

Elizabeth Fenton

**The Future's
Past**

A Novel

Cover Art by: _____

The Characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Copyright © 2009 by Elizabeth Fenton
First Edition

ISBN # _____

Library of Congress Control Number: _____

Published by Elizabeth Fenton

DEDICATED TO WOLFGANG

Chapter 1

Electra's guests were scattered across various rooms at her summer home in Ridgeport, Maine. Some had made it to their beds and others were slumped over in chairs and sofas, left over from the previous night's party, like empty beer bottles to be collected in the morning. Jimmy O'Conner, one of the guests of honor, was out on the enclosed sun-porch with green and white striped awnings and wicker furniture. He had stayed awake all night with a few other guests. He suffered from insomnia quite frequently. That night he didn't even bother trying to sleep. Electra had thrown the party to introduce him to her friends as her birth father. They had recently discovered each other after a search launched by Electra, who had only known for a short time that she had been adopted. Jimmy, her birth father, had adjusted remarkably well to discovering he was a Dad. What troubled him was that this introduction had included the birth mother Molly, a girlfriend from his youth. It was the first time he had seen Molly since their break up over twenty years ago and it did not go quite the way he had hoped it would. He had hoped for forgiveness. He had even been bold enough to wish that Molly might consider reuniting with him.

Taking a deep sigh and looking out the window at the sun slowly rising up from a hill on the other side of the water, Jimmy remembered the day before, when they had once again met. Molly had let him hold her. He recalled with a warm glow how she had risen to his embrace. It had felt so good. Jimmy looked again across the water and saw that the sun had quickly taken its place in the morning sky. The magical moment of the sun rising had passed as swiftly as had the embrace with Molly. After that welcoming moment, she had distanced herself, and to Jimmy's dismay she had offered no explanations for why she had never told him that she had given their baby up for adoption. He would forgive her. He knew he would.

He loved her and he loved Electra, their child. He still hoped that Molly would recognize the same possibility for them to be happy that he saw. Winning her heart was what he wanted most.

Jimmy turned his gaze from the window. "You know yourself, this is a beautiful time of day," he said to Gordy one of Electra's friends from New York City, who was one of the few people awake in the house.

"Oh my God, the sun is already coming up?" Gordy replied, stretching his arms above his head and then reaching for a glass of whiskey that he had been nursing in the early hours.

"Here's to the sun!" Jimmy said reaching for his own glass and toasting with Gordy.

"Are we the only ones still up?" Gordy asked as he threw back his whiskey and surveyed the room.

"Up until a few moments ago, you were snoring pretty loudly over there in that lounge chair. Your friend Melissa and another woman were the last ones beside me awake. They went to the kitchen saying something about getting some Bloody Marys going."

Gordy looked up and saw Melissa and her new friend enter the room. He instantly remembered Gina, the woman who was with her. She was older than he. He thought maybe she was in her thirties. Gordy had spoken to her before he had apparently dozed off. She was a cook, who was going to be opening her own restaurant. He liked her confidence and spunk. Her hair was cut in a bob that framed her round face and she seemed to always be smiling. *She had a terrific smile*, he thought.

Melissa noticed her dear old friend Gordy checking out Gina. She put a Bloody Mary down in front of him, rustled his hair, and said, "she's cute and she can cook, but she is taken."

Gordy looked over at Gina and smiled, "Well, I'm available if your circumstances change."

Gina, also very direct, was impressed by Gordy's honesty and replied, "I'll keep that in mind." She wondered if her circumstances might

change soon. Gina had shared the news about the property that she had secured for her restaurant with her boyfriend Stew the evening before. Stew knew opening a restaurant was a lifelong dream of hers, and she was surprised that he hadn't been more excited for her, he even sounded upset. Gina had expected him to grab a bottle of champagne and celebrate, but instead, he said he needed to get outside for a breath of fresh air, and when she had asked to join him, he told her that he wanted to be alone. *Wanting to be alone was not something that Stew ever wanted*, Gina thought. She respected his request however and went to mingle with Electra's guests. Later in the evening, she saw him pop his head into the living room where she had been chatting with Gordy about her plans for her restaurant.

