad. If she'd glanced around for just an instant, she would have seen the taller, fashionable lady making a bee-line for where she stood with the admiring man.

The lady circled behind the young man without his noticing, as his eyes were fixed on the face and bodice of the young girl. But the girl recognized the lady at once and the color drained from her once flushed

cheeks and neck. The young pretender then quickly excused herself from the young gentleman and when she was at once in the street, she was immediately joined by the taller lady who took the girl's elbow in her hand and directed her to the hotel and on into the lobby. Harry had followed the whole while, grinning in amusement at the quiet fussing he overheard.

When he sat back down again next to the old man on the porch, all he could say was, "You were right again Great-uncle, but she was thirteen, not fifteen." he added.

"Oh ho, well they get younger every year it seems, as I get older." And they took a break from their new game for a spell and just watched the ebb and flow of the foot traffic and the clouds scooting by above them.

Chicago made Omaha look like an undeveloped frontier town. Although the city had, from all accounts, revived itself from the ashes of the 'Big Fire,' Harry's first impression of the haze and dust was that they had missed a few smoldering areas. The train rattled through the city and slowed as they reached the station at 5:06 P.M. He and Mr. Allcock already had their luggage assembled neatly in their compartment. So when the 'all clear' was announced by the conductor they were out of the train and Mr. Allcock was directing porters to the correct compartment to unload their things. The two companions headed toward the exits, but before they emerged onto the street, a carriage driver approached them and Mr. Allcock welcomed him by name, indicated the trolleys of luggage following them, then he led Harry to the Ticketing office at the far end of the inside of the station.

While Mr. Allcock made their traveling arrangements for Buffalo and Niagara Falls two days hence, Harry took in the scene around him. The crowds were in constant motion. He recognized a fellow passenger from their own train, here and there busily seeking assistance with transport from the station, or being greeted by friends and relatives. The great schedule boards loomed over the cathedral-like space. Arriving trains were noted, Departures updated, and platforms shuffled. Along the narrow catwalk below it, the busy hands of boys his age or younger were handed slips of paper with new current data scribbled on them. After they made the

required entries to the board, they dropped the slips to the floor. Beneath them then, spilling onto main floor, were a drift of white slips resembling the fallen leaves of some great pale tree.

“Come along Harry, we'll have time to freshen a bit afore we dine,” Mr. Allcock was saying. Harry wrenched his gaze from the crowds and boards to follow him to the awaiting carriage, now loaded with their things.

“Sherman House,” Mr. Allcock directed the coachman.

“Right,” answered the moustached man as he climbed to his seat, “Randolph Street, here we come again.” He whistled to the horses, slapped the reins and they were on the streets of Chicago.

“My company keeps rooms at a few establishments sprinkled through some of the large cities where we tend to do the most business,” explained Mr. Allcock. “I was here just two weeks ago actually, on my route to Northern California.”

Harry watched the traffic, the storefronts, the pedestrians, tenements, trolleys, and the cross-streets that flashed in and out of view through the carriage windows. At the frequent stops he noticed the face of his elder companion glancing at him, a knowing smile dancing at the edges of his mouth. Harry continued to ogle the ever-changing scene from the carriage, unabashed.

In what seemed no time at all, they were stepping out of the coach into the grand entrance of the Sherman House hotel. While the rich appointments of the Overland Train had prepared him for some modicum of affluence, the hotel lobby still whelmed him. Exotic plants and vines, which at first gave him the impression they were in a courtyard, gave way to the vast sitting areas. Pockets of men and ladies sat in conversation, some individuals were merely resting and reading or enjoying a smoke. They were ushered through the lobby and led up to Mr. Allcock's rooms where their luggage waited.

The suite was such that both travelers were able to attend to their own grooming and hygienic concerns separately, and at the same time. Harry emerged from his rooms into the common area of the suite before Mr. Allcock. He inspected the titles on the low bookshelves and the view from

the window before he was joined by the older man and they made their way presently to the restaurant.

Mr. Allcock carried a letter-sized black leather pouch which he passed to Harry as they descended the stairs to the lobby. Harry accepted the pouch and tucked it under his arm as he had noticed the older man had carried it and didn't give it another thought, except not to inadvertently drop it. They crossed the conservatory of a lobby and were soon out and rounding a corner, striding up Clarke Street toward the River Bridge. They stopped in front of a restaurant with a french-sounding name and were ushered inside by a doorman who seemed to know his older companion. Before Harry's eyes adjusted to the lower light of the foyer, they were divested of their hats and led through a brighter dining area to a private table where two gentlemen already sat with drinks at their elbows and cigars in their hands.

"Harry this is Mr. Ward," Mr. Allcock was saying as the indicated gentleman extended a hand that Harry shook genially. "And this is Mr. Pritzlaff," whose hand Harry next shook. They sat at the two vacant seats and a prim waiter inquired about their drink preferences. "Scotch, neat, for me, thank you," ordered Mr. Allcock.

Harry asked for a Bitters and soda on ice and settled the black document pouch into his lap gradually realizing this was a 'business dinner' and why he was there. He studied the faces and dress of the two men, their grooming and their jewelry. Their drinks arrived. Once he had settled for himself their relative personal tastes and positions in society and industry, he listened more attentively to the banter with which the three men were engaged. Mr. Pritzlaff had just commended the Republican national convention for bringing a fair amount of delegates to the city the month before, and hoped the Democrats would be as forthcoming when they met in a few weeks. Mr. Ward commented that 'Spalding's Team' might return to their streak of pennants soon.

Mr. Allcock, for his part, made asides to Harry loud enough for the others to hear about the great American pastimes from the Euro-centric perspective. Nothing derogatory, simply amusing.

“Samuel, can you really guarantee that a given package from your own distribution point to say, Fresno, California, will arrive unbroken?” asked Mr. Ward after the pleasantries had subsided.

“I can not only guarantee it, I can prove that our record for intact deliveries exceeds all others by two to one, at least of those of my competitors who are willing to even share their results,” boasted Mr. Allcock. Mr. Ward was visibly appeased by this confident assertion. Without notice, Harry had put his fingers on the page in the brief which would corroborate his companion's statements.

Mr. Pritzlaff rejoined, “I'm not so worried, as is Mr. Ward about shipping hazards, what I am trying to inaugurate this season is a more complete line and range of products, to appeal to a larger spectrum of customer; from kids to grandpas, from the professional guide to the novice woman-angler.” He challenged.

“That is the gist of my last correspondence,” said Mr. Allcock, and he reached into his inside coat pocket and provided a professionally produced catalog of the Allcock Toronto Fishing Co., Rod Division. “These are the models available at the beginning of September.” He pointed out proudly as Mr. Ward inclined toward the brochure-sized catalog in Pritzlaff's hand. Harry, in a flourish, produced a second one from the pouch in his lap and proffered it to Mr. Ward, “For you sir, if you please,” he added as he handed the item to him.

The waiter arrived, refurnished their drinks, accepted their dining choices and left. Soups and salads and breads arrived momentarily; and the foursome enjoyed several bites of the meal and returned to their former banter. It became apparent, at least to Harry, that these two gentlemen hadn't really any inclination not to accept Mr. Allcock's business propositions. As Samuel signed for the check, Harry rose and in a calculated impulse, placed the respective contracts before each of the gentlemen who quickly accepted and signed them; Harry returned them to the document pouch nestled under his arm as calmly as if adhering to the script of a play.

When Harry and Mr. Allcock gathered their hats and departed into the

evening streets, bidding the two gentlemen 'Good Evening,' Mr. Allcock remarked with admiration, "Well done back there young Harry. I was going to send the contracts round in the morning by courier, that being their usual predilections, but they didn't blink at signing on the spot." He added, "I've always been quick as a cat to pounce, but you struck like a mongoose." Harry beamed at the praise, though he was caught a little off-guard. Hadn't Mr. Allcock intended from the outset that he do as he had done? Why else had he brought along the contracts? Oh well, it was done and the meal was very good too.

The next day's meetings met with similar success and by 6:00 that evening they were dining on the train bound for Buffalo, New York. Mr. Allcock carried three new contracts for the next year's sales and two renewed contracts from a supplier and a shipping company. After they arrived at the Buffalo Rail Station they next boarded a steamship bound for Toronto across Lake Ontario. Although in the failing evening light Harry couldn't fully appreciate the views of the Great Lake from the decks, he could see enough to impress his senses of the immensity and grandeur evoked by the inland sea of freshwater.

They were quartered in an Allcock & Sons owned hotel near the factory for the night. The next morning after a 'continental' breakfast, Harry accompanied Mr. Allcock in his triumphal return to his Toronto facilities. Harry was introduced to so many men and women that he soon quit trying to remember them all by name. But each introduction included: "...and this is young Henry Livingson of California, soon of Malvern College, England, a sharp head for business and my new ward." Mr. Allcock varied the introduction little during the multiple repetitions, and it was at last dawning upon Harry that he would be attending Malvern College. This was the first he'd heard of his acclaimed destination.

One of the Managers took him on a personal tour of the factory and workshops. Allcock's still made hooks, of course, but Harry was most taken by the planing machines and commercial lathes churning out components so quickly and efficiently. He tarried in the assembly shops where men, and some women, turned the blanks into rods ready for varnishing. Their deft

hands could not be replaced for producing the highest quality wrappings and attention to consistent quality. Harry knew their tasks intimately and approved of their handiwork when offered an opportunity to inspect a newly completed rod. His questions and observations of aspects usually neglected by casual admirers brought him a level of respect from the craftsmen generally reserved for one of their own, and they said as much.

The varnishing rooms were acrid and stung his eyes but were no less impressive for their lack of waste and cleverness of application. The drying rooms, the polishing area, the bundling, tubing, and packaging areas were each a model of efficiency and order. Harry expressed his admiration to Mr. Allcock when they were reunited that evening for dinner, as well as his appreciation for the invitation. Mr. Allcock was pleased that his young charge got to see his own domain, and voiced as much in hearty approbation. For his part too, Samuel applauded Harry for the respect echoed, even up to his offices, regarding his keen eye and sense of quality craftsmanship. "Those lads are stingier with praise for any but their own than any creature on God's green earth," he explained, "to bludgeon them into a compliment is Herculean at best. Well done young Harry, well done."

The next couple days passed pleasantly for Harry, as he was admitted to the Assemblers ranks and was allowed to immerse himself in an activity long familiar and comfortingly rewarding. When the whistle blew late Friday afternoon, the crew invited him to the pub as an honorary mate and toasted his good luck at University when he left them in the morning. The beer was good, though he drank very little; the company was jolly, though Harry missed his sisters, his mother, his dad and White Feathers more now than at any point in his journey so far. He let himself be entertained by the jokes and drinking songs, and when he retired that night was again as right as rain.

The return trip by steamboat to Buffalo passed within sight and sound of the Niagara Falls and Harry stood, leaning over the rail of the deck, his mouth wide and his heart pounding. The roar was loud, even at that distance, and the sheer magnitude of the Natural Wonder boggled his

senses. The waters of Lake Erie tumbling, plummeting, splashing, and roaring from the wide Niagara river down into Lake Ontario was a vision he would always remember with awe.

The New York Central & Hudson River Railway train left on time from Buffalo at 8:25 that morning. Harry and Mr. Allcock were just hours away from the busy, bustling avenues and streets of Manhattan, and rich thriving harbors of New York City. The Hudson River Valley whooshed passed the windows of the train as they went in and out of mid-summer showers which turned the emerald valley into an glistening, lush patchwork of hamlets and farms, hillsides and havens of affluence and industry.

The landscape shifted from agrarian to rural to urban before their very eyes, and in no time at all they were passing neighborhoods and parks, schools and shops, businesses, boulevards and brownstones. Grand Central Depot was announced at shortly before 6:30 in the evening and after the routine of disembarking was completed without hitch, Mr. Allcock and Harry were in a hired hack heading to Chelsea House, where Allcock & Sons Co. had bought into the cooperative and established an American headquarters of sorts for their commercial forays into the continent.

It was Saturday June 28, 1884. They had until Wednesday afternoon before they boarded the White Star Lines ship, R.M.S. Britainic. At dinner they were seated with a family, also staying until the Britainic sailed. The father, Lawrence Spelman, wife Yolanda and daughter Kaitlyn about Harry's age, were good dinner companions. Mr. Allcock and Mr. Spelman discussed the impact of rail and oil on the future economies of the United Kingdom and the US, while Mrs. Spelman asked after Harry's journey and prospects, to which Kaitlyn listened and interjected comments excitedly. When the meal was finished, Mrs. Spelman announced they were to enjoy the theater that evening and would Mr. Allcock and young Harry wish to join them? Samuel Allcock had no interest in the stage, but suggested, as Harry would have plenty of time shipboard to continue his studies, the evening out with the Spelmans would be a good use of his time.

“Go on Harry,” he encouraged, “you might even enjoy yourself.”

“It's settled then,” Yolanda exclaimed, to the obvious pleasure of

Kaitlyn.

Harry, hadn't said two words regarding the invitation, nor of his benefactor's having volunteered him; he simply smiled and asked, "When shall I be ready to join you?"

Mr. Spelman said the show was ticketed for 9:00, but that 'these theaters don't run like a train schedule,' to the chuckles of himself and Mr. Allcock.

Harry was ready in the lobby at 8:40 as had been arranged. He was sitting in one of two brown leather arm chairs, next to two settees around a small coffee table beneath three enormous Areca palms, which shielded the view of the foyer. Kaitlyn Spelman was the first to join him; she sat in the chair across from him and complimented his punctuality. "Mom and Dad will be down in a minute..." she offered and then silently made a show of surveying the room's appointments. The other groups of chairs and settees, the massive mantle and fire place with marvelously wrought andirons, fire tools, and the long snouted bellows leaning against the ornate fire screen. The ivies and miniature trees enfolded all the cozy conversation areas.

"This is my first visit to the theater," said Harry trying to seem at ease. The truth was, Kaitlyn Spelman was a charming and beautiful young woman and he was definitely not at ease in her presence. He had certainly been in the company of girls he had admired before, so his current state was an anathema to himself and his disconnectedness probably showed.

"I've attended performances since I was a little girl and I have practiced voice for three years; I hope to be a soloist someday," she crooned, "but I think I still enjoy Shakespeare best, even though there aren't any musical numbers."

A light went on in Harry's floundering dimness. "I thoroughly enjoy Shakespeare's sonnets and plays," he enjoined enthusiastically. "I mean I've read them all and performed many of them, the plays I mean, with my sisters..." he added as an afterthought.

This had obviously done the trick, for Kaitlyn glowed and looked at Harry with new appreciation indeed. "You've read them ALL? I've only read the one's everybody knows, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*,

MacBeth, you know, what they require at school?”

“Uh, well no...” Harry muttered as if he'd been found out, “I don't know what they 'require at school,' I sorta studied on my own over the last ten years.” admitted Harry, sure that this was a losing hand to play.

“On your own!” Kaitlyn's awe-struck 'wow' was just gasped as in a whisper of reverence.

The concierge approached them unseen until he raised one very long frond of the palm near Harry's head and interrupted Kaitlyn's astonishment. “Mr. Livingson, I presume?” asked the immaculately dressed man, looking imploringly into Harry's eyes.

“Yes sir, I am Henry Livingson.”

“I thought you were the same young man who accompanied Mr. Samuel Allcock upon his arrival. I only just inspected the register and noted your name. I am sorry for the delay of its delivery,” and he extended his hand which held a parcel, “however, this arrived a few days ago in anticipation of your arrival here. Please accept our apologies for not informing you sooner.” Harry took the large envelope from the concierge's hand, thanked him, and the man returned to his other duties.

“What is it Harry?” asked Kaitlyn, now intrigued by anything connected with her new friend.

Harry slid the point of his pen knife along under the flap and carefully withdrew the contents. He held it in front of him and with a warm smile, gazed at it in silence.

Kaitlyn moved around him to view the object for herself. A photograph of five people looked back at her. “Who are they, Harry?”

Harry pointed, “This is my mother, this is my Great-Uncle White Feathers, this is my father, and these two are my sisters.”

Kaitlyn looked closely at the two young women on either side of the three adults. “They are beautiful young ladies! It must be wonderful to have two older sisters, I always wanted an older brother or sister, someone to confide in and look up to...”

Harry pointed once more to each of his sisters in turn, “This is Titania,

and this is Hipolyta.” He looked at Kaitlyn to gauge her reaction, “They are my *little* sisters.” She gasped.

“How old *are* you Harry? I thought your were about my own age; those are *women* in that picture. They can't be your *younger* sisters!” exclaimed Kaitlyn. “They are my green-eyed cats.” Harry said still looking down at the photograph.

Kaitlyn looked at the others more closely still. “Harry your father looks oriental.” She looked again at the other two, “White Feathers' makes this man an indian, I get that. But your mother is one of the most elegant and beautiful women I've ever seen; she looks like a Russian Princess or something. And all these people are your family?”

Harry was always pleased when people admired his mother. “My father *is* oriental, Cantonese actually. And my Great-uncle is the grand-nephew of a Shoshone Chief.”

“Cantonese? Do you know the 'Ten Tigers,' then?” again Kaitlyn adopted that reverential tone that seemed to loiter always just below the surface ready to come out.

“Who?” responded Harry blankly.

“The Ten Tigers. My father told my mother and me about them when he returned from a business trip to Macau and South China last year. He said he saw an exhibition of something called Gung Foo which they performed, and he said he'd never seen anything like it. 'Acrobatics, flying kicks and expert boxing all combined in a graceful dance of great power and mystery,' that's how he described it. And my father is not easily impressed.” She took another breath, took a reappraising look at Harry and asked in a solemn tone, “The Ten Tigers are Cantonese; your father is Cantonese...” She held herself as if in fear she'd come apart otherwise, “Were you trained like the Ten Tigers?” again she whispered the question; he was almost used to her penchant for the dramatic.

Counseled by a memory he could not dismiss, “I don't have much use for kicking and boxing, I'm afraid. Sorry to disappoint you, Kaitlyn.” He answered earnestly.

Mr. and Mrs. Spelman joined them presently, they all went through the foyer to the entryway, went out near to the curb, waited for the doorman to hail a cabbie for them then they were off to the Theater. Harry didn't understand a word of the songs, but he felt the pathos, swelled with emotion at the arias and felt the catharsis of the finales. He enjoyed theater and looked forward to another opportunity to attend.

In the morning after a refreshing shower, he dressed, left a note for Mr. Allcock informing him of his wish to see the 'Central Park,' and that he would return before supper. When later, Samuel emerged from his apartment dressed and ready for the day, he saw Harry's note, read it and smiled. "Good for you laddie, Good for you." He left for breakfast and was heard humming as he rounded the stairs to the Chelsea House Cafe.

Young Master Livingston strolled up block after block, every now and then glancing at his little map of the city provided by the Chelsea. He stopped at a sidewalk cafe for coffee and a roll, and enjoyed watching the people pass along the sidewalk in front of him, so much like sitting in front of the store back home during the summer season. He imagined White Feathers, or Jameson, or his father sitting out there on Main Street as he was here, until he remembered the time zones the railroads had instigated for the country, and realized his folks were probably just getting up, or would be soon.

He walked up as far as fifty-seventh street and turned a corner east, in a couple blocks he was at the Merchant's Gate to the Central Park. He ambled along the paths, saw the sheep in a meadow and thought of Titania and Hipolyta. He meandered under the spreading boughs of hardwoods and along shrub-shrouded trails until he saw The Lake. Just here in the heart of the biggest city he'd ever seen, a lake. He skirted its shores and noticed several good positions from which he might wet a line casting for fish. He carried on past cottages and bath houses, amusements and museums, until the sun had past its zenith and the shadows of the trees began to reach further across the fields. He made the full circuit and began his trek back to the Chelsea, reinvigorated and content in his newfound oasis.

Harry fell in love with the city that never slept, and Central Park was easily his newest favorite daytime haunt. In the evenings and into the nights he attended performances with the Spelmans at the Cosmopolitan Theater at 41st and Broadway, or the Madison Square Theater W. 24th near Broadway, or Union Square Theater between Broadway and 4th Ave. Operas and Operettas, Musicals and Comedies, Harry was a theater sponge. When he awoke each morning, he headed to the Park, fishing gear in hand. He stopped at a different cafe each day and strolled the paths, visited the museum or relaxed at lakeside, casting happily for the denizens of the lake.

It was Monday afternoon, he had removed his coat and set his boots and socks nearby. With the grass between his toes he made long curling casts at the edge of some lily pads, hoping to entice a lazy fish into biting the threaded bug he used. Across the arm of the little bay, walking under parasols, came strolling Kaitlyn and Mrs. Spelman down one of the many paths which wound through the copse. The ladies espied Harry before he was aware, and marveled at his technique and the fluid movement of the silk line as it snaked back over his head and then with a flick of his wrist, sped by his hat and flew out toward his quarry. They slowed, but did come near enough that Harry noticed their gaze. He quickly set down his pole, and donned his coat at least, not able to dress his bare feet in so short a time.

“Well, Henry, you are full of surprises,” commented Yolanda Spelman as they drew nearer.

“I was just enjoying the grass, really.” responded Harry glancing down at his feet in the turf.

“You fish so effortlessly; it’s really beautiful to watch.” rejoined Kaitlyn, hoping to cover his obvious discomfort.

“Thank you. I have been casting since I was four years old; I should be somewhat proficient by my age.” He said a little embarrassed still.

“Mr. Spelman had meetings to attend today and left Kaitlyn and I to our own devices. It’s marvelous to run into someone we recognize.” Yolanda Spelman mused.

“Oh yes, mother, this is a happy coincidence indeed,” agreed Kaitlyn.

“Harry, if you are at loose ends this afternoon would you like to walk with us to the Museum?” She nodded in the direction of the Hunter's Gate and the American Natural History Museum.

“Well, if you would allow me a moment to put my boots back on and stow my gear, may I offer you ladies an ice cream before we see the museum?” Harry countered. He had that institution on his list of 'want to see' and this was as good a time as any.

“That would be nice, very nice.” Mrs. Spelman agreed and Harry set about reeling in his line and putting his rod back into its silken pouch and leather-bound wooden tube. The reel was replaced into a square leather pouch attached to the tube and he retired to a bench to pull his socks and boots back on as the ladies looked away across the water, politely.

“Shall we?” He announced rising again, slinging his gear over his shoulder by its strap, and inviting them toward the other end of the lake.

The ice cream was delicious and the company was enchanting. The exhibitions and displays of the museum afforded Harry an opportunity to match some of the information from his school texts to tangibles, and he once again entertained the Spelman ladies with the depth of his knowledge about the things they were viewing, of which he had only read before now. When they again came out onto the street, it was Harry who hailed a cabbie, handed each woman into the coach, and announced their wish to return to Chelsea House to the driver.

Supper that evening was full of the wonders of the day. Not least prominent was Harry's participation in the ladies full enjoyment of the activities. Mr. Spelman and Mr. Allcock were suitably impressed with young Mr. Livingston's comportment and command of information and arrangements; they said as much. This was well, as the Spelman's were to attend a theater performance at the Madison Square Theater that evening, but Mr. Spelman was not able to extricate himself from an engagement later with a valuable contact and potential international client. “I'm sure you'll be in good hands with young Harry here.” He apologized, and looked to Harry with confidence. Mr. Allcock, again, begged off the extended invitation. So, Harry once again asked, “When shall I be ready?”

Gilbert and Sullivan's Operetta was refreshingly upbeat and they each enjoyed it immensely. The street lamps glowed along Broadway just a block or so from where they stood on West Twenty-Fourth street. They hadn't far to walk to get to the Chelsea House, and with their spirits high from the evening's performance they strolled along without a care. Not very far along, however, they passed four men loitering in front of a bar. As Mrs. Spelman was the most senior of their little group, she made the strategic decision to, "Keep walking and don't look back at them."

Perhaps the notion, 'if you can't see it it doesn't exist,' works well when entertaining infants and toddlers, but as a general course of action, Harry had never thought much of it. It was by nature counterproductive. Two of the men walked passed them, and there was the whiff of unattended hygiene; the other two lingered just behind. Flanked and flustered, Yolanda demanded to know "their business with them."

The shorter of the pair ahead answered, "We ain't got any business to speak of... we just were hoping for an evening's diversion, so to speak. Isn't that about it in a nutshell fellows?" And the others chuckled without, Harry thought, much humor.

"It would be in your best interest to return to your previous entertainment, gentlemen, this evening's 'diversion' is wearying and we would like to simply turn in for the night." Harry spoke evenly to the tough who had first spoken, as he casually glanced in turn at each of the others.

"Oho, he's 'weary'." They laughed and snorted at this. "Well 'boy,' it's not you whose so interesting to us just now, run on along now, sonny," and Harry felt a large hand upon his shoulder from behind.

'Sonny,' still hovered in their ears as Harry firmly grasped the hand on his shoulder and dropped into a spinning crouch; the scream of pain from the hand's owner was silenced shortly as he yanked on his arm to free his hand with such force that as Harry released his hand his own fist smashed into his face and he crumpled like an imploded building. The short man pushed his beast of a mate towards Harry, who instantly moved into a low spin which put the approaching man and the remaining fellow behind him to their knees. Harry leapt onto their shoulders and in a back flip, his boots

squished upwards through their faces; they hit the ground on top of each other sprawled onto the first victim. Harry landed facing the little man with the big mouth.

“Uh, we don't need any trouble young sir...” the small man wheedled, but just as quickly he suddenly flashed a knife from his vest pocket as he said it. Poor choice.

Harry reached across himself as he spun on the rogue, grasped the knife hand and pulled the arm along with his own momentum. The short fellow left his feet and was deposited on the wriggling heap of his friends, with the knife now safely in Harry's hand. Besides the pointless banter, the entire incident occupied less time than a yawn and a stretch when awakening in the morning.

“I trust your later entertainments will not require the use of this tool?” Harry asked, folded the blade and dropped it into his own vest pocket. “Good evening, sirs.” And turning to the gaping faces of the Spelman ladies, “Shall we continue to the Chelsea House?” He offered an arm to each lady, which they took following his polite lead and they walked on.

“Harry?” gawked Kaitlyn, “You said you didn't know gung foo!”

“I said I didn't have much use for kicking and boxing; I didn't say I wasn't properly trained,” he answered calmly. “Mrs. Spelman, are you quite alright? You're being unusually quiet.”

“I am very well, thank you Mr. Livingson.” She answered in a weak voice that said more of her state than the words. “I... *We* are most indebted to you for accompanying us this evening. A most handsome display of calmness in the face of danger, and of quick thinking.” She finished uncertainly.

“What mother means, is 'Your *Amazing* Henry Livingson'.”

The next morning Harry stopped at the House Cafe for coffee before heading to the Park. Mr. Spelman and Mr. Allcock were already at a little table near the door and waved for his attention. Harry joined them and sipped his coffee. Mr. Spelman looked to Mr. Allcock, who raised his eyebrows and looked back at him. “My wife told me a disturbing tale about

the evening at the theater last night.” He began, unsure if he should even broach the subject.

Harry looked at him and waited. “Oh?” he answered simply after the pause.

“Kaitlyn corroborates her account and I am therefore at a loss to know what to do for you, for your... uh... gallantry.” He finished, apparently satisfied he'd hit upon the right modifier.

“Mr. Spelman, there was never a cause for any alarm on their part, nor did I do anything other than what anyone in my shoes would have done.” Harry replied coyly, with a straight face and hoped the subject might just be dropped.

“All the same, I am relieved you are to be sailing on the same ship with us and will perhaps join us on a brief tour of the English countryside once we've arrived,” said Lawrence Spelman in a curiously hopeful tone. “Mr. Allcock, will Henry be required elsewhere soon after arrival?” he added, less sure now.

“Aye, alas, we'll be off to Redditch on the first train. But if *you've* nothing more pressing than touring hill and dale, perhaps you could be persuaded to visit Redditch along with us. My wife, the Mrs. Olivia Allcock---my better half really, will be only too pleased to meet yourself and your charming family,” explained Samuel as tactfully as he could.

Harry rose from the table, “Well, sirs, I'm off this morning for a bit of fishing in the Park, until supper then?” He took an object from his vest pocket, laid it on the tabletop and departed the cafe.

Lawrence Spelman and Samuel Allcock looked down at the bright six inch tradesman's knife folded and left between them. Mr. Spelman gasped audibly and reached for his handkerchief. Mr. Allcock smiled wide until it was a grin. “Those Livingson's are an amazing family, of that there can be no doubt.” He thought nearly aloud and his chuckle just confused his new friend. He rose then, half remembering something he was meaning to talk with Harry about. He got to the door and looked down the street hoping to catch him, Harry was with the doorman in an animated conversation.

“Sorry to interrupt;” he began, “Harry I’ve a another favor to ask of you...” He explained his wishes and bid the lad a good morning.

Harry finished his dialog with the friendly doorman, excused himself, they shook hands and parted. He needn't stop at any cafes this morning, so he headed to the Park and its Lake for a last retreat with rod in hand. The morning streets of New York City weren't nearly as cluttered and smelly as he had anticipated in a place with so many people vying to make a life for themselves from the commerce and traffic a large city might afford. It wasn't Tahoe City by any stretch, with its bright little shops and swept boardwalks, but neither was it a neglected wasteland of concrete and humanity. The people he passed were just like the people he had known from countless summer seasons at home; those who worked the shops, stores and offices were very like the industrious folk of his own village, it was all just on such a grand scale here.

Harry walked round the ponds and lakes of the Park, admiring the unique qualities of each. He found the spot he was looking for between Harlem Lake and The Loch, removed his coat and boots, assembled his tackle and began a methodical coverage of the waters. When the sun reached above him and the mid-day warmth reminded him of his hunger, he donned boots and coat, stowed his gear and walked out to Fifth Avenue to look over the string of food vendors set up along the sidewalks. He settled on a promising repast, paid the friendly cook and returned to his stretch of water for a little picnic and to resume his ventures; which he shortly did.

As expected, when the afternoon was still young, Mr. Allcock and two gentlemen came strolling nearby. Harry appraised his benefactor's companions and deduced their station and purpose for 'a walk in the park' with Allcock. The taller man looked to have spent his days in the sun and had a build which suggested physical activity was the cause. The older of the two was more likely to have been found in an office or library, though his gait suggested health and enthusiasm. In a short while the trio were within conversational distance of Harry, and it was Mr. Allcock who spoke first. “Gentlemen this is Mr. Henry Livingson. Henry this is Mr. Reach and

Mr. Chadwick.”

“Pleased to meet you, sirs.” Harry responded genially.

The trio then simply continued their stroll, the two gentlemen kept an eye on Harry's activity as long as they were within sight. Mr. Allcock laughed and continued to lead their discussion from when Harry was first aware of their approach and for as long as he kept notice of them. That little obligation completed, he repacked his gear once more and made for The Lake and last farewell to his little oasis. A few couples were ambling the paths and trails here and there. A lone merchant on break was relaxing with a bite to eat and a the newspaper. A scrimmage of sorts was being played out on the sports field and the permanent citizens of the Park---the squirrels, birds, and bugs---added their own ambiance to Harry's afternoon walk.

Harry wound his way back through the West side down to Chelsea House. He inquired at the desk about the dinner schedules and requested letter paper and envelopes before retiring to his rooms. He wished to compose letters to his sisters and to his parents and White Feathers before sailing tomorrow afternoon on the tide. He had seen so much already and he didn't want the correspondence to have to make the Atlantic crossing in addition to the overland trek to reach them.

His compositions took him the rest of the dwindling afternoon and up until dinner to get onto paper and address. When he left their suite with Mr. Allcock for their last supper at the Chelsea, he handed the letters to the concierge with sufficient change for postage with the assurance they would be sent promptly with the next day's House mail. The two gentlemen resumed their seats in the dining hall and were soon joined, as usual, by the Spelmans. Each guest related their adventures of the day and Mr. Allcock made a grand announcement that his pursuit of New York City merchants for his tackle merchandise had at last yielded some success---thanks in large part to Harry. Harry nearly choked on the water he was sipping and had to wipe his chin.

“Yes, to you Harry, I have again, to offer my gratitude for my business ventures.” Mr. Allcock assured him. “Those two gentlemen you met in the

Park today allowed for the coup de grace, you might say, of the slow inroads I've made into the grip these northern New York manufacturers have on the markets in New England. One was a respected writer, and very influential in the circles of Sportsmen for his candid and considered opinions of many aspects of the athletic and recreational industries. The other fellow is a marketeer of goods here in the City and also respected for his quality merchandises." Harry still was unclear as to his own role in this success. Mr. Allcock continued, "As we strolled the Park paths, 'on a whim' I guided them by the waters you happened to be fishing and waited for them to notice you, your skill with the rod and, once we were close enough, your equipment. They were captivated to say the least. I mentioned that by happy coincidence 'I knew that angler' and they at once insisted upon meeting you, most likely to get a better look at that rod and reel you were employing."

"But Mr. Allcock, you knew I'd be there; it's where you asked me to fish when I left this morning." Harry corrected his companion's story. Then with a wave of insight, saw his intentions at last. "Ah, wait, never mind." That just added to Mr. Allcock's grinning countenance.

"Yes lad, 'There's nothing like seeing for believing' is there. I did neglect to mention that you had been plying that rod since you were able to stand on two feet, but that little omission needn't be made too much of..." he confessed. "What *they* saw was a skilled angler, of modest age, with outstanding equipment, at his leisure in the midst of this grand city, enjoying the out of doors at his luncheon break. The writer liked the ideal, and the merchant wanted the equipment." He grinned at his own cleverness. "Two fish with one cast!" And he really enjoyed his jest.

"Well done, Samuel. I must remember to not take anything for granted, should you ever suggest a stroll in the park," Lawrence congratulated.

"Thank you, sir. High praise indeed, from the agent who secured the exclusive rights to the mineral resources of a huge swath of Southeast Asia after a single 'meeting' with a major government functionary, met by 'happenstance' at an exhibition!" Mr. Allcock returned. "Don't be modest,

Mr. Spelman. I have that information directly from my own contact in the East India Trade Co. He was there.”

“I suppose only a handful of people know the truth of that adventure. Thank you very much.” Mr. Spelman confided. It was not in his nature to sound his own horn about his business successes. He was employed on account of that peculiarity of his nature; as the substance of his dealings was more in the arena of corporate reconnaissance, rather than 'over the counter' business.

Harry, Kaitlyn, and Yolanda Spelman listened to the men's dialog with growing appreciation for each man's circumspection and honor in the employment of their several gifts in the service of their chosen professions. Dessert was served and enjoyed, the ladies adjourned to begin packing for the morrow's sailing, the gentlemen and Harry retired to the House Billiards room for cigars and less important banter. Harry had never played at billiards, but that condition was irrevocably changed after one evening at Chelsea House. But his introduction to the game almost did not occur. After less than an hour, a rapping on the solid door to the Billiard room arrested Harry's attention.

Mr. Spelman was approached by the room's attendant and told that his daughter was without and wished urgently to speak with him. The three men discontinued their gaming to investigate. Kaitlyn was agitated as she explained the cause of the interruption. “...the House maintenance has made a botch of it, and Mother told me to come and inform you.”

“What's this then?” inquired Mr. Allcock, sure not to be overly inquisitive if it were a hotel matter.

“The bathroom fixture is flooding the floor,” answered Mr. Spelman in a sigh of both relief that it wasn't more serious, and of irritation that the house staff had been ineffectual.

“May I be of some service?” Harry interjected to the conversation. “I have some experience with such matters,” he added in explanation.

“Well the usual workmen haven't any success...” qualified Mr. Spelman.

Harry walked as nonchalantly to the great fireplace in the lobby as he could manage, so as not to attract much attention from the gatherings of genteel people scattered throughout the room. Kaitlyn and the gentlemen followed. He picked up the bellows inconspicuously as that little feat could be performed and walked directly to the registration desk as if it were the most natural thing to do. He selected an orange from a fruit basket perched on the end of the desk counter, probably destined for someone's room, and walked on passed the desk to the stairs just as if he had made the circuit a hundred times. As they climbed the steps to the Spelman's floor-- incidentally their own as well--Harry cored an narrow axis through the fruit. As Kaitlyn led them to their door, he inserted the long snout of the bellows into the aperture he'd carved and pushed the orange onto the metal tube until the end of the snout was just peering through the other side. By the time he was led to the 'flooded' tile bathroom, he was ready to employ the contraption. Harry inserted the modified end of the bellows into the bowl. "Thankfully, the Chelsea enjoys the comforts of *hearth and health*," he commented as he pumped the bellows four or five times. He removed his 'tool' from the once clogged device and flushed. Success.

"Surely the house staff can wield mops with better effect than they had with the furniture." Harry commented as he looked at the watery floor, then stepped away and dried his boots with a towel which Kaitlyn offered him. He set off to dispose of the fruit, no longer useful as food, and to return the fireplace implement to its normal perch next to the fire screen-- no one to be the wiser for its most recent use.

Once again, he left a wake of gaping faces as he exited. "That young man is a treasure," purred Mrs. Spelman.

"I have ne'er seen another, save the other members of his most remarkable family," enjoined Mr. Allcock.

Kaitlyn just beamed, as Harry was *her* new friend. Lawrence Spelman began a process of thought which might best be described as personally revolutionary and it showed on his face. With the evening's excitement now concluded, the travelers all resumed or began preparations for their imminent departure aboard the RMS *Britanic* on the next high tide.

“Alright, Harry is far further along the path to fulfilling man's potential than the people around him; hell, he's superman compared to me. The 'training' he received growing up did all that, in addition to this knowledge you refer to?” The host looked at his guest, sincerely hopeful of something which might indicate a path forward.

“We must explore the only shred of an artifact which accounts for the great knowledge reaching to our age.” The guest began. “It is a symbol. Like language, it is metaphorical, but unlike language it is a mathematical construct. When I said it is ancient beyond fathoming, I mean its origins are lost in the mists of time just as the origins of language itself, and this diagram handed on from age to age remains our only clue. Here is a circle.” He drew it on the host's notepad. “There are three forces in every event, positive negative and neutral.” He drew an equilateral triangle inside the circle and touching it at the even thirds. “These three forces manifest themselves into the universe we know through the process of an octave, seven notes leading to the beginning of a new series.” He placed two equally spaced marks on the circle between each of the points of the triangle. “Wholeness, or one, when divided by seven yields a repeating decimal, as does three into one.” He had the host make the mathematical division of seven into one. In a moment with the results in hand, he asked the host to write the result at the first tick mark right of top center.

“Okay, so .142857... goes here?” noted the young man.

“Yes, now add it to itself to obtain two sevenths,” answered his guest.

“.285714...”

“Yes, and that goes at the next tick mark clockwise,” indicated the guest with his finger. “Then add one seventh and two sevenths for three sevenths.”

“.428571...”

“One of the triangle points is next along the circle, .333..., so go to the next mark.” The host did so and wrote in the three sevenths. “Next...”

“Add it again, and place it here?” The young man quickly said as he pointed.

“Yes, and on around to the top,” affirmed the guest.

The host spoke aloud as he filled in the remaining points. “.571428... here, then the next point of the triangle, .666... here. Then, .714285... here, and finally, .857142... here. Is the top point of the triangle, then, .999...?”

“It is both zero and one, yes. Now connect the points of sevenths in the order of there series: 1-4-2-8-5-7-1. You may start anywhere, but begin at .142857... for the sake of starting somewhere.” The older man smiled and pointed to the spot, then drew his finger to where the next point in the series should be. “And so on, one down to four, up to two, across to eight, down to five, up to seven, and across back to one. Good.” He smiled at the diagram created. “What you see before you, if you pretend the numbers we used to construct it aren't there, is the one fragment left to us, which was in the depths of time, condensed into the symbol of all things existing. Like language itself, it is a product of objective reason and has been preserved as a guidepost for anyone 'who has eyes to see, and ears to hear.' This shall be our launching point toward the practicable method to become as a human was intended” The guest leaned back and let his host ponder the image undisturbed.

6

Wonder and Details

“...Friendship is precious, not only in the shade, but in the sunshine of life, and thanks to a benevolent arrangement the greater part of life is sunshine.”
--Thomas Jefferson

The guest continued, “Our further discussions, when not pursuing the trail of our story, shall be predicated upon that diagram.” He pointed to the young man's notepad and the drawing upon it. I made the comparison earlier between this mathematical symbol and language. Before we go on, it might be useful for you to know why. Language allows people to communicate, this is clear, but what do people say to one another? An experiment made on this subject yielded the realization that the vast majority of what we discuss is the delivery of information, or recounting, to someone who wasn't *there* when something transpired in the past and the rest is what may happen in the future.

This is not possible for lower forms of life, let alone necessary. The rest of nature exists in the present, they may have a sense of the impending, and a memory of the recent, but for the purpose of their lives it is immaterial. The recognition of a history and the expectation of a future is integral to being human, thus our vocalizations had to account for these. An organization of labels and directions, understandable expressions of tangibles and intangibles had to be structured in such a way to provide unambiguous communication from one person to another. To imagine that it 'just happened,' is not only implausible but contradicts the evidence of the rapid diaspora of man across the continents in cohesive groups accomplishing cooperative feats of civilized development.

A very high attainment of reason alone explains this conundrum. It is within the fabric of that reason that an understanding of the realities of the world had to have permeated their efforts. This yielded that diagram in

front of you. It is a map and it is an explanation. It is the repository of earliest reason as much as language itself..”

“But as you mentioned before, *any whole phenomenon*, you said could be described by an octave? I did take a course or two at university and the octave *we* know is diatonic; not the pattern in this symbol at all.” The young host asserted with a mixture of confidence and curiosity in his voice.

“That is the nature of a symbol, isn't it? Like a compass, it points to a direction without offering instructions for how to get there? Armed with the knowledge that all things could be explained through the interactions of these two ideals: a trinity of forces, and a seven-folded expression of those forces, compels the seeker to exercise that same capacity for reason in order to discover an instruction manual--the understanding--from which the symbol was obtained. Clever, don't you think?” added the guest with a wink.

“Why didn't they just say, 'Hey here's the pattern of all existence. Follow these instructions and you will be all you can be!' Why the mystery?” objected the host.

“I see, so you think the language you use now is the same used a hundred years ago, or a thousand years ago, how about thirty, or forty thousand years ago? No? And to respond directly to your skepticism, that is exactly what they did. While the structure and basic components of language have changed little in the intervening years, its usages and application have definitely evolved dramatically. Yet, it has been vaulted to the point that we accept, without question, the saying: 'A picture is worth a thousand words,' this does a disgraceful injustice to the picture however flattering it may be to the language of words and wordsmiths. For no matter how precise the language, it can not perform the same duty as the picture. Which is why they chose a mathematical symbol, a picture. Math is math, unchanging; the objective language, if you will.” And he pointed at the symbol again. “Mystery is merely a lack of knowledge and understanding. All men *may be* created equal, but few realize their possibilities. *There is only so much gold* isn't a justification for the rich and

self-satisfied, it is a statement of consequences. Reason is gold and its power is life changing.”

The ocean was as if the starry night sky was persuaded to exchange places with Earth, and was laid out before him. He had never perceived that there could be such vastness in the world, nor that he should be a part of it. As the lights of New York disappeared over the horizon behind the ship leaving only a glow on the low clouds to mark its unfaltering presence, Kaitlyn pressed close to Harry as they stood on the stern deck and she said goodbye to America and home. Harry did not feel the separation as keenly. Home for him was always with him, comforting and guiding his thoughts and feelings. Mere distance could not sufficiently intervene, but the immensity of the sea, with its tempo of solitude, he felt deeply inside himself and it played in harmony with his spirit as a swelling call to greatness.

Once again, Mr. Allcock and himself were dining partners of the Spelmans. It was a shift of scenery only, as the conversations, the pauses and the laughter carried forward as they had at the Chelsea. Though now, Harry was less simply Mr. Allcock's traveling companion and more a full member of the little party. He was asked his opinions on topics under discussion, deferred to in matters of a practical nature, and generally respected as an equal. This was fuel for Kaitlyn's pride for her new friendship with the young man of many talents.

Harry settled into his studies, read and reexamined his knowledge of the texts and formulae represented in the tomes until he should at last be convinced that he knew the material. Mr. Allcock and Mr. Spelman met and enjoyed the company of Captain Hamilton Perry and in turn the ship's captain found time to enjoy their company as well. The trio could be seen in any corner of the ship, during any of the captain's time away from the bridge. Mrs. Spelman mostly stayed in her cabins the first couple days, unaccustomed to sea travel and suffering the maladies attendant upon the traumatic difference between land and rolling swells. Kaitlyn mothered her,

read to her, fetched and cleaned her, dressed and bathed her until at last Yolanda was inured to the constant motion of shipboard life. The weather held. Those first days were bright with few clouds, the nights were starry beyond belief, and always the ocean spread past reckoning around them, calling them onward.

After an early supper, almost midway through the voyage, Kaitlyn was called upon by her mother to entertain their little party and the few others in attendance in the mid-ship's salon. The others watched as Kaitlyn went to her father's side and engaged him in a silent meeting. He rose, nodding, and advanced to the piano. With all eyes raised in surprise, he tested its tune and began to play an intricate melody. Kaitlyn's voice, a full whisper at first, rose to harmony and then into counterpoint with the music. Her resonance and command of the piece truly enthralled the audience. Her voice rang through the little hall in a triumphant appeal, then fell into echoing supplication, and gathered itself in the air into a crescendo of glorious beauty, and then, as quickly as it had begun, it trailed into silence. In a moment's pause, during which they might hope for the performance to continue, it was finally recognized for the end it was, and a wave of applause and genuine pleasure sounded through the room like a clap of thunder as it washed back upon Kaitlyn and her father. Her beaming smile and her father's expression of devotion and pride met the roar, and the performers bowed their appreciation for the response, a little taken aback that so few an audience could produce so loud an ovation. When they returned to their places in the little gathering, and Kaitlyn was again seated next to her friend, it was Harry's comments to which Kaitlyn most attended.

"Wow," he could just vocalize in whispered awe, and it was Kaitlyn's turn, at last, to feel idolized and special. "That was angelic. Your voice is so clear and strong, and commanding and entreating and sweet and perilous and..." Harry was having difficulty managing his modifiers in the expression of his complete rapture of her performance. "You're beautiful... Your voice is magnificent, I mean," he stammered.

"Thank you, Harry. Thank you very much," demurred Kaitlyn, in quiet

ecstasy that her new friend was so taken with her skill and talent.

“And Mr. Spelman,” Harry turned to Lawrence, “You play as a virtuoso!”

“Thank you Mr. Livingson.” said Mr. Spelman simply, still delighted in his daughter's performance. “As you can see, Kaitlyn was quite convincing when she insisted that she pursue public performance.”

“No doubt, no doubt could remain,” added Mr. Allcock enthusiastically.

“But I will not always have you to accompany me, father, and because of that I am sometimes unsure of my resolve,” said Kaitlyn sincerely.

“Nonsense Kat, you shall succeed honorably, always,” replied her father.

The smile which played on Harry's face carried him through the night and into the morning, so that at breakfast the next day he was still as enchanted as much as the evening before. This was not lost on Kaitlyn, nor anyone else. This was a brightness which outshone the gathering clouds of the eastern sky---now aflame at sunrise. As seafarers knew, it was an ill omen of the weather to come.

Kaitlyn and Harry strolled the promenade deck, enjoying the fresh scent of sea air. She revisited the evening in the city when they left the theater and were delayed momentarily by that band of four louts. “Harry, why were you so coy about admitting to your training before; when I asked if you knew about the Ten Tigers?”

Harry explained to her, “My ancestors would turn in their graves to know that someone, or group, used the external training of their art for self-aggrandizement. It is a mockery of the discipline and is a shallow expression of true understanding.” He continued, “You see Kaitlyn, my own training was the result of my heritage, a legacy of devotion and knowledge passed from parent to child in an unbroken trust, generation to generation. As my father told me, 'There will always be the opportunity to do the right thing... some would use these skills to fill a void in their heart where Conscience should be and exercise that power to influence others,

but you must not succumb to such a temptation, our service is in humility and faithfulness, without selfish gain, nor personal merit.' So, hearing about the Ten Tigers was somewhat reprehensible to me, and I only wished to distance myself from any taint of exhibitionism they represent."

Kaitlyn thought intently upon his words. Perhaps because they were the most he'd strung together in a personal account, since she'd met him. Yet she also felt the earnest appeal to her sense of integrity which he expressed so clearly. "I see. And I understand, now, why you were so off-hand after that encounter on the street. You didn't want to have revealed, so publicly your own formidable skill; lest you might be cast in the same mold as those you so pity for their own lack of depth."

Harry stopped walking. He turned and looked at Kaitlyn as if seeing her for the first time.

"What is it Harry? Did I say something wrong?" She petitioned.

"Not at all. I am just so very touched by your perceptiveness and insight. That is so rare in most people." He replied. Kaitlyn blushed and walked on, pulling him along, embarrassed a little that he should acknowledge her with such candid respect.

The clouds continued to press towards them, even as the ship raced onward. The lowering sky at last forced people into their cabins and the public places of the ship's interior. Harry escorted her to her state room and went to his own rooms just down the passageway on the same deck. He tried to imagine a storm at sea, and was carried into his own memory of the 'great storm,' and his first taste of helplessness in the face of forces beyond his strength to manage. He settled into a chair, selected a book, and had just begun to read when there came a fervent knocking upon the stateroom door. He set down the book and was putting his coat back on as he opened the door. Kaitlyn was there, trembling, though her eyes revealed her determination to remain calm.

"Harry, please come to our rooms, mother is frantic at the rocking of the ship and is in such a state..." She trailed off frailly. "I don't know what to do to help her. Father is up on the bridge with Mr. Allcock and the Captain." Harry was locking the door behind him and following her along

the passage already. They entered the Spelman's rooms and Harry went to the side of Mrs. Spelman who looked up at him with terror behind her eyes.

“Hello, Mr. Livingson,” she said, “I'm afraid I'm not...” A loud creaking and a sudden rocking of the ship cut her words short, and she gasped and fell into a tense quiet. Harry sat next to her and reached for her hand. She grasped at it as if it were a life line, and gripped it tightly.

“This reminds me of a storm we faced on the Tahoe several years ago. May I tell you the story?” His voice was comforting and calm, and for a moment soothed her racing heart. Kaitlyn sat down on her other side and took her mother's other hand.

Harry began his story. “It was early spring, and the crisp air of the mornings invited a sense of invigoration after the harshness of the last winter. White Feathers, Jameson---my best friend, and Titania were riding the mountain trails southwest of the Great Tahoe. Hipolyta and I had just spent the morning putting out fresh linens in the lodges for the coming guests at the start of the new season. My father and mother were making last minute repairs and the final grooming of the bungalows' buildings and grounds, when the eastern winds came stampeding across the lake.

The riders crested the summit of a ridge with a commanding view of the lake and surrounding mountain range. White Feathers saw the advancing storm and cursed his inattention to the gradually rising wind and fading light of the sun. “Make for that outcrop up to the right, there!” he called ahead to the backs of the riders in front of him. He was able to keep his voice level, but with imperative surety. They had just begun to dismount after reaching the steep sheltering escarpment, when a rolling boom struck the canyon walls. Titania's old gelding shied in terror, and she grasped the reins with all her might to wrestle the rearing horse back to the ground.

“Take off their saddles and gear, but leave on the reins. Tie them off to that tree, and make sure your knots are tight,” instructed White Feathers. They arranged the saddles over the trunk of an oak which reached outward in a tortuous angle from a cleft in the granite crag, and hitched the horses

to it securely. The overhang of the outcrop offered little shelter for the three of them, but it would have to do. The old man strung a rope across the opening, made it taut, and bunched their saddlebags into the nook at the back. "Titania, help Jameson get out some food for us before the rain hits and we'll lose the chance for a meal."

The young man and young woman made a hasty serving of the few provisions they carried for the excursion. "Where did this come from Great-Uncle? It was such a beautiful sunrise," asked Titania looking across the narrow canyon at the treetops being whipped in the early fury of the growing winds.

White Feathers followed her gaze, "The Sierras are as fickle as a debutant at her first ball, sweetheart. They can fall into a rage faster than a peregrine dives. I should have heeded her first whispered hint in that early eastern sky, crimson and fiery, when we were only a mile or two out of the village. I'm getting thick in the head, I suppose."

Jameson felt the first few timid drops of rain, "Well it's here now." He observed without emotion.

"You two pull on your rain gear and tie yourselves onto that rope, its going to get slippery here, very fast, and I don't want to have to chase down this canyon after either of you," said White Feathers as he donned a poncho and demonstrated with his own length of cord.

The full force of the storm blasted them in their perch like a wall falling onto them, and they crowded up under the outcrop to hide from the brunt of its savagery. White Feathers was relieved at the kids' lack of fear and earnest patience through the storm. His pride in them kept his own grip tight and his heart warm. The horses bowed their heads in surrender to the onslaught and simply stood like statues as the rain pelted their flanks and backs.

Titania let go with one hand to clear her face of moisture, only for a moment. Her foot slipped just then and she began a sudden slide beneath the safety rope. Jameson was quicker than the flash of lightening which struck out at the same moment, and held her in his embrace, safe from gravity and the fall. She gasped in relief at her lost footing so quickly

checked by his instant reflex, and lingered without struggle in his arms perhaps longer than really necessary to regain her balance. White Feathers noticed but said nothing, whatever kept them from worrying in the face of the peril facing them was alright with him. Jameson only loosened his hold when she thanked him aloud in a voice of both gratitude and intimacy.

Meanwhile, my father and mother, and Hipolyta and myself were latching shutters on the house and lodges against the brutal gusts of rain, flying sideways in their flight before the terrible storm. Slipping through the muddy torrents coursing from the Main Street down the Lakeside Road, we reached the shelter of the porch and I went with father around to shutter the store windows, just in case the winds shifted suddenly and threatened from the north. Hipolyta and mother disentangled themselves from their rain hoods and boots and hung their clothes over a line in the kitchen which they'd strung for drying. They went to the bathroom, toweled off and put on dry garments.

When father and I came in, we followed suit and in a little while we sat around the hearth and sipped hot tea, as the winds and rains lashed at the shutters and roof in a noisy percussive concert. "I wonder where Titania and Jameson were when this hit?" asked Hipolyta out loud, staring into the embers of the fire hoping to see an answer there as if it were a crystal ball.

Mother answered quickly, "White Feathers will have seen it rising and prepared them for the blast. They'll be just fine." Her voice was quieter than certainty suggested and I looked in my father's face for some hint of salvation from my own thoughts of foreboding and helplessness. Father was calm, and steady in the gaze he returned to my searching eyes, "This reminds me of my first storm in these mountains. I had just set up a tent-- In a low area of a wash, it turned out, and I hadn't seen to the horse's tether. The rains marched through as if they were iron instead of water, and when in an hour or two the wind abated enough for me to look around, my wagon had floated off, the horse had bolted, and I was knee deep in a stream of runoff where my tent had been. And there I was holding onto the rope which once held up my tent pole." He actually smiled in the

recollection, and we had to smile with him at the image he described. The moment was short-lived as a peal of thunder deafened us, and our thoughts snapped back to the plight of our missing family. "These winds always remind me of a story every child, at least where I grew up, knows well." Father then began a story, to which we all listened intently.

"Once in China there lived an old widow and her son, Chen. The widow was known all over for the brocades that she made on her loom. Weaving threads of silver, gold, and colored silk into her cloth, she made pictures of flowers, birds, and animals, so real they seemed almost alive. People said there were no brocades finer than the ones the widow wove. One day, the widow took a pile of brocades to the marketplace, where she quickly sold them. Then she went about buying her household needs. All at once she stopped. "Oh, my!" Her eye had been caught by a beautiful painted scroll that hung in one of the stalls. It showed a marvelous palace, all red and yellow and blue and green, reaching delicately to the sky. All around were fantastic gardens, and walking through them, the loveliest maidens. "Do you like it?" asked the stall keeper. "It's a painting of Sun Palace. They say it lies far to the east and is the home of many fairy ladies."

"It's wonderful," said the widow with a shiver and a sigh. "It makes me want to be there." Though it cost most of her money, the widow could not resist buying the scroll. When she got back to her cottage, she showed it to her son. "Look, Chen. Have you ever seen anything more beautiful? How I would love to live in that palace, or at least visit it!" Chen looked at her thoughtfully. "Mother, why don't you weave the picture as a brocade? That would be almost like being there."

"Why, Chen, what a marvelous idea! I'll start at once." She set up her loom and began to weave. She worked for hours, then days, then weeks, barely stopping to eat or sleep. Her eyes grew bloodshot, and her fingers raw. "Mother," said Chen anxiously, "shouldn't you get more rest?"

"Oh, Chen, it's so hard to stop. While I weave, I feel like I'm there at Sun Palace. And I don't want to come away!" Because the widow no longer wove brocades to sell, Chen cut firewood and sold that instead. Months

went by, while inch by inch the pattern appeared on the loom. One day, Chen came in to find the loom empty and the widow sobbing. "What's wrong, Mother?" he asked in alarm. She looked at him tearfully. "I finished it." The brocade was laid out on the floor. And there it all was—the palace reaching to the sky, the beautiful gardens, the lovely fairy ladies. "It looks so real," said Chen in amazement. "I feel like I could step into it!" Just then, a sudden wind whipped through the cottage. It lifted the brocade, blew it out the window, and carried it through the air. The widow and her son rushed outside, only to watch the brocade disappear into the east. "It's gone!" cried the widow, and she fainted away. Chen carried her to her bed and sat beside her for many hours. At last her eyes opened. "Chen," she said weakly, "you must find the brocade and bring it back. I cannot live without it."

"Don't worry, Mother. I'll go at once." Chen gathered a few things and started to the east. He walked for hours, then days, then weeks. But there was no sign of the brocade. One day, Chen came upon a lonely hut. Sitting by the door was an old, leather-skinned woman smoking a pipe. A horse was grazing nearby. "Hello, deary," said the woman. "What brings you so far from home?"

"I'm looking for my mother's brocade. The wind carried it to the east."

"Ah, yes," said the woman. "The brocade of Sun Palace! Well, that wind was sent by the fairy ladies of the palace itself. They're using the brocade as a pattern for their weaving."

"But my mother will die without it!"

"Well, then, you had best get it back! But you won't get to Sun Palace by foot, so you'd better ride my horse. It will show you the way."

"Thank you!" said Chen.

"Oh, don't thank me yet, deary. Between here and there, you must pass through the flames of Fiery Mountain. If you make a single sound of complaint, you'll be burnt to ashes. After that, you must cross the Icy Sea. The smallest word of discontent, and you'll be frozen solid. Do you still want to go?"

"I must get back my mother's brocade."

“Good boy. Take the horse and go.” Chen climbed on, and the horse broke into a gallop. Before long they came to a mountain all on fire. Without missing a step, the horse started up the slope, leaping through the flames. Chen felt the fire singe his skin, but he bit his lip and made not a sound. At last they came down the other side. When they’d left the flames behind, Chen was surprised to find that his burns were gone. A little later, they came to a sea filled with great chunks of ice. Without pausing a moment, the horse began leaping from one ice floe to another. Waves showered them with icy spray, so that Chen was soaked and shivering. But he held his tongue and said not a word. Finally they reached the far shore. At once, Chen felt himself dry and warm. It wasn’t long then till they came to Sun Palace. It looked just like his mother’s brocade! He rode to the entrance, sprang from the horse, and hurried into a huge hall. Sitting there at looms were dozens of fairy ladies, who turned to stare at him, then whispered to each other excitedly. On each loom was a copy of his mother’s brocade, and the brocade itself hung in the center of the room. A lady near the door rose from her loom to meet him. “My name is Li-en, and I welcome you. You are the first mortal ever to reach our palace. What good fortune brings you here?” The fairy was so beautiful that for a moment Chen could only stare. Li-en gazed shyly downward. “Dear lady, I have come for my mother’s brocade.”

“So you are the widow’s son!” said Li-en. “How we admire that brocade! None of us has been able to match it. We wish to keep it here till we can.”

“But I must bring it home, or my mother will die!” Li-en looked alarmed, and a flurry of whispers arose in the room. She stepped away to speak softly with several others, then returned to Chen.

“We surely must not let that happen to her. Only let us keep the brocade for the rest of the day, so we can try to finish our own. Tomorrow you may take it back with you.”

“Thank you, dear lady,” said Chen. The fairies worked busily to finish their brocades. Chen sat near Li-en at her loom. As she wove, he told her about his life in the human world, and she told him about hers at Sun Palace. Many smiles and glances passed between them. When darkness fell, the fairies worked on by the light of a magic pearl. At last Chen’s eyes

would stay open no longer, and he drifted to sleep on his chair. One by one the fairies finished or left off, and went out of the hall. Li-en was the last one there, and it was almost dawn when she was done. She cut her brocade from the loom and held it beside the widow's. She sighed. "Mine is good, but the widow's is still better. If only she could come and teach us herself." Then Li-en had an idea. With needle and thread, she embroidered a small image onto the widow's brocade—an image of herself on the palace steps. She softly said a spell. Then she left the hall, with a last long smiling gaze at Chen. When Chen woke up, the sun was just rising. He looked around the hall for Li-en, but saw no one. Though he longed to find her to say good-bye, he told himself, "I must not waste a moment." He rolled up his mother's brocade, rushed from the hall, and jumped onto the horse. Back he raced, across the Icy Sea and over Fiery Mountain. When he reached the old woman's hut, she was standing there waiting for him. "Hurry, Chen! Your mother is dying! Put on these shoes, or you'll never get there in time." Chen put them on. One step, two, three, then he was racing over the countryside faster than he could believe possible. In no time, he was home. He rushed into the cottage and found the widow in bed, pale and quiet. "Mother!" Her eyes opened slowly. "Chen?"

"Mother, I brought it." He unrolled the cloth onto the bed.

"My brocade!" The widow raised herself to look. Color came back to her face, and she seemed already stronger.

"Chen, I need more light. Let's take it outside." He helped her out of the cottage and placed the brocade on a rock. But just then a sudden wind came, and the brocade rose slowly in the air. It stretched as it rose, growing larger and larger, till it filled their view completely. The palace was as large as Chen himself had seen it, and standing on the steps was the fairy lady Li-en. Li-en was beckoning with her hand. "Quickly!" she called. "While the wind still blows! Step into the brocade!" For a moment, Chen was too astounded to move. Then he took hold of his mother's arm, and together they stepped forward. There was a shimmering, and there they stood before Sun Palace. Li-en rushed up to them, and the other fairies gathered around. She said to the widow, "Welcome, honored one. If it pleases you, we wish you to live with us and teach us the secrets of your

craft."

"Nothing could please me more!" cried the widow. "But, Chen, is it all right with you?" Chen looked in Li-en's eyes and smiled. "Yes, Mother, it's just fine with me." So the widow became teacher to the fairies, and Chen became husband to Li-en. And people say there are no brocades finer than the ones they weave at Sun Palace."

As father finished the tale. Hipolyta seemed to be still listening, turning her head from side to side, with a confused expression on her face. "I think the storm has passed! I can't hear anything at the shutters, or the door, or on the roof."

I went to the front door and after pulling it open, turned and said, "It has stopped. The storm has passed!"

They came out of the house and we all stood on the porch looking at the run-off, standing puddles and small ponds, and streams slowly winding toward the Tahoe. "I didn't even notice the storm after you started telling that story." I said to father. Mother smiled at Hipolyta, who was looking to father waiting for a response.

My father explained, "Children, when you are faced with forces beyond your power to overcome, you must submit. Yet in your surrender, you must also not yield to the gnawing of fear and foreboding. The only way to do this is to send your mind to a place of comfort and security, as a shield against the attack of doubt and anguish over your helplessness." My sister and I nodded to show our understanding, and set about opening shutters and investigating any damage the storm may have caused."

Harry finished his story. Kaitlyn and Mrs. Spelman sat relaxed, enjoying the aftermath of the tale. "And what about your sister Titania and Jameson and your Great-Uncle?" asked Mrs. Spelman, not realizing that the storm at sea had abated and the ship once again sailed on smoothly. Harry said, "They didn't get home until almost sundown. They came riding back up the Lakeside Road, White Feathers a little ahead, Hipolyta upon Jameson's horse, and Jameson leading our old gelding. Hipolyta asked Titania what she was doing on *bis* horse, and before Titania could reply that Achilles had thrown a shoe, Jameson spoke up and told her it was his

own fault. He had insisted that she ride his mare, and he would lead Achilles just to keep him from further injuring his leg. "I have been around horses a bit longer than your sister," he explained. Hipolyta turned to our mother and said that her sister could walk circles around the Tahoe and not be tired out, it didn't make any sense that she should let Jameson walk while she rode. My mother just smiled and didn't say a word."

"Henry, that was very instructive. Thank you so much for coming to our rescue once again," answered Yolanda after his final words. But at the word, *our*, Kaitlyn looked startled and glanced at Harry who only winked and said, "It was my pleasure, really Mrs. Spelman."

The door to the stateroom swung open and Lawrence Spelman entered. He saw the three of them in close conversation and asked his wife, "Dear, are you alright after this squall? From the bridge, it was hair-raising."

Mrs. Spelman assured him that she had been quite alright through the little cloudburst. Then she turned to Kaitlyn, "So you see Kaitlyn, there is always some way to deal with your anxiety when you face unreasonable situations." Kaitlyn's face again showed her astonishment at her mother's admonishment, and she looked imploringly at Harry and then her father. She regained control instantly and promised her mother she would try to remember the lesson. She looked back to Harry, and a little smile was playing at the corner of his eyes, then he quickly looked away to Mr. Spelman again.

Lawrence Spelman took in the scene in one, "I'm so glad you didn't have a relapse into that seasickness which plagued you at the outset of the voyage, then." And he went to his wife and gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"Harry and I were just going up onto the promenade to enjoy the air after the *cloudburst*," said Kaitlyn with a quick glance over her shoulder at her mother's cherubic expression.

"Enjoy. We'll see you for dinner." Mr. Spelman called after them.

When they were well out of earshot, Harry couldn't help but laugh at Kaitlyn's expression, which still had the vestiges of having been falsely accused and with no recourse but to acquiesce. She wanted to validate her own equilibrium, but quickly realized she would be preaching to the choir.

They strolled the promenade deck, each with a new appreciation for the other, again.

The *Britanic* sailed on smoothly over the north Atlantic. A day or so before they reached the Alexandra-Hornby dock complex in Liverpool, Harry had occasion to question Mr. Allcock regarding the inconsistencies which he remembered noting when preparing for the Chicago meetings. They were sitting with Mr. Spelman in the Smoking Room, and the consideration of the discrepancies came to the fore as he mused on how the lodges were faring this summer.

“I understand your volume of sales; those figures were quite clear. My concern is how can you have made deposits in the amounts you did over the last ten years, when a cane rod sells for \$12, even with your considerable volumes?” Harry posed, once his own clear grasp of his family's finances had been made certain to his benefactor.

“But Harry, I don't sell *all* my rods at that price. Indeed, most of my inventory is in higher end equipment, and that lot markets to the tune of \$20 and up.” Mr. Allcock expressed his pride of manufacture and command of his chosen markets. “And the Speys, lad, the Speys go even higher. It's a bright world out there for anglers, and for the men who provision them.”

Having at last tied up the last loose ends of his journey, and arrangements had been made for the Spelman's extended visit to Clive House in Redditch as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Allcock, Harry packed his trunk and readied for disembarking onto the soil of a new country. His excitement was matched by the eagerness with which Kaitlyn displayed, also on her first trip to England. Like Harry she was to receive an advanced education in the United Kingdom; she was to be installed in the training programs of Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Ltd. Stratford upon Avon. They had, of course, looked over the maps of Warwickshire and Worcestershire counties in the west midlands, and were certain that intercourse over the country roads, or by train would insure their continued friendship. In fact, Kaitlyn depended upon it. Harry was the only person she would know in this new land. Her apartments had been arranged for her in Stratford, and she would have the company of a distant

female cousin and her widowed mother, but Kaitlyn had never met them.

“At least we have nearly two months, yet, to spend together in exploration of Redditch, Malvern, and Stratford. Come September, we should be as comfortable in our new situations as if we'd lived here all our lives.” Harry encouraged his friend. Kaitlyn was mollified, her anxieties would simply have to be squelched she thought, and that was that.

Captain Perry settled the steamship into its berth at the dock on the morning tide, the gang way was set in place and it was Mr. Allcock and Mr. Spelman who led the way to a pleasant restaurant on Kings Road, not far from the rail station, which would allow them to board a train to Birmingham, with connections to Redditch, Malvern, and Stratford. While the gentlemen were engaged in acquiring rail tickets, Harry and the Spelman ladies enjoyed a light brunch. When the gentlemen returned, Samuel announced, “I've wired ahead to Clive House, we should be arriving in time for afternoon tea. Olivia will be most welcoming of guests, and my youngest daughter, Chloe, shall be only too pleased to have a young lady closer to her own age for a change. All her sisters are married and moved away, I'm afraid.”

The brief railway trip to Birmingham was uneventful, as was the even more brief hop down to Redditch. Clive House was close to the station on the north end of the town's center, so the Allcock & Sons Co. carriages weren't overladen for very long at all. The party used the few blocks for a stretch of the legs after so much sitting during this first day of their arrival. Olivia Allcock stood on the front steps of her house to meet her guests; Harry and the Spelmans waited politely at the gate as Samuel was first to the steps and his waiting wife. Once their embrace subsided, and Chloe joined them, Samuel introduced his traveling companions, beginning with Lawrence and Yolanda Spelman, then their daughter Kaitlyn and last but in no way least, Mr. Henry Livingson. Mrs. Allcock, who was several years younger than her husband, embraced Harry as an adopted son, and took his arm as they entered her home.

As forecast, after the parties were shown to their rooms, they assembled in the conservatory for afternoon tea. The ladies enjoyed

conversation ranging from the Spelman's crossing, to the Clive House appointments and Redditch shopping. The gentlemen made plans for a tour of the factory in the morning and arrangements for Henry's Entrance Examinations, for which he would be making a brief trip to Malvern the day after tomorrow. After which, should all go well, appointments might be made with local tradesmen for his school necessities.

Harry and Kaitlyn made fast friends with Chloe, who was only a few years their senior, and truly relished the prospect of having their company for the several weeks. "I shall be delighted to show you my favorite haunts, and I wish to hear everything about your own homes in America." She turned to Kaitlyn, "You are from Cleveland, Ohio? Did I get that right?" Kaitlyn nodded, still smiling at her new friend's accent when pronouncing her hometown. "And Henry, you are of course from Tahoe City, California. That has been common knowledge in this house for as long as I can remember. You are something of a returning son here, as we have anticipated your arrival these many years."

"Thank you, indeed, Chloe. I hope that I live up to your, and your family's expectations." He added sincerely.

"Harry, you can't possibly be worried about that..." countered Kaitlyn. "Chloe we should have a little chat about this 'new brother' of yours. I have had the honor of his acquaintance for only a fortnight and I may assure you, there is no young man who can stand as his peer." Harry was beginning to blush. He turned back to a conversation with Messrs Allcock and Spelman.

"Let's go for a stroll through the gardens before supper, shall we?" Chloe suggested to Kaitlyn, and with notice given their parents, the young ladies exited arm in arm. They reached the garden gate, and Kaitlyn began her story of their first meeting, the theaters, the museums, walks in the park, dinners at the Chelsea, the voyage, the promenade and the tempest. Chloe was absolutely rapt with attention to the exploits and talents of the young gentleman now in residence under her own roof. When at last the dinner bell sounded, she knew as much about Harry as Kaitlyn was willing to convey. There had been certain omissions, which Kaitlyn, in good

conscience, withheld, knowing Harry's wishes on some subjects. If he wanted Chloe to know he could make them known himself.

Dinner was wonderful. Henry, once again, recounted his academic aspirations and the novel events of his journey to Clive House. Further conversations followed and then before it was too late, all retired for the evening. Harry's rooms were a bit larger than the other guests, as he was 'part of the family' and would be in residence, so to speak, for the duration of his stay in England. That he had had the experience of living in Bungalow Two, for several months before his Tahoe departure, gave him the familiarity of having a suite, also with his own lavatory. The Spelmans and Kaitlyn were handsomely accommodated as well, with Kaitlyn's room adjacent to Chloe's boudoir.

Once he awoke the next morning, was dressed and came downstairs for breakfast, he was greeted by Mr. Allcock and Mr. Spelman as the only other early risers. Toast and sausages, butter, jams, biscuits and coffee or juice were standard morning fare at Clive House. Samuel handed Harry a map of Redditch, with the points of interest, both historical and popular marked clearly for reference, and suggested he tour the town and 'get his bearings.' His own tour of the factory could be got at any time in the future and therefore he was prodded out of the house before noon in the company of Chloe and Kaitlyn. The ladies, Mrs. Spelman and Mrs. Allcock, stayed at home to continue their new acquaintance, and prepare for the weeks ahead.

Chloe and Kaitlyn escorted Harry through the town like the triumphal vanguard which led the victorious generals through the streets of Rome in the days of the Republic. Chloe guided them to the medieval needle works, the Abbey ruins, the shops, parks and lanes of the Midland town. They settled down for a rest on a green sward at the banks of the Arrow and enjoyed the shade and each other's company. Conversation turned to Kaitlyn's upcoming 'education.'

"Father saw the Company perform on his last visit, a couple of years ago, and inquired about their training of aspiring young actresses and vocalists. To his surprise, they were just considering such a program, and

began taking on proteges in small numbers last year.” She explained, “I am, I suppose, to be one of the early 'guinea pigs,' although to be honest, I'm more or less uncertain about the endeavor, as I have so little experience with the works of the bard.” She trailed off, genuinely unsure.

Harry perked up at that, “But Kaitlyn, most of it is in poetic meter, which makes for a quick study, the dialogs and monologues are spirited and dramatic... you should enjoy yourself immensely.”

Chloe chimed in with, “I think it is so wonderful that you shall be on the stage. I get goosebumps thinking of it.”

“You should hear her sing, Chloe. There isn't another with as purely angelic a voice.” added Harry proudly, and when he looked back to Kaitlyn, he saw her throat begin to flush pink and rise to her cheeks.

“Harry is not impartial in this matter, Chloe, whatever other attainments with which we might credit him, in this matter he is biased, I'm afraid.” remedied Kaitlyn.

“Nonsense, I wasn't even the most vocal in praise of your performance on the Britishic. Not for lack of effort, though...” Harry added. “I was just so overwhelmed, my voice was mislaid.”

“And you already have apartments and companions arranged. That is so tidy a prospect. Have you seen the rooms yet?” Chloe went on.

“No. We are to travel to Stratford after Harry has completed his admissions work. Mother wanted to go straight away, but I could not contemplate traveling one step without Henry at my side.” She demurred to Harry without looking him in the eye. “Would you care to join us, Chloe? It may be dull, but I've never seen the hamlet that gave birth to the legend.”

“Just try to keep me from it!” answered Chloe. They all chuckled at her sudden directness and posture of chastening her friend.

When Harry boarded the train for Great Malvern and his Entrance Examinations, he was accompanied by Mr. Allcock, Mr. and Mrs. Spelman, Chloe and Kaitlyn. The entourage arrived near ten in the morning, as Harry's exams were scheduled for eleven with the Headmaster, Rev. C. T. Cruttwell, and the head of School House that year, Mr. Mackie. They

walked the few blocks from the station to the steps of the Main building on Malvern College campus, and remarked on the pleasing state of the grounds, the impressive architecture of the buildings and naturally, constantly reminding Harry that 'he would do exceedingly well' on his tests. This constant reassurance had an unsettling effect upon Harry. He had prepared as best he could, but their repeated exhortations gave him, gradually, to believe that perhaps he was somehow missing something.

Mr. Allcock escorted Harry to the Headmaster's office and made their presence known for the appointment. After being seated in the little anteroom for only minutes, Rev. Cruttwell emerged to formally welcome them. Mr. Allcock introduced Mr. Henry Livingson of Tahoe City, California, U.S.A., and then assumed a more observational role for the rest of the meeting. After a brief but probing interview, during which Harry was told of the school's twenty year history, and record for graduating the best and brightest, and his own responsibilities, should he be admitted. The headmaster outlined the general program of entrance procedures, the examination, the assessment, which should only take a matter of a few days, the placement into a house, and a course of study decided upon. All other matters regarding Malvern life would be attended to by correspondence or direct instruction upon arrival for the Autumn term on the third of September. Cruttwell guided him to an adjoining classroom. Mr. Mackie was waiting for them there, and looking at his watch, pulled the headmaster aside for a quick word.

The headmaster turned to Harry and informed him they would be waiting another half an hour, as the other two candidates scheduled for the examinations had not yet arrived, but would be joining them in the interim. Harry smiled and assured the headmaster and Mr. Mackie that he was completely at their disposal, "Would you prefer that I wait here, or return shortly?" He asked, hoping to walk off the nervous butterflies which had begun fluttering about in his stomach. "It will be at your own discretion, Mr. Livingson, please be sure to be in your seat at 12 noon." Mr. Mackie cautioned.

Harry rose and walked back through the corridors they had navigated

upon their arrival, to emerge into the fresh air at the doors of the Main Building. His entourage had gone off for their tour of the town and to sample the waters for which Malvern was famous. This left Harry alone looking out over the Cricket pitch and the rest of the grounds within casual view. He paced, he breathed, he tried reviewing the extensive volume of information stored in his head from his ten years of study, until at last he had his butterflies flittering in formation and it was five minutes until noon.

He reentered the building, walked to the examination room and sat at his desk. Within moments Mr. Mackie returned, followed two other candidates. One was about Harry's height and build, but for those puppyish hands and feet, which so endeared him to Jameson, back home, the other lad was shorter and thicker, and walked with an air of superiority which nearly preceded him into the room. "Mr. Livingston, these are Messrs. Lambert," and he indicated the thick lad, "and Inman," the Jameson lookalike. They each took a desk and sat down near Harry as Mr. Mackie went to the desk and lectern and turned back to face them. "Gentlemen, you are to take the Entrance Examinations for Admission to Malvern College. These tests have been compiled by our faculty to discover your present knowledge of a wide range of subjects. You are not expected to have this knowledge at your fingertips at this juncture, but for the purposes of assessing your intellectual fitness and compatibility with the courses of study here at Malvern, we ask you to do your best to answer all the questions, and as fully as you are able." He paused to look at each of them in turn. His gaze, over the half-glasses perched on the end of his nose, gave the impression he was looking at something besides their countenances, that he was in some way 'reading' them. He turned to the desk, picked up three packets, each in sealed envelopes and placed one in front of each of the candidates. "You shall have only five hours to complete your packets. If you should require to use the lavatory during that time, one of my assistants will be here to escort you to the facilities and return you to this room. There are glasses and a pitcher of water, there," and he pointed to a little stand under the only window to the room, "There will be no talking, whatsoever. If you need a question clarified, or have a need as has been indicated previously, please raise your hand and when I have recognized

you, you may approach my desk.” He paused again. “Do you have any questions before you begin?” He asked that last, as if he would be astonished if any one of them should have a question. “When you are quite sure you can do no more, replace the examination into the envelope and place it on my desk, and you may be excused. You may now,” He looked at his watch and made a note of the time as he said, “Begin.”

All Harry focused upon beyond that, 'Begin,' was each question in turn, and the sound of his own pencil on the test sheets. He was surprised by how thoroughly the examination followed his own studies. There were pages upon pages of questions which simply required him to provide information and data. Then there were several essay questions, none of which truly plumbed to the depths of his already practiced compositions. Then there were interpretive questions, for which he was to rely upon his own foundation of logic and reason to sort through. No doubt there were some truly incorrect approaches which would yield no worthwhile results, but those which resolved the basic dilemmas of the propositions would probably be acceptable. He wrote furiously, constantly, only pausing to sharpen his pencil. He made only one scratch through, for a misspelling, otherwise he finished and let out a relieved sigh---quietly of course. He looked back over his responses and skimmed his essays, the looked to be sure there were no other pages of the test which he might have overlooked, satisfied, he replaced his paperwork in the envelope, wrote his full name upon the flap, and raised his hand. Mr. Mackie waved a finger for him to approach. He stood up, walked forward and set the packet on the desk in front of Mr. Mackie, who looked up at him with a mixture of what Harry perceived to be mild contempt and incredulity. The proctor checked his watch, wrote the start and end times on the cover, then slid the envelope away from him as if wanting to distance himself from it.

Puzzled, Harry made for the door and closed it behind him, quietly. He looked up and down the hallway, and noticed a display case. Advancing to it, he admired the trophies and plaques contained behind the glass. One group of honors held his eye, and at last he turned and walked to the front doors. When he reached the outer steps he pulled his watch from his vest pocket. Two-forty-two. Perhaps, he thought, he might encounter Mr. Allcock

and the others if he started at the town center and then worked his way out from there. In the meantime, some lunch was overdue according to the quiet rumbling in his stomach. The rumblings were a vast improvement over the butterflies, so he was in no particular hurry to find a cafe.

As he finished ordering and sat back to review his early afternoon adventure, he heard his name called. "Harry!" Kaitlyn's clear voice wafted to him from across the little square. "Harry, what are you doing here? You're supposed to be in the examination until five o'clock." She fussed.

Mr. Allcock was no less surprised, having left Harry in the examination hall himself. "Did they call it off? Was it postponed until more candidates might arrive?" He proposed.

"Uh.." Harry sorted through the little barrage of questions, "I was; I finished earlier than expected; No there were two other candidates and that seemed enough for the event." He answered each in turn, having just come from the same sort of grilling.

"Ah, were the questions too obscure? Did I provide insufficient lists of study?" It seemed that Mr. Allcock was sure if he kept asking multiple questions, Harry would sooner or later be able to find an excuse in one of them for his being at lunch already.

"Mr. Allcock, the materials and lists you provided were thoroughly sufficient. The examination was clear and concise, as were all my responses. I suppose I just write faster than they anticipate a candidate would write. I cannot find another explanation for having lunch." Harry responded, hoping to stem any further interrogation on the subject. "Have you all eaten?" He added.

"Well, no, actually," answered Mr. Spelman. "We have had a lot of very healthy water." The others smiled, the girls giggled. Lawrence Spelman had made his opinions on the dubious benefits from the 'waters' from the first shop they entered. His wife had over-ridden his complaints, so he had merely continued to mention his variety of objections in passing, until they all knew them by heart, and it had become a running gag of sorts.

Harry signaled for a server and had other tables moved around. Then, until they were served, the girls began quizzing him on the contents of the

test. It became clear, before their meal was delivered, that Harry not only had found the test 'clear and concise' but had responded to each poser with clarity. They abandoned the quiz. Lawrence Spelman enjoyed his repast with an avid appetite.

The entourage was home at Clive House before supper, and settled back into a domestic pace. The ladies discussed the jaunt to Stratford, on the 'inspection' tour, and the gentlemen, wisely, listened without interruption. It was settled that, once again, they would form an entourage and tour the little town, with particular attention to the apartments intended for Kaitlyn, and the Memorial Theater. Mr. Allcock was asked about train schedules and he responded naturally, as if he were the rail inspector himself. They then decided to embark after a sufficient breakfast on the morrow, and return for supper to Clive House. Mr. Allcock, and Mr. Spelman looked at each other surreptitiously, the former, who would not be joining the party for factory reasons, gave the latter a look which said, 'rather you than me.' "Good, that's settled. Capital job of planning, ladies," said Mr. Spelman with a hint of a sigh, and that concluded the discussion. What he thought was that they had just executed the near same excursion that very day, and couldn't make out the need for such belabored planning for a similar trip; once again he chose to remain mum on the subject.

As the touring company left the little station in Stratford the next morning, Mrs. Spelman inquired of the first local she encountered the directions to Henley Street. Without a shred of mockery the gentleman indicated, "...veer left at the split, there, and you'll be in the heart of it, mum." And he went on his own business. Armed with this piece of information, Yolanda Spelman led the way, a slip of paper with the apartment's address clutched tightly in her gloved hand. Olivia Allcock walked at her side, perhaps in moral support of the mission. Mr. Spelman had received a wire first thing before breakfast and had had to beg their indulgence to attend to the most pressing matter the wire introduced. So, Kaitlyn, Chloe and Harry, followed in the wake of their 'guides,' admiring as they walked along, the Elizabethan construction of the town buildings they passed.

"It's a step into the past," remarked Henry as they lingered at a little shop displaying the local varieties of cheeses and woolens.

"I like it here already," Chloe agreed. Kaitlyn was surprisingly quiet, she smiled amiably at their comments, and kept a firm hold of Harry's arm.

"Here we are." Yolanda announced, as they walked through the little square and stood before what appeared to be an Inn. Harry went to hold the door for the ladies and they all passed into the sitting rooms of the establishment. After a moment to let their eyes adjust to the dimmer light of the interior and they were greeted warmly by the proprietress, a widow and formidable business woman.

"Welcome to *The Rooms*, may I get you tea?" she inquired of the ladies.

"Thank you, that would be lovely, and would you be so kind as to inform Mrs. Smythe-Wilkins of our arrival, I am Mrs. Spelman, we have arranged for rooms here, of an indefinite nature."

"Well at least I won't need to go far to do that, I am Mrs. Smythe-Wilkins, and I am very pleased to meet you in person, Mrs. Yolanda Spelman, indeed."

"Thank you," she turned to the entourage, "this is Mrs. Olivia Allcock, and her daughter Chloe," each lady nodded in greeting. "This is Mr. Henry Livingson, soon of Malvern College."

Harry reached for the widow's hand and clasped it with a gentle shake, "Pleased, ma'am" he said.

"And this is my own daughter Kaitlyn Spelman, who is to be your guest."

Kaitlyn reached out her own hand, and warmly greeted the proprietress, "I am enchanted with *The Rooms*, thank you so much for your hospitality," and she quickly returned to Harry's arm as if unsure to be absent from it for any small amount of time.

Yolanda continued, "Have Mrs. Walcott and her daughter arrived as yet?" Looking hopeful that her cousin's widow had already established residency.

"No ma'am, but I have a letter here, addressed to yourself. It was

delivered only Monday, last.” She went to behind the registration desk and produced an envelope. “Here you go, mum,” she added, handing it to Yolanda. “Now may I seat you for tea?”

“Yes, thank you,” answered Olivia for the group and they were led into a brighter room lined with windows onto the street, and each with a flower box at the open sill. “Lovely...” Olivia pronounced as they were seated.

Yolanda noted the return address, and seeing it was from her Walcott relation, read the brief missal. Her head drooped and her expression tensed. “Oh dear.” She said plaintively. She turned to Olivia and passed the letter for her to read as well. Mrs. Allcock scanned the lines, refolded the sheet and slipped it back into its envelope.

“Mrs. Smythe-Wilkins,” she called, “May Mrs. Spelman and I have a word with you in private?” The three ladies removed to the far corner of the room at a little table and sat in conference for quite a bit. Harry and the young ladies sipped their tea, and strained to hear something of the conference, but to no avail. All that was plain, was that Olivia Allcock seemed to lead the discussion. When at last they were reassembled, it was she who announced the results.