Stew and Gina had driven to the party together and when Gina excused herself from her conversation with Gordy to see where Stew had disappeared, she discovered that he had taken the car and stranded her. Gina tried to call him on his cell phone, but he had obviously turned it off as it picked up on the first ring. She couldn't believe he had been so selfish. Gina would need to be back over at the neighbors, the Gelds, her employer to fix breakfast for a large number of people. She had needed her rest. In the years that she and Stew had dated, he had never done anything like that. *My circumstances just might change*, Gina thought again as she sipped on her own virgin Bloody Mary hoping for enough strength to get through serving breakfast.

"I cannot believe I am actually having a Bloody Mary after staying up all night," Melissa said breaking the somber silence in the room. "I haven't done anything like that since college." For Jimmy's benefit, Melissa added, "And not with Electra. Electra is more of the stay up and drink chamomile tea type. I can assure you of that, Mr. O'Neil."

"You can call me Jimmy. You know yourself, Electra's a good girl. She'll be getting the better of me when she finds out I've been sipping on the whiskey."

"Well it's been an honor sipping whiskey with a rock star," Gordy said to Jimmy. My friends back in New York are going to be so jealous. I

told them that they couldn't come because Melissa would be here, and since we hardly see each other, I wanted to make sure I had time with her." Gordy winked at Melissa.

"Well, now I am really honored Gordy," Melissa said winking back at Gordy and smiling. "I didn't know you cared so much."

"Sure you do," Gordy said. "How many times have I asked you to be my girlfriend?"

"Just once."

"Well I know how to take 'no' for an answer."

"That is actually a very redeemable quality," Gina chimed in. She took a closer look at Gordy. Gina had been impressed the evening before by what a good listener he was, and even though he had only just met her, she felt as though he truly cared about the success of her dream to start a restaurant. He had given her a lot of good ideas and business feedback. She learned that he was a classmate of B.J.'s in business school and she was very grateful for any advise. Not unlike a lot of B.J.'s friends, Gina noticed Gordy's good looks. He had dark hair that was stylishly cut short. He wore designer glasses with green in the rim that brought out his green eyes. He was a little heavy, but well proportioned and she thought he seemed quite hug-gable. Gina wondered why Melissa had turned him down.

"Gordy has lots of redeemable qualities," Melissa said as though reading Gina's mind. "I'm just not big on long distance relationships. I live in Vermont and he lives in New York. I cannot see either one of us moving." Melissa, who went to Juilliard with Electra, was a musician who had chosen to teach music at Woodstock High School. She had inherited a home in the center of town and decided after college to move there. She couldn't imagine a life on the road and she didn't want to live in any cities big enough to have a symphony.

"If you really care about each other the distance shouldn't matter," Gina said thinking about her own circumstances and how she would be staying behind in Maine while her boyfriend Stew went to Florida for the winter.

"Of course it matters," Melissa replied. She twirled her shoulder length hair and added, "For me the most important part about being in a relationship is being there for each other for all the day to day things that happen. It's just so unreal to have a relationship where you see each other on weekends like it's some kind of vacation and then you go back home alone."

"I think seeing each other over distance and time makes it more romantic," Jimmy added to the conversation, remembering how nice it had been with his last girlfriend to return home to her after being on the road.

"I'm sorry Jimmy, but you don't really count. You're a rock star and your life is just not normal like the rest of us," Melissa said still twirling her hair.

"Ouch," Jimmy said. "So you're saying because I am a rock star I can't have a normal life?"

"I'm sorry," Melissa apologized, putting her hand to her mouth and wincing in embarrassment over her remark. "I didn't mean it quite the way it came out."

"Ah, no worries, you know yourself, my life is definitely not normal," Jimmy responded thinking that he would still like to settle down a bit more and specifically with the likes of Molly.