“Our Mrs. Walcott is soon to be married to a certain Reverend Cruttwell, of Malvern College.” Harry gasped, he had just met the headmaster only yesterday. “Those glad tidings have, of course, caused no little disruption to our Kaitlyn's lodging arrangements in this charming hamlet. Mrs. Smythe-Wilkins, Mrs. Spelman and I have, I think, landed upon a satisfactory resolution to insure that Miss Spelman shall receive her proper training with the Royal Shakespeare Company, an aim we can all agree is in her best interest.” She paused and looked to her daughter, Chloe. “Darling, I have endeavored to introduce to you the many aspects of managing a large household, and I am gratified to say that your abilities are unsurpassed in thoroughness and creativity. I have proposed to Mrs. Smythe-Wilkins that you be installed in this establishment, for the duration, at least of Kaitlyn's term of instruction, as her lieutenant. Her son has recently married and has left her without assistance managing the staff and daily requirements of the business.” She paused to look consolingly to Mrs.

Smythe-Wilkins, who nodded in appreciation. "I have assured her that she need look no further for a capable assistant. This, in exchange for room and board in the apartments which were intended for Mrs. Walcott and her daughter. Would you be amenable to this arrangement, Chloe?"

Chloe was transfixed by the whelming emotions prompted by her stepmother's approbation of her management skills, and the prospect of remaining with her new friend in Stratford. With a carefully restrained tone, she answered, "Thank you very much for the consideration of nominating me for such a position," she replied to Olivia, and to Mrs. Smythe-Wilkins, "Many thanks indeed for accepting these terms without actual proof of my abilities. I shall endeavor to fulfill my several obligations to you in just payment for your faith in me."

Mrs. Smythe-Wilkins smiled and extended her hand to Chloe, who grasped it firmly and shook on the agreement. Mrs. Spelman, meanwhile, leveled with Kaitlyn. "I am sure your father will approve this new arrangement. Should he have any reservations, I shall remind him that our Mr. Livingson is but an hour or so away, and maybe pressed into service should his presence be required." She smiled hopefully to Harry, who nodded. "Besides, the Allcocks are only half an hour by rail in Redditch. I am certain, you will be well in this situation. What do you think, dear?"

Kaitlyn was even more overwhelmed than Chloe by now. The people around her had pledged their support for her in following her aspirations and dreams, in the face of otherwise difficult impediments. She simply nodded vigorously, and smiled through her tears at the generosity of these dear people. Harry offered her his handkerchief, which she accepted in exchange for her own now soaked one.

"Good. That's settled then," announced Mrs. Smythe-Wilkins. "Jeremy," she called to the kitchen, "Put together lunch and cakes for our new friends."

While food was prepared, *The Rooms* hostess showed the party the rooms reserved for them. They were spacious, well-ventilated and lighted well enough. A connecting bath served both suites, and Chloe and Kaitlyn held each others hands as they were shown the appointments and were

told of the functioning of the house. Their mothers were well-pleased with the accommodations, and Harry remarked on his admiration of the Inn's design and construction, aspects he knew something about.

That evening, after a light supper, Olivia and Yolanda introduced the established arrangements to their husbands, and waited in silent apprehension as the two men quietly conferred over the plan. "And, Harry?" inquired Mr. Allcock, "How did you appraise the *The Rooms* and their mistress?"

Harry related clearly his perceptions, and observations of both the establishment itself and its management, with the additional promotion that its location in the hamlet was also advantageous, central and accessible, well lit outside and secure. It was but a few minutes walk to either the rail station, or in the other direction, to the Memorial Theater. Very convenient. The usual tenants were respectable and the establishment itself enjoys a favorable reputation among the villagers. "I made a few inconspicuous inquiries, as we toured the sights." He added genuinely. No one need know he was as concerned for these two ladies' well-being as any parent, somehow the two gentlemen intuited the truth of it on their own.

"Thank you Harry," replied Samuel. "Well Lawrence, how do think these ladies have done with the challenges of the day?"

Lawrence was careful to remain solemn, "Samuel, we are two very fortunate gentlemen to be so handsomely blessed with such capable ladies as these."

"Just so, just so." Samuel rejoined. "Splendid job, first-rate."

The ladies were of course very pleased already; it was icing on the cake to receive such praise from the two men whose opinions mattered most in the world to them.

Mr. Allcock's morning at the factory the next day was interrupted by a troubling wire from Malvern. He concluded his morning meeting with heads of departments and rushed home to fetch Harry along to the railway depot for an impromptu trip back to the college. When they were settled in the train coach and at liberty to discuss the sudden trip, he passed the wire to Harry.

Harry read aloud, "Mr. Samuel Allcock of Allcock & Sons, Co. Please arrange to meet with Rev. C.T. Cruttwell in his offices at Malvern Main Building at your earliest opportunity. This is in regard to the proposed admission of your ward, Henry Livingson, to this college. We deeply regret any inconvenience this may afford you, but it is imperative that we discuss this matter at once. The Reverend Mr. Cruttwell." He refolded the brief message and handed it back to Mr. Allcock.

"What's this about, I wonder," muttered Harry, unsure of the implications.

"That's what we'll find out, shortly, laddie," replied Mr. Allcock evenly. "I don't suppose it has to do with your 'cursory' examination, do you suppose?"

"Mr. Allcock, I assure you I did my best on that battery of tests." Harry defended.

"Ay lad, I know you would have. We'll just have to wait and see."

They crossed the school grounds to the Main Building and, once again, were seated in the anteroom awaiting their appointment with the headmaster. Mr. Mackie opened the door to the office and invited the gentlemen inside. The headmaster was behind his desk and rose when they entered, he extended a hand to each in turn.

"This, gentlemen, is Rev. Grundy, a colleague and friend." He introduced the man to his left, and again they were shaking hands. "Mr. Mackie, you have met before." He nodded to the head of School House. "Well, I apologize for the suddenness of this meeting, but I'm afraid it was unavoidable." His tone gave no comfort to Harry as he attended carefully to the postures, mannerisms and words of the men before him. Before they had gone much past what passed for pleasantries, Harry congratulated Rev. Cruttwell on his recent engagement.

This had a curious effect on what came after. "Thank you young Mr. Livingson," the headmaster began, as he looked from one to the other of the gentlemen beside him. "I must say I am taken aback by your knowledge of that blessing, as I have been scrupulous in keeping it from common knowledge." He sat back and regarded Harry anew, as did the other two

gentlemen. Mr. Allcock relaxed, some, and crossed his legs loosely, setting his hand on his raised leg.

“I am sorry if I have impinged upon your privacy in these well wishes. I assure you I have told no one at Malvern, other than yourselves,” admitted Harry quickly.

“I am sure that is the case, Mr. Livingston. As long as you are aware of that; let me explain Rev. Grundy's presence at this meeting in his true role. I am to pass the leadership of this institution into his capable hands at the end of the Autumn Term, and have included him, naturally, in as much of the business of the school as possible of late, so that he may be able to take the helm with little or no interruption to the staff and faculty.” He explained candidly. “Now to the matter at hand. After a most thorough assessment and review of your Entrance Examination, we are at a loss as to the certainty of a proper course of action. We at Malvern can not, in good conscience, offer you a place in the Foundation Year Class of this college.”

Harry's gasp was only less audible than that of Mr. Allcock.

“Nor, can we with confidence install you in the Remove Class.” He added, to the confused looks staring back to him from the other side of the desk. “Mr. Livingston, I have just been impressing upon Grundy and Mackie, that in my five years of tenure here, nor I might add, after counsel with Mr. Faber the former headmaster, there has not been any student who has responded to the Malvern Entrance Examinations with the full marks of a perfect score...”

There was a sudden explosion of breath from Samuel and Harry at these words, and their utter relief was apparent.

The headmaster continued, “The heads of each department were enlisted to scour your submissions for any flaw, whatsoever, to no avail. You have, by the way thoroughly impressed our literature and composition professors.” He paused to allow the compliment to settle on his guests. “So, what we have determined is this: You shall be installed in School House, an honorable heritage there, I assure you, and you will begin your studies with us as part of the Hundred. We seriously considered promoting you instantly to the Lower Sixth, but I had to account for your inexperience

in a formal educational setting, and therefore would wish you the opportunity to familiarize yourself with both that new arena and our own culture here at Malvern.” At the Headmaster’s last words both gentlemen at his sides nodded in certain agreement. “To be honest Mr. Livingson, our Entrance Examinations are, with some slight modifications, the third year promotion trials, so you rightly should be admitted to Lower Sixth, but for the considerations already mentioned.” He finally paused to gauge the effect of his decision upon his guests.

Mr. Allcock was smiling broadly, and Harry tried to restrain shouting at the dramatic turn of events and emotion. “Thank you very much for your careful deliberations for my well-being. I assure you I am most genuinely grateful.” He said and stopped abruptly, lest the thrill in his voice become overt.

Mr. Mackie, then stood and extended his hand to Harry, “Young Master, I am pleased to be able to apologize for my previous incredulity upon your summary completion and submission of your materials. Honestly, I was disappointed to some degree at your quickness. It has been my experience that that reflects an incomplete grasp of the subjects. I stand humbly corrected.” He inclined his head as he took Harry’s hand. “Two hours, fifteen minutes. That is unprecedented, and shall likely remain so for many, many years to come.”

It was Rev. William Grundy’s turn to speak, “I was offered the opportunity to review your submissions as well. I also find your insight and perception, your reason, and sheer grasp of the volumes of information required, to have so handily... to respond so flawlessly...” he was near speechless, but recovered to add, “I shall be proud to offer you an open door to my counsels should you require advice during your own tenure with Malvern College.”

“Well, what say you, Henry Livingson? Do you accept the solution we offer?” the headmaster brought them all back to topic.

“Sirs, I am most pleased to accept admission to Malvern College under these terms,” answered Harry succinctly.

“Excellent. Here are your book lists, and wardrobe requirements. If

you will return on the first of September, before the start of term, we can discuss your focus of study and other various disciplines a Hundred member must decide. Until then..." They all rose and again shook hands all around. "By the way, how did you come by the news of my engagement?" He had to ask.

"A dear friend of mine was impacted directly by your upcoming union, depriving her as it happens of your betrothed's company and succor in a new situation. She was then blessed herself to find out firsthand how thoroughly fortunate she is to be so loved by her family and friends, who made instant provision for the accomplishment of her dreams. Very auspicious for your own futures, wouldn't you say?" explained Harry.

"Yes, thank you, a very good omen, indeed," answered the Reverend Mr. Cruttwell. "We'll see you then on the first of September."

The train ride back to Clive House was nearly as quiet as the ride to Malvern, but for different reasons. Mr. Allcock's expression could not be easily described, but was a sincere reflection of the extremes of fatherly pride he felt at Harry's triumph, and the eagerness which he tried to constrain in broadcasting this news to everyone he encountered. There was a true victory celebration at Clive House that evening and night. It was all Harry could do to remain humbly himself and his endurance was well rewarded.

After breakfast, the next morning, Kaitlyn and Chloe took Harry into town to the most reputable tailor upon whom the Allcocks relied. "Your school wardrobe falls under our purview, Mr. Livingson." Chloe pronounced, as they strolled the lane in approach to his shop. "Redditch isn't the center of needle-making for naught, after all."

Over the door of the tailor's shop, hung the sign, 'Millward's' and under the bold letters: *Under New Ownership*. "I don't remember when that sign didn't read as that," said Chloe, noticing her companions' glance at the sign. "He's really very good."

They entered and a little bell tinkled their arrival. Mr. Bessamer, a fastidious gentleman of some years hurried from a room behind the desk. "Good morning, Miss Allcock. You are looking handsome as ever." He put

his hands out to receive hers. "How may I assist you today?"

"This is Mr. Henry Livingson, and this beautiful young lady is Miss Kaitlyn Spelman." The tailor greeted each warmly. "My good friend here has been accepted into the Hundred at Malvern and shall require you to attend to his wardrobe. Your own Harold is a Malvernian, is he not?"

"Oh, yes indeed. Thank you for remembering. We are just that proud of our Harold. We have just returned very recently from the Commemoration ceremonies for graduation and I am pleased to say that he has done his mum and me very proud." Then, still smiling warmly after the opportunity to crow just a little, he turned to Harry. "So, young master, into which house are you installed?"

"School House, sir." Harry answered quickly.

"Ah, the black, magenta and blue," approved the tailor. "Our Harold was in Number Two, blue and white, you know... Let's see..." and he went about searching his swatch book for the authorized colors of School house. "Here we are," and he proffered the swatches for inspection. "You will, of course need ties, and a coat, sweaters if you wish, your robe, and let me see, I know I have the revised stitching form for the Malvern crest here... Ah, yes. Now, Hundred... hmm, here are a selection of fabrics for your shirt sleeves." Mr. Bessamer was just laying out more swatches, when tinkling through the door came a tall grinning man followed by a timid lad, almost to the point of shyness.

"Hallo, dad! I've brought round some more business to our door." The tall young man exclaimed, as he put his arm round the shy lad and pulled him forward. Chloe and Kaitlyn had settled themselves in the two available chairs in the shop, and looked up in surprise from their tete-a-tete. Mr. Bessamer grinned in welcome.

"Harold, you're home." He said in obvious delight. "Mr. Livingson, Miss Spelman, this is my son Harold Bessamer, lately graduated from Malvern." He proclaimed with a father's pride.

"Good to make your acquaintance, of course I'm only just recently made a Malvernian, but Mr. Harold Bessamer is already known to me," said Harry and shook Harold's extended hand. "Captain of the Malvern fencing

team, Champion Archer, these titles are known to all of Malvern, are they not?"

"Mr. Livingson," nodded Harold, "I am impressed and grateful at your knowledge of Malvern champions. Thank you for your recognition, indeed." He looked more keenly at the young man before him for just a moment, then turned his attention to the ladies. "Miss Spelman, I am pleased to make your acquaintance. Miss Allcock, I am truly delighted to have the extraordinary pleasure of seeing you again." His attention lingered upon Chloe. "Dad this is young Mr. Roger Inman, of the Birmingham Innans, and he is need of tailoring. I met his family on the train down and overheard their conversation. Quite by happenstance, I assure you," he corrected quickly, "and I naturally had to recommend the finest tailor in Redditch for Roger's needed wardrobes." Harold was confident to a degree that was nearly infectious in both his manner and speech. He continually wore a disarming grin and his carriage bespoke assuredness of purpose. Harry decided he liked him already.

"Well, Mr. Inman, if you would be patient for just a little, and allow me to take Mr. Livingson's vitals, I shall be with you at once." Mr. Bessamer asked of the young man.

"That's quite alright, sir. I am not in a rush at all. My parents are enjoying the sights and I have the afternoon at my disposal." Roger answered genially.

"Fine, fine. Now Mr. Livingson," the tailor continued to Harry, "if you will allow me to take a few measurements, this way please, sir." Harry followed Harold's father into the next room, which was routinely used for fittings and measurements.

Kaitlyn rose to follow, "It was a pleasure to meet you Mr. Bessamer," she said as she went to supervise the taking of Harry's 'vitals.'

"Congratulations, Mr. Bessamer, on your graduation; you're father is quite proud." Chloe offered by way of conversation to the tall young man standing before her. She remembered him, of course, from their past commerce in the town, and was fondly reminded how striking a figure he had always been, even as a lad.

“Thank you very much, Miss Allcock. It means a lot to me to hear you say so.” Harold's brave persona softened when speaking to Chloe Allcock. He had long admired her from a distance, and any opportunity for conversation was greeted with the utmost attention.

“Into which house will you be installed, Roger?” She turned and asked of the timid lad, who was merely looking about the room with an uncertain gaze.

“Um...the letter from Malvern said I'd be in Number Four under the instruction of Mr. Bryans, ma'am,” he answered politely.

“Miss Allcock, if you don't mind my asking, how did you come into the acquaintance of the two yanks?” Harold inclined his head to the fitting room.

Chloe, stifled a laugh, it hadn't occurred to her that they were anything but her new friends, so inured to Harry's arrival these many years. “Mr. Henry Livingson is a ward of my father's and Miss Spelman is, well, a dear friend of the family. In fact I shall be sharing rooms with her in Stratford at the start of term.” She smiled broadly, hoping to not let too much information out about their plans.

“Are you attending school then, Chloe. In Stratford?” asked Harold puzzled.

“Actually it is Miss Spelman who is pursuing her education, I am merely a companion, if you will.” She answered as tactfully as she could manage, still trying to be friendly.

Harold Bessamer made one last go at conversation before she would depart with her friends. “I have business in Stratford, as it happens, may I look you up when I am there? It would be welcome indeed to hear a kind voice and behold a gentle face in the midst of an un-familiar town.”

“I shall welcome it, Harold Bessamer.” She answered politely.

The tailor and her friends emerged from the fitting room, “That should do for the present Mr. Livingson, I shall send word to Clive House when your articles are ready for fitting and alteration.”

“Thank you, again Mr. Bessamer. It will be a privilege to wear your

work, and I shall refer all inquiries to your capable talents," answered Harry. "Mr. Bessamer, it was a delight to meet such a noted Malvernian," Harry again shook Harold's hand, "And to meet a fellow classman, Mr. Inman." He turned to the lad. "Congratulations on your examinations, I'm sorry I didn't linger to meet with you the other day." Harry added to assure the lad he had indeed remembered him.

Roger brightened visibly at this, "Oh, don't give it a second thought. I was so surprised at how quickly you finished, and there I was struggling, scratching through paragraphs, and guessing at questions so far beyond me." He admitted. Then his curiosity got the better of his temperament, "How did you do, after all...Mr. Livingson?" He just had to know.

"I was adequate to the challenges set forth. I also had a strike through," he added, in a confidential tone.

"Just one! Brilliant. Thank you Mr. Henry Livingson." Roger commended.

Harry went on the factory tour, although instead of the company of Mr. Allcock, it was Chloe Allcock who served as guide. Naturally, Kaitlyn attended the tour, and was fascinated by the complexity and efficiency of the workmen, their machines and their products. Harry was satisfied that the same esprit d' corps was evident at the home factory as was apparent in the Toronto facility. This showed through the managers' and workmen's genuine deference to Chloe, as much as their own unharried tempo of manufacture which lent an atmosphere of calm and good humor, camaraderie and determination to the tasks they performed.

Mr. Spelman was to leave for the appointments arranged on the continent as a matter of business, and the ulterior purpose of the Spelman's trip abroad. Mrs. Spelman, it seemed, was habitually anxious at her husband's forays to foreign soils, for she voiced constant reminders towards him during the days leading up to his departure. These were taken with a grain of salt by himself, which led the observers to understand it wasn't the first time he'd received the cautionary directives from his wife. On this occasion, however, he yielded to one particular suggestion which she offered, that was to consider allowing Kaitlyn, Chloe, and Henry to

travel along for part of the journey, and return when he had completed his own duties of business.

On the day before his departure, he approached Samuel concerning the notion his wife had put in his head about their dependents having a limited tour of the continent, as it were. Mr. Allcock was silent in deliberation of the proposition. When at last he resolved his mind on the matter, he said "...it would be a good proving ground for the lad and lasses to be on their own for a week or two in preparation for their imminent nest-leaving." So it was agreed and explained to Harry, Kaitlyn and Chloe; this was not so much a free-for-all holiday, as much as it was a 'trial separation' before they went their separate ways at the beginning of term anyway.

Mr. Spelman gave them a brief outline of his several destinations on the first leg of his journey and kept the bulk of his itinerary for his own travels close to his vest. The young travelers would be on their own from the arrival in Bassie-Normandy, to Paris, where Lawrence Spelman would retrieve them and return with them to Redditch. His own travel accommodations were amended from one to four with his chosen commercial carriers, and they were off. The train to Weymouth during that day, was as uneventful as any they'd made, and the ship to St. Malo wasn't as luxurious as the *Britishic*, but it was comfortable enough for the overnight crossing.

Lawrence Spelman took advantage of their shared quarters to discuss with Harry certain things he had been wishing to impart. "Henry, I have made my living by seeing opportunities and leveraging them to the benefit of my employers. This occupation has brought my family the wherewithal to be quite comfortable, and afford many experiences which others, less fortunate, might therefore go without. I mention this because my daughter has only known the benefits of my labors and has no firsthand knowledge of the hardships faced to obtain this level of accommodation. I know people in general, it is my job if you will, and I have seen in you the most novel character I have yet encountered." Harry began to respond, but Lawrence went on, he reached into his vest pocket and laid a familiar

folded tradesman's knife on the side table between them. "I do not, for myself, need to know how you came to be who you are, but I would have that self-sufficiency, at least, for Kaitlyn. If you are able to offer some direction for me to pursue in this regard, I would accept it most graciously. As you may have come to know yourself, my daughter is greatly talented, but lacks the singular discipline to truly succeed a proper human should have. This is, I know, Yolanda's and my own doing, yet there you are." He finished, and sat looking at Harry as though he had just been shrived.

"Mr. Spelman, you must know that any personal attainments that may be credited to an individual must, perforce, be the result of their own deeply held being-wish." Lawrence's brow furrowed slightly. "That is to say, a person only strives to obtain what they perceive they need and want to have. You can't give someone something they don't want, or do not think they need. In fact, most people believe they already have what they do not, nor could have without effort...that is, to own their own soul, if you will."

Mr. Spelman considered what he heard. He reflected upon his own request and attempted another go, but from a different tack. "Harry, I see the obvious impediment. You allude to a view of the world to which I am not wholly unfamiliar, 'the wall is not just for the thief and the tiger, but for honest men'..." Harry's eyes widened, and his breath shallowed. "I see by your reactions that I have hit near the mark. I do not suggest that I myself fully know that path, it was once offered me, but I was, as you say young and full of myself, convinced I already had what I did not and could not have had." He looked away from Harry's eyes and could not bring them back. "I do not want Kaitlyn to miss the opportunity with which I merely brushed. I could not do what I do without the little I carried from that 'brush' of experience, yet I did not put forth the efforts necessary for me to, as you rightly pointed out, own my own soul." He finished, and seemed drained from the effort, remorse filled his eyes when he at last peered again into Harry's.

"Mr. Spelman," Harry chose his words very carefully, "I cannot give someone something they do not wish to have." Lawrence winced slightly at what he thought was coming. "Yet, as the saying goes: 'you can lead a horse

to water'..." Harry paused to allow himself a moment to gather fully his resolve, "I will attempt to encourage her thirst." He finished; he could not in conscience do any more than this.

Lawrence Spelman brightened, even straightened himself at those last words. "Mr. Livingston, I am truly grateful. I can ask no more of you. Whether your efforts yield the fruits I would wish for or not, that you have offered this much gives me great hope." He looked down at the knife on the table top. "I know you are true to your word and that is enough for any man." There was no reference to their private talk, in word or behavior by either of them through this journey, nor ever afterward. There was no need.

Kaitlyn's father left on his own errands when they reached Normandy, with the parting words that he would see them in Paris in six days time. The little trio of travelers had examined their Baedeker and decided upon Mont Saint-Michel as their initial destination. With that aim they hired a coach and set off.

Chloe pointed excitedly out towards the sea, "Ooh, look!" There through the late mists rising from the bay, rose what appeared to be the turrets and spires of a fairy tale castle. It was medieval, something left over from an age long past, solid as the rock it sprang from, yet ethereal as any dream. They gazed until the view was masked by a turn in the road, but their appetites were whetted now and the adventure took hold of them. Their first impressions were only more stimulated when on the narrow strip of road across the tidal basin the edifice grew to fill their whole vision.

The coach deposited them at the gates of the great gothic enclave. They hired porters to deliver their few items of luggage to their chosen hotel up the long series of narrow winding lanes and stepped paths. A little winded and with a well earned hunger, they assembled in a cafe opposite the little hotel, and looked back over the bay to the mainland. "This is a most remarkable place." Kaitlyn almost whispered as they took in the view. Chloe seconded her observation and opened the Baedeker to read passages describing the island's history and attractions. "We must explore every inch..." she concluded.

They did indeed begin explorations, with Harry serving as erstwhile guide. He had studied the Baedeker and a volume of the island's history, borrowed from the hotel's small collection, over the first evening and night. With his previously acquired knowledge of the region's deep history in hand, he established for himself the context of the newer information gleaned from the recent books of study. Harry proved a most excellent guide to Chloe and Kaitlyn's constant delight.

After the first morning's general inspection of the environs, Kaitlyn had to at last ask, "Harry, how can you *just know* so much about so many things?" Inspired, no doubt, by this latest display of versatility and with Chloe urging her along.

"But Kaitlyn, nothing worthwhile just happens. That is counter to the laws of nature and to reason." He advanced an idea for her consideration, in the form of a story. "Once in the Song Kingdom there was a farmer, he always wished all good things would by chance fall in front of him. One day he was working in the fields when a wild rabbit ran headlong into a wooden post, snapped its neck, and died. He happily bent and picked it up thinking, 'If I can find a rabbit every day like this, I won't ever need to farm again.' So he discarded his hoe and everyday sat by the wooden post and hoped for another stroke of luck like the first. Days past --but he had no such luck, and more and more people ridiculed this foolish man for his naivete." He finished and looked for her reaction.

"But, Harry, *you* make everything seem as though you're just picking up rabbits at your feet!" She stated, a little vexed. Both he and Chloe laughed at that, which in the first moment made her more frustrated, then the next she was forced to laugh at her own candor. "Okay, so you don't have a magic wand or a crystal ball, but how do you do it?" She persisted.

He chose his phasing cautiously, "Kaitlyn there is nothing which I have done, or do, that is outside your own reach, should you truly wish to grasp it for your own."

They systematically toured the island's secrets, the crypts and dungeons, the lanes and houses, the cloisters and cathedral. They took a short sailing trip one day when the tide was high, to Tombelaine and back,

imagining as they voyaged how merchants in ships of yore must have felt as they approached the island and the fortress it once was. Inspired, Harry began sketches of the more remarkable foundations and buildings, trying for himself to devise the methods he might employ if he were to construct the imposing structures. Meantime, while resting upon a rampart or some other commanding viewpoints around the island, Chloe and Kaitlyn read to each other from books of poetry, or from the book of histories which Harry had borrowed, not just for their entertainment, but for the sheer pleasure of broadening their horizons of knowledge.

The train from Rennes to Paris was a ten hour affair. This time, it was Kaitlyn and Chloe who studied both the Baedeker, and a purchased volume on the architectural history of the city of lights, for the tours they anticipated in Paris. Harry noticed and made no remark. He enjoyed the countryside scuttling passed the window and had to remind himself that he was viewing the Great Plains roll passed him just the month before; and now, here he was on another train, bound for Paris, in the company of two people he had not met before that last journey seemingly so long ago. He took out his pocket watch, opened it and read again, *Time is the uniquely subjective phenomenon*.

The ride from Gare Montparnasse to the Splendid Etoile Hotel, near the Arc de Triomphe was without a doubt the most fabulous coach ride the trio had yet experienced. Along the journey, Kaitlyn and Chloe pointed out the Hausmann renovations, historical parks and bridges. Harry was becoming well-informed, but more importantly to him, Kaitlyn was exerting herself beyond her habitual passive nature and carrying Chloe along in her train. They rented modest rooms in the new hotel, meaning without views of the Etoile plaza nor Champs-Élysées. Mr. Spelman wasn't due for over two days, and there was much to see. Thankfully the Paris transportation system allowed them ready access to the neighborhoods they most wished to tour.

Between the Exposition Universelles of 1878 and 1889, Paris was in a state of continual transformation, they relished every excursion and view. The Louvre alone, accounted for hours of interest; and the newly installed

Winged Victory of Samothrace invited even further study on the part of Kaitlyn and Chloe. Harry walked with his hands free, smiling his silent joy in the company of the ladies. As with all knowledge, when used and made practical, understanding is increased and a person's own being is enhanced. So it was with his companions, he only hoped that he would be able to build upon this new foundation before it might lapse into passing fancy.

Lawrence Spelman arrived as expected on the morning train into Gare Nord, and joined them for brunch at a sidewalk brasserie. They had obviously used their own time well, such stories and descriptions, experiences of such depth of meaning for the ladies was hardly to have been expected. Harry simply smiled noncommittally and enjoyed listening to Kaitlyn regale her father with her insights and thoughts regarding peoples and places, their histories and significance, which had so impressed her into a re-examination of her own perspectives on the world in which she was beginning to find herself. Lawrence Spelman reflected Harry's smile, and the ladies took their pleasant expressions as license to request more time in the city. "One day more" Mr. Spelman allowed, though he was secretly very anxious to be led on a tour by these two evocative young women and would have granted a week.

They readied their provisions and set off for the site being readied for the Sacré-Cœur Basilica located at the summit of the butte Montmartre, the highest point in the city. A fitting end to the eye-opening journey, and with more steps and inclines than Mont Saint-Michel. Harry was elated on account of those two particular locales they had essayed during their journey merely for their very formidable access and the determination which one must conjure to tour them. Truly, if climbing Alps had been on the itinerary, he might have been only slightly more pleased.

They took the train to Calais, and the ferry to Dover's white cliffs. A stay-over in a charming Dover Inn and they were again on a train for Redditch. They arrived at Clive House for a late dinner and knackered, they trundled off to their beds. Harry was intent upon writing his sisters and parents about the month past and set himself the task when he awoke next

morning.

It was July twenty-fifth and after mid-day when he emerged from his room with letters for the post in hand. He strolled to the Redditch post offices and sent off his correspondence. A notice from the tailor, Mr. Bessamer had arrived during their absence, so he included a stop in at the little shop. Mr. Bessamer was delighted after the initial fitting session and promised the completed wardrobe for the following day. Harry returned to Clive House, fetched his angling gear and found a comfortable shoal in the Arrow river to wet his line. The waters were a homecoming for him; they reminded him of earlier days, and of all that he'd come to appreciate in his life. He lost track of the time. He had moved steadily upstream from where he first waded in; it wasn't until Kaitlyn came searching for him and found him, that he realized it might be near time for supper. As they walked back along the lanes of the town to Clive House, she asked a question of him he had not at all anticipated.

“Harry, I have no wish to pry, and I understand completely if you do not wish to tell me... I am in no position to demand or even ask... I realize I have only a background of the most routine education, parents who have granted me my almost every wish, and scant talent or skill for actual life in the real world...” She sidled around to her question, “What would it take for me to be able to think and do as you are able to think and to do? I mean is it even possible?” He stopped mid-step, and looked fully into her upturned face. Her eyes showed most earnest interest, with a hint of apprehension. She hurried forward with her last argument while her nerve still held, “You told me not long ago that, 'there is nothing which I have done, or do, that is outside your own reach, should you truly wish to grasp it for your own,' Did you really mean that?”

Harry asked a question in return, “What exactly do you have in mind?”

She took a deep breath and then said what she'd only hoped to have an opportunity to say. “Teach me, Henry Livingston. Teach me to be a real person. I just cannot go on any more, if I am only ever to be what I am now: a pretty face with a pretty voice.” She spoke with her heart, her tears were rolling down her cheeks, and it took all her meager strength of will to

hold her face up and keep her eyes on his. Harry took his handkerchief out, without taking his eyes away from hers, and dabbed at the glistening streams of self-renunciation on her face.

“I will show you the path, but it will be you who must make the journey.” He answered her directly and completely. She threw her arms around his neck and thanked him with her every fiber.

They passed a little fountain in the town square, and dipping his hand into the water, he offered it to her. She laughed aloud, “I’m sure I look a sight, but I just don’t care. I’m so excited, and happy, and, well, a little nervous...” She laughed some more, and it was infectious, Harry smiled and laughed with her. As they neared Clive House and approached the stairs, she turned to him one last time. “Harry, I will do whatever it takes; I *must* make this journey.”

Harry replied, “We will begin preparing you for that journey in the morning.” With that she mounted the last steps and hurried to her room to tidy up for supper.

Harry came down a little early for breakfast the next morning. Mr. Allcock looked through the morning paper and muttered about the lack of useful information to be found in this local ‘rag.’ He looked up and told Harry plainly that it would be more profitable if the news included some indications of what might be of practical use to the citizenry. He gave as an example, “There’s a man in my own factory, whose family has just suffered the cruel loss of the better part of their house to an unseasonable rise in the river. Now don’t you think it would be more beneficial to investigate the management of the rivers than gossip about the comings and goings of the notable folk which these pages belabor without end.” He tossed the paper aside in disgust. Mr. Allcock’s words acted as a ‘shot,’ and Harry’s mind raced forward.

Before Mr. Allcock went to the factory to begin his day, Harry followed him to the foyer and engaged him in a dialog which made his benefactor’s eyebrows rise. “I don’t know what you have planned, young master, but I’ll arrange for it. Give me ‘til the morning to set it up, and I’ll need some specifics naturally.” With those words they parted company, and Harry

returned to the breakfast room. Kaitlyn had come down meanwhile, and with a look of anticipation, asked what were the plans for the day. "I think we will take a turn on the county lanes east of town. Is that acceptable?" he asked.

"Whatever you suggest. I am ready," she replied, with an air of adventure.

"Do you have good walking shoes and garments that will afford you... uh... clearance for any physical activity we may be required to endure?" He asked casually.

"I will be back down shortly," was her simple reply.

Harry informed Olivia of their anticipated morning's activity, and reassured her, after seeing her skeptical look in response, that they would travel only on public thoroughfares and would return well before supper. She acquiesced, remembering her husband's admonitions to 'give the young master broad latitudes, he's as noble a man as ever lived.' With Mrs. Allcock's blessing, Harry went to prepare himself, and met Kaitlyn in the foyer for the morning's walk. He had picked up walking sticks, of sorts, no doubt factory discards, and handed one to Kaitlyn.

When they had walked some little way from the lanes of the town, Harry adjusted her grip on the stout cane pole and they continued further a little ways. Then he stopped their progress again and demonstrated just how he would prefer her to walk with the pole, something more of a sweeping movement, but nothing overtly odd at a glance. As they breached the limits of the town proper, he began a story, "Once upon a time there was no donkey in the Guang. So someone from the Heavenly Court..."

Harry concluded his story and its aftermath with the explanations as they reached a little farmhouse next to a bend in the river; he allowed himself no expectations for the exercise he'd just delivered. They stopped and he asked, "Do you have any questions?"

Kaitlyn had listened with rapt interest to every detail, and had accepted with gratitude each time Harry called attention to how she held and walked with her pole. "What training must I have, and how shall I build this wall that that keeps out the tigers, and protects honest men?"

Harry wondered for a moment how many generations of his family had asked those very questions. "I will instruct you in that training, and begin when you wish." Harry added, "But it is not an everyday wish like, 'wishing for more pie,' it is a wish that must command your whole attention. When you decide to begin, there is no turning back, it would waste what you have already acquired and endanger your future desires."

She deliberated only a moment, "I wish to begin now."

Harry called her attention to the residence near at hand. "Do you see this house? It was ravaged by the rising river and the people who live here have need of assistance to get their lives back to what they once called normal." Harry waved his arm, taking in the tangled gardens and damaged structures.

"Why can they not make the reparations themselves?" Kaitlyn asked simply with an sincere interest in their obvious needs.

"The husband works at the Allcock factory all day, and his wife is nearly to give birth to their first-born." Harry responded as if simply passing along information.

"Can we help?" asked Kaitlyn meekly.

"Yes, we can offer our assistance, and we shall see if it is accepted or not. That is the best we can do at this moment." Harry replied and walked forward to the garden gate which hung precariously on a single hinge. Passing to the door, he knocked. In a moment a woman heavy with child came to answer. She straightened the few errant tresses around her carefully brushed hair and greeted them.

"How may I help you?" Seeing them with walking paraphernalia, she asked, "May I get you some tea?" and invited the two hikers inside.

"That would be lovely, thank you mum." Harry answered in perfect accent. "Mum?" he began as she went to put on the kettle, "We were just passing and noticed you've had a bit of bad fortune, what has happened?"

She returned and sat heavily down in a chair, inviting them to also sit. "The river, yonder, rose suddenly after the recent rains and washed through 'ere as if we were twigs," she answered.

Harry explained that he and his companion were associated with a new chapter of the Sisters of Mercy, and could they be allowed to offer assistance to herself and family in their current distress?

“Oh, bless you. My husband and I would be most grateful for any small contribution to repairing our estate,” she answered imploringly.

“Well then may we have a look round about to determine the best use of our efforts?” Harry requested promptly.

“Please do, please do, and thank for the trouble,” the wife encouraged.

“No trouble at all mum.” Harry added to Kaitlyn, “Please keep her company, while I take a peek around the house.” And with that he was out the door and inspecting the grounds and house. Harry went to the far back of the grounds and saw straight away where the earthen levee had succumbed to the river, he then inspected the house proper and was surprised to see that the foundation's piers were remarkably undisturbed. Taking a few more general measurements, gauged by his own steps, he was satisfied of the necessary tasks required for preventing any future incursions. He quickly turned to specific structural assessments and after an informed inspection, he returned shortly. “Do you have indoor plumbing, mum?”

The mother-to-be simply shook her head and said that the house had been the only inheritance from her deceased Aunt, and had not been renovated before her death, nor had they the wherewithal as yet to make the modifications. They chatted a little while longer, thanked her heartily for the tea, and promised to return in the morning to begin 'whittling away at the edges of the mess.'

As they gained the road, waved farewell, and headed back into town. Kaitlyn stopped him and asked, “Harry, she has accepted our help, what can we really do for them?”

The sun was rising to mid-day; he again adjusted her grip on the walking staff and began to walk back toward town. “It's not what *we* are going to do, it's what *you* are going to do.” She didn't ask another question all the way back, but maintained her tempo, grip and posture with care.

They stopped in at the tailor's, he compensated Mr. Bessamer for the bill due, and they returned to Clive House. Once at the gate, he again instructed Kaitlyn to refrain from mentioning her activities with any specific reference to *her* training, but to otherwise feel free to discuss anything else she may wish to share with Chloe, her mother, or Mrs. Allcock. She smiled and disappeared into the house. "It's a start," Harry said to no one present and followed Kaitlyn into the house.

Before supper was called that evening, Harry furnished Mr. Allcock with a list of the items they had discussed after breakfast. He wasn't intentionally vague about what else he had 'been up to,' except to ask if Chloe had any practical experience in the maintenance of a house, beyond its management. "I dare say she has. When we moved to Clive House she was my own little helper, she was, and good at it too." He answered with a fond recollection of times gone by. "Why do you ask?" Harry explained that there were certain little jobs which he was certain might need a ladies touch, and left it at that. Satisfied, though not fully clear on the program proper, Samuel repeated his support for anything Harry wished to venture before September first and the start of term.

Harry was first down in the morning. He went into the kitchen and sat with the cook as she warmed the ovens and he poured himself some coffee. She was a nice lady and had been with the Allcock's since before they moved to Clive House. "Betty, do you have children?"

"Oh no Mr. Harry, sir. I never married, you see. I was raised the youngest, and took care of my mum until she passed. Bless her soul."

"And what was Miss Chloe like as a child?" asked Harry, as if making conversation.

"Oh, Lord love her, she was a handful. Always under my feet, she was, and as full of life... Then her sisters started marrying and leaving the house, and her own sweet mother, the first Mrs. Allcock died and all. Seven years ago it was. Well, she was just that close to her. Poor Mr. Allcock, he was aggrieved as any man would be I suppose. They clung together, they did. Two souls alone and apart, if you see my meaning, sir. And then he brings home a new Mrs. Allcock, she's a fiery one she was, a widow she was. She

knew how hard it was to lose someone you love, she was good for himself, I say. And good she has been for Miss Chloe, too. They've been more than civil, not like she were her own mother, mind you, but wholesome, kinda.”

“Thank you for the coffee, Betty. It was good of you to keep me company while you're busy. Thank you,” said Harry politely. She smiled back to him and started another several loaves of bread.

Harry emerged into the breakfast room and sat down. The sun was just slanting through the lace curtains, casting lovely shadows on the paneled wall and kitchen doorway, when Mr. Allcock joined him at the table. “Well you're up with the sun this morning Harry. Ready for the new day?”

“Yes sir. Thank you for accommodating my requests for materials and the delivery and such. It is more than helpful.” Harry hoped his benefactor wasn't put to too much trouble over the matter.

“Harry, when a man decides to do what's right, it's all that's left for the rest of us, but to lend a hand and a shoulder. You've a good heart Harry.” Mr. Allcock answered plainly. “Besides what you do with your own money is your own affair. Your parents taught you which way money runs, so it's not for me to hold you back. I'm glad to help where I can.”

“Thank you, again, sir.” Harry added, and poured more coffee. Kaitlyn and Chloe came down at the same time, both dressed for exercise, and they waited at the front door. They looked only once to Harry, and then stood quietly, not watching him. Harry excused himself, saying only that Kaitlyn wished for Chloe to instruct her in the art of angling and that he'd been conscripted for the first go. He put on his coat and opened the front door to leave. He made no comment about Chloe's presence with them. He was so used to his sisters always together when they were younger, it seemed almost second nature that 'girls came in twos.'

When they were just a little way from the house and Kaitlyn was already walking with her pole, properly Harry noted, he then also noticed that Chloe was imitating her every move and gesture as the three walked along. “Kaitlyn.” Harry stopped.

“Yes Harry,” she answered sheepishly.

“I am certain I left clear instructions that you might discuss any thing at all with Chloe, your mother, or Olivia Allcock, save only the particulars of your own training.” He said without emotion.

She pulled around to face him, Chloe behind her, but at her shoulder. “Harry, it's not what you think.”

“What do I think, Kaitlyn?” Harry replied in answer, without any expression.

“Chloe asked me about my day and where had I gone. I told her about the couple at the damaged house, and about lending a hand to help them clean up...” Kaitlyn rushed along, “And then she asked what did we talk about while we walked, and I told her that we talked about your folks, and how you were raised; but I didn't say a word about anything else.”

Harry looked from her eyes to Chloe, and back again. “And...” He prompted.

Now it was Chloe's turn. “Kaitlyn wouldn't tell me what I wanted to know, so I tricked her.”

“Tricked her.” Harry repeated.

“I asked her if what you talked about had to do with 'the thief and the tiger...’” Harry raised an eyebrow. “I didn't know anymore about it than that. I kind of overheard Mr. Spelman talking to father when we returned from Paris, and really all I heard was something about '...what I just said...' and I saw the look on Mr. Spelman's and father's face when he mentioned, uh '...what I said...' and they were like two kids having a secret club meeting or something, very mysterious and important...”

“So, when she asked about '...that...’” Kaitlyn picked up the story again, “I thought she already knew. So, I told her.” Harry raised both eyebrows and lowered his chin.

“Everything,” finished Chloe almost sullenly.

“Word for word,” added Kaitlyn, and they both dropped their heads, one ashamed of having failed to keep trust for even one day, and the other for having tricked her into it.

“Harry, you can't be mad at Kaitlyn. You must keep with her training,”

said Chloe, putting her hands on her hips in a frail attempt at a demand.

Harry replied evenly, "Must I?"

She abandoned the inept posture and pleaded, "Harry, ever since I was a little girl after daddy came home from America, from visiting your family, I have heard of only the Livingsons. The Livingsons this and the Livingsons that. You and your family have been like heroes to me, most of my life now."

Then Kaitlyn took over again, "All she's wanted all these years has been to have the chance to be 'a Livingson' herself. Obviously not literally, but just 'like' you. Whatever secret something that so changed her father, to so enchant and amaze him, she wanted too."

And then Chloe clarified, "Not like power over anyone or anything, but strength that could even impress a powerful man like my father, that had made him so much more, well, alive." They both stopped at once and stood silently looking into Harry's eyes for any indication at all. Some sign that they were forgiven, or were doomed to never know anymore than they did. Something. Anything, other than this nothing.

"Chloe," Harry began, and the young women winced, at what might be coming, "hold your hand with your wrist like this, and not quite so tight. There. Off we go then." And he started along the lane to the edge of town and beyond. They were instantly at his heels, trying to keep up with his long paces. When they had once again breached the town limits, and walked into open fields, Harry walked behind them, both to keep an eye on their form, and so they wouldn't see the smile he had on his face--and the efforts he was making to keep from laughing aloud. 'Always in twos it seems.'

When he was sure he could keep his voice level again, he said, "Ladies, your walking stick is your friend, and this road has done you no harm. Please do not poke at it as you walk." The clatter they had been making ceased. He walked on with them in this manner for a while longer then, when he was certain they were comfortable with the motions, he said, "Switch hands." They each took their staff into the other hand and, after adjusting their grip to the new hand, started on. "Stop." Harry called,

and went ahead of them to demonstrate how he wished them to exchange the staff from one hand to the other. They watched closely, when his staff hand was behind and the opposite foot was forward, he pivoted the staff up across behind him and catching hold with his free hand and setting his grip 'just so,' continued his stride smoothly and without disruption with the staff now swinging in the new hand. "Now, you'll do it."

They continued a few paces and Harry again said, "Switch hands." This time in a much more fluid display each young woman passed the staff to her free hand, without breaking stride and with a 'proper' grip on the staff. "Better." Harry said aloud. So it went for the duration of their walk over the next almost two hours. Every so often at odd moments Harry would call, "Switch hands," and they would execute the exchange better and more smoothly each time.

As they neared the little house at the river, they could see a well-laden wagon, unhitched and unattended in the side garden. Harry went up to the door with the ladies behind him and knocked. Once again, the lady of the house opened the door in greeting.

"Good morning again, mum." Harry began, and Chloe glanced quickly to Kaitlyn with a cocked eyebrow, as if questioning Harry's sudden accent.

"Good morning to you, thank you for returning. I told my husband about your visit yesterday, and the poor man was just that tired that he said, 'and that's the last you'll see of them, if they saw the work this place'll need...' But I said back to him, 'oh they'll be back, alright, you'll just see.' And here you are again," she said, well pleased at being so validated in her trust.

"Yes mum. We'll just get started if its all the same to you, mum. Never mind us at all, there's a good woman." Harry answered and led Kaitlyn and Chloe to the wagon. "Right then. We need to get this wagon over to that levee break, just back there," he pointed.

The girls looked at each other, then followed Harry's lead. "I'll direct the tongue, you push," he said simply. "Now, put on these gloves and sun hats, do not forget to always wear them when you are working here, we shant have you spoiled by the elements." They nodded in assent and

donned the gear. Then they went to the back and with their hands up against the wagon like it was a stuck door, pushed. Nothing moved.

“Let me show you how I'd prefer you move it.” Harry said, and facing away from the wagon end, placed his shoulders flat to the bed with his arms extended along it as well. “Bend your knees deeply and push with your legs until they are very near straight.” He demonstrated. “Then with a steady grasp of the wagon in your hands, hop with both feet into the same squatting position you began, with your knees deeply bent.” As he demonstrated the full motion, he moved the wagon a few feet, where it rested.

“Now, you do it,” he instructed and went round to the tongue and waited. The two girls placed their shoulders, arms and feet into the indicated positions, and as one, they extended their legs and quickly hopped their feet back under themselves, ready for another push. Unlike their first, untutored attempt, this time the wagon moved easily and as they repeated the movements, even gained a bit of momentum. Harry casually held the tongue and gave a little nudge as necessary to keep it headed in the right direction, but mostly he watched the girls' form and posture. In a very little while the wagon was near enough to the levee break to unload some of the timbers needed there. “Good,” he called and they stopped, having just gathered their legs beneath them for another push. They straightened and came round the side where Harry waited.

“Right. These four timbers,” he pointed, “will be sunk in holes here,” and he walked over to the levee break and indicated a place with his boot, then stepped to the next, “here, here, and here.” He made four impressions in the ground with his heel, at the four spots. He reached into the wagon and handed out post-hole diggers, one to each of them. “Here is how you are to dig the holes.” He held one of the tools, his arms extended to full length in front of him with a hand on each of the tools lever handles. He raised the tool aligned above the target hole and with his back held straight, dropped the digger's blades into the soil with force while simultaneously dropping into a semi-squat, with his feet more than shoulder width apart. He then spread his arms wide to capture the soil

between the blades, raised himself with his legs and with the tool clear of the new hole, pivoted and brought his hands back together in front of him, thereby releasing the soil and freeing the tool for another go. He pivoted back to the hole and was ready to repeat the process. "These holes need to be *at least* three feet deep. Alternate your pivot foot as you go." He instructed and left them to it.

They took up the tools and imitated his instructed movements. Each made little grunting noises with the efforts. "Talking to it will not increase the amount of soil you remove," he called over his shoulder and went to inspect something of interest to him beneath the house. He kept an eye on their progress as he examined the flooring, he could just see what he wished to see by crouching very low and peering back under the house. The pump was but a few yards from the back door; he went over and tested it. Only a few strokes of the handle and water gushed forth onto the ground. He held out a hand to sample its flavor. Satisfied, he inspected the well head and fittings. He glanced over at the girls' progress and smiled.

He went round to the front door again and asked if he might be allowed to inspect the kitchen. The lady of the house led him to the back of the little cottage and Harry looked about, having inconspicuously noted the house's rooms arrangement as he passed through. He asked if she would kindly put some water on for tea, and with a bow of thanks, he returned to the back of the house and out to the wagon, while watching the wife's routine for collecting the water and her usual efforts made for the simple task. He looked through the collection of tools, assembled in a separate crate, and taking out a tape measure went about taking more specific measurements than those he'd made cursorily the day before. He jotted down all the dimensions, and re-measured certain of them.

The holes were nearly dug; he checked their depths, and smiled, "Well done ladies, well done indeed. Let's set these timbers in place." He moved one of the massive eight foot timbers into an accessible position on the wagon. When the post-hole diggers were cleaned and leaned against its side out of the way, he showed them how they were to set the timbers. With himself on one end and the young women in charge of the other, he

maneuvered the post to a hole. Then they performed the previously demonstrated coordinated lift, their backs straight and knees well bent, their arms near fully extended over their heads holding the timber's end. The girls raised their part so that Harry's end was deposited into the hole, and righted itself as it sank down into place. The process was repeated until each post was now standing on its own and ready for permanent setting.

“Most excellent. Chloe, Kaitlyn, shall we have some tea?” He invited them to the pump where he brought up a bit of water for them to clean up a little. They walked around to the front door and knocked. As if on cue the lady of the house opened the door to them and seated them around the tea service. “May I pour?” Harry offered, and proceeded to properly serve the ladies as if he had been brought up observing tea time his whole life. Kaitlyn and Chloe were once again sure that they would never cease to be amazed by Mr. Livingston.

It was then that the lady of the house made a formal introduction of herself and absent husband, and Harry introduced the ladies and himself, careful to avoid last names. Mrs. White was most pleased with the project's start. “My husband was sure that whoever would come round, 'if they came around he qualified, would most certainly focus on the appearances of the damage and pay no heed at all to the root and cause of our current distresses, he said. And there you are jumping straight 'way to the very source of the problem as it were. Oh he'll eat his words, he will. I'll see to that.” She finished with a gloating smile.

“I wouldn't fault the good man over much.” Harry defended, “He may no doubt have had good reason to suspect that the 'Sisters of Mercy' might have no practical sense, as so few have these days.” He proposed, “But I assure you, these women are most capable indeed, and shall have your estate in right repair before the month's end. Including the appearances, mum,” he added with a smile.

“You're right there, Miss Chloe, Miss Kaitlyn, you two are the most capable women I've ever laid eyes on, you are.” She beamed in admiration of them, which brought quite a flush into each of their faces.

Harry checked his watch and declared, "Oh my, well we don't wish to keep you from your own. We'll tidy up our mess and see you in the morning, early."

They each excused themselves, thanking Mrs. White humbly for the tea and followed Harry out to the wagon. "We should replace our tools onto the wagon and cover everything well against the night moistures." The girls put away the tools they had used and stretched the provided tarp over the contents of the wagon, then tied down its edges to the wagon proper. "A good start, indeed." Harry announced. "Shall we then?" He extended an arm toward the road and they gathered their staffs and headed in the direction of town. Every now and again Harry called 'Switch sides,' and they responded in synchronous movements as if already long practiced at the maneuvers. Chloe and Kaitlyn each observed how incredibly light her staff felt in her hand this afternoon.

They went back to Clive House by way of the town square, where Harry purchased ice creams for them and they sat at a bench on the commons and enjoyed the treat. The girls were unusually quiet which bothered Harry not in the slightest. He had certainly once been where they were now and recalled his experience with nostalgia as he hoped they might someday do as well.

The process repeated itself every day, save Sunday. Then, even on Sundays, Harry gave them instructions on how they were to sit, stand and walk, to which they dutifully complied. The full repairs were made to the levee, in such a fashion that Mr. White commented, through Mrs. White of course, that 'a team of horses weren't going to breach that levee again.' More post holes were dug for several piers beside the kitchen/dining room exterior wall, with more concrete and squaring. While Harry busied himself with a bit of construction, he set the ladies to prepping and painting the sides of the house.

"Hold the brush 'just so'," he'd demonstrated and set their own hands properly to the tools. "Your strokes should flow smoothly to up," and he paused, "and down," again another pause. They tried and he approved. "Be sure to change hands every twelve strokes or so," he added and went back

to his bit of construction.

That afternoon on the way back to town, when they reached a long stretch of single railed fence beside the road, he halted them and walked over to it. "Let me demonstrate" he said and standing on the roadside of the fence, he dropped into a crouch with his back still straight. He extended one foot beneath and forward to the opposite side, then in a fluid movement, shifted his weight to the field-side foot and resumed his stance, a full step forward and on the other side of the fence. He repeated the procedure, and was again on the road-side, a full step further. The whole while he kept the staff at arms length in front of him, balanced in both hands.

He set each lady at the beginning of a length of rail, and they imitated his movements. Harry made no comment on their initial efforts, he simply watched and waited patiently. After several steps each young woman was more and more competent in performing the movements with poise and grace, at which point he commended them and offered pointers of a minor nature to each. Their progress down the road to town was naturally retarded considerably for the length of the fencing. When they had completely run out of fence, they resumed their walk on the roadway, with Harry calling 'Switch sides' at every odd moment or so.

And so it continued, when they reached that stretch of fence going or coming, they moved off the roadway and ducked back and forth beneath it until the end of it, then back to the roadway as if nothing had interrupted their progress whatsoever. A couple days later he added the transfer of the staff over the rail they passed beneath, as an addition to the exercise. "Alternate rail post to rail post," he instructed.

When one side of the house was painted, they went to the next side and were duly instructed to now brush side to side, and again 'just so' and be sure to change hands. This continued, alternating directions and hands, until the house including the addition Harry had installed was quite handsomely repainted. Next, sanding the front porch. Harry had to manufacture the proper sanding blocks as he could not seem to find a suitable substitute wherever he searched. He gave each lady a pair and

demonstrated their use: right hand clockwise in a moderately sweeping circle, and the left hand counter clockwise in a synchronized motion with the right hand. Squatting like two British bullfrogs, they sanded. Up one side and down the other; when, "Stop." They looked up at Harry in pained expressions of weariness, but accepted his instructions to simply go backwards and not reverse their direction on the porch, so that they always faced the same way. This they did as they had done day after day, and now week upon week without a single complaint, moan, grunt, or whine. He commended their efforts and reminded them that after the porch, they would need to repair and repaint the garden fence. Harry expected the storm to descend any day now.

It was the last week of August, he had trenched, laid pipe, fitted and made connections, run a drain to the existing out house, installed two pumps and a few fixtures, and was ready to test the system. He gathered Chloe and Kaitlyn into the kitchen with Mrs. White and offered her the honors. She stroked the pump's handle and 'voila,' there was water in the kitchen basin. They moved to the new bathroom and again Mrs. White did the honors of pulling the toilet chain for the first time. 'Whoosh' and the water ran around and round the bowl and out through the drain. Harry lifted a bucket to refill the tank and it was all set to go again. After also inaugurating the pump for the basin and tub, Harry declared their renovations complete. They all laughed and applauded their achievements. They walked through the house, admiring the gleaming floors and repainted walls. As they exited the front door the mellow luster of the varnished front porch shone up at them in the mid-day light.

They bid farewell to Mrs. White, with a promise that they would drop in from time to time to visit the little one and they were back on the roadway. The road, as usual at this time of day was vacant of traffic, and they began the walk toward town. After just a little ways Harry noticed they were not walking with their staffs, but were merely carrying them as they might carry parasols. Then they stopped abruptly.

He wondered aloud at their non-performance of the routine 'walk.' Kaitlyn and Chloe stood facing him, unwilling to take another step.

“Harry,” Kaitlyn began, “we certainly understand all the efforts made in the renovations to the White's residence,” then Chloe added, “And we most assuredly think all your instructions of 'just so' and the like were tedious but well meaning, even useful.” Then Kaitlyn announced, “But neither of us see the point of this 'Switch sides',” “Nor of the ducking about under the fence rails,” Chloe completed. “What is the point of all that?” they insisted.

Harry walked toward them and not knowing his intention, they gave him a wide berth between them to let him pass. But just as he passed between them, with a flick of his staff, almost too quick to see, he popped them each in her solar plexus. They bent in surprise and a little discomfort. “Let's try that again, shall we?” he said. “This time Chloe, 'sand the floor',” and he aimed another jab at her chest. She went through the entrenched movement with her free hand and the staff glanced harmlessly aside. “Kaitlyn, 'Switch sides'.” And he swung the staff intending to crush her side. She gracefully passed the staff in her left hand behind her, into her right hand and brought it up as the blow landed with a thud and was stopped in mid-air. He turned back on Chloe with a swing aimed at her head, “Duck and pass.” She performed a crouch and step with her staff passing over head as his blow was again blocked. Without pausing to allow them time to think, he was whirling, spinning, and jabbing at them with ferocity and strength, unyielding and unabatedly. After the first several movements, for which he had telegraphed to them a posture, they began to react instinctively in self-protection, which saved his voice and breath and allowed him even greater focus in his unrelenting attack.

They ranged over the roadway from one side to the other, the ladies executing with expert precision each posture, block, deflection, and duck. Had there been any passersby, they would have observed only a beautifully choreographed dance by two elegant women which protected them from painful death at the hands of a master. As they each gradually moved closer and held Harry to only one side of them, such that they presented a more united front, he settled on an attack which should strike them both at once and end the match in a single blow. As he made the sudden lunge forward, they dropped their own staffs, grasped the ends of his just as suddenly and with the strength necessary to heft a two hundred pound timber, they

pulled him forward adding his own momentum to theirs. Harry felt his feet leave the ground and in a perfectly timed release, flew over their heads, somersaulted and landed balanced on one foot atop the corner of a stone wall beyond the edge of the roadway.

He perched there for a moment, unmoving. Chloe and Kaitlyn stood at the roadway's edge, heaving their chests just to keep enough air in their over-taxed lungs, and stared up at Harry, his staff still held like a barrier between them. Harry relaxed, hopped down from the wall, walked calmly up to the wide-eyed ladies and took his staff from their yielding grip. He bowed to them each in turn. "That is the point," he said concisely. "Kaitlyn, Chloe, today you have each purchased the ticket to the rest of your life. Your journeys begin *now*." He turned and walked toward town.

Chloe and Kaitlyn looked at Harry's receding back, then to each other, then back to Harry. They picked up their staffs and began following him down the road, every now and then 'switching sides' at a moment of their own choosing and with a flourish of new precision.

When they returned to Clive House, a little earlier than usual, the ladies retired to wash up and redress. Harry also renewed himself and joined them shortly in the parlor. They rose as he entered and sat when he sat. Chloe served them each tea. They sat silently and looked for all intents and purposes as two ladies entertaining a gentleman caller on a pleasant afternoon. Harry spoke to them in hushed tones but quite loud enough for both to hear clearly. He explained everything they had accomplished over the last few weeks and the purpose behind every task. He elaborated on how they had done it and why each effort brought them nearer to their aim. He reminded them that it was only in humility and in the confidence of their presence of mind which would allow them to progress along the journey. "You will always have an opportunity to do what is right, others may not understand your actions--but *you* must." His words reinforced their own new sense of their abilities and strengths. "Unlike the discarded Guang donkey, helpless before the forces of nature, and never to be recognized as the helpmate to mankind he was meant to be, you are each, now, no longer helpless.

Remember: We are the faithful, and humble bearers of truth. The wall around the house isn't only for the thief or the tiger, but to keep honest men from the temptations of riches they can not bear unassisted." He paused to allow them sufficient time to digest their new positions. They both surrendered to the solemn charge laid upon them, and each personally, privately, vowed to maintain her equilibrium and promise of service. He began a discussion of their inner construction, constantly mapping their previous experiences onto the schema illustrated. He promised them he would continue those dialogs as they mastered the given material and were ready to advance.

At dinner that evening, Mr. Allcock passed along the report he'd received from the much relieved supervisor of Mr. White about his newfound lease on life, and renewed congenial attitude towards all his fellow coworkers. Whereupon Mrs. Allcock related the latest words of praise to which she had been privy, regarding the most excellent accomplishments wrought by the 'Sisters of Mercy' upon the White's home out at the bend in the river. "Mrs. Kelsey was by there late this very afternoon, and was so impressed with the renewed aspect of the dwelling, she stopped in for a visit on behalf of their historical acquaintance. She said the interior was near as pristine as the facade, and you won't believe it but, they now have an indoor bathroom and a pump right in the kitchen. Very convenient indeed, as Mrs. White is soon to deliver a new life into the world."

The diners all voiced their approbation at this good news. "It is a well done service to those so deeply in need of it." Mr. and Mrs. Spelman agreed aloud.

"Just so, just so," Mr. Allcock rejoined, "Top rate, well done indeed," with a sly wink at Harry unnoticed by anyone else, which Harry took care not to acknowledge.

Mrs. Allcock had not quite done, "Mrs. White confided to Mrs. Kelsey that the great bulk of all the work made to remedy the house and gardens was made by just two extraordinary women. In her own words: 'two of the most capable women she had ever lain eyes upon,' a Miss Chloe and a Miss

Kaitlyn.” The young ladies gasped. “And the lone workman who assisted them, she was quite sure was from the north country, unmistakable accent you know.” Upon hearing this, Mr. Allcock gained Harry's attention, to which Harry merely shrugged his shoulders and adopted a most innocent expression.

Olivia Allcock was not so easily put off. “Chloe, was Mrs. White referring to you and to our Kaitlyn?”

“Common names really, a remarkable coincidence to be sure.” She responded coolly. Undaunted, her stepmother asked to see her hands, which were at that moment hidden in her lap. Chloe raised them into common view for all to see. Her nails were perfect and the skin of her palms were as soft and delicate as ever they had been. What was not in 'common view' were Chloe's tanned and toned forearms and near ideal physique well-covered by the elaborate custom of extensive dress. Truth be told, had the wardrobe conventions of that period allowed, Chloe and Kaitlyn would each have now been idyllic models of the female form for even the discriminating sculptors of classical Greece. Her stepmother was mollified. A servant entered then and quietly whispered to Mr. Allcock that a telegram had just arrived for Mr. Henry Livingson. Mr. Allcock accepted the envelope and passed it unopened to Harry with a look of sincere interest upon his face. Harry raised his eyebrows in receipt of the proffered wire, and slit it open, read it silently and smiled.

“Well Harry? What news?” Mr. Allcock asked politely.

“It is a receipt of good tidings from home of a most personal nature,” he answered without elaboration.

Mrs. Spelman, oblivious to the gentlemen's encounter, returned to her own observations of the affair she thought still in discussion, “Extraordinary indeed...two women only, and all that difficult labor. They must be Amazonians, with hands like tradesmen.” She paused, then added quizzically, “Who are the Sisters of Mercy, are they an English invention? Are there many of these large angels sprinkled around your country sides here?” She looked to Mrs. Allcock and to Mr. Allcock, then to Chloe. No one offered a clue in assistance, and the discussion moved on to the upcoming

departure of Mr. and Mrs. Spelman.

Chloe and Kaitlyn shared a covert glance. Each began to feel the weight of humility, and both were overjoyed in bearing their new secret burdens. It was so very much more satisfying and rewarding than to be held up to public approbation. Then they at once thought of Harry and all he'd endured of celebrity, and at their hands. They looked to him at the same time. He caught their stare, but he simply shrugged and winked. He knew full well their thoughts and could not do anything to assuage the remorse they would grow to endure, but never ignore, as real people must. It were other thoughts, however, that occupied the moments before his drifting off to sleep that night and even with all his experience, acquired knowledge and skills, he could not unravel the conundrum laid before him. Finally, assuring himself with the satisfaction that all things would eventually be known, which were at present simply unknown and not in the realm of the unknowable, he rested.

Once Kaitlyn's parents were seen off at the station the next day, the next trial facing the trio was their own imminent separation. Should Harry see them to Stratford and then go on to Malvern, or would the ladies see him to his new home and then travel themselves to Stratford. The ladies, naturally, decided the most reasonable course of action.

Harry packed his trunk and hung up his new wardrobe inside its small closet. Tidied his rooms and toted the luggage to the entry door. He returned upstairs and carried down Kaitlyn and Chloe's as well. The young ladies carried themselves with their heads high and shoulders thrown back. The strength beneath their elegant demeanor was nearly palpable. When they spoke, it was with conviction and a confidence neither had heretofore practiced with any duration. Harry was as proud of them for their own merits as he had always been of his own sisters, and they knew it integrally.

The train pulled into the Malvern station and the entourage, once again, disembarked. The young ladies trunks were entrusted to the stationmaster and they set off for School House and Harry's new home for the Autumn term. Mr. Mackie met them at the entrance and directed them to Harry's room. Once his trunk was placed near his assigned space, they

went to the town square for tea. They spoke of when they would see each other next, of the letters they pledged to write, and bid farewell to each other with polite embraces and a few tears. Mr. Allcock took Harry aside for some final words, as the ladies ambled toward the station.

“Young master, there is no denying I am beholding to you, whatever Chloe tells to her stepmother. You have returned happiness to my daughter and given her a confidence that she has not known before. That is a priceless treasure to a father, and I shall never forget it.” He paused to regain control of his voice. “Lawrence wished me to give this to you,” and he produced a tradesman's knife from his vest pocket and put it into Harry's hand. “He told me that he once carried it as a talisman of what was truly possible for an ideal human, but to make *sure* you knew this: the change Kaitlyn has undergone in these last several weeks with you as her companion is nothing less than a miracle for which he did not dare to hope nor dream. You took a fragile girl and made a 'Tigress,' and he is most glad to substitute the talisman for the realization of the ideal in his own daughter. He wants you to know: you have his undying love and respect...” He stopped, his eyes so moist, and his voice so choked with emotion, he could not finish the sentence. “God bless you Henry Livingson.” He exclaimed abruptly, and threw his arms around Harry's shoulders in a most uncommon display of affection.

“This guy just gets better and better! I'm with Kaitlyn, Henry Livingson *is* amazing.” Then deciding to pursue the only thread he'd been given from before the last installment of the story, “Okay, we have centers, or brains--- Several you say. Exactly how many, you've mentioned four so far? Where are they? And what do centers have to do with a practicable way to regain my humanity, my conscience?”

The guest regarded his host carefully and began, “Some of our centers have a direct organic foundation in our physiology. These have been recognized through the ages as avenues, if you will, to restore contact with conscience. Our instinctive brain, or center, regulates the internal

processes of our body. Remember it was a 'given' part of human nature? It follows that the metabolism, brain stem and central nervous system, circulation and respiration all are under its governance. Under the aegis then of the moving center would naturally fall the musculature and the reflexive and adaptive systems of movement. The next 'given' is caught in the midst of physical and spiritual dualities and is the emotional center, which empowers our confident orientation within the world we live, through the meaning we bring to it. Each of these centers, mentioned thus far, also have a representation in the physiology of the human brain complex, as does the intellectual center, that great repository of potential connections in the gray matter of the noggin."

"Practicable, please?"

"One practicable way, or avenue, to restore our conscience is through the instinctive center. It is historically known as the way of the fakir. The second avenue, or way, is through the moving center, and is the domain of the yogi. The third way, through the emotional center, is the way of the monk. There is a fourth avenue, a balanced way---called the way of the sly man.

We have six centers. The two, so far unmentioned, have a far less direct connection to an organic basis. They are both: essentially absent, and the most pervasive. An interesting paradox to be sure. This is the point at which another perspective becomes useful. The four organically based centers are a no-brainer, if you'll forgive the pun. The first of the two indirect centers, we also share with the higher forms of animals, mostly higher mammals actually. It is the aforementioned seat of conscience, a higher emotional center. This center is unique among its previously mentioned fellows in that it is greater than the sum of its parts. For now, let us see what might be this sixth and last center. This brain, or center, we do not share with any other organic life form on this planet. It is what literally separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom, and like its 'given' spiritual counterpart, the higher emotional center, it also is greater than the acquired sum of its parts. For example, its most mechanically basic rudimentary function is no less than Reason itself. It is called the higher

mental center, and is the seat of true impartiality and objective reason. Among its properties is: knowledge of all things; no small capacity indeed. We shall discuss these conditions and these centers' roles and purposes at greater length."

The young man was paying attention to the descriptions offered, "But you also said this structure has a mathematical foundation. How are you going to get there from here? You've talked of centers. Okay, plausible. You've referred to historical paths to enlightenment. Okay, I've heard of these, except for the Sly Man road. How do we get to the mathematical, the verifiable and quantifiable from swamis, gurus and saints?"

The guest cocked an eye at the younger man and said, "An interesting phrasing. In fact it occurred the other way round. First there was the structure, then existence formed around it, through it, and according to it. So, let's reach back and get that image of an octave we used to see the series of epochs in the life of a single individual. Got it?" He paused, then to clarify a point he once made, "You'll remember when I first referred you to an octave as a valid example for study? We used it to map the life of a man, birth to death---zero to full---all to nothing. Yet when we approach an octave in its 'native habitat' it begins at a given vibration and doubles to the octave above it, or halves itself to the octave below it.

So, two representations of a single phenomena are maintained: all-to-nothing and doubling/halving." He made sure he hadn't lost his host, then continued, "All to nothing, an octave is divided into discreet vibrations. Pythagoras mapped them for western science: zero, an eighth, a quarter, a third, a half, two-thirds, seven-eighths, one; one and an eighth, one and a quarter, one and a third, one and a half, one and two-thirds, one and seven-eighths, two. Now these may be spread between zero and one, one and two, or one and one hundred, the length of the octave is inconsequential—the ratios remain the same." He waited for the young man to finish that series of notes, then repeated the intervals in the octave of twenty-four.

"Do-(3)-Re-(3)-Mi-(2)-Fa-(4)-Sol-(4)-La-(5)-Ti-(3)-Do."

He spoke this slowly so they would enter correctly into his host's notes. Then added, "The notes of the octave, and the length of the gaps

between each note---in an octave with a length of twenty-four (the smallest whole numbered octave). This will be important later on as we examine, and you verify, certain assertions which I will make about the structure of existence itself.

I should think this gives you enough to chew upon for a bit.” Realizing he had done it again, he said contritely, “I apologize for these puns, I really have no excuse.”

Best Laid Plans

"He is the best man who, when making his plans, fears and reflects on everything that can happen to him, but in the moment of action is bold."

--Herodotus

The two men sat quietly for a while, each in their own thoughts. The older man, chuckled to himself over his gradually slipping into humor more and more these days. The younger man carefully attempted to incorporate this new world scheme into a workable framework in his mind. It was then the elder of the two, picked up the discussion, once more.

"It will be beneficial, at this point, to expand upon this vision by explaining to you the inner expression of an octave. 'As above, so below,' may be turned on its head and read the other way round as well, and that is precisely what we can see in the world within our arena of observation. Fractals. A leaf is the model of the tree from which it arises, a snowflake's shape and structure are mirrored by its own construction of ever increasing patterns of its smallest connections, and the examples are endless. This fractalization is the result of what may be found in the mathematical construction of the model we are investigating. Remember an octave's nature is to double and halve, if we look at its own inner assembly we notice a curious thing, it doubles and halves within the course of its own gamut. An eighth becomes a quarter, becomes a half, becomes the whole, or in a descending pattern of whole to half, to quarter, to eighth."

The young man volunteered his own observation at this, "Actually, when you first mentioned the doubling and halving, I thought... what you just described, was what you were referring to all along. That took me a while to sort out. We're on the same page, now."

"Good, good, I'm glad to have as little confusion in our discussions as possible." Then he continued, "This *inner* halving, or doubling, is precisely

what gives rise to the fractal phenomenon. Which, when carried to its logical conclusion, will yield this: Take an all-to-nothing octave of an immense length. Inside of it, so to speak, three more octaves come into existence, unique to it alone. An octave from the top DO down to SOL, whole to half. An octave from SOL down to MI, half to quarter. And an octave from MI down a little to RE, a quarter to an eighth. Three inner octaves which provide an inner framework for the whole. Yet the story doesn't end there for within *each* of those three, three more octaves come into existence and provide an inner scaffolding for each of those. Now we can find, therefore, nine octaves standing at this next level. For our own purposes, in order to keep these ever fractalling series of groups of octaves clear to us, and for easier reference, let's call the initial all-to-nothing octave: Scale Zero, the next two created: Scale One, and Scale Two."

"That is very useful. I was just about to scramble my brains over this, thank you. This is much neater. Categories of diminishing reflections of the whole: fractals. Got it. Please continue." The young man enjoyed keeping things clearly delineated, and he was now warming to the new information.

"Very well. One octave gives birth to three, which in turn yield nine. Those nine, you can see where this is going I'm sure, give birth to their own inner octaves. So now there are twenty-seven more. If required this can go on ad infinitum and never truly end, at least according to the postulated maxims of Zeno of Thrace who proposed that if you continue to halve the distance between yourself and your destination you will never arrive at your destination... always having halfway more to go. He was an apologist defending Pythagorus, however some of his arguments weren't as helpful as others. Anyway, this is the genesis of the fractal nature of nature itself. As above, so below."

The young man was satisfied with this and appreciated his guest making it an accessible concept for him. Yet there was a previous discussion which had not been so accessible and he very much wished to have it all clear in his head before going any further. "Back when you explained that ancient mathematical symbol which explains the structure behind everything, and we are not to that grand claim yet so far as I can

see, you did not make clear to me how that symbol, which presented even sevenths and even thirds could be a true reflection of the octave we know. A diatonic progression.”

“Alright but you must realize that the translation from even to diatonic and how it can be intelligibly perceived is the life work and Reason of a Master. So it is to him that we owe this explanation.” He paused to be sure his host fully appreciated that they were standing upon the shoulders of giants.

“Remember, three forces equal and separate can only occupy, for the purposes of a two-dimensional diagram, the extremities of an equilateral triangle. This is not so very different than in other dimensions, including the linear ascent or descent of an octave model. Always even thirds. So how then is the symbol, reflecting the primordial 'law of seven,' to become in our world the diatonic 'law of octaves' which includes this equi-distanced arrangement of forces where its purer cousin does not? A change was made in the law of seven. It was described in fragments by very ancient sources indeed and then re-presented, still in its fragmentary form, by a predecessor of this same venerable master. It is the evidence of a bold stroke of outstanding reason which, among other matters, separates this most respected master from all who came before him. He made this change, once only known in fragments, clear and accessible to all.

“It is thus: the fabric of the universe, the medium in which the separated forces have their existence, could never allow for their reunification. That is to say, the pattern of forces could not align with the pattern of the fabric predicated as it was upon the primordial law of seven. The fabric of the law of seven had to have been stretched and rumped in order to become the diatonic law of octaves with which we are familiar here in our own universe. During this alteration certain of the resonant vibrations within the seven's series came into contact, once and for all time to come, with the separated forces at one third and two thirds, one of the trio having already from the outset retained its original contact with the series; our DO, if you will. The resultant stretch and rumple brought FA and LA into contact with the those other lonely forces so that through the

progress of a now diatonic ascension and descension of any octave, having its existence among other octaves of similar nature, the forces could at last realize the imperative of their separation, i.e. To reunite.”

“For a more complete description of this phenomenal story you would be better served to read that master's own writings in his words. No does that help to clarify your conundrum and resolve it?”

The younger man was still trying to wrap his mind around the vastness of the scenario presented and the myriad implications which were rising like froth in his thoughts. “Uh, let me read and re-read my notes. I can perhaps get a handle on it if I work out the situation on paper for myself.” He began to lay out the general outline for his investigations, and the elder man sat quietly until his host at last sighed and seemed prepared to continue with their story.

He began again, now describing life at home after Harry's departure. “As you may recall, Harry did after all get that photograph of his family he so wished he'd had a photographer at hand to capture. That was naturally the work of Titania and Hipolyta who wished to document their apparent transformations for all time, and send that evidence along to Harry before he was gone from these shores.

They chose as the backdrop for the portrait the grand gateway into the Lodge's grounds. The photographer was roused to the commission that same morning on their return from the rail station in Truckee and the tearful sendoff. They kept a plate of the photograph for themselves and placed it on the mantle above the hearth at home. Belle and George were both pleased at the addition; representing to them the new advent of tradition that was soon to transform their family's own training for generations to come.

As with all good things and spells of happiness, into each a little rain must fall. And this occurred in their household as well; tragedy struck. Jameson's father was about his usual routine at the livery on as normal a day as any that passed in the little village. He was cleaning the hooves of a

recently stabled mare ridden into town by an annual visitor at the opening of the summer season. He knew he should never have tended the horse while it was still in its stall, but whether out of hubris or carelessness, he was there. And it was there, that perhaps as a result of a leak in the roof and subsequent soakings from the late spring and early summer rains, the loft above the stalls, heavy with sodden fodder, gave way over the area in which he was working. The frightened mare instinctively bucked suddenly away from the falling structure and threw James into the rails between the stalls. The stallion in the adjoining stall was also terrorized. He reared and kicked at the barriers of his prison, and in the process crushed in the chest and skull of the faithful liveryman pinned to the railing by the mare. His body wasn't found until that afternoon and it was his own son who made the discovery, in the company of White Feathers and Titania who had accompanied him there for routine reasons having nothing to do with the stables at all.

The graveside service was held at the village cemetery soon after, and young Jameson walked away from the grave down the village streets to the stables and his home---an orphan. This dark cloud of anguish and misery was itself to have a silver lining. Titania and Hipolyta convinced their parents to take in the lad and situate him in Harry's old room off the workshop. It was White Feathers who had almost raised the lad himself from near infancy, who gave his own blessing to the arrangement and helped George and Belle passed any hint of trepidation they might have had over the lad. They didn't have any to begin with, but it wasn't their place to decide anyway, it was White Feathers's, and that was that.

This Summer Season was then a new chapter in the annals of Livingson Summers. White Feathers was no longer at George's disposal for impromptu 'store-tending.' He took it upon himself to maintain, for as long as he was able, the running of the stables. This responsibility assisted both the village which needed the service, and Jameson who would receive all profits from the continued enterprise as an investment in his future, wherever that might lead him. Titania then split her efforts between her duties at the Lodges and chores at the livery helping her Great-uncle when Jameson was in the kitchens. Hipolyta picked up her sister's slack, assisting

Belle at the Lodges and in large part filled Harry's shoes left vacant at the hardware store. This left Jameson's life virtually unchanged, less the obvious catastrophic loss; he was able to continue in the kitchens of Mandy Hill's Restaurant and Tea Room and also keep up his own chores at the stable. Though now every morning and evening he awoke and retired in the Livingston home and under the aegis and instruction of George and Belle. Out of the ashes the phoenix rises.

Neither Hipolyta nor her sister resented, in the slightest, their new activities as many their age might easily have done. In fact it was, for them, glorious. The saying, 'those to whom much is given, much is expected' is actually an observation of reality not a cautionary injunction. Besides her other chores Hipolyta took over the management of the bookkeeping for the store and lodges with only the briefest apprenticeship. Like Harry before her, it was satisfying to her sense of wholeness, to balance ledgers and keep entries in neat and orderly columns and rows. So when her parents required a reference point for the re-supply, or a forecast of certain necessary amendments to their endeavors, Hipolyta's account books were accurate and up-to-date tools for those instances.

Hipolyta coached Titania through the account books' inner workings so that were it to become necessary she also would be able to step in at a moment's notice and serve as a most adequate surrogate bookkeeper. And for Titania's part, her assistance to White Feathers opened her eyes to the far reaching impact of a village's livery stable. The care of horses certainly, but the hired care of another person's property was in a different arena. Each animal had its own likes and dislikes to be sure, and each family that boarded their horses with the stable each had their own routines for the use of those animals. Then there were the livery's own stock to be managed, cared for and let out for hire. The livery's wagons, carriages and other vehicular assets had to be maintained for service. The Summer Season's tourist trade impacted the livery in every way, from the numbers of horses kept available rather than pastured and the space available for seasonal boarding, up to the obvious, that is: someone who knew both what they were doing and the current state of the livery to interact with the public at large. Titania gained a great respect for the late Mr. Connor and

by default, Jameson, who had been raised to manage all this, and of course White Feathers who stepped in and made a go of it without a hiccup or pause.

Jameson was, by inherited nature, meticulous and thorough, both from his life in the livery and from having been under the tutelage of White Feathers near from birth. So in Mandy's kitchens he was a treasured asset. He always knew what the stores were, what was soon to be needed and how much. He knew where everything may be found and put hand to whether it was the everyday tools of the trade, or the paperwork for the administration of those activities. This latter facility was the result of having been given the responsibility of performing the daily ordering and planning based upon the restaurant's business load, the current menus, and the seasonal availability of supplies. Mandy could not have been more pleased and proud of her protege, whom she had originally taken on to handle odd jobs around the kitchen and to simply encourage his native cooking and baking talents. Jameson was so much more than she had initially bargained for, and after Mr. Connor's tragic passing she felt at liberty, at last, to compensate Jameson properly for the actual benefit he was to her enterprise.

There was a longstanding unwritten and therefore quite tacit understanding between all the Livingsons, natural or adopted, that when the Lodges required extra manpower, they each pitched in to help. Belle never over-indulged this resource. Actually, more often than not it was some other member, or collection of members of the family who had to insist upon stepping in and shouldering the unexpected burdens whenever necessary. An interesting example of this occurred almost as soon as Jameson had been moved into the house.

A runaway horse and carriage owned and operated by visiting tourists not a local villager, plowed through the fence and side yard of the Lodges' grounds one late July afternoon. It was always suspected that some of the local young hooligans had set off some fireworks, no doubt pilfered from the recent Independence Day celebrations, behind one of the village shops lining the Lakeside Road, and of course without any forethought to the

consequences of their actions. The horses reared and bolted, taking their helpless driver and passengers careening into the fencing. By a great stroke of good fortune none of the people were seriously injured, but one of the horses broke its leg and had to be put down. Also fortunate was that none of the Livingsons nor their guests were in common transit along the path there. The carriage occupants were too shaken to help themselves, so it fell to George and Jameson, Belle, Titania and Hipolyta to send for the doctor, rescue the driver and passengers from their now very crumpled carriage, extricate the horses from their harnesses, right the nearly overturned carriage, remove the damaged carriage and still unhurt horse to the livery and lead away the injured horse. Then there was the damage to the fence the garden grounds and the few busted panels on the nearest bungalows. The family led the efforts and delegated where possible the necessary responses. Within a day or two it could not be determined that anything so misfortunate had occurred. That was the result of everyone in the family instantly heeding the call of their tacit responsibilities. Other instances of note came along from time to time, some less perilous than others, but always each was met with the singleness of direction, resolve and purpose the Livingsons brought to their every endeavor.

But all was not the fun and games so far described. There were also serious occasions over that summer as well, and the local young hooligans previously implicated were the instigating players in those dramas. As it happens, wherever humans congregate for the purpose of harmonious communal existence there are the bad apples. The August weather was not uncommonly intemperate in either warmth or chill, nor had there been any violent summer storms. Perhaps because of this, or any other contributions made from an unending range of factors, the incidence of petty crimes and destructive pranks rose to an all time high that season. The major institutions of the village's commerce and livelihood were spared, but the younger local residents were not. Jameson, Titania and Hipolyta fell into that latter category.

Titania was returning from the livery stables after putting out fodder and watering the resident beasts; Hipolyta was sitting in front of the Mercantile enjoying the evening breeze while finishing the weekly logs, and

Jameson was soon to leave the kitchens for the day. It started innocently enough; most of the town's guests were at supper or were off on overnight excursions, so Main Street was nearly vacant. Titania stopped in front of a shop window to admire some newly displayed items. Two boys a bit older than herself were leaning against the narrow walls of an alleyway across the street sharing a cheroot, out of view from the disapproving eyes of their elders, and they mischievously took an uncharacteristic interest in her solitary idleness. They noiselessly approached thinking to surprise her and 'have some fun.' Titania wasn't so enamored of what she was perusing that she didn't notice their approaching figures in the reflection of the shop window, but not giving them much thought at first continued her inspection of the display. It wasn't until it appeared they were coming directly toward her that she turned and faced them thus spoiling their surprise and setting a whole series of events into motion.

The larger boy interposed himself between Titania and the shop window as she watched him carefully walk around her. She noticed in the window's reflection that the smaller kid was getting on his hands and knees behind her and so set up that old classic schoolyard prank.

"What could interest a mutt like you in a respectable shop like this?" said the boy in front of her and pushed her.

Titania wasn't unbalanced in the least. His fragile little ego couldn't abide his ineffectiveness at this, and so raised both his arms to push harder; which he did. Titania instantly dropped to a crouch and wasn't there when the force of his lunge sprang at her. He went headlong over his accomplice, off the edge of the boardwalk, and into the street carrying the smaller boy with him tangled in his feet. Hipolyta had just glanced up the street from her numbers when she saw the tumble. She saw her sister standing on the boardwalk; she closed the ledger, dropped it onto the bench, and sped toward her.

Other miscreants hidden in alleyways and nooks along the street, each hiding their own unapproved activities, had watched the failed prank and were now mindlessly streaming toward their 'captain,' preparing for the retribution of his mislaid 'honor.' As Hipolyta passed a blind alley to her

right and was about to leap the last step to join her sister, two more of the young thugs emerged and cut off her path. Titania saw the commotion they made as they intimidated Hipolyta into that alley, and she tried to reach her sister even as other boys arrived to add to their numbers. Both girls were then being backed down the narrow alley cul de sac by Titania's initial knuckleheads and five other equally nefarious louts.

Jameson left the side door of the restaurant and had just made the street when he saw the stragglers rushing to the alley. Realizing this could not bode any good for anyone, he stayed on his side of the street trying to avoid any dustup with the surly group. He was level with the alley when out of sheer curiosity he looked over. Titania and Hipolyta were hidden by the clot of bodies blocking their escape route, but a moment of jostling gave Jameson an instant's glimpse of two small figures nearly with their backs to wall at the far end. He sprang across the road, and as he entered the threshold of the alley, shouted, "Hey, what's going on here?"

The booming, adult-sounding voice behind them gave the little mob a moment of frozen guilt.

"Jameson" the girls cried out together.