"Well Melissa, if you and I are still not married at retirement age, I tell you what, I will move to Vermont," he paused and then added, "Unless of course Gina decides to leave her man and have a long distance relationship of weekend romances with me."

"I'll keep that in mind smart ass," Melissa responded to Gordy. She got up, crossed the room and rubbed his shoulders. "Now if you'll excuse me I need to use the rest room."

"I'm going to need to excuse myself as well," Gina said getting up. "I'm going to see if I can't wake up that boyfriend and find out why he left me here all night and then I need to start getting breakfast ready." Gina turned around at the door and added, "Let everyone here know that they're invited next door for breakfast."

Melissa came back from the bathroom and found Jimmy and Gordy talking about the band's last concert in Munich where Electra had made her debut with them. "I have to say that I for one was shocked when I found out," Melissa said plunking herself down on an available wicker sofa and wrapping a throw blanket over her lap. "I never heard Electra listen to a rock band once the whole time we were in school together."

"It was brilliant really," Jimmy said. "It was exactly the new sound that the band needed. Matthew might have been a bit of a ladies man, but I think even Electra's grateful to him."

"Who's Matthew?" Melissa asked not following Jimmy.

"Electra didn't tell you about Matthew?" Jimmy asked and then added. "I better let her tell you about him, but in short it was his idea that Electra join the band."

Melissa raised her eyebrow and replied, "I will definitely need to ask about that," Electra sure is a mystery these days. I don't hear from her in months and suddenly she's in a rock band throwing parties." Melissa sat up and took her Bloody Mary from the coffee table, sipped on it and then added, "It's almost like she got a new personality when she found out she had a different set of parents."

"I wouldn't say that," Jimmy said. "She's the same girl I met in Boston last Spring, she's just opened up. It's been a grand thing to witness really."

"Well, if you had known her as long as I have that blossoming is pretty shocking," Melissa said and then once again put her hand to her mouth, "I'm really opening my big mouth a bit too much," Melissa said apologetically. "That sounded rude. I didn't mean to imply that you didn't know her Jimmy or that the changes are bad. It's just been surprising," Melissa paused still feeling stupid about what she had said, she added "I mean surprising in a good way."

"You should stop while you're ahead," Gordy teased Melissa. "I think it was pretty brave of Electra to just go for it the way she did. I saw the videos of the show. She didn't even look one bit nervous."

"Well, I'm not so surprised that she could perform in a crowd. She did that in New York since she was in her teens. I'm talking about her getting social again. After her dad," Melissa added, "I mean the Dad who adopted her," she looked at Jimmy to see if she had offended him, and then continued "after he died, she came up here to Maine and none of her friends in New York really heard from her. I think I was the only one she ever called and she didn't call me much or really have too much to say. She was always just checking on me to see how I was getting along."

"I know some other people who lost someone they loved to the Twin Towers tragedy. I also know a lot of people who moved out of the city. I'm glad to see that Electra is one of those people who is recovering and making some new sense out of life. She deserves to be happy." Gordy took the last sip of his Bloody Mary. "We all deserve to be happy." He put his empty glass down, put his hands on his thighs and then stood up. "Speaking of being happy. I am a happy, but tired boy. I'm going to go lie down for a while. I'll see you all a little later."

Jimmy and Melissa were the only ones left on the Sun-porch.

"Don't feel like you need to keep me company," Jimmy said to Melissa.

"I'm so tired that I am not tired," Melissa said. "I'm afraid if I go lie down that I won't wake up until the evening. I haven't even gotten a chance to visit with Electra yet and I leave tomorrow so I think I'll just stay up if you don't mind the company, that is."

"Sure, I actually have a question that I need a woman's opinion on."

"What's that?" Melissa asked.

"I brought a present for Electra's mother Molly. I thought that it might have gone a little smoother when we first met, but it didn't go so well, and then last night she brought her new boyfriend so now I am not sure what to do."

"What did you get her?" Melissa asked curiously.

"Jewelery actually," Jimmy answered. "I'll go get it." Jimmy went

up to his bedroom and came back down with a powder blue box.