As soon as those nearest him turned and saw their inquisitor they laughed in relief. "Aw, it's just the horse boy turned kitchen boy!"

The others turned some of their attention to the interloper and jeered, "What do you want here 'horse boy'?" "Better not trip over your apron an' fall down... go boom, boom!" They laughed and howled at their own ideas of cleverness. Jameson held his ground and posture.

The bullies close to Titania and Hipolyta turned back to taunting their captives. "Aw, do the little mutts miss their playmate? Maybe they'd like a bone to make them all better?"

"I've got a bone for 'em right here," one of them cried coarsely, and the rest giggled and laughed perversely as only those with malice and lust in their hearts can.

Jameson got their attention again, "If you wish, you may deal with me and have done with your sport. I promise I'll be far gentler with you than

they will," he said pointing his chin to the girls.

"What?!" came the disbelieving voice from the lead bully. "Buddy there're seven of us, since you obviously can't count," more giggles and laughter, "besides you had better run on home and cozy up to a donkey or something before we squash all three of you just for giving me your lip. After we play around with the little mutt bitches." He finished, with the others trying to sound equally as fierce.

Poor choices lead to sad consequences. Jameson advanced one stride at a time and walked straight through their numbers. Without clear direction and no spine of their own as individuals, they parted and let him pass.

The 'captain' laughed. "Are you an idiot? We've got you surrounded now, and I don't think I like interruptions."

Jameson coolly answered, "This is your last chance. You should leave now before somebody really gets hurt."

The mob didn't know if they should giggle or grunt. When the captain couldn't stand the insults any more he yelled, "Get 'em!"

The two on either side of Jameson reached to grab his arms while the 'captain' in front of him pulled back his fist for a mighty punch, aiming for his face. In the same instant Titania and Hipolyta sprang apart from where they had been clutching each other close; each hit the wall nearest her in a forward leap, pushed off the walls and sprang up over the remaining little crowd to land on the far side of them. Jameson pulled his arms to his side, pinning the hands of his 'captors' and dropped into a low crouch with his back straight so as not to dislodge them. The captain's intended blow therefore slammed into one of *their* faces with a yelp from the victim.

Jameson then leapt backward with his 'entourage,' slamming them into the wall behind them as Titania and Hipolyta simply spun in low arcs and toppled the four goofs facing them with wide-eyed stares. Un-tethered by his bruised and battered 'baggages,' Jameson then faced down the captain who alone was presently left standing among his minions.

"There is no reason this should go any further..." he began to say, but

the older boy was momentarily blind and deaf with fury. He hadn't any instinct but to keep punching. Jameson dodged, grabbed his leading wrist, used the ruffian's own momentum to whirl him around and land him on the four goofs who were just trying to stand, causing them all to tumble into another pile. The two boys who had first grabbed his arms lost their appetite for the event and dodged by the girls to the safety of the street and ran off in different directions.

Jameson walked around the wriggling pile of boys who were actually unhurt but very confused, and joined the twins to stroll out of the alleyway. The bully captain regained enough presence to call after them in vain, "And don't come back or you'll get more of the same."

Titania started to giggle; Hipolyta positively laughed out loud. Jameson rolled his eyes and said, "Yes sir, we won't."

After Hipolyta returned the store ledger to the office and locked up, they were home for dinner as usual. The entire diversion, save the brief conversations with the locals, took as little time as window shopping.

As August wound into its last week the Village Council met to discuss a very pressing issue indeed. Unlike their usual topics for debate, the emergence of the random acts of pranks and such had forced their need for action.

"I won't have it. It is simply unacceptable," the chairman said, "I can not bear to walk our fair streets on a given afternoon and overhear even long-time visitors say that his was '*once* such a pleasant little town.'" He stared at his fellow council members, "*Once!* Ladies and Gentlemen, *Once?* It's outrageous. Before you can blink, word will spread and we all will be saying it---because our inns and hotels will go unoccupied, our stores will have to close their doors, and if this goes unchecked we shall each have to start locking our own doors at night!"

As with everything else that they had ever considered for action, they were only able to determine a financial impact to their businesses and so *bad* to act. The relatively early evacuation of the this year's seasonal guests perhaps had some influence on their urgency. And there is something to be said for their point of view. However it was the children of these very same

'high-minded' folks who were the instigators of the acts which were smudging the village's reputation. Had their focus at some earlier times been upon the proper raising of those 'symbols of their future,' this current discussion would be moot. Instead it took this dire situation to affect their pocketbooks and bank accounts to impinge upon their own attentions. Quite anti-social, objectively speaking.

At any rate, they ranted on about 'the youth' as if the youth in question were some foreign agency infiltrating their kingdom, and not actually their own sons and daughters. They debated courses of action and adjourned after assigning committees to pursue investigation of the three solutions they had qualified as possible solutions from the outset two hours earlier. Then they ordered lunch.

Meanwhile the final carriages filled and headed for Truckee carrying the last of the summer's tourists home to hearth and kin in the distant cities and towns of their ordinary lives. Hipolyta and Belle opened all the bungalow windows, stripped the beds, and scrubbed the bathrooms for the last time that season. Titania and Jameson herded the horses not required for off-season commerce up into the pastures owned by the livery for this very purpose. George stored the remaining unsold inventory which had been ordered for the last season's latest fads. He made emendations to his logbooks which tracked the annual fads and rages as a reference for the future recurrence of any one of them. The store shelves were rearranged and the stock room shelves were put into order and he closed the front door for the day.

"Please let's read Harry's letters again," pleaded Titania and Hipolyta after dinner that evening. Jameson nodded vigorously at the request and the others smiled in assent. The girls ran to their room and returned promptly with their two letters apiece, Belle took down the two letters they kept on the mantle, and they all opened the first set received together. White Feathers and Jameson with George sat in the rockers, drinks in hand, and listened as Belle and the girls compiled the events variously presented through the three initial documents. The train trip of course and its accommodations, Omaha and Chicago stations, the business meetings and

the food, the people, the buildings, the shops, stores and sights, all these they read in turn as they leafed through the first series. It was near the end of that set that evoked so much interest by the three younger listeners.

Belle read aloud, *We most thoroughly enjoyed the theater again our last evening in the city that doesn't sleep. When upon our return journey of a mere few blocks to our rooms at the elegant Chelsea House, we were momentarily detained by four disconsolate fellows whose evening's entertainment I'm afraid was not furthered by our own contributions. They had, it seemed, set their hopes upon persuading Mrs. Spelman and young Miss Kaitlyn into joining them for certain undisclosed sport, and with some regret I must admit, I was forced to dissuade them from their request. There was but one who insisted to press their intentions even to the extreme of knife-point, but he instantly surrendered his cause and forfeited their case at my gentle but firm insistent refusal. I am unused to resorting to such arguments as I was perforce required to employ, yet all was well and from our initial introduction to our parting of ways was but the duration of a good stretch and yawn first exercised upon a chilly winter's morning. When upon departing for a last angling adventure the next morning I was interviewed by Mr. Spelman regarding the previous evening's encounter. I was at a loss to see the import of his apparent concerns. I confessed my regrets and made known I had only used what persuasions any one in my own place might have used and as consolation left him with the trophy of that unfortunate encounter---a rather well designed and cared for tradesman's folding knife of about half a foot in length.*

Jameson and the two men at ease beside him listened, smiled broadly and closed their eyes in appreciation for their friend-son-nephew and his honorable dispatch of the incident. The second series of correspondence was then opened and a new round of readings ensued. Descriptions of the sea most captivated all the listeners and gave rise, for White Feathers, to quite a recurrence of nostalgia. The beautiful voice and delivery of song by Miss Kaitlyn, the tempest, and the Port of Liverpool with descriptions of its environs were always favorite passages. George enjoyed the descriptions of the Allcock factories, its craftsmen and equipments. They were each

entertained by Harry's description of his taking of the Entrance examinations and of their aftermath every time it was read. Harry's subsequent interview with the headmaster and the accommodation which Malvern College made on Harry's behalf was cause for celebration when first received and read aloud; even now it rekindled a warmth of pride in them at the recollection of Harry's triumph.

Belle had not read aloud, nor would she consent to do so, the record of Mr. Spelman's conversation with Harry on the outbound journey to France conveyed from Harry solely in the letter to her. She and George and White Feathers, indeed all their ancestors too, waited in expectation of some further developments in that line before making anything known to the girls and Jameson. Their ancestors watched the developments of Harry's endeavors carefully, but would not comment or apprise George and Belle until, *"the bold experiment had reached the end of its first fragile stage..."* they had said.

The exotic and medieval blended and woven through Harry's long passages describing the monastery castle of Mont Saint-Michel were treasured indeed. The passages depicting the sights and background of the city of Paris were also spell-binding. Satisfied and rejuvenated, the girls returned their letters to the special places reserved for them in their room, bid all goodnight and retired. Jameson excused himself and readied for bed, leaving George and Belle and White Feathers to sit quietly around the big table and reflect upon their own thoughts, and reveries. What might the near future hold for their family, their brave new traditions and their children.

The dawn broke next morning but so had an early shower. It was dim in the house and the three elder members again sat at the table finishing their light breakfast. The girls and Jameson had set off on their morning tasks and wouldn't be back for hours. It was the last Tuesday of the last week of August. Without forewarning and in great urgency the ancestors broke into their thoughts, and the mood of their sleepy morning became instantly pensive.

"It has never been done. We were most disturbed at the initial

discovery of its inception. His conduct has been honorable however and his approach, though unorthodox, has been inspired and effective."

"What has happened!" Belle insisted aloud, startling White Feathers. He looked about the room for some immediate cause of her outburst then, discerning nothing at hand, allowed the realization of her 'extra-communion' to assure him he must patiently await any information of import.

"George Henry Livingson, your son and of our own blood, has successfully and with consummate attention and focus," they added with what almost sounded like pride, *"has now set two young women upon the most humble journey as faithful bearers of the great knowledge. One, Kaitlyn Elizabeth Spelman, of a deserving father and most frivolous mother; and one, Chloe Anne Allcock, of father in your acquaintance and mother deceased."* The utter shock at the news that the waiting was so soon over and that there were two instead of the acknowledged one was quite a bit to digest at once.

"We have plumbed to the depths of their newly forming souls, and can, without reservation, state that their eyes are clear, their minds are open, their bodies and spirits are purged and prepared for the reformations ahead of them on the journey. We most humbly offer our considered forecast of their continued dedication and strength." They paused for a moment, yet created the distinct impression they had more to say. *"We also wish to state clearly, so that there may be no lingering doubt, that you have again vanquished our worst fears. Young Henry has exceeded our best hopes for this family's future. We offer him our most humble respect, and shall henceforth offer our willing support in all of your decisions. About the young Kaitlyn, we are most convinced and so shall allow you..."* George promptly began to relate to White Feathers all that had been spoken and so did not hear what next was said next, but Belle heard every word. She kept the knowledge of that last offering to herself alone.

White Feathers couldn't have been more proud of his protege than if he were his own son, and he said so. *"Two young women, previously*

untutored and for all intents and purposes the most unlikely of candidates. This is just beyond my experience.” He repeated.

George responded, “Not as unlikely as you perceive, Harry must surely have laid some foundation and waited for the necessary signals to allow him license to inaugurate the disciplines.”

They mused together without speaking of the immense weight with which Harry must surely have been burdened as he awaited some sign, some hint of preparation and contrite surrender from one and the other of the seekers. This event unmistakably signaled the birth pangs had truly begun for the humble beginning of a new era.

White Feathers wasted no time. Once breakfast was finished and the house was made ready for the day, he set off to complete his morning's responsibilities at the livery. The morning showers had yielded to a glorious sky, lit as if a heavenly army might at any moment march from behind the billowing clouds. Before seeking lunch at Mandy's to see Jameson, he walked first to the telegraph office. He wrote out the message he wished to send, and reread it once to himself.

Young Master, you have once again gained two new students. On behalf of your mother and father, I congratulate you and maintain this steadfast confidence that the young ladies shall make great use of their new found lives; purchased, no doubt, at great expense to themselves and dearly transferred by your own very capable hands. Your devoted Great-great-uncle White Feathers, J.B.C.

Since the lad who usually tapped out the telegraphs was away to lunch, he sidled around the counter and deftly tapped out his message himself. The depths of his own experience and resources were his own second nature, and would have given any casual passerby only the glimpse of an official telegrapher at his routine chores. Satisfied, he folded up his crib sheet, slipped it into his pocket and went to see his adoptive grandson.

On Thursday that same week the Village Council reconvened and decided to go forward with the grand experiment designed to remedy the town's ailing reputation. They dictated the text of a public notice to be circulated, and also to be posted at the public gathering places in the

village. Satisfied that they had made all the necessary arrangements for their selected remedy, they adjourned for lunch and drinks. '...the best laid plans...'

Around the village the very next day, the topic of most urgent conversation was the soon to be established Tahoe City School and the mandatory enrollment of all children six to thirteen years of age. By some it was greeted with great acceptance and satisfaction. Yet to others it represented an incursion into their determination to remain masters of their houses and homes and other discomfited intrusiveness. To many of the children it was a source of excitement, and to others, echoing their parents reservations, it foreboded a curtailment of their liberty to go about in pursuit of their uncurbed desires, which was more often than not, simply idleness.

On that afternoon, Titania and Hipolyta with Jameson sat around the big table in the great room with their elders and listened as George read aloud a copy of the notice delivered personally by the Council Secretary to all store owners in the village. It read:

"We, the Council of Tahoe City, make proclamation of the establishment of a School for our children, aged six through thirteen, to be publicly financed through the receipt of taxes assessed upon all sales of goods, merchandise, and services conducted in this town during the months of June, July and August of each year henceforth. The initial tax rate not to exceed .05% of each transaction. (Specific tax codes, exemptions, and collections to be issued in accordance with California policy and Tahoe City Charter, and set forth in a separate statute, forthcoming.) Proceeds from said funds shall be utilized for the maintenance of the school house, furniture and implements of instruction therein contained and affiliated, textbooks, and the annual salary of a teacher. The Autumn terms shall commence each annum on the first Tuesday of September, and run its first term through the fourth Wednesday of November. Spring terms shall commence each annum on the second Tuesday of February and run through the last Tuesday of May. Traditional holidays shall be observed. Graduation requirements shall be set in

harmony with the entrance requirements of the Higher Institutions of this State, and the corollary testing commiserate with same. Inclement weather delays and postponements will be made up at the end of each term, where permitted. A School Committee shall be elected from among the citizenry with school age children, and shall be responsible for suggested curricula and textbooks. The first election to be held in conjunction with State and local polling, and Committee members shall be required to serve terms of two years. Truancy shall be cause for severe punishment, specifics of which to be determined by the newly elected School Committee whose plenary powers in these matters may be redressed only by petition, whose subscribers must number over half the current enrollment of the School at the time of submission.

All male children exempted according to an approved criteria, or beyond school age up to the age of eighteen years, not currently apprenticed or otherwise gainfully employed, shall henceforward be required to provide bi-annual proof of employment to this Council at the commencement of Autumn school term and at the end of Spring school term. Female children exempted according to an approved criteria, or beyond school age up to the age of eighteen years, shall have the option to assist in the education of those younger than themselves, or to provide for their own education as their family deems fit. Those young people not adhering to the statutes herein set forth shall be assigned employment at reasonable rates of hire at the discretion of this Council.

The initial establishment of a temporary location for the first Tahoe City Schoolhouse is the newly renovated building at Main Street and Hill Street. (Formerly the local offices of the Union Pacific Railway before its relocation due to partial destruction in the fire of '82.) A provisional teacher has been arranged and initial textbooks ordered from and according to the curriculum established in successful suburban schools of San Francisco. Initial exemptions shall be made by 'dire need of the family,' or by successful completion of graduation examination--even should this be incident prior to the usual age and class of qualification for general candidacy of same. Amendments to these requirements and provisions shall be the responsibility of the School Committee, by charter.

May God bless our town and its enterprises. Tahoe City Council of Elders, set forth this day, August 29th, year our Lord, 1884.”

“Well that's the text of it,” said George as he laid down the notice and regained his breath. The listeners sat with their own thoughts for a little while. Each of the 'school-age children' contemplated the advent of this proclamation and its impact upon their own responsibilities. The exemptions offered through testing might make their concerns moot, yet each continued to devise alternate plans should an exemption for themselves not be forthcoming.

“It's about time,” said Belle and she was seconded by White Feathers.

He continued, “You know it's a direct response to the rising plague of young rascals with too little to occupy themselves.” He received nods of agreement all around. “Well, these scholars,” he waved to include the children, “have nothing new to gain from a locally contrived education. From what I've seen and judged by the children their age from the cities, who return year after year for the summers.”

“Perhaps,” began Titania, “it would be useful for Hipolyta and I to consider assisting in teaching. Provided that we pass the graduation examination that was mentioned as a possible exemption.”

Hipolyta nodded and added, “It really can't be any more challenging than the one Harry took at Malvern College.”

Jameson was satisfied that the 'dire need of family' clause should exempt him since he was his own family now. And, if that was insufficient reason, his own thorough education already years along would insure his being able to continue his current responsibilities without interruption.

“Well lad,” corrected White Feathers, “In the first place, if all your considerations come to naught, it's less than a year before your fourteenth birthday anyway. In the second place, if they leave it to me as your nearest legal next of kin, I will definitely invoke the clause you mentioned, and it may come to that. In the third place, the last I read, your writing skills will need a bit of polish if your to legitimately maintain your confidence of current educational prowess.”

Jameson listened attentively and had to agree that his writings did not have the flourish and general elegance Titania and Hipolyta's compositions conveyed. Titania instantly volunteered to tutor him in that regard, and Hipolyta just rolled her eyes. As for the matter of White Feathers seconding his 'dire need' argument, he was humbly grateful.

"Besides," added Belle, "if White Feathers can't persuade them--a truly doubtful notion---Mandy will most certainly guarantee your staying in her kitchens. Where would the Council eat if they defied her?" They all laughed heartily at that. The Council was notorious for not being able to accomplish much to begin with, and without food and drink they were utterly helpless.

None had to angst over any of these considerations for long. The provisional teacher arrived at the first of the next week and she brought with her samples of the textbooks, copies of the prescribed initial curricula, and most importantly to the Livingsons, sufficient sets of both entrance assessments for each grade and the graduation examinations. Her name was Sarah Bunker and she was at present between teaching assignments and condescended to accept the Tahoe City's invitation to start-up their fledgling school. She was temporarily given room and board at the Great Tahoe Inn until a permanent situation might be found for her.

The School House was nowhere near the condition the Council had suggested it would be for the advent of the Autumn term. Consequently, Miss Bunker was obliged to utilize the Council Chambers for both exemption testing and the first few weeks of the term. Although they were extravagant as council chambers, they were wholly inadequate as a facility for education. Tables were brought in, council meetings were naturally suspended for the interim, and the blackboard destined for the actual school house had not yet been installed in its ultimate home and was therefore setup in the chambers as well, leaned against a far wall that is. The date for the initial round of testing was published and all hopefuls were provided a cursory outline of the subjects which were to be assessed. This was supplied in part to dissuade any truly unqualified candidates from wasting the time and materials of the new instructor.

The Livingson hopefuls were busy the next few days, giving all their attention to recovering even the minutia of former studies in order to be fully prepared for the examination. They quizzed each other when not in individual study of past essays. Any information and data still vague, for whatever reasons, was individually determined and corrected. So it was that by the morning of their rendezvous with the impending academic challenge, they were calm and excited to begin. This attitude was diametrically counter to those of the other candidates who assembled in the 'schoolroom.' In fact so many had abdicated their seats during the days leading up to that morning, and even on that morning itself, that Jameson, Titania and Hipolyta found themselves among a cadre of only six others near their own age, and none any younger.

Miss Bunker distributed the packets, gave explicit instructions for each section to be completed, and was explicit in cautioning them against evincing any suspicion or hint of 'cheating.' When she was convinced that all was ready, she gave the signal to commence. Nine heads simultaneously bowed over the pages of questions and essay topics and set to work. Titania was first to rise and return her packet. Jameson was next, followed not long thereafter by Hipolyta. The others were still in the throes of chewing their pencils and scratching through confused responses when the Livingson crew met outside the hall and walked to the ice cream parlor, having previously agreed that that was to be their just reward for at least completing the battery.

Two days later by way of an appointment set the afternoon before, Miss Bunker came to call at the Livingson house in the company of Miss Mandy Hill. The children were out of the house and George was in the store, White Feathers wanted to attend the little meeting, but Belle would not hear of it. If this was to herald inauspicious tidings for her girls, she alone wished to be the one to receive the news. She had winnowed Titania and Hipolyta's several crates of studies and writings to one apiece, and gathered a crate-worth of Jameson's work as resources to any arguments she might feel compelled to make in their behalf. She greeted her guests with grace and her natural hospitality. They were seated around the great room and Belle served them tea.

“Mrs. Livingson,” began Miss Bunker, “Miss Hill has made me aware of your having apartments, of a sort, to let out.” Belle glanced naturally to Mandy, who winked, “And I was truly hoping to entreat you to consider allowing me the opportunity of leasing one of your suites for the duration of my stay in Tahoe City.”

Belle had to take a moment to readjust her attention. “You would be a most welcome guest of the Livingson Bungalow Lodges Miss Bunker.” She responded as pleasantly as she was able. “However,” she added, “Will it not be viewed as, well, my exerting some influence over your position and perhaps compromising your impartiality where my own children are concerned, as your students I mean to say?”

It was Miss Bunker's turn to make use of a moment and readjust. It was then that she realized she had wholly neglected her role as the herald of examination results. “I beg your forgiveness, please Mrs. Livingson, I am being terribly remiss.” She recovered quickly, “Here am I seeking my own comforts and ignoring your pre-imminent concerns as a mother.” She reach into her satchel and produced three parchments. She laid them face up on the table and turned them for Belle to view them directly. “I am very pleased, in fact personally honored, to confer this village School's first diplomas upon Jameson Aloysius Connor, Hipolyta Belle Livingson, and Titania Belle Livingson with top honors. I have also,” and she reached again into her bag and produced three unsealed envelopes and three sealed but unaddressed envelopes, “included my personal letters of recommendation of their, quite extraordinary, academic command and achievement.” She handed them to Belle with a broad smile and added rather sheepishly, “I never expected anything like the results they provided on their examinations from any children of their age, or any other for that matter. I only wish I had had a hand in their education.”

Belle looked from the envelopes to the diplomas, to the crates of studies sitting nearby, and finally to Mandy who had remained impatiently silent through the ordeal.

“Tell her about Harry, Belle!” Mandy burst out with at last.

Miss Bunker turned back to Belle and asked, “You have another son?”

and she glanced around involuntarily.

Belle gathered her strained wits about her and calmly explained that their son Henry was, this day in fact, "...beginning his first day of courses at Malvern College in England as a third year class-man, one of the 'Hundred' I believe."

Miss Bunker simply stared back at Belle, her demeanor faltering before the news. "Malvern College, England," she repeated.

Mandy intervened, "It's a young College to be sure, but it is reputed to be a most exemplary University..." Miss Bunker opened her mouth to speak and closed it again, causing Mandy to stop short. "Did you wish to say something, dear?"

"Malvern is apart of the Oxford Union, I have followed the publications of their debates for years." Miss Bunker stated simply.

"Oh," rejoined Belle and Mandy together without knowing the context of their appreciation of that fact, except that it seemed important to Sarah Bunker.

The ladies resorted to sipping tea quietly. At last Belle broke the silence. "Miss Bunker..."

Whereupon Miss Bunker responded quickly, "Please call me Sarah."

Belle continued, "As you wish, Sarah, I am Belle, and Mandy you know."

Mandy nodded smiling, and said, "Good, I was almost ready to scream. Thank goodness we can just be women now... At least amongst ourselves," she qualified.

"Sarah, we would be happy to have you with us here at the Lodges...Unreservedly. Would you care to tour the suites?" added Belle---all smiles now. Sarah accepted readily and the three ladies strolled around to the Lodges for more conversation and a tour.

The ladies chatted; Sarah oohed and aahed at all the right places. Among the topics under discussion were the twins' participation in the daily instruction at the school. "I am most taken with Hipolyta's handwriting and number formation, always so precise; she would provide

an excellent model of instruction for the younger one's as they attempt proper letter construction and also as they move from block letters to cursive--always such a challenge for the finer muscles of the hand and wrist." Belle simply nodded, as Mandy came from Bungalow Seven with a tray of refreshments, the ingredients for which she consistently maintained in 'her' rooms.

Sarah continued, "I wish I could convince Jameson to subscribe to at least a part-time presence at the school; it is so instructive for younger boys to have a role model of sorts, especially as they reach ten and eleven."

Mandy responded to this. "Jameson does look quite a bit older than his twelve years."

Sarah balked at this and nearly spewed her mouthful down her blouse. "Twelve? I actually could not understand why he was taking the testing at all. I thought he was past the prescribed age and merely gauging his abilities against a standard measure." The two friends politely ignored Sarah's little mess and Belle continued.

"I do not presume to categorize my children by tucking them under some fixed label of personality, you understand, yet it is most apparent that Titania is far more ready to spend time in the forest and mountains, or on horseback, than inside four walls however pleasant the accommodations." It was a wistful comment, to which both Mandy and Sarah responded readily.

"That is precisely how I was at her age," they both agreed in so many words. Belle was mildly surprised and thanked them for their understanding.

She admitted that between the girls, Hipolyta was the daughter she most tried to keep up with and sort out. "She's..." Belle began, but searched for an accurate yet non-labeled description.

Mandy intervened, "...a girly-girl, a lady's lady, all-woman..." she offered with a smile.

Belle conceded with a sigh of resignation that those were apt descriptors. It was Sarah's turn, "But Belle, you yourself are the very

epitome of elegance. Surely Hipolyta follows in your own footsteps.”

“Actually, I am of yours and Mandy's cloth. Give me the choice between the out-of-doors versus salons or boutiques, and I'll chance the dirty hands and feet every time. I do prefer to dress nicely, however.” They all smiled at her phrasing and each warmed to the bond of similarities and friendship that was strengthening between them.

Mandy invited the Livingson family and Sarah up to the Restaurant for dinner that evening, and assured the latter that Jameson and some other of her staff would remove her belongings to the Bungalows before then. So the ladies parted having a fresher and clearer view of the road immediately ahead of them, for the Autumn at least. The arrangements were coordinated and executed, the dinner hour approached, and Sarah Bunker walked with the Livingson's up the boardwalks to Miss Hill's.

The three diplomas were proudly displayed on the great room's walls. Titania and Hipolyta began their official duties as assistants of instruction at the School with little or no backlash from the students or their parents. Word had spread quickly, oddly enough, through the same families of the children who took the examinations at the same time as the Livingson's, but without as much success at all. There wasn't the jealousy nor envy which actually might otherwise have been expected. In fact, in its place there was a genuine regard for their accomplishments. Perhaps because of Harry's own trailblazing, in attending a British University, perhaps because of the 'educational fever' which had been ignited in the little village; whatever the cause, it seemed that the Council's 'remedy' to address the deleterious effects of the idle youth was at last beginning to have a positive impact on the community.

The School was able to move into its own facilities and grounds by the last week of September and lessons continued as they should. By the break between terms just before Thanksgiving, homes all through the village sported construction paper pilgrims and turkeys, red and green paper chains and all the other crafts projects which spring from the elementary classes of schools everywhere, like apples on apple trees. Sarah spent the holiday season more in the Livingson's home proper than alone in her

Bungalow. Her suite was kept warmed by the franklin stove, White Feathers saw to that, but the constant company of the family was far more inviting than the solitude of even the well-warmed quarters.

Hipolyta and Titania helped Sarah with preparations for the next term. Jameson spent more time in the kitchens during the restaurant's off-season learning the arts, processes and techniques of becoming a chef. Chef Paul, Paul Nigel—a most diligent bachelor—was only too glad to fill the idle days tutoring the lad, and Jameson was a quick study, eager and humble with a great admiration for his mentor. There were several new families around the village transplanted from more urban roots, and who were less able to initially cope with the harsh winters of the Sierra village. Mandy made sure Chef Paul's tutoring efforts for Jameson weren't just instructional; she had the meals delivered to the young and struggling families scattered around and within reach of the village.

White Feathers found that the head of one of those families, Melvin Pierce, a nice fellow with a pair of roan geldings stabled at the livery, had a real knack for husbandry and a serviceable business sense. No doubt if he'd had the wherewithal to afford quartering his own animals at home, he would have done so. White Feathers took him under wing. His wife was with their second child and he made sure that Melvin's time at the livery was well compensated. He discussed the matter with Jameson as if with a business partner, and of course to test the depths of Jameson's attachment to the livery in memory of his father. "I know dad loved the stables, it was all he'd ever done, kinda the way he wanted to raise me. I do still think of him every time I walk through the doors, but I also remember that he would give the shirt off his back to help give a leg up to a fella." White Feathers agreed, and recalled a few of those occasions to mind. Jameson concluded, "If you think Mr. Pierce can make a go of it after next Summer season... well, I am all for it." White Feathers was so proud of his 'grandson,' he could barely contain himself. He shook his hand on it, hugged him, and shook his hand again. The display was not lost on Jameson who was near to tears himself.

In Great Malvern near the town square just a ways down College road

stood the snow laced gothic spires and frosted wintry windows of Malvern College Main Building. Just forty-five or so steps away was School House, and on the first floor, up the wide stairs from the common room were the halls of rooms occupied by the Hundred and the Sixth Form, mostly. Harry was in one of those rooms packing his trunk with everything he would be taking with him for the holidays. The first term was challenging, not so much for the studies, but the school's culture, events, activities and clubs kept him so occupied and pulled this way and that, he was ready for the break of term. He was, truth be told, very much looking forward to his first English Christmas--with Boxing Day, Carols, Crackers, Father Christmas, and at Clive House, Hogmanay. Mrs. Allcock found it more than difficult to leave behind her own favorite holiday traditions when she moved from Aberdeen to marry Samuel.

Once seated on the train to Redditch, he pulled a few letters from his coat pocket, one from his sisters and two from Kaitlyn and Chloe. Truth be told, Hipolyta wrote and Titania was at her elbow reminding her to add a passage here and there to 'give Harry all the news.' Closer to home, it was Kaitlyn who actually did the letter-writing, and like the twins, it was Chloe who made sure she included the items which seemed also important to add. He read his sisters' account of their examination and of their diplomas mounted proudly on either side of the mantle. Hipolyta told him about the children she tutored and about their progresses, and about how much she admired Miss Bunker. Titania made sure that he knew they were missing him, and about how Jameson was being personally trained by the head chef. They sounded so grown up and he had to remind himself, he'd only been gone seven months. He read Kaitlyn's last letter he'd received just before term exams. She was looking forward to telling him about her role in the training company's first production of *Twelfth Night*. Chloe was now the busy Director of Staff at *The Rooms*, handling every little crisis with deliberation and resolve, and having the time of her life enjoying every day, rain or shine.

He tucked them back into his pocket. He gazed out over the ever-whitening fields rolling passed, and let the lines of one of the sonnets he'd memorized during the term echo through his thoughts.

*Quando fra l'altre donne ad ora ad ora
Amor vien nel bel viso di costei,
quanto ciascuna è men bella di lei
tanto cresce 'l desio che m'innamora.
I' benedico il loco e 'l tempo et l'ora
che sí alto miraron gli occhi mei,
et dico: Anima, assai ringratiar dêi
che fosti a tanto honor degnata allora.
Da lei ti vèn l'amoroso pensiero,
che mentre 'l segui al sommo ben t'invia,
pocho prezando quel ch'ogni huom desia;
da lei vien l'animosa leggiadria
ch'al ciel ti scorge per destro sentero,
sí ch'i' vo già de la speranza altero.*

The station platform in Redditch was slippery, but navigable. He crunched along the lanes to the gate, the garden and home. Olivia Allcock was entertaining her friend, Mrs. Kelsey, in the parlor. She rose instantly when she saw him pass the open doors. "Henry! How wonderful, you are earlier than expected." She took his arm and led him back into the parlor. "You recall my praises of Mrs. Kelsey."

He bowed politely to her friend, then she added to the lady still seated, "Mrs. Kelsey, this is Mr. Henry Livingson, at last." He held Mrs. Allcock's chair before he sat down himself.

Both ladies were smiling at him; "Henry, please have some tea," suggested Mrs. Kelsey as she poured him a cup.

"Thank you Mrs. Kelsey, that will warm me near as much as meeting yourself," he responded sincerely. "Mrs. Allcock defers to your observations often; I am so glad to at last have your acquaintance."

"Olivia, you weren't exaggerating, Mr. Livingson is a treasure," gushed Dorothea Kelsey to her friend.

"I would find it difficult to contemplate exaggeration, Dorothea, no one accepts the notion of living saints any longer." At least Harry provided the two women a new subject with which to practice their wit. They went

on like that while he sat smiling and enjoying their very feminine company, from the ranks of whom he had been so removed of late.

Chloe was needed during the bulk of the holidays at *The Rooms*, the burdens of success; so Kaitlyn would be traveling on her own to Redditch on the four o'clock train from Stratford. They made plans to return together and fetch Chloe at the start of the week. Mrs. Allcock, in the meantime, lavished her attentions upon Kaitlyn as if she were a second step-daughter. The parlor entertainment disbanded with Mr. Kelsey's arrival at Clive House. They waved farewell to the departing couple in their barouche from under the porte-cochère at the side hall entrance.

"I suppose I should freshen a bit before we fetch Kaitlyn," commented Harry as they reentered the entrance hall. He thanked Mrs. Allcock again for the charming company upon his arrival which so increased his spirits, and went up the broad stairway to the first floor and his rooms. A fire was already burning in the tiled insert fireplace; his suite was very comfortable. He still wore his school uniform and robes, and would not have a change of clothes until before dinner. He left his trunk at the station; they would pick it up when they returned by carriage for Kaitlyn and her baggage, which they did just before Mr. Allcock returned home from the factory offices for the evening. He, too, would be in and out of the offices for the next couple days until his daughter's return. Before dinner, as they divested their luggage of the presents prepared for the upcoming occasions, they each found opportunity to secretly sneak them beneath the lovely decorated tree in the Drawing Room.

Before the late dinner, Mrs. Allcock and Kaitlyn joined Mr. Allcock and Harry in the billiards room where the men were playing Snooker. The gentlemen were half through the reds when Mrs. Allcock and Kaitlyn began a lively debate regarding the differences in spelling and pronunciation between certain English and American words and terms. The gentlemen played on a few turns without evincing any interest until the ladies decided between themselves, quite aloud, that the word: *gruntled* should be stricken from both versions of the language. It was neither properly descriptive, nor pleasant on the ears as its definition might indicate. Then

they went about brainstorming for an alternative which would meet the criteria for which *grunted* fell so short.

Whereupon Mr. Allcock stopped mid-cue and stood looking at them with the blank look of disbelief. "You can't be seriously deciding upon the revision of the language from our billiard parlor, and over *grunted*..."

At that juncture Mrs. Allcock interrupted, "Not over-grunted, dear, just grunted." And she turned back to Kaitlyn, neither of them giving Mr. Allcock a second glance.

"I didn't say over-grunted," he replied, "I said you can't be making such a fuss over the word, grunted."

His wife returned curtly that she had not misheard him, he had distinctly said 'over-grunted,' to which she added, "Really Samuel, I don't think that is even a proper application of the term. We are certainly not, after all."

He had by now put down his cue and had come to where they stood. "You aren't what after all?"

"Over-grunted, of course. Kaitlyn and I are simply and methodically peeling you away from your snooker game that's all." She finished and turned back to Kaitlyn, who could no longer keep her straight face. Harry was chuckling and putting away his cue as well.

"Sir, you have been outmaneuvered. Shall we subscribe to the ladies good pleasures? It seems they'll have none of ours." He patted his benefactor on the back as Samuel smiled and wagged a finger at his wife, whose turn now it was to adopt the blank look, but of near feigned innocence.

They strolled to the Drawing Room, Olivia on her husband's arm and Kaitlyn upon Harry's. They seated themselves around a low table on settees arranged for conversation. "Mrs. Allcock, you might have done well in the theater; your performance just now was very convincing," commented Kaitlyn to the lady across from her.

"That's sweet dear. Before the late Mr. Playfair passed on, he was very ill and left the operation of his shops in my charge. Before a suitable

manager could be found, I had a good deal of practice presenting a stern face for the craftsmen one moment, and of sympathy and compassion for my dying husband the next. One does what one must do,” she replied, receiving a squeeze of her hand from her present husband in admiration. “But that introduces a happy topic. How have your own exercises developed at the Memorial Theater in Stratford?”

Kaitlyn grinned, “Oh, they have progressed well indeed. Our training company was required to make production of Act One from *What You Will*. We contrived that I should, from offstage, sing the melody that prompts the good Duke to offer up his opening line...”

Harry spoke at the cue, “*If music be the food of love, play on; Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting, the appetite may sicken, and so die. That strain again! it had a dying fall: O! It came o'er my ear like the sweet sound That breathes upon a bank of Violets, Stealing and giving odour...*”

“Just so, Harry, just so...” Mr. Allcock remarked, rapt with the intercourse. “Miss Spelman, please relive the melody for us.”

Kaitlyn smiled and obliged. In a lyric voice, rising and falling pleasantly with the lines, she sang hauntingly:

*When that I was a little tiny boy
With a heigh-ho, the wind and the rain
A foolish thing was but a toy
For the rain it raineth ev`ry day*

*But when I came to man`s estate
With a heigh-ho, the wind and the rain
`Gainst thieves and knaves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth ev`ry day.*

*But when I came, alas!, to wive
With a heigh-ho, the wind and the rain
By swaggering never could I thrive,
For the rain it raineth ev`ry day.
A great while ago the world begun*

With a heigh-bo, the wind and the rain...

They applauded with gusto, and gave her the right praises befitting her rendition. "There's a fine theme mixed in there withal I do say, 'But when I came to man's estate, against thieves and knaves men shut their gate...' Do you not think so, Harry?" winked Mr. Allcock.

"I should think it were common sense, sir. Although all too uncommon I'm afraid." He responded cautiously.

"Uncommon indeed," returned his benefactor. "But here now, this is the season of goodwill towards men, let's suppose the best for our fellows, and be thankful for our blessings."

"Here, here," answered Olivia and said, "Shall we dine? Betty has prepared a special dinner in your honors."

They reassembled around one end of the long Dining Room table beyond the seasonal centerpiece of holly and yew boughs, surmounted by lit candles. Betty's two kitchen maids came and went from the dining hall, bringing out traditional American Christmas dishes for the guests of honor. Harry and Kaitlyn were delighted and supplied their own nostalgic anecdotes of Yuletides past adding to the gay atmosphere of the evening. Fruitcake and custard were set out for a dessert, and though burgeoning almost to bursting, they enjoyed the end of the feast.

"Thank you so much for setting this Christmas season off to a happy start for Harry and me," announced Kaitlyn as benediction to the evening before they all retired to the warm rooms awaiting them for the night.

"My dears, you are most welcome. We could not help ourselves but to make every circumstance for your holidays as amenable as possible in fond remembrance of your absent families," answered Olivia in parting.

Harry saw Kaitlyn to the door of her boudoir and gave her an embrace of great satisfaction. "Ooh, careful young master I'm nearly ready to pop already!" whispered Kaitlyn, and smiling, closed her door softly.

Harry and Kaitlyn went out the next day into the town, each had last minute purchases to make to complete their inventory of gifts. Wandering from shop to shop, they caught up on all that had transpired between their

last correspondence and the present. As they passed the train station, Kaitlyn gasped, "Oh look," and she smiled. There, just stepping out of her train compartment was Chloe, three days ahead of her anticipated arrival. They rushed through the station house to greet her. "Chloe!" Kaitlyn cried and fell on her neck with a great hug as if they had been parted longer than the twenty-four hours it had been. "How are you here?"

Grinning with the joy of her welcome, she embraced Harry and answered that Mrs. Smythe-Wilkins received a cancellation letter from the only two boarders expected for the holiday, and promptly walked her to the Stratford depot herself and put her on the train. All over her own protests for at least taking the time during the lull to bring the rooms each back up to state standards. "So, here I am. Without a present purchased nor crafted, and with my own dearest two friends for the holiday."

"Where is your luggage?" asked Harry looking up and down the platform.

She laughed, "I am not so encumbered as yourselves must be to travel. I am simply between two homes; this small valise is all I require to return to Clive House." And Harry, at once, relieved her of the small bag, leaving her arms free to take Kaitlyn's arm as they went back onto the street.

"Harry and I were just searching for last minute items ourselves. Would you care to begin your own search with us?"

"Delighted," answered Chloe. Harry ducked back into the station and charged the porter with minding her valise until they should return for it on their way back to Clive House.

They were now three together again, and the high spirits with which Harry and Kaitlyn had begun the day were now trebled as well. Over hot cocoa at the cafe, they made a brief list of stops for the shops Chloe knew she would find the majority of her surprises. The girls were, to Harry's eye, as sound of body and spirit as ever he had seen them. They spoke with the voices of women of purpose, and even the girlish banter which sprinkled their conversations was gilded with the genuineness of heartfelt joy, lacking the trivial frivolity so mechanically tittered by other young women

tiresomely and without depth. And he noticed something was definitely lingering just in the wings of Chloe's happiness that did not seem to arise from their serendipitous reunion. He mused on it and patiently waited.

They began their commercial expedition and every so often Chloe would roam amongst the shelves of some emporium and glance, unnoticed, over to her companions idly waiting for her quest's success. She confirmed for herself what Kaitlyn would not confess, nor what Harry would yet acknowledge. She, for herself, was only just recently made aware of the hints of expression and gesture which revealed to the careful eye, the heart's own true longing. It was on this account she was pleased that she might for a little while longer postpone her arrival to Clive House and her father. She was expecting a hurriedly arranged visit from a most special someone, and hoped to have all well prepared against that occasion before the appointed time.

They were just passing Millward's when of a sudden Chloe insisted upon a visit with the old tailor. The opening door tinkled their arrival and Mr. Bessamer appeared as was his wont. Recognizing their faces at once he reached out a hand to greet them more warmly. "Mr. Livingson, how good to see you again. Malvern has been fair to you I hear."

"Yes sir, she is teaching me the meaning of 'schedule' to be sure," answered Harry.

"An' Miss Spelman, more radiant even than our last encounter." She blushed involuntarily.

"Miss Allcock," he smiled deeply with what seemed a happy sigh, "It is always a most particular honor to greet you in my little shop." Chloe curtsied and replied, "As it is for me, Sir."

The formality of the otherwise casual meeting was not lost on Harry nor Kaitlyn. Chloe continued, "How is your Harold fairing in his enterprises?"

"Our Harold is very soon to be home for the holidays. His letters have been quite full of his successes in each of his passionately pursued endeavors, ma'am." Mr. Bessamer answered with the pride always employed in his every reference of his most regarded son.

“That is indeed great good news, Mr. Bessamer. We shall no doubt see each other again before the holidays are through, but so long as we are here just now I wonder if you should have a selection of gloves on offer?”

Harry and Kaitlyn, as they had in each shop thus far, whispered between themselves while Chloe inspected the proffered handiworks. After she had chosen a pair of blue gloves with white piping, she paid for them and bid 'dear' Mr. Bessamer farewell. She turned to her friends and they continued upon their Christmas questing. It was not lost on Harry that the colors of her new-bought gloves were the House colors of Number Two, Malvern College.

The trio stopped at the station and retrieved Chloe's valise then strolled through the chill air of the late December afternoon to Clive House and home. Chloe's father and step-mother were beside themselves with surprise at her early arrival and after she was situated in her rooms once more they gathered in the parlor for tea. Cakes and biscuits were served and the conversation again revolved around the adventures met during their last several months apart. Chloe added her own presents to the gathering hill of wrapped gifts beneath the little tree in the Drawing Room and the trio took a turn or two up and down the Long Gallery fronting the modest great house. Harry asked after their progress on their personal journeys and was regaled of their every effort in unnoticed service and humble dedication to furthering their understanding and reformation of un-useful attitudes and ideas. He offered his own accounts of adjusting to the hectic social requirements of University life and of the new acquaintances he'd made. “And to top it all off, the fishing on the Severn was off when last I wet a line.”

“Ah, poor Harry,” consoled the ladies, feigning concern for his pretense of disappointment.

“Miss Chloe,” announced the Steward of Clive House as he approached, “Mr. Allcock has asked that you join him in the Library, please.” A pang of excitement washed through her at the announcement and she hastily followed the Steward from the Gallery. Harry and Kaitlyn looked after her, and then at each other. They walked casually to the Sitting

Room adjacent to the Library and sat quietly trying to hear the words of the muffled voices coming through the thick double doors separating the rooms.

Within moments Mrs. Allcock opened the doors to the Sitting room they had been unable to penetrate. Within, they saw Mr. Allcock rise from a chair and Harold Bessamer and Chloe stand at the same time. "Harold Bessamer?" Harry began to Mrs. Allcock as she approached, smiling. "What business brought young Mr. Bessamer to Mr. Allcock on a chilly December day?" he asked aloud.

Mrs. Allcock did not answer, but turned to face the party emerging from the Library. "Chloe, what is this about?" Kaitlyn questioned her companion.

"It's about the best news I have been privileged to receive since the end of August last," she answered holding Kaitlyn's hands in hers, and she turned to her father and Harold.

Mr. Bessamer, grinned broadly and shook Mr. Allcock's hand then Harry's. "Mr. Allcock has consented that I shall have the sublime honor of hoping for his daughter's hand in marriage when once I have secured house and fortune enough befitting so wonderful a lady." The small gathering erupted in cheers, laughter and tears of joy. Harold was thumped soundly upon his back and his hands were again shaken vigorously by both Harry and Mr. Allcock. Chloe was embraced and praised for her discernment and future distinction.

Kaitlyn erupted with, "But Chloe when did you two even have a moment together? I've been your constant companion these last weeks and months?"

"My precious friend, you have been away at the Memorial theater for long hours every day. Harold has been courting me every Tuesday and Friday during his trips to Stratford once his company's business was dispatched."

"And you hadn't breathed a word of this to me!" rejoined Kaitlyn at this news. She decided instantly to be thoroughly impressed with her friend's circumspection, and felt at once how terribly difficult it must have

been for Chloe to remain silent, day after day, and night after night. “Oh, I am so happy for you, and so proud to be your companion.” She erupted and hugged her friend once more.

Mr. Allcock turned to Harry, “Surprised the hell out of me! But Mr. Bessamer here made a fine argument for his case.”

Olivia Allcock added, “Indeed he did; the first words from his mouth to inaugurate his proposition were, 'Mr. Allcock, I love your daughter Chloe more than my own life.' Needless to say he had Samuel's attention and full approbation of his tastes from the outset.”

Samuel added, “And if that had not sealed it, when I asked Chloe for her thoughts about the proposal, she simply said, 'Oh Daddy, I love him.' My own part in this was a formality to be sure,” and he feigned a resigned sigh.

The company laughed with the happy couple at this and relaxed in the Sitting room before dinner was called. “You will stay with us for dinner Mr. Bessamer,” Olivia beseeched him.

“Madam, I am at your bidding. I have no other business so dear to me in the world than to stay at the side of this beautiful woman here.” Chloe squeezed his hand in hers, and they walked with the rest of the household to the Dining Room. It was a Homecoming to be remembered with greatest joy by all present.

Following dinner they reassembled in the Drawing Room. Chloe didn't want the evening to end and so suggested a parlor game. “What shall it be? Ball of Wool, Shadows, Shopkeepers, Proverbs, Charades, Blindman's Bluff...” She rattled off diversion after diversion until someone seconded one of them. At last it seemed the consensus that Blindman's Bluff would do for a start, that they should have forfeits and see where the fun went from there.

“Mrs. Allcock, may we move your furniture back some to clear the playing field?” asked Harold, eyeing the collection of shin-bruises.

“Harold,” she answered, “you are near family now and this room is one of our family's retreats. We do not stand upon formalities here. Call me

Olivia and my husband you may refer to as Samuel. It is a little thing, I know, but it offers us the impression of being removed from the bustle of polite society. And, yes; do let's move the timber out of our way."

The gentlemen opened up the field and Chloe suggested Kaitlyn should be the first to be blind-folded. She produced a scarf and with a mischievous smile explained to Kaitlyn the game. "I think I am familiar with this sport," responded Kaitlyn.

"Can you see anything?" asked Chloe, once the blindfold was in place. Kaitlyn affirmed she could not. "Now remember, only touch---and no faces..." then she twirled her friend in circles until the assembly was satisfied she was disoriented. She then motioned the others to back up and hold their positions. She laid a finger to her lips reminding them to be silent. The gentlemen were of nearly the same height, as were the ladies. Only Samuel's beard distinguished him from the others, and there were to be 'no faces.'

Kaitlyn held her arms in front of her and teetered in the direction of Olivia. Olivia quickly removed the shawl she was wearing on her shoulders and tossed it to her daughter, then let her hair down so that it fell to her shoulders in the fashion of Chloe's coiffure. This solicited grins from the others who had to be careful not to laugh aloud. Kaitlyn neared and her hands just touched Olivia's sleeve. She gently felt her arm with both hands then moved to her shoulders, grazing Olivia's tresses. She then ran her hands back down to the woman's waist and declared, "This fine lady is... Olivia!"

Olivia affirmed her guess aloud and with a slight disappointment that her ruse was unsuccessful she went to sit down and watch the continuing game. Kaitlyn turned and started back across the floor, hands held high once more. She approached Harry, and Chloe was grinning from ear to ear as her friend approached their mentor. Harold tossed his own Malvern ring to Harry, who caught it and placed it on his finger. She reached him and her hands were flat upon his chest. She explored his shoulders and down his arms to his hands, which she held in hers for a moment then declared, "This fine gentleman is... Harold!" Whereupon, Chloe cried out a forfeit

and Kaitlyn removed her blindfold. She looked full into Harry's eyes, now glinting with humor.

“Tricked by a ring!” she exclaimed and looked to Harold who offered a most innocent expression in return.

“Kaitlyn, how did you determine it was me and not Chloe?” pried Olivia.

“Chloe's waist is this,” she pantomimed with her hands ringing an imaginary waist, “And your waist is this.” She brought her hands slightly closer together. All the while careful not to mention her own knowledge of her friend's wardrobe contrivances of late.

“That is a surprising judgement for so subtle a difference.” remarked Olivia, not just a little flattered.

“Harry you are it,” announced Chloe. Kaitlyn wrapped the scarf around Harry's eyes and secured it tightly. “Can you see anything?” she asked and stuck her tongue out at him to gauge his answer of, “No.” She spun him around in the midst of the rearranged group and took up a position between Samuel and Chloe.

Harry walked slowly toward Harold. Again some shifting of wardrobe and jewelry was made between Samuel and himself. As Harry came to within a foot of Harold's face and still had not raised his hands. He paused for a moment, laid a hand upon Harold's chest and declared, “This fine gentleman is... Harold.” Harold shrugged and went to sit outside the circle. Harry next walked straight across to Chloe and again paused as he came very near. He reached out and touched her arm lightly, “This fine lady is... Chloe.” She went to join her betrothed. The singular process repeated until all were sitting, leaving only Kaitlyn before him. As she was the last standing, he still had to 'find' her in the room. And at last he resorted to raising his hands slightly. The seated players began calling, “You're getting colder,” or “You're getting warmer...” until Harry grazed Kaitlyn's shoulder. He made the final declaration and the players applauded his feat.

Samuel just had to ask, since Harry had only made the slightest touch of each player before making a declaration, “How did you do it, lad?”

Harry smiled and confessed, "Samuel you wear a musk cologne, Harold smells slightly of sandalwood, Olivia is roses and chamomile, Chloe is roses and chamomile also but with a faint scent of sandalwood, for obvious reasons." That admission raised eyes and prompted sighs from the others, "Seeing is highly overrated at times," he added.

Kaitlyn had to hear what was her scent to him, although she was the last and therefore needn't have been determined as the others had been. Harry looked her directly and said, "Kaitlyn, you are the fragrance of freshest spring and the dawning of every new morning to me." The women aahed at this, and the gentlemen praised his good sense, to which he responded innocently, "But she is; I don't know how else to describe the aroma of her to me."

This won Harry a ready embrace from her, and a well-deserved kiss, again to the approbation of the others. "Alright, how about Charades?" Chloe announced, and they brought the furniture back into the positions each item had formerly resided. The diversions went on like this until Olivia declared it was indeed getting late and Harold should attempt to get home before he froze to the street thus ruin the bright future now before them. They all walked their guest to the foyer and bid him good night, leaving Chloe alone to see him out.

Breakfast the next morning was a little later than usual on account of their very late retirement. Harry received a summons from Chloe and Kaitlyn by way of Hamis, the steward, to meet them after his coffee and toast in the gymnasium. Harry had never been into the gymnasium and didn't know of its existence. He applied to Hamis to guide him there. Through a hitherto unnoticed doorway off the Long Gallery, Harry descended a little lighted flight of steps down into the Clive House undercroft. He opened the only door and emerged into a high ceilinged open room, well-lit and ventilated. The ladies were on tumbling mats at the far end when he entered and they called him over to them.

"This is marvelous." He said as he joined them, still looking at the space, the exercise equipment around the walls, and the ladies attire. They wore close-fitting leggings and loose blouses, which allowed for a greater

expression of movement. Chloe explained the undercroft. "My father had this area built into the Clive House foundations primarily for my own entertainment. I remember many happy hours of play down here."

Kaitlyn explained their unusual wardrobe. "We made these outfits so that we could more easily pursue our physical inclinations," she began, "we have been slipping into the theater practice rooms after hours and improving on our already capable movements and forms." They demonstrated. Each girl took a corner of the large mat surface and with a few bounding steps, executed front handsprings into forward airborne somersaults. Harry was very impressed and said so.

"We have been working at back flips," added Kaitlyn and she bent backward until her hands reached the floor behind her and her feet left the ground, stepping one after the other to bring her into a forward stance once more. She smiled broadly at her feat. Chloe did the same and followed with a rapid succession of two more, the last one was nearly airborne.

"You two have certainly not wasted any time. I learned those acrobatics by picking up twigs from the yard for our winter kindling," he offered.

"It was remembering your every move of that last day on the road near the White's house that prompted our determination to achieve what you had demonstrated," they admitted to Harry's delighted expression. "We can't actually perform any of this when we're dressed for public intercourse, naturally..." added Kaitlyn, "but we have made these knitted camisoles that are tight enough to... perform the proper function of, uh... restraint, and still allow for a broad range of motion;" they were proud of their ingenuity in adapting clothing to the rigors of their discipline.

Chloe stated, "Of course none of this would be necessary if we weren't such bushel bunnies." They heaved up their ample chests, sighed, and wagged their heads in mock shame.

Harry chuckled at the antics. "Well would you like to try an exercise in eye-to-hand dexterity?" he asked, noticing a collection of croquet balls racked on the near wall. They were game, and he fetched three apiece.

With the three in his own hands, "Watch closely," he began to juggle them, tossing them relatively high above his head so they could catch the required movements of his hands, and the increased rhythm as he lowered the height of successive tosses. "There, now you try."

The girls made a few aborted attempts, but gradually were able to keep the balls aloft quite well. "Good," Harry commended, "now here's the game of it: we all commence juggling and on command we toss one ball to the person next to us without breaking rhythm and incorporate the newly passed ball into our own set."

"Well, that sounds simple enough," said Chloe in unmasked sarcasm.

"Now don't be cheeky," said Harry and began tossing the spheres into the air again. The girls followed suit and once their rhythms were fairly compatible, he called for a shift. The first trial actually worked. They continued at the same tempo, he called shift again, though balls fell to the floor at this attempt.

"Oh, so close! We did it the first time, though," commented the girls, and they were now determined that they should keep at it until they could make multiple passes without dropping a single ball.

They kept at it for the space of perhaps three quarters of an hour in alternating failed and successful attempts. Then as if on cue, Harry called shift at every toss and the trio were juggling nine balls between them as if practicing for a circus act. It was sublime, and Chloe and Kaitlyn just grinned with the sheer pleasure of accomplishment, never taking their eyes from the bobbing orbs. Harry called a cease to the passing; they juggled their own spheres and stopped. Harry simply said, "Tada!" and they all laughed at their impressive performance. "The next step is to not focus your eyes on the balls at all, just keep your eyes relaxed and allow your hands and arms to do the work on their own. Ultimately, it can be done with your eyes closed. They gasped at the suggestion, but were equally intent upon mastering the new activity.

The girls went up to their rooms by a back stairwell out of sight from the house's common traffic. They showed Harry the doors and panel behind which they would emerge and instructed him on precisely how to

open it from upstairs. They met downstairs for brief luncheon and then set off for a walk to the tailor's shop.

The holidays were a smashing success; Harold was a very enjoyable addition to their celebrations. After New Year's day they began to prepare for returning to their places in the world at large--- Harry to Malvern and the Lent term, the ladies to their vocations in Stratford. More assurances of correspondence and hugs goodbye, and they were once again installed in their various situations. While on the train, Harry began letters to his sisters and parents about the holidays in Redditch. He put away the unfinished missives when the train arrived at the little station in Great Malvern where he then made his way on to School House.

The spring term at Tahoe City School recommenced in mid-February. Titania and Hipolyta picked up their duties once more. The only comment that Titania voiced, which may have sounded the least bit unfavorable, was that she 'had never worn such nice clothes, so often before.' Although, the rest of the family noticed it was Titania, instead of her sister, who spent a bit of extra time at the mirror every morning. Miss Bunker was settling nicely into the village's social fabric. She made house calls to conference with the parents of all her students. For some children these were welcome visits and opportunities for showing the pride of their work; for others it was not.

Jameson was officially promoted to assistant chef and his time in the kitchens increased. The slack made at the Livery, as a result, was filled by Mr. Pierce whom White Feathers relied upon in increasing measure. Belle and George tended the daily routines of the store and lodges assisted in the afternoons by the girls. Life in the little village was improved. The hooligan menace had abated dramatically, and there was a new found civic pride in the younger members of the community. Some parents who had not given their children much attention before, now at the least, were attending the frequent performances and school contests. Those who had always made efforts to raise their scions properly, enjoyed the addition of formal assistance made through the school's Mistress and her lieutenants.

By the end of the term a commencement was held for the graduating

class. Four girls and two boys proudly walked to the front of the contrived stage in the Council Chambers, converted to a makeshift auditorium for the event. Each received a diploma and each were applauded boisterously by their peers and parents. Miss Bunker had a plaque made for the rear wall of the schoolhouse which read in relief letters across the top: Graduating Classes of Tahoe City School. Brass plates inscribed with the names of each year's classes were to be mounted, in succession, after commencement exercises were completed. The newly graduated class of '85, the second brass plate, was thus installed on the plaque with great pomp and ceremony at the conclusion of the awarding of diplomas. The town folk made a point of inspecting the display once all was said and done; some even making rubbings for scrapbooks back home. What they also saw, prominently presented just below the title at the top of the walnut plaque, there for all the village to see and remember, on the first brass plate were the three names of the School's first graduates--the class of '84: Jameson Aloysius Connor, Hipolyta Belle Livingson, and Titania Belle Livingson. Three of the proudest young people in the village.

By late March Harold was offered, and accepted, a junior directorship with the company he had joined out of University. That paved the way for Chloe and his setting a date for their nuptials in late May. Clive House was the scene of frenetic activity from their reception of the announcement forward to the named date of the blessed union. Harold came to Malvern, ostensibly upon business, and spent the afternoon with Harry. They discussed Harold's proffered position, his hopes for their new home in Stratford, and Harry's own background. Harold sat enthralled as Harry told of his family and his childhood, including his personal stories and responses to the training disciplines. He needed no longer to keep anything about his relationships confidential or masked from the future husband of his own student. Harold was so taken by the descriptions of the Sierras and of the Great Tahoe, he wondered aloud how fitting a Honeymoon destination it would make for Chloe. Harry knew, in some depth, what Chloe's response would be to that suggestion, and without hesitation he offered to arrange their stay at the Livingson Bungalow Lodges. Harold was ecstatic with the anticipation of presenting the

suggestion to Chloe. He would contact Harry immediately with instructions to proceed with the plans once he gained her approval. Two days later Harold and Chloe separately contacted Harry through telegram of their pure delight at the proposed Honeymoon destination.

Kaitlyn was just weeks away from completing the year's course of instruction at the Memorial Theater when she received an unexpected telegram from her father. Yolanda Spelman had succumbed to an incidence of cholera during a trip with her husband to Japan. Her father was understanding in that he did not expect his daughter to abandon her training immediately, but hoped she would be amenable to returning to Ohio and helping him sort through the requisite challenges his wife's death left their little family, after her term had ended. She was disconsolate for two days. Harry arrived on that weekend to offer what assistance he could to Chloe's efforts in consolation for their friend. Kaitlyn, it turned out, was not so disarmed by her mother's death as by the imminent leave-taking she must endure. One thing she was sure of, that she most certainly would be present as maid of honor for her closest friend on the occasion of her wedding.

On the issue of Kaitlyn's return to America following the wedding, Harry was perhaps most helpful. He wired his father and mother again to book rooms for several weeks of the mid-summer season, this time for Mr. Spelman and Kaitlyn. Then he contacted Mr. Spelman personally by wire, offering his parents' lodges in Tahoe as a retreat to himself and Kaitlyn as they regained their footing. Mr. Spelman was thankful for the offer and acquiesced to his daughter's whole-hearted support of the invitation. Kaitlyn was jubilant at the prospect. For himself, Harry enrolled for the Summer Term at Malvern and set his mind to completing his education with that hallowed institution within the shortest time practicable, driven by an imperative which he could not satisfactorily define.

All but a few of the sporting societies at Malvern retained a serviceable membership during Summer Term. Gymnastics was both a required activity and also the center of an orbit of students who were highly proficient in the more strenuous disciplines of artistic and acrobatic gymnastics. As

Harry had become a dominant force in both, his decision to remain through the summer was welcomed heartily by instructors and practitioners alike. It was difficult to find someone of Harry's caliber to participate in the acrobatics, though in the artistic floor exercises and rings, and other individual disciplines Harry was alone in expertise and flourish.

Sport has always been apart of the Malvern experience, yet it was not Harry's intention to let gymnastics become his be all and end all; in fact it was for him more of an outlet for continuing his own regimen of flexibility and creative response. The library was his domain of choice. He received full marks during his Hundred year, largely due to it covering subjects and skills for which he had already demonstrated mastery. The sixth form should provide some challenges and he relished the prospects, hence his residency of the library and reading rooms of the College.

Harold and Chloe's wedding took place, fortunately, between terms for Harry. He arrived at Clive House and assisted where he could, yet this event was already under the capable administration of Olivia Allcock, and his assistance was moot. The gardens were made ready for the ceremony with all the attendant accessories purchased or rented for the occasion. Kaitlyn spent as much time in his company as she could manage in the midst of her own responsibilities to the bride to be. She was most anxious to have all his attentions as this would be the last time she would see him for the indefinite future. She was cheerful, attentive, solemn, at times playful, and absolutely determined that Harry should acknowledge his intentions of future companionship before she departed. Which he recognized and avowed at their every meeting.

It was a most beautiful occasion and the reception was bacchic, by Victorian standards. Some couples were always dancing if there was music playing. Wine, beer, champagne and gin flowed as if in fountains, and it wasn't simply the well-connected and well-heeled in attendance. Mr. Allcock made welcome all the craftsmen of the factory and their families who wished to attend. Had not the musicians had to surrender at three in the morning, it is likely the celebration would have raged until the dawn. Harold and Chloe, the new Mr. and Mrs. Bessamer, were to board the

R.M.S. *Britanic* for New York and then set off by train to San Francisco---part of the conditions for Harold's extensive honeymoon holiday from the offices was to deliver certain matters personally into the hands of his counterpart there, only then to enjoy the sights and settling in Tahoe for an extended stay.

Kaitlyn was to travel with them as far as Cleveland, and both Chloe and Harold were glad of her company. Harry saw them to the docks in Liverpool to bid them each a most fond farewell, then he would return to Malvern. At Chloe's urging, Kaitlyn was alone with Harry for the space of half an hour before sailing. She allowed him to offer her cautions and reminders for her journeys, personal and terrestrial. Then just before their brief time expired, she insisted that he hold her and she embraced him with all the fervor in her heart. Harry responded in kind. Truth be told, as a result he was more than just a little absent-minded during his train trip back to Malvern.

Harry's new intercourse with all his friends and family was now through correspondence only. He was dutiful in response to the plethora of letters. His own engagements at the College began with alignment of a new focus. The new Headmaster made good his open-door offer to Harry, and prior to the first day of classes they sat and outlined a course of studies which would yield the results from his academic career that would set him well prepared for his future path. Harry wished to pursue architecture. Although Malvern was not ideally equipped to prepare him in this regard, the Reverend Mr. Grundy had contacts in that field and assured Harry he would endeavor to arrange tutelage should it come to that. It did.

One of the headmaster's acquaintances was a central figure in the planning and design studios of Alfred Waterhouse, a most prominent architect. An apprenticeship was arranged and Harry embarked upon his fledgeling vocation while still maintaining his Malvern studies. The intervening terms between his beginning Sixth Form and the summer of his commencement flew by him like a blur.

Mr. and Mrs. Bessamer bid a brief farewell to their traveling companion in Cleveland, hoping to see her and her father before the

month's end in Tahoe. Mr. Spelman met his daughter at the station and they returned to the Spelman estate north of the city. Lawrence Spelman had begun the arduous process of the disposition of properties no longer deemed useful to themselves, or which might be better employed in the use of others. This left household decisions to be made and Lawrence was not up to the task. He had been absent the estate upon business through a majority of their residence; so it was up to Kaitlyn to determine the disposition of everything connected to the house and grounds. What was a surprise to her, although not disquieting, was her father's determination to no longer occupy her childhood home. What could be set into storage against a future home was to be crated and removed, the rest was to be auctioned. Fortunately for Mr. Spelman, his daughter was more than a match for the task. Since her training and discipline of reason had been well inaugurated and honed during her year's absence. Indeed, Mr. Spelman was much impressed with his daughter's even-mindedness with regard to every decision and determination.

When at last all provisions for the property and estate were concluded, they boarded the train for Tahoe and did not look back. Two travelers without a home harbor, but with a well anticipated destination: the Livingston Bungalow Lodges, Tahoe City, California. Within several days they were on the River Road from the Truckee Station to the little village. George and Belle greeted them as if they were returning family, indeed Harry had made so thorough his frequent mention of one or the other of the Spelmans that they did consider them more than mere acquaintances. Titania, Hipolyta and Jameson made Kaitlyn their instant intimate and set about giving her the grand tour of all their favorite haunts. Within the first few days an observer would be hard-pressed to determine who was the local and whom the visitor.

George and White Feathers included Lawrence in their weekend fishing expeditions. He was soon rejuvenated through their company and the restorative succor passively provided by the Sierras, and her crown jewel, the great Tahoe. So restored in fact, that he began to ride out with Titania and Jameson along the Lakeside Road with an eye to available properties and the inclination that he would consider remaining as a

resident of the area. Had he mentioned any of this to Kaitlyn, there would have been no argument.

Belle took her under her wing and treated her as her own daughter. They were constantly in each other's company as Belle went about her various and many duties and responsibilities of home and Lodges. Kaitlyn assisted the twins in each of their chores and after two weeks of the visit, Titania and Hipolyta were her avowed and devoted sisters. It was then that Kaitlyn broached the subject of their own training and opened a new theater of conversation. She was timid to even speak of it at first, so strong an injunction against the discussion of her personal experiences she had set for herself, but here again the twins were a balm of relief to her.

Hipolyta insisted they take Kaitlyn on an overnight across the lake, and having received Mr. Spelman's hearty approval and Belle's encouragement, they did just that. With the twins at the oars in the stern of the larger boat, they set off across the waters of the lake. Kaitlyn was more than delighted to be allowed to row, and after some brief instruction, was wielding the oar powerfully and 'shifting' as if the training had been hers as well. When they settled for camp that afternoon, the three young women turned their attentions to other aspects of the training, and it was here also that Kaitlyn was prepared for nearly every move and counter. She quickly absorbed what Hipolyta and Titania were able to offer her of that which she had been unaware. The result being that Kaitlyn was more a Livingston woman when they returned home than she thought she could ever be. Almost.

Belle sat up with her one evening on the occasion of one of the men's weekly fishing trips and turned the conversation intentionally to the subject of her son. "When will you convince Harry to ask for your hand?" She posed without prelude to Kaitlyn's spontaneously blushing cheeks. Belle continued, seeing she had hit the mark in one, "For you will have to *win* him outright, and then inform him of the change in management. My son is brilliant at everything he touches, however he can be as dense as two thick planks on those rare occasions when his own heart is in play."

Kaitlyn had gathered her composure and set upon answering the

imperative of her having to *win* Harry, to the elegant and formidable woman before her. “Mrs. Livingston...”

“Call me Belle.”

“Belle. I am just a girl compared to those two women,” she indicated Titania and Hipolyta by waving to their room, “and though I must bow to yours and their seniority of familiarity and intimacy with Henry, I would challenge the supremacy of any who walk two-legged on the face of this earth against the absolute value I place upon the treasure of his intimacy.” With those words she rose, stood to her full height, and though she trembled inside at the pronouncement of these words for the first time aloud, and to this woman of all people, her eyes flashed with the fierceness of her conviction and resolution. “I would win him, if it were to cost me all I had in this world or the next.”

Belle rose and embraced her, whispering, “I thought it might be as bad as all that...” As she rocked the girl gently in her arms, she comforted the heart of the woman in her embrace. To her ancestors she offered a grateful word of thanks for their having prepared her for this occasion. “Well we have some planning to do. I have been thinking how nice a Theater group would be for this village...” The ladies talked, were soon joined by Titania and Hipolyta, and made the outlines of a plan of action for the near future.

At breakfast around the big table in the great room, Kaitlyn announced her concern that Harold and Chloe were overdue for their arrival in the village. George answered, “They are newly-weds and have likely mislaid their usual sense of time. They’ll be along in their own good time.” As if on cue, the happy couple made good their arrival that very afternoon. They were received as royalty by the Spelman’s and Livingsons, and plans were at once set in motion to dine with Mandy that evening.

After they were seated in the restaurant and drinks were served around the table, Harold stood to make an announcement. Tinkling his wine glass to gain the party’s attention, he cleared his throat and began. “Chloe and I are thrilled at our reception here and have an announcement.”

Kaitlyn interrupted, "You're expecting!"

"No not yet Miss Spelman, not yet," he answered to chuckles and Kaitlyn's slight embarrassment. "Actually it is the reason for our being delayed in joining you here. I was required to seek out our Company's offices in San Francisco and forced to add a touch of business to our honeymoon travels. Upon my arrival there I was informed that my counterpart in their offices was recently taken ill and had to resign his position indefinitely due to the extensive treatment of his near fatal malady."

Chloe was beside herself, so she resumed the explanation, "It seems that, in the States, there are not candidates of Harold's depth of talent and skill enough to be considered for the vacancy. They have offered him a small fortune and a path to partnership if he would allow himself to be nominated for the position," she crowed and Harold beamed. The party's response to the news amounted to an ovation.

He continued unnecessarily, "I have accepted their offer, and we have found lodgings in Pacific Heights. We will close on a permanent residence before year's end I should think." The chatter of conversation was set to a frenzied level, and it wasn't until the meal was brought out that they reined their enthusiasm to a pitch more conducive to an evening's repast.

Jameson led out the servers and directed the placement of each dish, making comments as to each dish's ingredients and preparation as he did so. Pleased with his delivery and to the proud smiles of Titania and Hipolyta, he bid them "Bon Apetit," and left them to their meal. It was the consensus that none had ever tasted such savory and satisfying fare as this. When they had quite finished, Jameson was again called from the kitchens and lavished with compliments. All this to the extreme gratification of Miss Mandy Hill and her own pride in her now very accomplished protege.

Harry plowed through the Summer Term receiving marks of Distinction for his every assignment, and the preliminary term of his Sixth Form years was passed. The apprenticeship into which he'd been inducted caused him to be absent from campus two days per week and presented him little time for anything but keeping up with his studies. It was grueling

but very rewarding. Architecture was as challenging and fascinating as he'd hoped it should be, and the Waterhouse firm encouraged his input and creativity, though in moderation. He was after all just an apprenticed architect and not yet graduated from university. In short, he was low man on the totem pole, albeit the tallest, one of the most prestigious totem poles in the United Kingdom.

Summer became autumn, autumn became lent and on to summer once more. Commemoration was soon, set always at mid-summer, and he was in the midst of his final term before his realizing it. It was with some surprise then that he was summoned to the headmaster's offices and sat down for an interview just before the July event. "Mr. Livingson, your education with this institution has been unprecedented, wouldn't you agree?" the headmaster opened. Harry had to affirm the observation, he was made well aware of his distinct status nearly from his first days in the Hundred, sometimes favorable, often eliciting some degree of initial jealousy, though soon overcome and banished.

"I have met with each of your professors personally, and have received their every assurance that while you still have a few weeks and final examinations to undergo, it will not be to the detriment of this College to allow you the right of processing with the Leavers during this Commemoration's ceremonies." He paused to allow Harry an opportunity to speak; Harry was speechless. "You will, of course be presented with all accolades attendant upon a Malvern graduate, and special note made of your own achievement of Double First Honors with Distinction for those subjects which you have already completed entirely. Well that being said, do you have any questions?"

Harry sat, his head swimming, "Sir, I shall do my best on my final examinations to reaffirm your confidence in me in this matter. I shall not let the dignity of Malvern waver for an instant."

"Well done Henry, well done. I knew I could expect no less. Good day, Mr. Livingson. Oh, you might check with my secretary on your way passed to arrange for your robing and such. Good Luck." With that, Harry was set to run the final laps of his studies with redoubled energies and

eventual success was his reward.

Samuel and Olivia Allcock attended the ceremonies and stood with Harry for photographs after the event. "I'll be certain to forward a plate to your parents, Harry, make no doubt of it. We are all just so proud of you." Olivia assured him through her own tears, then with a hug and a kiss on the cheek, she went to join the queue ordering the souvenirs. Mr. Allcock and Harry took a little turn around the pitch and discussed final business between them.

Harry held out an envelope to Mr. Allcock. "What's this Harry?" asked the older man.

Harry responded in as business-like manner as he could muster at the moment, "My father and I agreed that upon my graduation from this institution we would return to you the unused portion of the funds you were contracted to provide for this, now completed, education."

"I thought that might be its contents. And might I ask what sum you have arrived at for this 'refund'?" asked Samuel nonchalantly.

"It is in the amount of three and half thousand pounds sterling, sir," answered Harry rather quickly.

Mr. Allcock nodded, "And odd shillings, yes, well... I'm sorry to say this lad, but that bank note isn't worth the paper it's written on."

Harry balked and sputtered, "But I am certain I have not used the vast sums invested..."

"No Harry, you have not. And if you don't mind my saying there was actually a great deal more than I'd estimated--Since you required only three years worth tuition and the resultant fewer years rents and such. But the reason the draft is no good is because I withdrew the remainder myself just this last week in preparation for a play such as this on your part."

Harry just stood woodenly. "Oh, but how could you have fore..."

"Mr. Livingson, it is my turn now. Olivia and I have discussed this thoroughly and are in consummate agreement on this point. You shall have the remainder of this account," and here he produced a very heavy silk purse and put it into Harry's hands, "in gold." He paused as Harry simply

looked at him uncomprehending. "Lad, before you arrived, Clive House was a just a home to my wife and daughter. While Olivia and myself have tried to bring Chloe some measure of happiness, we were singularly unsuccessful. And that's not all; the atmosphere of Clive House was thinning and getting thinner. At this moment, Olivia and I are happier than we have been since our honeymoon, Chloe and Harold *are on* their honeymoon, and the wire I just received tells me he has accepted a directorship in the San Francisco offices--at three times the salary he was promised in Stratford. Chloe herself is a changed woman, and that was the case well before her engagement to young Bessamer. Harry it has been you who have instigated these miracles, and you alone." Harry opened his mouth to speak, "No, I won't hear another word about it." He folded his arms as if settling the matter once and for all. Then he softened, put his arm around Harry's shoulders and directed him to walk a little more with him.

"That money in your hand represents more than our gratitude, Harry, it is our respect, admiration, and joy of knowing you. You'll be needing it soon, I've no doubt, for new enterprises of your own; and Mrs. Allcock and myself will watch your continued progress with the same pride we'd have of our own son." He stopped suddenly, "Harry that's what this comes to... we have kept you close in our hearts as our own son, and we damn sure are gonna make certain you know it."

"Sir," Harry began timidly, unsure if it were his 'turn,' "I had but two aims in attending Malvern. Those were, first: to make good the faith my parents put in me to broaden my horizons and repay their sacrifices on that account. The second was to make good the debt I owe to you on behalf of your own careful fulfillment of that oath you made so long ago, and if possible make you proud in the service of it. You have been for me a model of integrity, honesty, and fairness, I could not have dreamed for a more ideal benefactor than yourself. As a result, I have only done what anyone in my shoes might have done." He finished.

"But there's the rub, Harry--No one else *can fill your shoes*, save you alone." Samuel held out his hand and Harry took it in a firm grasp. "And

there it is laid plain as the day, you *are* amazing Henry Livingson.”

The guest stopped there and let his host wipe his eyes and note the last few paragraphs in his journal. He stretched and paced back and forth a little way across the porch and back.

“For us, like in the natural world, we must always begin with small things---one thing which you cannot do and then repeat it until that one aim is accomplished. For us, and our discussion of this structure, it means constantly returning to the foundational knowledge underlying your future understanding. What questions have you formulated with regard to this aim?”

The host was most anxious to clarify the translation of all the talk of centers and brains into the more concrete schema of the octave's structure they had just recently begun to map.

“Excellent.” The guest responded excitedly. “Open your note pad to a blank page and let's make that translation. Remember, that a thousand words do not really approximate a picture. So in doing this exercise we are attempting the transition from words to pictures, and therefore our starting point must be to make concrete that mathematical structure in the intermediate form of a chart. Here,” he reached over for his host's note pad, “if I put the top and bottom DOs and their values in a certain small script, then place the RE through TI in their anticipated positions, you should be able to use just the one page to accomplish this map. Is that amenable to you?”

The host nodded. With the pencil, his guest wrote in a DO at the near top of the page and a DO at the near bottom in very small letters indeed. He wrote in a RE directly adjacent and above the bottom DO, then about a finger length above the RE, he wrote in a MI. A finger length down from the top he wrote in a SOL, then he inscribed a FA just a bit below the halfway between the SOL and MI. TI was placed just a very little ways down from

the top DO, and the LA occupied the spot just a bit above halfway between the TI and SOL. “There,” he said satisfied and handed the pad of paper back to his host.

The younger man glanced at the skeletal beginning and asked, “What shall be the values of these first notes? And by the way this does not look diatonic in the least!”

“Well for convenience sake, let's simply use a rather large number for the top DO of the all-to-nothing Scale 0 octave, a number which will accommodate thirds, quarters, eighths and halves in three scales.” He glanced at the ceiling of the porch for a moment, the younger man followed his gaze, only to realize his guest was just in thought. “One thousand, five hundred, and thirty-six. That shall just do the trick. And you will see the purpose of their 'non-diatonic' layout momentarily.”

The host scribbled in the same size script, a '1536,' next to the top DO. Next to the bottom DO, he scribbled a '0.'

“Of course, you remember, we could put this octave of 1536 anywhere... between 1 and 1537, or 1536 and 3072. It will suffice for us to make this Scale 0 octave as absolute fullness of 1536 down to nothing. So, now get out your abacus, or calculator, or use your own brain and calculate the values of the notes in between,” suggested the guest.

His host first looked at the range and muttered, “It's not doubling and halving, so I have to calculate an eighth of the length of 1536, which is...” a quick division yielded, “192, so I assign RE the vibration 192.”

The older man just smiled back at his questioning glance. “OK, well TI is an eighth down from the top, so I can use the same value subtracted from 1536, to get... 1344 for TI. MI is at a quarter, so double RE, 384, SOL is twice that again, 768, and that just leaves FA and LA. It's simple division to get a third of 1536; FA is 512 and twice that for two-thirds is 1024 for LA. There!” He looked up again and grinned, knowing he had done this much accurately.

“Well done,” congratulated the older gentleman. “Now, what do you notice about the octave's internal construction at RE, MI, SOL, to DO?”

“It's a doubling,” said the host concisely.

“Yes, as I pointed out before, this is how and where the octave derives its 'inner' structure. The octave that comes into existence between RE and MI will be half the length of the octave that comes into existence between MI and SOL, which will be half that of the octave between SOL and DO. So fill in those octaves beginning with the octave of 192 between Scale 0's RE--which becomes a Do in Scale 1--up to the MI--which becomes that octave's top Do.”

To the right of the RE 192, the young man wrote in Do 192, and then made a similar addition at MI 384. He looked at the spacing on the page of the notes of Scale 0 and tried to gauge the smaller octave's notes' spacing to conform to it. Now he saw why although the spacing of the actual Scale 0 octave was an eighth, a quarter, a third, a half and so on, that was not the way these were laid out to accommodate all the charted inner vibrations. They were accommodating the inner structural octaves' notations. He gauged fairly accurately and now had: Re 216, Mi 240, Fa 256, Sol 288, La 320, and Ti 360.

“Well done again.” His guide responded to the addition. “Next?” He encouraged.

So on to the middle octave between MI 384 and SOL 768. It took the young man calculating the first note of the Scale 1 octave's Do 384 to the Re above it, as an eighth of the way between 384 and 768 with an overall length of 384--an eighth of which was 48 added to the bottom Do 384 to yield Re 432 that he looked down at the octave below and saw 216 as the lower octave's Re.

He gasped and smiled in acknowledgement, “So *every* note in an octave that doubles itself is also doubled!” His mentor nodded, grinning. It took no time at all then for the younger man to complete that octave and the next, with that little bit of knowledge.

Now he looked down at a Scale 0 octave from 0 to 1536, and its first inner set of three octaves in Scale 1. Proud of himself thus far, he looked at his guide again, who pointed out that, “Scale 1 is the mathematical scale, the only mathematical scale. So when you notice doubling and halving of

octaves, that is the scale you are perceiving. Right. So now the nine octaves of Scale 2.”

The younger man looked down at the Scale 1 bottom octave and the Re 216 to Mi 240 which would now be the Scale 2's very most bottom octave, Do 216 to Do 240---Not the doubling he'd just completed in the Scale 1 calculations. This was going to take a bit longer... it was a distance, or length of 24.

“Twenty-four!” He announced loudly, “I know the octave of twenty-four. 3-3-2-4-4-5-3! This will be far easier than the tedium I had feared it might be.” He went about filling in the little spaces, now stacked nearly on top of each other on the right side of his page. Mi to Sol, the next Do to Do above the lowest in Scale 2, was a length of 48 = 6-6-4-8-8-10-6, double the octave of twenty four, although Do 240 did not double to Do 288, the lengths did. He added those increasing values to the bottom Do of each succeeding octave, and so it went on until he had completed the chart. His own map of the inner world of an all-to-nothing octave. The mathematical map of the inner octaves.

8

The Dawn

"On life's journey faith is nourishment, virtuous deeds are a shelter, wisdom is the light by day and right mindfulness is the protection by night. If a man lives a pure life, nothing can destroy him."
--Buddha

“When you look back down your chart you will notice two significant things: Some vibrations become only certain others, and some stay the same name. Second if we group the resulting smallest bits into threes, the larger chunks follow suit. Let me make that clearer for you.” He elaborated, “So let's examine this first significant item of notice. What becomes of the REs, the MIs, and SOLs?”

The host studied the map and promptly answered, “They become DOs, all of them.”

The guest replied, “Good. Now what becomes of the other notes?”

The host ran his finger over the page and said, “The FAs stay FAs, and the LAs become FAs then stay FAs.”

“And the TIs?” he prompted the younger man.

“They disappear; except the Scale 0 TI, it skips Scale 1 and shows up as a Sol in Scale 2.”

“Excellent, what else do you notice about all that?” the guest pressed him.

The host scratched his chin as he looked further. “Well... all the notes of the Scale 0 octave are reused in both the next scales, except TI, as I said before... then that TI's vibration gets used in the last scale. But the other TI's vibrations are only used once.” The older man nodded, and indicated there may be something else in front of him. “Uh... well, at Scale 0's MI and SOL when they get to Scale 2 there are double Do's?”

“Well done again,” the guest congratulated. “Now let's look at those groupings I mentioned at the outset. All the Do's of Scale 2 actually came from Scale 1 and those of Scale 1 came from Scale 0, but all the notes *created* between those Do's *truly* belong only to that Scale. So the notes between all the Do's of Scale 2 really belong to that scale alone. Let's bracket them in threes, alright?”

The host took his pencil and made an initial bracket for Re 219, Mi 222 and Fa 224. Then a second for So 228, La 232 and Ti 237. Skipping the Do, as it came from the previous scale, he next bracketed Re 246, Mi 252 and Fa 256. Then So 264, La 272 and Ti 282. Thus he continued up the Scale 2 created notes until he at last reached the last bracket consisting of So 1344, La 1408 and Ti 1488. He showed the assemblies to his guest for confirmation.

“Perfect. Now here's a bit of traditional knowledge. It was determined in ages past that each of our six centers has three parts: a mechanical part which works without attention, an emotional part whose attention is drawn by the object itself of that attention, and an intellectual part of the center which holds its attention by will alone. Then each of these three parts of centers has its own three parts---mechanical, emotional and intellectual.” He paused for his host to scribble marginal notes on this key information. “So, if we next lump these bracketed little groups into sets of three, what will we have?”

The young man began lumping them together as indicated. What emerged was that the bottom three groups, from Re 219 up to Fa 256 made the bottom chunk. The next chunk ran from So 264 up to Ti 372. The next was from Re 438 up to Fa 512, next from So 528 up to Ti 744. Then the last two chunks from Re 876 to Fa 1024, and from So1056 up to Ti 1488.

He looked down at the new groupings and said with a touch of surprise, “There are six large chunks here and each one has three notes from Scale 1 as larger representatives of the group. Would those serve as the mechanical, emotional, and intellectual parts of the centers, proper?”

“Yes, indeed,” replied his guest.

“So then here are the six centers, each with there own three parts, and

each of those with their own three parts of parts!" The young man was beaming with the thrill of discovery. A real mathematical representation of all those otherwise confusing labels the older man had been referring to all this time in their discussions. Here before him was the Instinctive and Moving centers grouped in the lower level--just as predicted. In the second level were the Emotional and Intellectual centers, and finally in the top was the spiritual level where were the two centers his guest had called the Higher Emotional and Higher Mental. He was at last feeling as though they were really making some actual sense of those fundamental, and for him, somewhat abstract Law of Three and Law of Octaves.