"Tiffany's," Melissa said recognizing the box right away. "Pretty fancy."

Jimmy sat down in the armchair next to Melissa and opened the box. "What do you think?" he asked.

Melissa stared at the box. The necklace was a cluster of emeralds shaped like a diamond with small diamonds connecting them and the earrings were large diamond shaped emeralds.

"That's a pretty spectacular gift," she finally said.

"I was so disappointed yesterday that I didn't have a chance to give it to her, and now I am not sure if I should," Jimmy said closing the box back up.

"Well, if you meant the present for her then you should give it to her."

"Do you think?"

"Sure if she doesn't want it she doesn't have to accept it."

"Well, I'm not sure what I would say to her."

"What were you going to say yesterday if you had the chance?"

"I was going to tell her it was to celebrate Electra finding us."

"I don't see why you can't still say that. You might tell her that there are no strings attached and you hope that she will accept it."

"There are strings attached though," Jimmy said. "Honestly, I just want her to forgive me. She never gave me a chance all those years ago." Jimmy paused and then added, "I forgive her."

"I don't want to be nosy, but what happened?"

"We got into an argument when she told me she was pregnant and I walked out," Jimmy said thinking back on the day. He would do anything to be able to reverse time and not have walked out on her. "In fairness though, I was in a state of shock. I tried to talk to her several times after that, but she wouldn't see me. It really was very unfair. I was pretty upset about it back then. It was a hard time. I had just lost the co-founder of the first band I started. I guess when it seemed that I had also lost Molly it

would be a good time to leave town. I decided to move to New York and start over and that was where I started the band Quarter Moon."

"I'm sorry that happened. On the bright side the Quarter Moons are a huge success. That has to feel good."

"Ah you know yourself, it was a dream come true when we hit Platinum."

"Everything has a silver lining," Melissa said.

"Well, like I said last night, Electra is my silver lining. I just hoped when I found out that Molly had never married, we might have been able to talk and set things right. She was my first love." Jimmy patted the Tiffany box. He sighed and added, "I think really the only woman I really loved."

"You said it yourself," Melissa replied, "She didn't marry, so maybe it isn't too late," Melissa was getting swept up by how romantic it seemed that a rock star would be wanting to get back together with his first love.

"I guess nothing is impossible, and I think you're right. I should give her the gift. She can decide what she wants." Jimmy opened a drawer on the side table and stuck the box in there. "I'll invite her back over. I'm sure she will want to spend more time getting to know Electra." Jimmy envisioned Molly coming over and having Electra play one of her enchanting songs while he pulled the elegant box out of the drawer and offered it to her.

"Speaking of Electra, I wonder when she and B.J will be getting up," Melissa said. "Maybe I should start waking up some of the folks in the living room."

"Let them sleep," Jimmy said. He was enjoying the quiet of the sun-porch. He thought he even might be able to sleep soon.

BJ woke to a white throated sparrow singing outside. Electra was still asleep next to him, her long wavy chestnut brown hair fell over her shoulder and spilled onto the pillow. *She makes me want to sing too*, BJ whispered softly letting the slight breeze that was coming in the window sweep his words away as he stroked her shoulder and gently kissed her neck.

Electra opened her sky blue eyes slowly and smiled, revealing her dimples as her vision focused on BJ. "Good morning. What time is it?" she asked feeling as though she had come out of a very long slumber.

"It's still early, not even seven yet," BJ answered. "You left the window open, and I could hear the birds singing."

"I always sleep with the window open," Electra said. "I hope it didn't bother you."

"No it was the sweetest thing," BJ responded extending the stroke of his hand from her shoulder down her side and over her hip. Electra turned her head down to where he was kissing her on the neck and her mouth found his.

After they made love, BJ sat up in the bed and noticed a picture of him with Electra in his Dad's boat, *The Promise* from when they were younger. He remembered the exact day, and how he had dreamed of being like he was that morning with Electra. The reality of it was even more than he ever imagined in his dreams.