"What you hold in your hand is the map of the inner world of man's machine. It is a real verifiable map of your own inner world. Cells organize into tissues, tissues organized into the organs of the organism of a man. Now young man, 'What do ya say to that?'" And without waiting for his young friend's smile to fade from expression into words, he began the story once more from where he'd left off--but with a caveat: "I should probably explain that while Harry was still finishing his Malvern studies, a new beginning of sorts was arising amongst his family and friends."

He thought a moment and began, "Let me take you back to well before Commemoration. The summer of the Bessamer's announcement to relocate to San Francisco and the Spelman's extended visit in Tahoe City was rapidly drawing toward September before any one realized the air was growing nippier. Miss Sarah Bunker volunteered to sponsor the Theater Society on the condition that her students would be instrumental in any productions set for performance.

"The dramatic Arts inspire creativity and imagination in children, and I find them an indispensable resource for a thorough education..." She had said when Belle and Kaitlyn approached her for her opinion.

Titania and Hipolyta were thoroughly jubilant at the prospect of performing in public all the plays they had produced as junior thespians in the Livingston great room. Notices were posted and the response by the

community was positive indeed. Those villagers who had always secreted any inclination toward the dramatic now found a ready outlet and they came forward to add their names to the lists of the Village Theatrical Society. The school house was commissioned for their meetings and rehearsals.

Lawrence Spelman found precisely the property he wished to develop. It was above the Truckee River on the last stretch leading into the village and commanded a view of both the river and the lake. It also, as good fortune might have it, was at the edge of town near opposite to the Livingston Bungalow Lodges. He made a generous amendment in the development plans he discussed with George. He intended to build a proper school house for the town in lieu of the poorly renovated burnt out building provisionally employed for the purpose. "The house will be set up the slope far enough and so secluded from the more publicly accessible school that I am sure the Village Council and the School Committee will approve the location." He pointed out on the plot map a section on the River Road just as it became Main Street in town.

"It seems to me anything you just give them, they will approve of, Lawrence," answered George with a grin.

"Well there's that. I have had Kaitlyn contact Harry regarding the building plans. Belle told me he's immersed himself in his apprenticeship. It is not so surprising, I suppose, for Harry to both complete his University studies *and* hold down a new career at the same time. Maybe he'll be willing to add this little project to his to-do list as well. It can't hurt to ask him, and truth be told, he would be the ideal man for the job--what with his familiarity of the environs and of my own tastes, etc."

George was sure if Harry could do it he would. Lawrence continued, "Samuel wrote to me; he and Olivia did not see Harry over this last summer, but hope he will be 'home' at Christmas break. I do hope he managed to see them, they are quite as fond of him as we are you know." Lawrence became wistful.

George brought him out of his momentary reverie, "Lawrence, Belle and I are seriously planning to increase the capacity of the Lodges. Another

four buildings of eight suites arranged in the same manner as the present ones are set, and adjacent to them.”

“Capital idea, George; capital,” congratulated Mr. Spelman.

“Well, thank you. You see I mention this because they will sit here,” He indicated on the plot map still lying on the big table before them, a swath of land directly opposite Lawrence's intended developed parcel. “We don't want to spoil your views or crowd you in any way since you've looked so hard for an ideal situation, and...”

“Not at all!” Lawrence broke in, “When I said it will be secluded, I was genuinely sure that this village will no doubt continue to grow in the years to come. I am locating the house remotely for that eventuality. That that growth actually coincides with my own construction is proof of my initial inclination.” He smiled widely, his shoulders pulled back delighted that he had demonstrated good foresight.

A package came over a week later at the near last week of August. An oblong wooden box from Great Malvern, England, addressed to Mr. Lawrence Spelman, Number Three, Livingston Bungalow Lodges, Tahoe City, California. On the afternoon of its arrival, once all were gathered around for the opening, Lawrence, did the honors. “I really didn't expect Harry to have responded so quickly...” he said as he uncrated a long thick cylinder and opened it. Belle looked to Kaitlyn who returned the inquisitive glance with an expression of utter delight. She had merely asked Harry to 'consider' the project; 'as a favor to her on behalf of her father,' she had added casually.

Lawrence gasped. “Oh my.” A sheaf of plans from topographical situations with grading and filling, landscape, access and building situations, to detailed construction plans, materials lists and timelines were amassed there on the table before them. All this and he included the new School House designs and construction plans. Tania, Hipolyta and Kaitlyn looked these over. “Look here! He's included a real stage at one end of the building! Oh Harry!” They pointed to the features and showed the others excitedly.

“Here's a note,” said George and caught at a paper which had

separated itself from the rolls of plans and drifted toward the floor. He held it out to Lawrence. Mr. Spelman read the few lines aloud, "*My apologies, I'm afraid I didn't have time to assemble the view maps for your residence, but I am quite sure you will find that your vista of the river and lake are framed quite nicely by the near valley's shoulders. Your servant, as always, Harry.*" Lawrence laughed out loud and repeated, "He didn't have time!" The families gazed down with ever-growing respect on Harry's handiwork.

The construction proceeded almost at once on three projects at the same time. The new set of Bungalows, the new School House, and the Spelman's residence. This time White Feathers *did* gather as many carpenters and brick layers as he could find available for the jobs well beyond the forty he once kidded George over so long ago. Each crew was set to task and although the first frosts caught up with them as the Spelman's residence was being finished, all the buildings were winter-proofed already.

The School Committee and the Village Council accepted the keys to the new School House in a ceremony of much pomp and circumstance at the end of the Autumn Term. It had not been lost on any of that powerful cadre of merchants and proprietors comprising the Village Council that Lawrence Spelman was a man of extraordinarily deep pockets, with international contacts and connections, and most eye-opening to them, he was the close friend and confidant to George and Belle Livingson. It was beginning, at last, to dawn on them that the Livingsons had done more for their little village's affluence and reputation in just the last twelve years than anyone else had done during the length of the village's long history.

Lawrence and Kaitlyn moved out of their temporary homes in the Bungalows and up into the house that Harry had designed for them. Sarah, Mandy, and all the Livingsons threw a modest shivaree for the new occupants. As dusk descended they all stood on the front hanging decks and looked out toward the Tahoe. There, shimmering in the last rays of reflected sunlight and the first silvery glow of the rising moon was the river and the lake, framed by the shoulders of their little valley as if it were a

scene painted by Bierstadt. Kaitlyn held her father's arm and sighed a deep sigh of utter contentment and complete joy. They were home at last.

The 'Village Players,' the name used for them by the rest of the town to refer to the Village Theatrical Society membership, began deciding in earnest what their first production should be and when they should expect to offer performances. Miss Spelman, as the de facto director and producer due to her own training with the Royal Shakespeare Company in the bard's own hometown, solicited ideas from their rolls at their next scheduled meeting in the new School House. "Please use the provided slips of paper and write down your own personal choice for our inaugural production, as well as what role you would envision yourself playing in that endeavor."

The attendees pondered and scribbled. Before too long all the submissions were gathered up and she dismissed the meeting with the promise to provide the results of the polling two days hence when they met again. While Kaitlyn was already relatively certain which productions best suited the membership of 'the players,' she wanted to be absolutely sure the decision appeared to be the product of their own wishes. As she tallied the slips and listed the preferences, she noted with amusement that *Hipolyta* and *Titania* had each listed several plays and set themselves to all the roles attendant to them. Each of the others had made good selections, and from their personal wishes for their own roles, Kaitlyn carefully reassigned them to complimentary and fit casting selections for the play she had already chosen. She reviewed her assignments and she was satisfied that each player would welcome the favorable casting choices. When the Players met again, all were hushed in anticipation of the declaration.

"You have each proven to have high expectations for our little company, judging from the suggestions you submitted. I also must applaud your sincere estimation of your own participation in those plays." She stopped and actually applauded, which was infectious and all of the players were soon applauding themselves for their discretion. "I have taken your thoughtful selections and have racked my brain as to what one production would best suit the combined talents of our fledgling Company." She

paused as if still in pensive meditation of the subject, then lifting a finger she commenced again, "Then it occurred to me to profit from the advice given me by the R.S.C. Artistic Director himself, 'When faced with the dilemmas of a play, play to your strengths!'"

There were nods of agreement and a sagacious wagging of heads at this. "Our strengths I estimate thus: We are eight gentlemen and five ladies, not including myself, and the population of the School to chose from for lesser, but important roles to be filled. We have a generous stage area and balcony o'er set withal, and as I know first hand through our previous workshops, each of your own various talents and abilities." She paused, then continued, "We shall have the winter months and a bit of the spring for preparations. Therefore the inaugural production of the Village Theatrical Society shall be that same play which Shakespeare himself crafted to demand the best of his own company and elicit the greatest imagination from his audience..."

Kaitlyn's sense of the dramatic was being tested to its limit and her little company had not yet noticed in the least her own most expressive use of it. "...That most timeless celebration of the season: *A MidSummer Night's Dream*. How very appropriate, do you not think? Considering also our own community's native industry and reliance upon that season?" She concluded with the question, and left it to the group before her. A few looked about at the others and all were very soon enthusiastically in agreement that this was in fact an inspired choice. "Here then are your scripts; please come forward as your names are called."

And she began, as all Shakespearian castes are begun, the male roles by rank, then the females by rank or association. "Yes, it is an interesting twist, I agree, that Hipolyta and Titania whose namesakes are the lead females of this play will not play those two characters, but shall in fact play the two male lovers: Lysander and Demetrius. That's the stage for you. No less surprising I'm sure, than my own participation as neither male nor female, in the role of Puck."

Kaitlyn praised each cast member's strengths, and alluded directly to their own previous choice of role from the secret ballots, as she made the

casting assignments and cemented their willing ownership of the choice of play and character.

Jameson laughed aloud at his own role as Bottom the Weaver. “Chef Bottom! I can just hear the kitchen staff’s jokes already!”

The others laughed with him and sympathized. Theseus and Hippolyta played the dual roles of Oberon and Titania, respectively, as so many directors before her had cast them. Assigned to them were their own Mr. Avery Goodman, the handsome proprietor of the haberdashery, and Miss Mandy Hill. Then to Sarah Bunker's delight she was to nominate as many of her students as she pleased to fill the roles of an indefinite company of fairies. They set a schedule of bi-weekly rehearsals, to be increased as need be; the sets' construction was entrusted to Miss Bunker and her determinations of assistance were also set on a 'as needed' basis. Kaitlyn Spelman stayed out of the limelight to the best of her ability, allowing instead the talents and gifts of the Company to feature foremost. She directed Socratic-ly, that is by asking questions of her players and allowing them the opportunity to sort out their dilemmas and confusions, their motives and best advantages *for themselves*---after a fashion at any rate. Kaitlyn was still the one they each looked to for final decisions about all phases of the production, and she couldn't escape that, yet.

Harold and Chloe had no sooner settled into their new home in Pacific Heights than they were sending out announcements of a different nature. They were expecting their first child, likely to be born at the beginning of September next. Kaitlyn, with Hippolyta and Titania, made the train trip to visit the happy couple over the Easter holiday in the company of Lawrence Spelman. The reunion was a splendid affair.

The Bessamers met their guests at the ferry station and took the long way home, offering the ladies a brief tour of the City by the Bay and its admirable points of interest. When they at last arrived, Chloe showed off her new home to the admiring praises of her lady friends, while Harold and Mr. Spelman managed the baggage. “Chloe has performed all the interior design and execution herself; down to the last drawer pull and window treatment. She is a one woman design firm and contract agency, she is.”

Harold crowed proudly of his treasured love. "And she won't think of having a maid, though I've told her we've enough income to afford any help she wishes." Harold confided to Lawrence after they joined the little tour.

"I have no need of a staff," responded Chloe, "I am more than capable of running this house. Besides, Harold is a marvelous cook and laundryman." The ladies were impressed, and said so.

"It's second nature really," he defended. "My father was always in the shop, and my mother was always so frail; I was relied upon to perform the majority of the household chores and duties growing up. It was a very instructive upbringing to be sure," explained her husband.

"*Very* beneficial I'd say," rejoined Chloe, "my Harold is indeed a man of many talents." She looked to him with a most fortunate wife's admiration.

The ladies retired to the kitchen, where on this occasion Chloe was in charge of their welcoming feast. Lawrence and Harold remained in the Drawing Room with aperitifs and a smoke. "Harold this is a fine collection of trophies from your Malvern days," remarked Mr. Spelman at the well organized assemblage before him, "But I don't recognize this item as a usual award for either athletic or daring deeds." He stared at an arrow enfolded with two ribbons in a place of prominence over the mantle. "Is it a sculptural artifact?"

Harold simply said, "It's the Terror Trophy actually, I believe I'm the only one to have earned it. A one off, you know," smiling broadly he refilled his guest's tumbler.

Lawrence took a seat and asked, "How has your position with the Company fared?" he seemed genuinely interested. Harold's position required the extensive employment of international connections and contacts, the very sphere of enterprise Lawrence had so recently vacated. They discussed their mutual fondness for the work itself and of Harold's being able to call upon Lawrence for any assistance he might be able to advance on his friend's behalf.

"It'd be grand to keep my hand in it, as it were." He concluded, to the

younger man's appreciation and enthusiasm for the proposal.

The few days of the visit enabled the ladies ample opportunity to walk Union Street down to the Square, peruse Gump's, to window shop, and to generally enjoy the cosmopolitan pulse of the traffic along all the neighboring streets. They visited the markets and restaurants of Chinatown where Titania and Hipolyta gazed with wonder at more Chinese proprietors and passersby than they had seen their whole lives. It was a grand opportunity to practice their own modest command of Cantonese, which both impressed and delighted the others in their group. The Bessamers promised to visit Tahoe over the coming summer and assured the three thespians they would most certainly attend the upcoming performances of Shakespeare. Fond farewells were made all around and the party was once again on the ferry then train headed home, satisfied that their friends were well-contented and settled in their new life.

White Feathers was no longer attached to the Livery. Melvin Pierce had run the operation very well indeed over his first Summer Season, and in an official transfer of ownership he and Jameson signed over the business to him. Because Melvin was unable to put any more than a meager down payment on the purchase, terms of installments were arranged and the 'keys' were passed into his hands. The keys were symbolic at best, as one 'unlocked' the Livery office which had no lock, and the other was to the medicines cabinet which did. So, White Feathers resumed command of his own free time with gusto by taking a long adventure by horse to visit some of his remaining friends in the Sierras and up into the Northern Cascades.

Kaitlyn wasn't occupied directly in the school as were Titania and Hipolyta, so her days were mostly free, and Belle included her in her every activity. They prepared the Bungalows for the upcoming season, worked the grounds for the newest bungalow's landscape needs, and more importantly Belle made quite sure that her Kaitlyn was firm in her thorough understanding of their family's most treasured resource---their training and discipline.

While they were transplanting flowers and shrubs one afternoon Belle began another conversation, "Kaitlyn, it is not enough that you know and

practice; it is through living this understanding which yields the most powerful results.”

Then she told her an anecdote George had related to her long ago: *“In ancient times there once was a lover of dragons. He was so fond of dragons that all his clothes had embroidered dragons, and his columns and pillars also had engraved dragons. His love of dragons was widely known, so one day a real dragon decided to visit this dragon lover. He poked his head into his home and dragged his long tail down the hall. The dragon lover saw the head and was frightened out of his wits. Turning, he ran. The real dragon finally understood that this dragon lover loved only the images of dragons but not real dragons.”*

Belle continued, “Many people are convinced that they think reasonably and act honorably, but without having made any of the very efforts necessary to gain their Conscience which allows for right thoughts and actions; they are unaware of what owning their own soul actually means, nor how a person who has made the journey of a real man actually looks and behaves.”

“Harry told me a similar thing when I asked him once about why he didn't tell me about his training, after I had pestered him about the Ten Tigers my father'd seen. It was just that, Mama Belle, that brought me to my knees. I talked with Harry about everything he was willing to share with me, and I saw with my own eyes what he allowed me to see of his immense wealth of spirit and compassion. I was nothing by comparison, and I knew that condition would never change of its own accord. I found Harry fishing one afternoon and confronted him with my realization of my desperate need for guidance if I was ever to tolerate my own existence.” Belle listened, as Kaitlyn continued, “I have forced not merely my nerves and sinews to do my bidding, but I have challenged my every thought and emotion in the effort to purge what silliness and inanity might yet remain in me. Harry taught me this. He said before I began, 'I will show you the path, but you must make the journey yourself;' MamaBelle, I am making this journey and I am mindful of, and most humbly grateful to, all those who have gone before me who have made my new life possible.”

“Thank you, Kaitlyn. I have become so attached to you; I so want you to have all that I have had in my own journey.” They had stopped for a brief lunch and before they went back to the gardening, Belle walked her through the house and recited to her the stories of her own and George's ancestors, pointing out how they honored them and venerated their sagacity and far-sightedness. Kaitlyn helped her to 'tidy up' the little niches and corners dedicated to this or that forebear. When the house was thoroughly revitalized, they walked to the bungalows and returned to the landscaping for the newest additions.

Belle continued their discussion, “Remember I told that about some things Harry can be rather dense.” Kaitlyn nodded as she continued the planting. “What it amounts to is that he is near blind to the impact he makes on others. He must have his nose rubbed in it for him to recognize the results of his own efforts. He thinks that what happens around him is merely a reproduction of what he already right properly expects, and as you know yourself, he expects a lot.” Kaitlyn again nodded, and with an expression that she clearly understood. “The thing to do is to outmaneuver him,” Belle whispered as if that advice might be overheard as her revealing his achilles heel' “...knock his socks off, and on his own terms; so that he has to see it for himself, as it really is... Does that make any sense to you?” she asked, unsure if her own understanding of her son could be properly translated to the young woman next to her.

Kaitlyn was silent while she thought about what was just said, and at length sat back on her heels, wiped a stray tress from her face with the back of her hand, then answered, “He needs to see the very results of his own efforts, without his having time to reflect upon his most extensive expectations? A riddle.”

Belle agreed. “That's as good an explanation as I can think of, yes.” They finished the task at hand, gathered up their tools and went back to the house to clean up.

“I'm so relieved to have had this conversation today, Kaitlyn. I am overjoyed with the time we are able to spend together.” Belle said as they parted for the evening.

“As am I, MamaBelle, as am I,” responded Kaitlyn sincerely happy.

While thousands of miles away, Harry was finishing his penultimate term at Malvern, the Village Players readied for their opening night performance. The school house was made ready also. Folding chairs replaced desks, and large retractable draperies were installed in the proscenium arch of the stage area. A pavilion was erected at the rear side door of the building for the convenience of the players, and the final touches to the sets had just been made the day before.

Miss Bunker and a few chosen students manned the ticket booth and ushered in the arriving audience. They passed out handbills and sorted out standing arrangements for those arriving too late for seats. To Kaitlyn's great relief, knowing how amateur thespians can succumb to last minute debilitations of stage fright and other psychosomatic disturbances, the Village Players were made of sterner stuff, ready for their moment of public exposure. Costumed and made up for the stage, Kaitlyn stood in the wings prepared to send in her Theseus and Hippolyta, with Philostrate, for Act One, Scene one. Sarah Bunker walked to the front and stood just below the stage before the audience. “Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends, Relatives and Guests... Welcome. This evening inaugurates the dawning of a new age for Tahoe City. It is my privilege to introduce for your entertainment: The Village Theatrical Society's production of Shakespeare's beloved, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.” She turned and took her seat to the left of the stage and the curtain was 'raised.'

Kaitlyn took a deep breath, let it out slowly, waited for the initial applause to not quite die out, then cued the Athenian Duke and his Amazon Bride. No turning back, no regrets, no Kaitlyn. There was now only the Athenian nobility, the workmen, the lovers, and the faerie world of the stage. For a bit over three hours, not including the intermission, the Players, as so many before them had, drew the audience into that other world of their own imagination. When after they had raged with the aggrieved father, cried with the injustices of love gone awry, laughed at the absurdities of the ass and the faerie queen and the grand paradoxes of the mechanics' play; Puck stood before them with the curtain drawn down

behind the lone figure on the stage.

“If we shadows have offended, Think but this and all is mended, That you have but slumbered here While these visions did appear. And this weak and idle theme, No more yielding than a dream Gentles, do not reprehend: If you pardon we will mend. And, as I'm an honest Puck, If we have unearned luck Now to 'scape the serpents tongue, We will make amends ere long; Else the Puck a liar call: So, good night unto you all. Give me your hands, if we be friends, And Robin shall restore amends.”

Then bowing deeply, and to an unanticipated rousing ovation, Kaitlyn was herself again. She waved an arm to the left then to the right as the curtain was pulled back at her each gesture and the cast stood before the audience, arm in arm, then bowed deeply in heartfelt appreciation for the ongoing applause.

Sarah Bunker walked to the front below the center of the stage and offered up a large bouquet of fresh cut flowers to Kaitlyn. She accepted the tribute, and went along the line of the cast distributing the flowers from the bouquet to each player individually beginning with the children who had played the littlest faeries, all the way to her principles. The thundering of the audience did not abate throughout the spontaneous ceremony. She waved the stage crew to the front, and had them take their own bows, then with a nod the curtains came back down and the performance was over.

The audience rose, wearing smiles and dabbing at tears. They filed out into the May evening air. Sarah Bunker had spoken well, this was the dawning of a new era for the village. For everyone who later recalled the pleasure of being in the audience upon that first performance was ever after given the respect afforded a minor celebrity; to recollect for their listeners the excitement and the thrill of being present at the very beginning of what became a beloved tradition of the little village on the Tahoe.

The cast exchanged their costumes for normal apparel, and removed to the Spelman residence for a party. As they paraded up the little lane from the theater to the house, they were somehow as transported from the lives they knew, and into which they would return in the morning, as they

had been upon the stage itself. Lawrence Spelman, White Feathers, George and Belle with Harold and Chloe enjoyed the revelry as much as the cast themselves. Kaitlyn remained herself, the only professional in the excited crowd of amateurs, making sincere observations of performance when requested, returning genuine gratitude for compliments, and reviewing to herself all the little things which together would improve each performance as they proceeded.

Titania, Hipolyta and Jameson had been the only constant resource for the infrequent, though necessary cuing of the rest of the cast on the occasions of a dropped line, and were acclaimed by the cast and crew as the saviors of the show. They were humble and thrilled in equal measure. Jameson donned the donkey's ears, put on his toque and went to the kitchen to make finger sandwiches to the amusement of all. The twins answered easily to congratulations as either 'the talented gentlemen,' or as 'gifted actresses' whichever accolade might be offered by their peers. That, ultimately, was the over-arching achievement of the theater: it made peers of people who might otherwise seldom speak on the street; it created a brotherhood.

At the following rehearsal, before the next weekly performance, Kaitlyn broached the subject to the Players, of how to dispose of the receipts from each engagement. She had discussed this, of course, with Sarah and Belle ahead of time and knew what to suggest and how to suggest it. Once the novelty of 'disposing' of funds had worn off, and before anyone gave it considered thought, she made her pitch.

“We have been very fortunate to have been offered a facility and support from our village, would it be appropriate to, I don't know, in some way return our good fortune somehow to the village?” Allowing for a minimum period of initial reflection and chatter, she continued. “We perform in a school house; might we set up a scholarship or something for our sons and daughters who wish to pursue their education, but who might not otherwise be able to without assistance?”

And with that she let the debate continue without her further participation. Before the rehearsal was over, each Player was sure he or she

was the first one to conceive of the new Village Theatrical Society Educational Fund, for the awarding of College scholarships to deserving and merited graduates of the Tahoe City School. Kaitlyn reminded them of last minute changes for the next performance and walked home. She whistled a little tune she remembered hearing while working on a house, on a county lane, beside a river, in the cotswolds of England.

Harold and Chloe stayed with Kaitlyn and her father for the long weekend. Belle was relieved, as the suites at the Bungalows were booked. All the ladies of the gathered households, along with Mandy and Sarah, assembled in the Tea Room on Sunday afternoon for a good chat, the men being away. It would likely have been the last place any of the families' gentlemen might have wished to be anyway. What was discussed and what might have been decided was not discussed later outside their own company. They did, however, refer to each other by interesting epithets, unused hitherto, but inserted at opportune moments ever afterwards to the enjoyment of their absent men.

The Summer Season came and went as easily as the visitors and tourists up and down the River Road to Truckee. The village was in the throes of a renaissance and when the Autumn Term began, the children of the village were eager to know what was to be the next Summer's production in *their* school house. A new interest and enthusiasm laid hold of the community, an almost tribal pride of their bubbling fountains of Arts and Education. Businesses in the area began offering to sponsor clubs and sports, societies and endowments for school age children at first, then for the greater enrichment of the general population at large.

Then the unthinkable occurred. Mandy Hill sold her restaurant, Tea Room and management of the saloon to Chef Paul. She drew up the transfer documents with certain provisos. Chef Paul at once considered changing the name of the establishment and certain embellishments of the décor, but after a great deal of public feedback, he decided some things were best left unchanged for the time being.

Mandy wasn't retiring by any stretch of the imagination. She had received permission, in fact encouragement, from Mr. Spelman to construct

a new patisserie-brasserie next door to the school house. One of the provisos she had insisted upon in her contract of transfer was that Jameson would no longer be a member of her former restaurant's staff, which naturally left him with the only avenue available for the pursuit of his chosen vocation--the head chef for the new establishment.

Mandy was at last able to start from nothing and design a place of her own, to her own ideas of hospitality and efficiency. She also rode the wave of change to set up permanent residence in Bungalow Seven of the Lodges, the compliment of Bungalow Six already occupied by Sarah Bunker. The location and designs for the new restaurant were Mandy's constant preoccupation for a short while. An inviting main entrance faced Main Street, but an equally elaborate side entrance was constructed facing the school house. The space between the two buildings was cobbled and set with tables and chairs, with a covered walkway from one building to the other erected. A section of the seating area in the new cafe would serve the school's students as a lunchroom, for their special occasions and always for breakfasts. The proximity of the two buildings also put the new cafe in the enviable position as a retreat for theater goers before and after performances and during intermissions.

Jameson's ideas for the kitchens, although scrutinized carefully by Mandy, included what appliances and storage were required to produce breakfast and brunch pastries and a limited evening menu. A saloon was included in the scheme of arrangements, isolated from the dining hall proper, it was envisioned more of a sitting room with a bar than a bar with a sitting room. All their sketches and ideas had been forwarded to Harry. By the time the ink had dried on her transfer contracts, Mandy was in possession of the construction plans and interior design drawings for the new establishment. Before Christmas season, 'The Grand Concession' would open to the public.

Mrs. Bessamer was present during the ground-breaking ceremony. "I told Harold, that his child and I would look forward to his arrival in three days, but that there was nothing which would keep me from giving birth to my daughter in the presence of the women I most admire on this earth,"

she had confided to Kaitlyn and Belle upon her arrival.

Harold concluded his business in the city as quickly as possible and joined his wife before their daughter's birth. Hannah Belle Bessamer was born on September the ninth, with a most auspicious gathering at her first yelp of life.

Harry's position with Waterhouse allowed him access to all the office's past and current design projects. Well access may not be the right descriptor; part of his list of duties included the maintenance and management of the file rooms. When projects were completed or when held for anticipated funding--'plannae interruptus,' as the condition was internally dubbed, it was Harry who filed the plans and drawings away in the vaults for safe-keeping. He was personally under the supervision of a Mr. Ralph Stanley, a man more interested in the architecture of his career than in any boring buildings. He had risen to his current level of incompetence through cleverly exploited connections, not upon his own talents or the lack thereof. He was uncaring of the loathsome burdens with which he tasked the apprentices, and he was shamelessly obsequious to his superiors. He paid great attention to his well-oiled hair and his pencil moustache, which he kept sharper than his drafting pencils. Of course under Mr. Stanley Harry was utilized in other ways as well. There was the morning coffee and hot water for tea, keeping the heating stoves burning in winter, sheafs of dimensioning, the labor-intense meticulous lettering of the ever-changing sections of notes which had to be inscribed on near-finished plans, and his favorite duty, serving as sometime courier between the lead Waterhouse designers and their clients.

So when requests arrived from his family and friends back home for his *own* design talents to be applied toward their various projects, he slept little and excitedly drew up the packages. He was designer, draftsman, engineer and lead architect on those exercises, and he loved it. Those assignments also gave him the most essential experiences of encountering the inevitable snags and snafus of planning, *and* finding the necessary work-arounds or redesign solutions in remedy. He was careful to never use office materials, nor office time and space for these extracurricular

activities; he set up his own studio in his apartments, and sparingly furnished it with the bare essentials necessary for the tasks accepted. The other apprentices of Waterhouse, there were two others, were subject to much the same rigorous and varied challenges as himself. The position of apprentice it seemed was more a proving ground for an individual's dedication and perseverance, than a refinement of talents and skills. Harry accepted his lot and kept his attention on the tasks at hand, though always watchful for any opportunity which might present itself to reveal his greater abilities.

Just such an opportunity arose. He was sent to deliver an acceptance letter and preliminary design drafts to a group of clients from whom Mr. Waterhouse routinely accepted commissions. This particular proposal involved the design and construction of an orphanage in a rural setting of the north country. Harry waited in the administrative offices of the Scottish Rite for the named recipient to arrive so that he could discharge his duty and return home for the evening. One hour became two, and still no sign nor word from the contact designated. The Office Manager suggested he return in the morning and attempt a second delivery. Seeing no clear alternative to this practical suggestion, Harry took the letter and plans home with him.

That evening, after a meager meal, he looked through the conceptual drafts of the plans; no harm in that, he thought, they might after all be put into his charge for the vaults anyway. The plans were straightforward enough: Main Hall, Dining and Kitchens, Upstairs Sleeping quarters for children, a few Office areas for the local administration of the charges, a Chapel, gardens with playgrounds. Something else caught his eye as he scanned the drawings, there was no undercroft, no classrooms, nor near enough windows to suit his own taste. So he took out some vellums of his own supply and reworked the plans---as a formal exercise, of course. He added Construction plans, well-phased and detailed. He employed more interesting building details for the facade and added a bell tower of sorts, nothing ostentatious just well adapted to the balance and symmetry of the structure. He smiled at the improvements and retired for the night.

When he gathered the letter and official plans for his departure the next morning, whether by whim, pride of authorship or simply out of habit, he rolled up his own revisions and tucked them under his arm as he left for the return visit to those administrative offices in which he had already wasted the previous early evening. Not much waiting this morning. The Contact Administrator was in his office before Harry arrived, so he was let in promptly upon his arrival. The large man behind the desk was both warm and good-natured, and treated Harry not as a courier but as a capable employee of a prestigious Architecture firm.

“Let's have a look at these drawings before you go, just on the chance I may need any questions answered. It'd do me no good to introduce them to my principles without knowing what I was looking at; wouldn't do at all.”

He smiled broadly, unabashedly interested in whatever he didn't know, and readily admitted as much. Harry liked this man already. He laid the Conceptual Plans out in the desk and pointed out the features which answered to the client's initial requirements. Mr. Kennitch, the Contact Administrator, nodded and asked very few questions as Harry gave the brief explanations. “And what's this other, then?” He asked about the second bundle laying near as Harry rolled the official sheaf of drawings back up again.

“Oh, well those are another project, actually.” Harry equivocated.

“I've got the morning open, no tee-time until three this afternoon. I'll send a note to Alfred explaining how I kept asking more questions, and how helpful you've been, if that'll set you with your supervisor?” he offered, genuinely interested in looking at more plans.

“Well, if you wish. And yes, it would be most helpful if I were able to produce sufficient cause for arriving to our offices so late. The plans were to have been delivered yesterday, and...” Harry began unrolling his own plans.

“There, and I was the cause of all this anyway.” Mr. Kennitch drafted a quick note to 'Alfred.'

Nobody at Waterhouse *ever* referred to Mr. Waterhouse so familiarly.

"I've invited him for a round at a course I know he enjoys, that should let you off the hook." He folded up the paper, passed it to Harry, and looked back to the new plans. "Now, what have we here?" He looked over the first page. "This looks a lot like the building you've just shown me... wait this building's entry is broader and has a greater feeling of both security and invitation. Hmm, and these window placements are slightly asymmetrical, but they really offer quite the impact, don't they? I do really like the addition of the tower, it raises one's spirits and would I suppose perform the same purpose as a steeple on a church... raise one's eyes in hope and all that." He made comment after comment and leafed through the construction plans as well.

"Sir, if I am not mistaken, these buildings are cousins of each other. And I'm not sure why the one destined for our commission should be the ugly relation to this beautiful one here." He slapped his hand upon Harry's revised building.

That sealed it. Harry spent the next half an hour explaining his motives and actions over the last twelve hours--his wanting to be more of a real contributor to the Waterhouse firm, his apprenticeship, his graduation from Malvern... "You're a Malvern man? So am I, Leavers of 77, School House. Yourself?" They shook hands as Harry admitted he wore the colors of School House as well.

"This cements the deal for me. Hand me back that note..." Harry obliged. "I most definitely prefer your drawings to their drab and droll cousins." He wrote a second note, which this time approached letter length. Harry rolled up the drawings and stood patiently. After a few minutes, Mr. Kennitch crumpled up his writing and announced, "Blast; this is dreadful. Let's go see the old man in person, shall we?" And with that he rose, called to the Office Manager that he was going upon an important errand to Waterhouse, and they were off. They chatted on the walk through the streets of Manchester, Mr. Kennitch was a wealth of information about the city, about the movers and shakers of the region, and alluded to some of his own connections without boasting in the least. Harry was sure he liked this fellow.

He proceeded straight through the offices of lesser managers and subordinates with Harry in tow, and Harry couldn't fail to notice the glances and stares he received in their passing. Mr. Kennitch announced himself to the secretary guarding Alfred Waterhouse's inner sanctum. She emerged in moment and ushered them in with a faint smile to Harry. The gentlemen greeted each other as old friends, exchanged banter befitting sporting partners, and Mr. Kennitch broached the subject of his visit. All the while Harry tried to appear as close to the shape of the wall he waited near as to be near invisible. Mr. Kennitch laid the two sets of drawings out before Mr. Waterhouse and asked him to judge the more appropriate submission to pass along to his principles. Harry held his breath.

"Just so. Precisely my own determination; Harry step over here," called Mr. Kennitch. Harry put his shoulders back and faced the situation without flinching.

"Mr. Livingston," began Mr. Waterhouse, "Do you have an explanation for how my friend has two sets of drawings for the same commission?" he asked evenly.

Harry explained, again, but with more brevity his own private endeavors and aspirations regarding his employment at the firm. Mr. Waterhouse listened patiently without interruption.

When all was said, he simply responded with, "I see," and asked his secretary to come in. He issued a request to her in a low voice and she left promptly.

He turned back to Mr. Kennitch and said in a grateful tone, "Good of you to handle this personally, Theodore, very good of you indeed."

To which Mr. Theodore Kennitch replied, "You'd have done the same. *Handle it now and personally*, I've heard you say often enough."

Mr. Waterhouse rewarded the expression of respect by accepting Mr. Kennitch's offer of that round of golf at his favorite local course. The office door opened again, and Harry's Supervisor's Boss's Director stood waiting for instructions from his master.

"You called for me Mr. Waterhouse?" Ethan Strenhowell said by way of

greeting, and he nodded to Mr. Kennitch, obviously familiar with the gentleman.

Mr. Waterhouse simply said, "Put Mr. Livingson on the Construction and Phasing plans for the Scottish Rite Commission," then gathering up Harry's plans he added "and use *these* Conceptual Plans as a springboard for the Prelims, I'll want to see them in a week's time before my formal meeting with Mr. Kennitch's principles and the Construction firm contracted for their execution."

Mr. Strenhowell accepted the bundle and extended an arm toward the door, indicating for Harry to exit with him. Harry quickly thanked Mr. Kennitch for his time and consideration, bowed to Mr. Waterhouse and followed his new boss out of the office. He was shown to his new work area, comprised of layout tables, drafting, and writing desks with lamps, empty book shelves, two chairs, and a floor lamp. "Do you have any 'things' which you might have secreted away in your previous space that you shall need for this position?" Mr. Strenhowell asked off-handedly.

Harry shook his head in answer; it wasn't necessary that Mr. Strenhowell know he hadn't been supplied with 'a space' in his capacity as apprentice at large. "Very well," and he began introductions for Harry of the other members of this planning section. Mr. Strenhowell made him acquainted with their names and duties, each time presenting Harry as their new supervisor and reminding them of their responsibility to produce their work in a timely manner--always submitting their products for 'Mr. Livingson's approval' before passing it along to the drafting section.

One of the faces Harry did recognize was that of Ralph Stanley. He omitted the opportunity to exercise any expression of what might be perceived to be gloating, ignored Ralph's obvious quiet rage at the turn of events, and got straight to the task at hand. Once the gentlemen were gathered near enough to see, he went methodically through the concept plans, making explanations and assigning tasks. Harry also added certain ideas of his own to direct their most efficient efforts, these were instructions borne of his greatest talent: the process of construction, in real terms, for those who actually laid the stones or raised a wall. He suggested

an appointed time in the next few days for reassessing their progress towards their given goals and set about his own tasks in the project. This little impromptu 'team' meeting was greeted handsomely by the others as it had been their own experience that generally, orders were passed along to them for the production of a given set of drawings, then they were left to their own devices to accomplish what was demanded. None of them had ever dared ask for clarification or assistance, presuming that such admissions would reveal a lack of competence and a summary sacking. This new approach was far less stressful and far more empowering.

Harry headed home after the most rewarding turn of events of the day, and that evening instead of the meager portions to which he was habituated, he treated himself to supper out. His new position, he had been informed, was to be compensated by a salary over which he simply gaped when told. "This is the standard salary for this position, I assure you Mr. Livingston..." Mr. Strenhowell had said, "However should you find that it is insufficient, we will arrange for semi-annual appraisals of your contributions to this firm and amend your compensation accordingly. Will that be satisfactory?" Harry nodded his astounded responses more that one day than he'd ever remembered being reduced to such nonverbal communication before.

The progress toward the stated deadline was exemplary, and when final presentation of the completed plans was made to Mr. Strenhowell, the Director said, "Well done, I look forward to your presentation at the meeting with Brown & Backhouse and the Scottish Rite principles Monday next." Harry was stunned. It hadn't occurred to him that his plans would, of necessity, be presented by him personally. He still had a lot to learn about this business, he reminded himself.

Mr. Waterhouse and his entourage arrived punctually a half hour before the Monday appointment held in the offices of the contracted construction company, Brown & Backhouse. Harry was last to enter the room and carried the plans his team had so efficiently prepared. The B & B lead representative entered just after their own arrival, and seeing the unfamiliar younger man, sent him for coffee and pastries before the

meeting began. Harry was nonplussed and his superiors were otherwise too engaged to notice his brief absence. Harry set out the platter and directed an assistant from the offices to set the coffee urn and cups on the sideboard of the conference room. He then took his seat and waited.

The Brown & Backhouse's Lead Representative, Miss Rebecca Backhouse, a daughter to the firm's namesake, evinced a formidable persona with years of construction experience admirably and conscientiously executed already behind her. Though to the casual observer she appeared to be no older than Harry. She wasn't.

Miss Backhouse began, "Mr. Waterhouse, Mr. Strenhowell, Mr. Kennitch..." she greeted all including the principles by name, save Harry. "We are very excited about this project; the region served by the orphanage will no doubt benefit immensely from its construction and subsequent operation."

She deferred to Mr. Kennitch for his forecast of the realized benefits in more specific terms, then resumed. "We are equally pleased that this project represents a sea change in the approach to Construction Planning at Waterhouse, and we look forward to your continued adaption to, and coordinated efforts with ourselves and our affiliates." She smiled, momentarily revealing her youth and genuine enthusiasm. "I am personally very impressed with these submissions, quite frankly you've made my job far simpler indeed. The careful attention to practical construction development, phased and processed as seen here, is inspired." The gentlemen at the table smiled and murmured their approbation of both the praise and the subject of that praise.

It was then Mr. Strenhowell's turn to respond. "Perhaps, then, you will offer your attentions to the designer behind these plans." He turned to Harry, "Mr. Livingson, if you please."

Miss Backhouse gulped as Harry, the unfamiliar young man, stood up and presented the salient points of the processes and purposed organization of the plans before them. She watched and listened attentively, although the plans spoke for themselves to her own well-trained eyes. What she tried to do, as Harry spoke, was not so much absorb

his words, but attempt to determine how she would atone for her previous presumptuous behavior toward the lead architect. Harry concluded and sat back down. The approvals of the main players was assured and the meeting adjourned.

“Mr. Livingson, a moment of your time please.” Rebecca Backhouse called as the entourage readied to depart.

Mr. Strenhowell turned to Harry, “We will see you tomorrow, Mr. Livingson, well done.”

Harry turned to the Backhouse Lead and said simply, “What can I do for you now, ma'am?”

Flushing at the reference to her former faux pas, she answered, “I wanted to apologize for my presumptive behavior at the outset of this meeting. It was inexcusable, really.” She was sincerely penitent.

Harry smiled, “No harm done in the least. To tell the truth, I've never been to a meeting like this, and I honestly didn't know the protocols. For all I knew, fetching refreshments was one of my tacit duties.” Harry said candidly.

“It most certainly is *not*.” She responded emphatically. “Mr. Livingson, I am certain I have never encountered a man who was so willing to offer such honest and candid uncertainty regarding the disposition of his position and prominence. I find your attitude most refreshing. After years of enduring these sorts of formal necessities, and the insipid arrogance of some participants whom I've met along the way.” She indicated the last meeting with a nod to the conference room they'd just left. “Not that any of these gentlemen are of that ilk,” she quickly corrected, “It's just that public prominence seems to go to some people's heads.”

“I have met one or two whom you would identify as just those very poor souls.” Harry answered tactfully.

“Mr. Livingson...” she began.

He interrupted, “We shall be working together it appears, please call me Harry if you wish.”

“Very well, Harry. I am Becky, except when surrounded by the other

men of our industry, I must be Miss Backhouse or I lose what credibility I have earned over the years," she added. "Harry may I invite you to lunch? There is a very good cafe just around the corner from here; please say yes. I insist upon making up for our getting off on the wrong foot."

"I'd be delighted." Harry answered; she left no room for him to decline, as a gentleman.

They walked round the corner and enjoyed a very good lunch indeed. They talked about their ascents to their present positions, Harry spoke of Malvern and of Redditch. Becky told him of her tutelage under her father's instruction and her first solo project, of Manchester and other cities she'd had the pleasure to experience in connection to her position. Harry told of his first visit to the continent, and here Becky was most interested.

"That's where I've been so anxious tour. One day I'll be able to take a holiday and do just that." She sounded hopeful, but remained resolutely practical. They finished the repast and parted at the doors of the Brown and Backhouse offices.

"I look forward to working with you, Miss Backhouse," Harry announced as they shook hands. "

And I you, Mr. Livingston." She responded in kind with a sincere smile and firm grip.

The Orphanage Project required Harry to be on-site from time to time and he was pleased that on most of those occasions, Becky was also attending to the construction developments. They toured the site and inspected the facets of each their own interests and requirements, chatted pleasantly, and generally kept up with each other's ongoing pursuits beyond this project alone. Becky offered Harry a multitude of hints and pointers for dealing with the vagaries of their business and for many of the individuals who populated it. In turn, Harry often made mention of the short-cuts and tricks of construction of which Becky had not been made aware, either due to their novelty, or because they were in fact from Harry's own experiences. They each found their association mutually beneficial.

Harry was invited to the Backhouse home on Guy Fawkes Day for dinner with the family. Harry accepted gladly, and arrived with a sack of

potatoes in hand to the amusement of Mr. & Mrs. Backhouse. He was introduced to Becky's twin brother Aaron, with whom Harry got along famously from their first introduction.

“Would you care to help me stuff 'Guy'?” He offered promptly, and they were off to the back of the house where the project had already begun.

They talked as they assembled the effigy. It seemed that Aaron was quite as adept at ascertaining the depth and character of others as Harry was himself. Their conversation roamed from his and his sister's odd upbringing, to his own completed Cambridge coursework. “Malvern's a good school, I have friends from there, sharp fellows every one.” He commented to his new acquaintance.

Harry inquired at more length regarding Aaron's reference to their early governess, “Mrs. Anna Leonowens? Did I catch that correctly?”

“She was a character, to be sure. A widow. Her husband served with father; she and mother were childhood friends. When she returned to England from the Orient, mother offered her hearth and home while she 'assembled her memoirs.' It turned out though, once a governess, always a governess. Becky and I were introduced to a world of which we'd never dreamt. Remarkable.” Aaron sketched a brief outline of their years under her care, and the effigy was complete.

After the evening was properly celebrated and the fireworks in the nearby park were ended, Harry made a point to make plans with Aaron for future discussions. “It would be my pleasure,” Aaron assured him and they appointed the next Friday as fitting their mutual schedules. He thanked the Backhouses for their generous hospitality, bid farewell, and returned to his apartments satisfied of now having two friends in Manchester.

Harry met up with Aaron the next Friday afternoon. They strolled the grounds and walked through the preview exhibits of the Manchester Museum, scheduled to open to the public in early Spring.

“Becky was the one to set her sights upon taking over father's interest in the Construction firm. She's very good at her chosen field.” Harry agreed and offered his own anecdotes in support of the accolade. “I favor a more

mundane vocation, I'm afraid. I would like to settle into a teaching post, somewhere," he admitted.

"That's a wonderful and noble profession, well worthy of a dedicated mind." Harry encouraged. "Out of curiosity, what field of education attracts you?"

"The impact upon cultures of their own folklore, myths, and legends, actually." Aaron answered without apology for the eccentric preoccupation.

"And as long as your not offended by my prying, what prompted that field for your consideration?" Harry became more and more fascinated by his new friend.

"It goes back to Mrs. Leonowens, again..." He spoke at length of the tales and stories she had confided in her charges so long ago. "There was one occasion that took pre-eminence for me. It seems she was waiting for an audience with her employer and happened into a conversation with a wealthy merchant of southern China, who was to meet with the Minister of Trade or some such. Neither of their applications for audience came to anything that day, and she invited the merchant to tea and a continuance of their discussion. He related to her, and she passed along to my sister and me, a rare tale of a most curiously adapted regimen for the pursuit of what she referred to as 'enlightenment.' The old gentleman was only a little vague on the precise methodology of the regimen, that it was passed generation to generation through certain families unchanged was very clear. The merchant outlined the tenets of the discipline and various verifications of its claims, adding as he did so that he himself was at liberty tell her what he knew of it, as he had declined the invitation to the 'path' when he was still young and very foolish." Aaron fell silent and looked away at nothing in particular.

"That is a most compelling story." Harry said with certainty and a great deal of personal appreciation for the story's good reception by others.

"Compelling enough! I have dedicated myself to those disciplines since that first hearing; and I can say, in proper modesty, with some genuine success." Aaron added with just a tinge of pride at his suggested accomplishments.

“Very impressive, indeed.” Harry encouraged gladly. The evening was approaching too soon for either of their tastes and they agreed to continue their intercourse, mutual schedules permitting. Harry gripped his friend's hand and bid him a safe journey home. Aaron bid Harry likewise. Each was more convinced of the other's growing friendship and both were happily comforted at the thought.

The winter season drew down upon the northern hemisphere with anticipation of the thrill of holiday cheer to come. Harold, Chloe, and Hannah came to the Spelman house for Thanksgiving and planned to stay through New Year's. Harold was esteemed well enough in his own Company, and had already brought so much business through their doors that they were more than willing to spare him the holidays. Grandmama Belle, Auntie Titania and Auntie Hipolyta spent hours cooing and oogling over little Hannah, as did her Auntie Kaitlyn. Chloe was so pleased with her bundle of joy, she took up every opportunity to sit back and regard her in the arms of the child's dearest female relations. Sarah and Mandy weren't in any way excluded from having plenty of face time with the cherub themselves. Although neither of them looked forward with quite the same enthusiasm for their own prospects of motherhood. They prided themselves on the professions they pursued without regret, nor with any feelings of personal sacrifice or loss of womanly opportunity. Caring for the children of their closest friends was quite satisfactory and rewarding enough.

Harry's letters were assembled and the ladies spent a whole afternoon in a compiled reading session, as Belle and his sisters were once wont to do. At the close of that afternoon *someone* made the proposal of a visit to Redditch, Manchester and a general tour for the early spring. Chloe welcomed the thought of showing off her daughter to her family and in-laws, which Harold seconded. Titania and Hipolyta were adamant that seeing Harry was long overdue---and Kaitlyn was quietly pleased that the matter came up for discussion *at all*.

Her only concern was for the upcoming preparations of the next season's performances. “Although,” she mused, “Mr. Avery Goodman does

have a real flair for direction, and an intuitive grasp for subtly managing the extremes of emotion displayed by the Players from time to time. No doubt the result of his vocation.”

When Jameson got wind of the tentative notion, he was conflicted. He dearly wished to travel to Europe, not just because he'd never been far from Tahoe before, but also because he knew he had cousins, uncles and aunts in Scotland. Then, there was the fabulous opportunity to visit 'foreign' kitchens. That was most near the root of his conflict, he was also determined to stay in *his* kitchens where he was the chef and lord of his domain. Mandy was silent on the subject, and her lack of comment attracted Belle's attention.

“What's on your mind, dear?” she approached her friend after dinner that evening.

Mandy looked uncertainly into Belle's eyes, and admitted she was giving the matter of the possible absence of Jameson quite a bit of thought. On the one hand, he was the master of his own decisions, she explained. On the other hand she would miss him, professionally and personally, for the duration of his absence. “And Belle, what if he sees the wider world and decides Tahoe is just too small for him. I think I'll be devastated.” She whimpered most uncharacteristically, almost in tears.

Belle held her friend's hand tightly, “Mandy, why wouldn't you wish to go on the adventure as well? You are overdue for a vacation.” Then she added, her brows furrowed, “Have you *ever* had a vacation?”

“No.” Mandy answered quietly and simply. “There has never been a good time for one.”

“I thought not,” whispered Belle in reply, “Perhaps you might give this opportunity some small consideration.”

“But what about the 'Concession'? What about the late spring and the Summer Season? What about...”

Belle laid her hand on her friend's shoulder. “What about you have Jameson draft lists of duties and menu suggestions, and leave the 'Concession' temporarily with someone you trust?”

“Like you? Maybe?” Mandy asked, almost a plea.

“George, Lawrence, White Feathers and I could likely pull it off with assistance from some of Sarah's former students. It would be a good training experience for them,” Belle thought aloud. “George?” she called across the room. Her husband looked to her and nodded clearly, then returned to his conversation with Lawrence and Harold. “There you see, you're free to travel.” She concluded.

Mandy glanced from her friend, then across the room to the gentlemen and back to Belle. “How does he know what you were going to ask him?” She demanded.

“Uh... it's an old married people thing; you know how it goes...” Belle equivocated sheepishly.

Hipolyta nominated herself for sending word to Harry about their plans, “Once we have something more than: 'We're coming to visit,'” she announced honestly to the chuckles and laughter from the rest of the room. Lawrence and Harold set about establishing a working itinerary with rail and sailing schedules. Before Christmas, the plans were entrusted to Hipolyta for formal documentation in letters to Harry and to the Allcocks. She sent a brief notice of their intentions by wire, promising more details would soon be forthcoming by correspondence.

Mandy and Belle published notices of hiring for the 'Concessions,' and Sarah Bunker assisted them in sifting through the applications for the most likely candidates based upon her firsthand knowledge of her former students. Harold and Chloe returned to Pacific Heights after New Year's Day. Harold threw himself into paving the way for his now foreseen prolonged absence. His industry was paramount to their recent successes in the market and, he decided, if they were unwilling to part with him again so soon, he reconciled himself to beginning fresh with one of their rivals. It didn't come to that.

Jameson, Titania and Hipolyta resurrected the diagrams and plans used in the construction of Harry's travel trunk, and began new assemblies of their own. With the combined efforts of the three of them working whenever a spare moment might be afforded, they were constructed,

packed and repacked well before the appointed time for their departure.

Kaitlyn did follow up with her notion that Mr. Goodman would be an acceptable surrogate director for the Players and gradually deferred to him more and more, until the rest of the company looked to him as a matter of first recourse. She managed this feat at the same time she groomed an understudy for her own role in the next season's performance. So that when it did finally come time for their imminent departure, the Theatrical Society threw a bon voyage party in honor of her deft disposition of her responsibilities to them.

White Feathers practiced pastries; George and Lawrence made the menu for home meals in preparation for manning the Concession's kitchens. Belle spent her every spare moment becoming thoroughly familiar with the cafe's management, operation and clientele. The future travelers were both satisfied with, and gratified for, all the efforts made on their behalf that would allow them this once in a lifetime adventure.

Harry spent the Christmas holiday in Redditch, and the first evening by bringing the Allcocks into currency with his architectural career. In turn they produced photographs of their new grand-daughter Hannah and the happy little family of San Francisco, their Pacific Heights house, and the Spelman's new residence above the Lodges. Harry was honored that the souvenir photograph of his graduation was prominent on the wall of the Drawing Room near the Christmas Tree. They enjoyed each other's company into the wee hours of the morning and resumed their conversations over breakfast. It was nearly as wonderful a visit as if he'd been in Tahoe. The news of the 'grand visit and tour' by their family and friends had been the most avid topic of conversation.

By the time March and warmer afternoons graced northern England, Harry was keeping quite a number of plates spinning in the air at once. The Orphanage was moving ahead without as much of his direct oversight, and other challenges were presented to his little 'team.' Their efficiency and prompt results in answer to their every proposal had not gone unnoticed by the Directors with whom Harry had daily and weekly interaction in the course of the firm's business. One unhappy occasion only, marred their

otherwise pristine reputation. Ralph Stanley failed to produce certain required drawings for which he was responsible, in the timely manner demanded by a certain sudden 'request' from Mr. Strenhowell. Thinking his sabotage would bring down his nemesis in the eyes of the management; his thought was that he would be able to step in, provide remedy, and thereby ingratiate himself into those same supervisors' good opinions who for reasons unknown to himself so depended upon that 'Mr. Livingson.' It was a very ill-conceived scheme.

No one had to tell Mr. Strenhowell the cause of the hiccup in his anticipated project's completion. He went straight to Mr. Stanley, sacked him and had him escorted from the building.

“Mr. Stanley, although Mr. Livingson has assured me that this was purely a miscommunication on his part, and that you are not to be held responsible, I disagree with his protection and defense of you. Your replacement shall be installed immediately.”

Irrationally, Mr. Ralph Stanley recognized only that Mr. Livingson had ruined his career and he vowed to avenge himself upon him---a form of myopic insanity.

Harry's semi-annual re-appraisal was scheduled and conducted by Mr. Strenhowell as promised. The Waterhouse firm was very pleased by his manner with clients and his efficiently managed, and growing team of designers. Mr. Strenhowell, on the firm's behalf, then offered Harry a very generous leap in salary and the pick of several homes owned by the firm for use as his personal residence for a duration of his own choosing. “One of the perquisites of employment in an Architectural Company,” Mr. Strenhowell offered a rare smile at his last comment.

In addition, Mr. Waterhouse had selected Harry and his team to work on the Victoria Building at Liverpool University. “Other projects may therefore be made secondary to this commission,” he told Harry, and that was the conclusion of his first re-appraisal.

Harry invited his friends, Becky and Aaron along with their parents to his new home in Greengate, of Salford. He apologized that he had not yet begun furnishing all the rooms, as he led them along a tour of the house

and grounds. The Dining Room was well appointed, as was the Drawing Room. His library was rapidly filling and he had comfortable chairs in the Sitting Room. And other than his own bed in only one of the several bedrooms, the house was still rather spare. The parlor was his office away from the office, and plans, designs, elevations and perspectives covered the walls in no certain pattern or apparent organization to anyone's eye but Harry's. He cooked a savory meal for his guests and they promised to return for another visit whenever they were invited. Aaron returned often, sometimes staying the weekend.

The R.M.S. *Britanic* was to sail from Chelsea Docks on Wednesday the eleventh of April, therefore tickets for passage on the Overland train were arranged to insure their arrival in New York with time to spare should the unforeseen impede their journey. So it was, that on a still chill morning in the first week of April, Lawrence Spelman bid farewell to his daughter, while White Feathers, George and Belle waved goodbye to their three loved ones. Mandy and the three Bessamers took their last look on the faces of their friends remaining behind as the train pulled away from the Truckee platform. The eight travelers settled into their state rooms for the long trip east to the Atlantic.

They occupied four state rooms in two adjacent cars. Hipolyta roomed with Mandy, Kaitlyn stayed with Titania, leaving the Bessamers and Jameson to their own individual cabins in the next coach. Harold and Jameson took very little time situating themselves and were ready for breakfast in the Dining car very soon after boarding, although breakfast wouldn't be served for another two hours. This suited the ladies.

As Titania and Kaitlyn sat looking out the dark windows, Titania mused, "I wonder if Harry felt as I do now when he boarded this very train? It seems so long ago." Kaitlyn was ready for any topic of conversation which began with: 'Harry.'

"I remember when I first met him at the end of his train trip. He said he had reviewed his memories of all that he knew. The events which had shaped his life, the people who molded his ideas, and the places he was to be missing. I thought at the time he said that, that he must be one of the

few people, other than *really old* people, who made such an attempt,” reflected Kaitlyn as response to her friend's comment.

Titania giggled, “I always thought of my brother as 'really old,' so I guess he was entitled,” her smile was infectious.

Kaitlyn reflected, “Harry's eyes make him look old. Maybe that's what made me think of the comparison, but what really intrigued me was his constant smile. You know what I mean. It's not a grin or a smile like he just heard a funny story; it's that expression that he wears like everything he's perceiving is a pleasure to him. That's it, a smile of pleasure. I envied him that feeling, that everything's a pleasure.”

Titania turned on her friend suddenly, “But Kaitlyn that's your expression! You've always had that look, at least since I first met you. Everybody notices. We have all been sure it's the *look of love*.” She did grin now, thinking she had unmasked her dear friend at last.

“I certainly didn't have it when I was a girl, nor when I arrived in New York what seems so many years ago, and I didn't have it when we crossed to Liverpool. It wasn't there as Chloe, and Harry and I toured those places in France. And I know what my expression was when he made Chloe and I do all that work on the White's house; it definitely wasn't there then.” She searched her memory, “And I *thought* I loved Harry so much all through those times.”

She tried to recall the exact moment she remembered that expression peering back out of the mirror at her; then she was sure. “It was August twenty-sixth, after our walk on the road back to Clive House. The day before my mother and father returned. That was the first day I actually knew who I was and what was actually around me for the first time.”

Titania had listened carefully, “Oh Kaitlyn, that's beautiful and at the same time so sad...”

Kaitlyn smiled, “But you're right, love can put that smile of pleasure on a face as well. Just look at you and Jameson.” She kept looking out the dark glass without looking at her friend's reaction.

Titania sat still and quiet. “Kaitlyn, is it so obvious?” she sounded really

concerned. “Does everybody know? We have tried so hard to avoid any public displays of our affections... We know everybody thinks we're so young, too young to even be able to love, let alone...” She couldn't say it aloud, the practice of silence was too strong after so long.

“Titania, your family is built of the sternest stuff anyone's ever built people from. If any one of you sets your mind to something, well, they might as well write it in the history books now, because it's done.” She tried to say this just right, “Dearest, I don't know what MamaBelle and George have raised you to think about... intimacy... between ordinary people in love, but I'm quite certain the Livingsons are not ordinary people.”

“Mother and father haven't ever said a word about it. They taught us from when we were the smallest of children to see and hear and smell the world around us, to work hard without expectation, to approach the world around us reasonably, to see the best in the people we knew---to hope for the rest and to walk with our heads held high. But never a word about...intimacy.”

“Well, Titania, perhaps it's like when I first donned this expression which Harry, and you girls, and MamaBelle, and George all have, have always had; I have it because I can see clearer now than I ever was able before, and I know my place in all that I see. I can truly love now. It was simply a dream of love before. You're a Livingson, Titania, if you love, your eyes *are* open. It's everyone else who is in the mists and darkness.”

Titania needed to hear that so much; she threw her arms around Kaitlyn's neck and they sat there, comfortable in a lingering embrace. Titania finally whispered, “I love my sister, she's practically me after all, but honestly Kaitlyn, you're the best sister in the world.”

“It's only because I had a tougher road getting to 'here,' and I know 'here' is so vastly different from the place I came from,” whispered Kaitlyn in reply.

Harold came down the corridor knocking on cabin doors. Jameson walked after him announcing the Breakfast hour. Chloe and Hannah emerged from Mandy and Hipolyta's cabin with their eyes slightly

reddened; Mandy had her handkerchief at her eyes. It was unclear how she could see to walk. Kaitlyn and Titania came out of their cabin holding hands and smiling. Harold looked to Jameson and they each simply raised their eyebrows to each other's glance and said nothing about what women did or talked about when they sequestered themselves.

The gentlemen hadn't been completely idle in the interim, they informed the Dining car staff of their party's size, and that they were each quite capable diners. Jameson got to look over the train kitchen and offered his compliments to the cooks on their managing so well in such a limited space. This drew them into an exchange of commiseration and the first bonds of kindred spirits in difficult circumstances. Then the gentlemen removed to the smoking car, though neither was a practiced smoker. Harold produced a couple cigars and they lit them, but that was about the extent of their 'smoking.' It was however, a good setting for gentlemen's conversation and they determined to occupy the space often during their journey.

The breakfast was delightfully filling. After sating themselves, each diner gazed, immersed within their own thoughts out the windows at the hills and mountains passing by as if they were in an art gallery and the paintings walked by their eyes instead of the other way around. Mandy sat with Harold and Chloe, Hipolyta sat with Kaitlyn, and Jameson with Titania. The latter were now unabashedly holding hands at every opportunity. "It's about time," observed Mandy, just loud enough for the party to hear and there were nods of agreement nearly in unison from the rest.

They retired to the Sitting car and sat in the big comfortable chairs to let their breakfast settle. Mandy asked Harold about his job, and how he could take so much time away from the office.

"Well that's a story, isn't it." He replied, and turned toward her. "I have a unique position within my company, we... collect other companies, for lack of a better description and I am the top collector, you might say. So this 'holiday' is also, in part, business. You see it doesn't matter where I 'work,' if I can spot a possible treasure somewhere, and if we are compatible---then another company is added to our network." He paused

to see if she were taking his meaning.

Mandy tried to reiterate what she thought she heard him to say. “So, you don't need to be in an 'office,' and wherever you are or go, you are at work, sort of, and... What makes any particular company you might come across, 'compatible'?” She was trying to work it all out, but lacked certain information.

“My company is focused upon services and merchandises, so a potential addition is compatible if they have a solid market share of whatever market they are in and of whatever size. But more importantly, they must have a sound reputation for integrity and profitability. Most often the trick for me is to somehow convince them that they would prefer to be a part of a larger network of companies like themselves, than continue alone as they have always been.”

“How do you do that?” Mandy asked innocently, finally grasping the nature of his enterprise.

“Dear lady.” Harold answered with a smile, “Magic, of course!” The rest of their party laughed, and Mandy realized she had asked what he could not answer; like asking a tightrope artist how they got from one end of the high wire to the other. They could tell you it's the result of practice, steel nerves and luck, but you're no closer to the answer you thought you were after.

Smiling, and a little chagrined, she said, “Very well, I concede. Magic it is. Thank you. At least in the restaurant business, the concepts are simpler: 'People are hungry, you serve them what they think they want, they eat or don't, and you're paid anyway.'”

“But you've stated it precisely,” replied Harold quickly and with enthusiasm. “... 'serve them what they think they want, eat or not,' makes no difference to me, I get paid for bringing them to the table! Magical really. That people can be the way they are; is not that a most fertile market? I am often amazed by the sheer depths of human variety and their simultaneous absolute similarity.”

“Ah, at last I see you; you are a philosopher Mr. Bessamer,” concluded Mandy, satisfied at the epithet.

“A simple magician, Miss Hill. An observant minor player in the wings, behind the curtains of progress,” answered Harold modestly.

The others had listened to their dialog with rapt interest as if the players were indeed on a stage, and when Harold played his final metaphor they clapped happily for both. As if on cue, Mandy and Harold rose from their chairs and made a bow and a curtsy, respectively. There were more chuckles at that.

“Hannah's hungry, again. Excuse me.” Chloe rose to return to their cabin. “I'll keep you company.” Hipolyta and then Titania, both rose to follow her.

“You're all too good to me, or is it the spell my daughter has already cast upon you all?” Chloe was delighted for the company whatever the source. She had considered feeding Hannah in the company of all her 'family,' which would likely have been perfectly unnoticed, but then there were the population of all those other passengers to consider. Simple courtesy ruled.

Once the madonna and attendant angels exited, Kaitlyn offered, “Shall I read from the Baedeker for New York? I am curious how they describe that grand city compared to my own notions and experience there.” They rearranged themselves so that each could hear her without her having to raise her voice.

After an afternoon of more gazing at the passing landscapes, of quiet chats and a few naps, the ladies occupied the lavatories in preparation for dinner. Harold and Jameson sat with Hannah, passing her between them each time she appeared to grow restless in the arms of one. Her bright eyes stared around the compartment and the moving picture of the window. “She's so happy, and quiet for a baby.” Jameson remarked.

Harold reflected aloud. “She's her mother's daughter there. Chloe can sit quietly doing what appears to be the most routine of little tasks, with that ever-present hint of a smile playing at the corners of her eyes, for hours on end it seems.” He handed his daughter to Jameson, “You know, when we were children, after her mother died she walled herself in behind courtesy and elegant gowns, her house duties and her father's factory. It

wasn't until Kaitlyn and Harry showed up that she was soon that bubbling and joyful girl she had once been.”

Jameson nodded, “You do know what happened, don't you? I know it's not my place to say, but she must have told you...” He realized he might should have tested the waters a little more carefully, but there it was, he'd opened the door.

Harold looked out the window, “When I began to court her, she was just the beatific angel you see now. It wasn't until she recognized my attentions were so wholly focused upon... well, her love, that she then told me an amazing story. Her eyes grew more solemn and her face was as serious as the grave. She told me about having grown up hearing about her father's first trip to the States. About meeting an extraordinary family who took him in and gave him whatever they had. How he could see behind their faces 'and glimpse the love and majesty of God.' That's what she said her father said about them, anyway. Well, she idolized these people she'd never met, put them on pedestals. Then several years ago, there is Harry in her own house, one of that remarkable family. She said he seemed pretty normal to her until she had a 'girl-talk' with Kaitlyn, and then she began to look at him with different eyes. Harry was still just Harry, but what Harry could do, what he did... extraordinary.”

Jameson handed Hannah back to her father, and Harold continued talking but more to the face of his sleeping daughter, “There was a family who had nearly lost everything in a flood and Harry decided it was an opportunity for Kaitlyn to make good on her desperate desire to escape the shallowness of her life. Chloe knew what was happening almost at once, she said. She told me, with some embarrassment, how she tricked Kaitlyn into telling her what her friend had sworn never to tell. Then she showed up with her the next morning, ready for the day's 'lessons.' Chloe said she'd never been so scared of anything, man beast, or devil, as she was when Harry stopped them as they left the house that morning. She had rationalized that her need was as great as Kaitlyn's, her spirit was as determined, her own memories of the idolized family were there longer... Harry just took her on as if expecting her there all along, and she said she

damned near fainted with relief.”

“But you know 'what' she learned?” pressed Jameson, anxious to know how far his friend's knowledge of his family reached.

“Sir, she is my wife. Well to put it in more correct terms: I am her man; she would not have anything to do with me until I knew what she was capable of, and what possibilities she could realize, which I at that time could not. It went without saying that if I was to have any chance at all in a successful courtship, I should have to become worthy of her.”

“What did you do?” Jameson was rapidly becoming very intrigued.

“What any man must do when faced with forces greater than he can overcome. I surrendered. I mean I surrendered utterly to her absolute dominion over her own world, and the undeniable power she had over my own future... What else was left to me to do? I have loved, or more correctly, thought I had loved Chloe since I was just a boy. She told me she could not marry a man who did not possess himself; for if he were unable to do that, how could he possess anything? She had me there by simple reason, sheer reason.” He shifted his sleeping daughter to his other arm careful not to disturb her. “I was, and am as capable an athlete as England can produce in this day and age, yet Chloe made me look like an uncoordinated toddler!”

Jameson caught himself before he laughed too loud, Harold held his finger to his smiling lips as a caution.

“Then once she had rescued my shriveled male pride from the depths of despair into which I was ready to be plunged, she painstakingly guided me through rebuilding my imploded inner world, brick by brick. After a couple months, and a titanic rubbish heap of silliness and inanity purged from my mind and heart, she at last said she would marry me. IF I were able to maintain that new found wakefulness and peace until she was satisfied I wouldn't relapse into the blustering baboon of bravado I knew had always been.” He looked down into Hannah's sleeping face; a little trail of drool was running from the corner of her mouth and over her chubby cheek. He looked up at his friend with a grin, “And then she and Kaitlyn introduced me, properly, to Harry.”

“Mr. Allcock had given me consent to marry his daughter, of course only after she herself had given leave to inquire such a thing of him; then during those holidays she told Harry and Kailyn all that she'd gone through to get me to that point. The ladies pleaded with Harry to offer me some advice, or encouragement, or something which might inspire me to greater efforts. He assured them that Chloe had done all that she could do, and it was up to me to make my own way after all. Well, if you don't know yet you might as well hear it from me, when those women set their minds and hearts to an aim...” He paused to find the words and resorted to the simplicity of, “An aim is accomplished. Harry assented to their request, and on New Year's morning Chloe led me down to the Clive House undercroft, their gymnasium. She was dressed in an outfit I'd not seen her in before. She said it allowed for a greater range of exercise.

She cautioned me that I was to do exactly as requested and swore me to secrecy. That turned out to be moot; no one would believe me if I told them about what happened that morning, anyway. Well, Harry was standing in the middle of the training mats holding in his hands a bow and one arrow. Kaitlyn was already standing at the edge of the mat off to the side and dressed in the same manner as my dearest. Chloe took a stance opposite her on the other side of the mat. Harry walked to me, that little smile he always has playing at the corners of his eyes. 'Harold, would you stand there and prepare to loose this arrow?' He handed me the bow and I took a position at the far edge of the mat we were all now surrounding. The ladies were perhaps ten steps apart from each other, and half way between from where I stood to where Harry walked to, at the other end---maybe twenty paces all told. He knew, from his tenure at Malvern, I was an excellent marksman with the bow and deadly with a sword. He took off his vest and shirt, then removed his shoes and stockings. The ladies tightened the ribbons they wore which were holding their hair up off their necks. Then he said aloud that he himself was my target, and to loose the arrow with all my skill and strength. I can tell you, that was the closest I have ever been to absolute terror in my life. He just looked at me, pointed to the center of his chest and waited.

As was my habit, for luck and from routine, I bit off the smallest bit of

the fletching of one of the flights, notched the arrow, drew back on the bow and aimed exactly at the spot he'd indicated. I let go the string. There was a sudden moment of the rush and roar of wind; I thought I'd passed out. I looked in front of me; the bowstring was still singing on the bow in my hand and there was Harry. Not at the end of the mat where he was a split second before when I loosed the arrow, but in the middle of the mat balancing the arrow idly in his outstretched finger, with a ribbon dangling from either end of it, and the ladies' hair was at that moment just falling to their shoulders as I watched.

Neither Chloe, nor Kaitlyn were prepared for that demonstration any more than I was. My eyes could not have been any more springing from their sockets, nor my mouth any more gaping open. They reached up to where their ribbons were supposed to be on their heads, and *were* just that very second before. Then they looked to those dangling from the arrow. I walked out to him and looked at the arrow, reached to my mouth and matched the piece still in my teeth with the tiny vacancy in the fletching of this arrow. They mated perfectly. Chloe and Kaitlyn inspected the ribbons and were resolute that they were the same. Harry handed me the arrow still balanced and beribboned on his finger, and went to put his shirt and vest, shoes and socks back on. When he rejoined us, he said simply, as serious as death, 'Because your wife wished for you to see with your own eyes what is truly possible, in honor of her love for you, I condescended to make this little demonstration'."

Jameson wanted to hug him, but Hannah was peacefully drooling in his arms. "Harold, that was absolutely inspiring, truly an epic endeavor of love."

"That's the heart of it you see;" Harold added, "It wasn't until I'd taken the blinders off, so to speak, that I even had the capacity and understanding to know what love is, or to be able to really love! My wife is a most resplendent treasure. I am the luckiest man on the planet and I remind her of that fact at every opportunity."

The two men gazed at Hannah, or out the window at the lengthening shadows streaming along before them until Chloe stepped into the cabin

and between them to rescue her daughter. Jameson stood, bowed deeply to Mrs. Bessamer and went to ready himself for Dinner.

“What was that about, dear?” she asked her husband.

“Oh, he just naturally genuflects in the presence of the divine, my love,” answered Harold sincerely.

Dinner was a festive affair for the traveling party that evening. Toasts were offered for their journeys, and each drank heartily to the adventure before them. They retired to their cabins and readied for sleep. Mandy asked Hipolyta before they nodded off, “How do you, and all your 'sisters' keep such expressions of pure contentment always behind your eyes? It's an anathema to me.”

Hipolyta yawned and replied, “Yes, we will have to talk about that sometime. That's a good story, I'm sure,” and she drifted into slumber. Mandy just stared into the inky darkness past the window and let the last words echo in her mind until she fell fast asleep too.

There were no impediments, either in the stations of Omaha or Chicago, nor along the tracks through the bounteous American country sides they traveled, to keep them from arriving in New York with a few days to spare for sightseeing. Harold hired two hacks at Grand Central Depot to deliver them to the Chelsea House where Mr. Spelman had procured for them their rooms until the *Britishic* sailed.

When Kaitlyn stepped into the foyer she was transported through time and her heart nearly leapt from her chest through her throat and out for all the world to see. This was hallowed ground to her, the most sacred of places.

She walked to two arm chairs and settees behind spreading *Areca* palms and stared at a spot between them as if peering back into time itself at the silly young woman and the bashfully debonair young gentleman chatting about Shakespeare and Tigers. Tears were trickling down her face, and Titania took her arm and led her casually to their suites upstairs. When she relaxed to the knowledge they were safely upstairs in their suite, she suddenly realized they were in Harry's former suite and Titania was holding out her hand for Kaitlyn to have his bed.

She just stood there transfixed until Titania brought her a wet cloth for her face and sat next to her, rocking her gently until she was nearly herself again.

“I had no idea... I would be so affected... it just came over me so overwhelmingly.” Kaitlyn finally managed to say.

“Sister, you have got it bad” whispered Titania, then she giggled at her own boldness and that brought Kaitlyn back to good humor.

“I do; don't I,” she admitted, and giggled with Titania in spite of herself.

The Chelsea Dining Rooms served as good a dinner as always, When the room was clearing of diners, their little party still sat. They joked and laughed, exchanged stories and thoughts of all they had seen and hoped to see. It was never afterward disclosed precisely how it began, except that it started with the gentlemen. Jameson or Harold, pinched a nut between his fingers and it flew towards the other's face. At the last moment the targeted gentleman caught it in his mouth and returned the favor towards the other's face, who likewise caught it in his own mouth. While their hands never left the tabletop before them. In a minute or two Hipolyta and Titania noticed the display and each pinched, or flicked two nuts apiece towards the gentlemen, which were likewise caught and chewed. This immediately resulted in a counter assault from themselves. Before any time at all there was a cloud of nuts hurtling through the air above the table top. No one's hands left the table in front of them, but everyone was munching on nuts. Miss Hill remained oblivious to the tiny cloud before her eyes, except to notice her table mates had become very interested in the bowls of nuts provided at each setting. When she reached for some nuts herself and raised them to her mouth, she looked across the table at her companions and she at last noticed the flying debris. She sat, at once mesmerized by the display, then could not believe her own eyes and at last spoke up.

“Would one of you kindly tell me what is going on here?” The missiles ceased at once. She said again, “Truth be told, you tend at first blush to look like ordinary people, but would one of you explain why I suddenly

feel as though I'm in the midst of circus performers?" That brought a wave of muffled laughter.

Hipolyta came to her rescue at once. "You are absolutely right, Miss Hill." Then she looked at her companions and said, "This *is* unacceptable. Honestly, what would Harry say...?"

Titania looked to Kaitlyn, and Kaitlyn sat up a little straighter. Then in an immaculate impersonation of tone, manner and posture, down to his very voice, she said, "Would someone please *just* pass the nuts?" The table exploded in uncontrolled hilarity. Mandy Hill was not entertained, and no closer to having an answer.

Hipolyta tried to speak again before she had wiped the tears of laughter from her eyes. She composed herself, and explained to the assembled company that their behavior was isolating their dear friend and they must make amends. One by one, each person at the table apologized for their very inconsiderate behavior, which Miss Hill happily accepted.

"But honestly, what am I missing here? You are obviously not who I thought you were." She was genuinely curious and waited for a response.

It was Kaitlyn who spoke for all. "Mandy, these gentle people around you are exactly the same people you have always known, some.." she indicated Titania, Jameson, and Hipolyta, "You have known since birth." She paused.

"What has disturbed you, I think, is that they are not conforming to your perceptions of who you always have come to recognize as the 'little girls,' or the 'little boy' with whom you are familiar. This is perfectly normal. All people look through lenses of perception they have fitted over their own eyes to view the world around them---in order to keep them from going completely insane. For if they were suddenly thrust into the incomprehensible reality of the situation, they would do just that." She waited again for this little to sink into her friend's consideration. "These few here, and others you also know, are genuinely ordinary humans. But, if you look outside on the street or review most all of your acquaintances, you will be seeing people who are *not* only not *properly* human, but are in fact nearer to barely civilized *imitations*---sleep-walkers essentially."

She gathered her nerve and continued, “These gentle folk have risen from the shallow depths of that bare imitation, or have been trained from birth to become actual human beings. Men and women who possess their own souls. Ordinary humans with a fully functioning Conscience and the full potential of what humankind was meant to achieve. It has been a labor of love, born from the sacrifices and dedication of those who came before us, that we are who we are presently before you.”

Mandy sat, stunned and shocked but relieved. “I think I see,” she began meekly. “So, Belle?” and Titania nodded gravely.

“And dear George?” and Hipolyta nodded solemnly.

“And I always suspected there was something about White Feathers...” and Jameson nodded in agreement.

“Well, I am not spending the rest of this trip as the sole 'beast' of this company!” She exclaimed and the rest of the party sensed she was going to demand a return ticket to Tahoe.

“One of you had best get busy and explain exactly what labors are in store for me, and what I shall have to do, else nobody's leaving *this* table tonight!”

With a collective, simultaneous sigh, the travelers relaxed and one by one essentially said... in so many words... she'd have to wait until they reached England and Mr. Henry Livingston to truly begin the journey upon which she wished to embark. In the meantime, they were happy to answer any other questions as best they could. Satisfied at their reassurances, she relented and enjoyed the rest of the evening, laughing and joking with them with all her heart.

They strolled the city during the next days, walked in the Central Park, visited the galleries and museums. Chloe and Mandy, joined by Titania and Hipolyta, decided they wished to go to the theater once before they left, and so approached Kaitlyn to take them. Kaitlyn simply demurred saying she was not in the least interested in the activity, but to pick any theater at all and they were sure to enjoy themselves. Harold and Jameson were conscripted to arrange their last evening's entertainment, while Kaitlyn was delighted to insist she remain with Hannah in her rooms. At seven-thirty

that evening, with the baby in her arms and waving her little hand 'bye-bye' to her parents, Kaitlyn saw them off and went back to her suite--Harry's suite. She walked her little niece from room to room and told her grand stories of the men and women who had led the vanguard of the life she was destined to pursue as a real woman, not the grown up girl Kaitlyn had nearly resigned herself to be, that is before she met Hannah's Uncle Harry.

The *Britanic* sailed on schedule on the evening tide from the Chelsea Docks in New York harbor. Harold wired Harry before they sailed to make sure he knew when they should likely arrive. Jameson and Titania walked hand in hand on the promenade, weather permitting, at every opportunity. Hipolyta strolled with Kaitlyn, or sat, or read stories with Mandy, sometimes one or the other had the privilege of caring for Hannah during their companionship. Harold and Chloe took full advantage of the many baby-sitters and treated the cruise as a second honeymoon to the delight of their fellow travelers. The Atlantic passage was invigorating for Titania and Hipolyta, but for Mandy in particular. The vastness of the ocean was a sight she'd never seen before; the unrelenting swells and breezes, the almost living air filled her lungs with every new breath. Belle was right, she had been overdue for a holiday. They approached Liverpool docks just seven days from New York and they resigned themselves to returning to the firmer earth once more.

Miss Hill, with Jameson and Titania, disembarked to procure rail accommodations and to hire porters for the party's luggage. Hipolyta stayed behind with Chloe and Harold to assist them in finishing their more extensive preparations for leaving the ship. Leaving Kaitlyn to wait at the top of the gangway with Captain Perry in a friendly conversation and to keep an eye out for Harry's approach. She introduced herself via his acquaintance with her father.

“...Know him, I should say so! As a matter of fact I have a post from him just here in my... Oh, I am sorry for the loss of your dear departed mother. That was quite a blow to us all.” The Captain said as he reached for the letter and was about to read some from it, when Kaitlyn saw Harry cross the street at the far side of the landing grounds.

“Oh, Captain, I very much would like to hear my father's kind words to you, but if you will indulge me, I have just spotted the man for whom I was to be on watch.”

“Not at all, not at all, Miss Spelman. I am glad to have had the opportunity of our little chat,” he replied courteously.

The next series of events fell out like this. Harry arrived on the terminal landing tarmac and walked directly toward the gangway of the R.M.S. *Britainic*. Kaitlyn left the Captain, reached the bottom of the gangway and was approaching Harry's smiling countenance and open arms. Harold, Chloe and Hipolyta emerged from their cabins onto the deck and were making their way to the gangway, while Mandy, Jameson and Hipolyta had nearly returned from their own errands.

It was at that most inopportune of moments that Ralph Stanley, in an insane attempt at exacting his revenge for the non-existent wrongs suffered at his nemesis's hand, also approached Harry from an alleyway off the dock's tarmac.

“Mr. Livingston, you have done me great injury.” He sneered loudly as he came abreast of his enemy. Kaitlyn had nearly leapt into Harry's arms at the same moment, when interrupted by the snide words and tone of the stranger; she turned to face Harry's accuser.

Stanley continued, “This is a fitting departure for you...” he grinned evilly, produced a derringer from his coat pocket and pointed it at Harry's chest. “Say farewell Mr. Livingston.”

Kaitlyn immediately swooned onto Harry's arm. He wondered at her extraordinary tension in such contrast with her evident state. She leaned heavily into his support and kicked suddenly; her high-laced booted foot smashed Mr. Stanley's gun-hand, causing him to release the weapon. It flew into the air just a short way above their heads and she caught it neatly in her own extended hand as she rose from Harry's arm. She disappeared the little gun into her purse. The entire reunion and brief interruption went nearly unnoticed by any of the passersby.

She stepped close to Ralph Stanley who was holding his injured hand with his still whole one. She leaned to his ear and whispered something

only he could hear. He blanched involuntarily and simply muttered, "Yes ma'm. Thank you very much indeed, ma'am..." and he hurried away without looking back, nearly tripping himself in his haste.

Harry watched his receding back, looked at Kaitlyn's smile and then espied Captain Perry at the top of the gangway. He called out to him. "Captain, is this ramp a part of your ship?"

"So long as it's attached it is," answered the Master of the ship simply.

It was Kaitlyn who called next, "Captain Perry, would you consider doing us a great service?"

"What might I do for you then?" He smiled.

"Marry us, Sir. Now!" was Kaitlyn's concise reply.

Captain Perry looked from her to Harry, who nodded his encouragement to proceed. "Well, this is a rare pleasure."

It was at that moment, that Mandy, Jameson, and Titania came up behind the shouting couple, while at the top of the ramp, descending behind the Captain were Harold, Chloe, Hipolyta and little Hannah in her mother's arms.

Captain Perry looked again to Harry; "Do you have the ring?"

Kaitlyn looked suddenly to him, not having expected any such preconditions. To her surprise, Harry reached into his vest pocket and produced a well-rubbed cigar band.

All who were present heard him say, "I have carried this with me as a treasure from our very first conversation alone in the sitting rooms of the Chelsea House." She flushed at the memory and his confession. "Kaitlyn Elizabeth Spelman, will you have me as your husband? You won my heart at that first encounter," he knelt, "and you have won my soul's own devotion through your constancy of love and integrity. Please take all that I am; and know that you have always been my love's only aim and desire."

His family and friends were in such a state of sudden and complete awe at being present for this unexpected display of unprecedented passion from *their* Harry, that not a whisper of sound came from the assembled audience. Kaitlyn alone maintained her composure and answered.

“Harry I pledged my life and my undying love for you in a solemn oath after that tempest at sea on our first voyage. There is nothing in heaven nor on the earth which could ever cause me to break that most precious vow. I have been and shall *always* be, yours.”

They looked together to the Captain and as if startled by the sudden recollection of his own role in the occasion, he said abruptly, “I pronounce you man and wife!” He wiped his own flowing tears aside, muttering, “Impetuous...Homeric...” Their audience roared with a sudden ovation of great excitement and with tears of absolute joy.

Into the lives of some of our species, there is brought a bare glimpse of the truth of love. The rest of us can only bow in heartfelt admiration and awe of those few who realize that ideal on our behalf. Kaitlyn and Harry embraced and then kissed---real passion is the mere shadow of true love requited---and theirs was the very heart, blood, and soul of that rarest of all treasures.

As if awakening to a new day, and looking about him at a new world, Harry looked into his wife's glowing face and said, “Kaitlyn, *you have green eyes!*”

She smiled, “*Yes, Harry, I am your green-eyed Kat.*”

“And that young man is how to begin a story,” concluded the guest.

An Honest Man

Book One of
The Donkey and the Wall
trilogy

Copyright © 2011 by J. L. Lawson

Published by **Voyager Press**
<http://VoyagerPress.org>

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any other means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented, without permission in writing from the author, except by a reviewer, who wishes to quote brief passages in connection with a review written for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper, or broadcast.

Other novels by J. L. Lawson
offered by Voyager Press

---The Donkey and the Wall Trilogy---

Book One: *An Honest Man*

Book Two: *The Thief*

Book Three: *The Tiger*

---The Curious Voyages of the Anna Virginia Saga---

First: *Weigh Anchor*

Second: *Harbor*

Third: *Storms*

Fourth: *Locks & Gates*

Fifth: *Tidal Bore*

Sixth: *Beyond the Littoral*

Seventh: *Red Sky at Night*

---Reader's Companion---

for: **the Donkey and the Wall** trilogy and
The Curious Voyages of the Anna Virginia Saga

---Just A Curtain---

---The Elf Series---

The Elf & Huntress

The Elf & Elbebrim

The Elf & Rebuin