"What are you thinking?" he asked Electra who was lying very still.

"About last night," she answered slowly getting up and going to her closet. "I just wish that Molly and Jimmy could have gotten along a little better," she said tying the belt of her robe around her slim waist.

"It's been a long time. I'm sure they'll get along better once the shock of seeing each other wears off." B.J. also got out of the bed. He wrapped his arms around Electra. "How about if we take a nice shower and then go on down and see what kind of damage our friends have inflicted upon your beautiful home?"

"The shower sounds great," Electra said. "Not so sure I'm excited

about seeing what has happened to my place.”

“I was just teasing you. I'm sure it's nothing we can't clean up.”

“I know. I'm just not used to have people in my home, especially a whole party of people.”

“Well it was a very successful party and I think it was a wonderful thing to share the news about your birth parents.”

“I kind of wish I had done it with a smaller crowd. I don't know why I thought I needed a big party?” Electra said, though she knew deep down that she had wanted to please B.J. by showing him she could entertain friends like his mother, who he so adored. She just wished that she hadn't chosen her entertainment debut to correspond with her introducing and reuniting her birth parents. Electra felt puzzled by a lot of her own actions over the past couple of months. She felt a strange dichotomy as though she were being both herself as well as someone who was completely contrary to who she knew herself to be.

Electra had spent the last few years by herself in Maine at the summer home that she inherited. She had only learned after the man who raised her died, that she was adopted. During those years of grieving, Electra decided to seek her birth parents. After assistance from a private detective, she was able to locate both Jimmy O'Conner and Molly Callahan. She had met Jimmy first, the previous Spring. They were in frequent communication after they met and Jimmy had planned to visit her in Maine for her birthday in July. When he didn't show up for the visit, Electra learned that he was in the hospital having suffered a heart attack on stage at a concert in Boston. She had rushed to Boston to be with him. It had been a very mild heart attack and he had a quick recovery.

The heart attack, however, was a life changing event for Jimmy, and he made a promise to not only spend more time with his mother back in Ireland, but to let her know about Electra. Jimmy's mother was a devout Catholic so he knew she would not be happy that he had a child out of wedlock, but Jimmy felt convinced that his new found daughter and mother should meet. The event of the two meeting took place in Ireland and the

journey brought Electra out of her reclusive state. Not only had she traveled with Jimmy to Ireland, but she went on with him to Munich and performed a solo during his band's sold out show. Electra went from being alone to being in front of thousands of people, and somehow both of those things felt right to her. Electra needed time to be quiet with herself, but she also desired to share what she heard during those quiet moments with the multitudes of people. Electra knew she was meant to be a performer. She also felt she had something important to communicate. Electra remembered how it felt to have the undivided attention of thousands of people. It wasn't the power that captivated her so much as it was the responsibility to somehow touch those people's lives in a meaningful way. Electra sighed as B.J. lathered her back, she also knew, she was meant to be with him. She couldn't imagine anything coming between them. Electra wrapped her arms around his broad shoulders and leaned up to kiss him as the water bounced off her nose while she blinked to look into his warm brown eyes.

After getting dressed, and heading downstairs, Electra and B.J. tip-toed past the guests who were still sleeping in the living room and stepped out onto the sun porch. The first thing Electra noticed was that Jimmy was wearing the same clothes as the evening before. "I gave you the nicest guest room in the whole house," Electra said as she went over to give Jimmy a hug. "Did you even see the bed last night?" Electra asked and then noticing that he smelled of booze added, "Have you been drinking all night?"

Jimmy winked at Melissa and replied, "I knew you would be scolding me about that. No worries, I didn't have all that much to drink."

"I do worry about you," Electra said and taking B.J.'s hand she sat down with him on the love seat across from Jimmy. Electra turned to her friend Melissa and said, "He's impossible. It was only a month ago I was visiting him in the hospital after he had a heart attack."

"Well, I tell you what, I've had another kind of heart attack," Jimmy

said dramatically pointing out the porch window. "Is that the Nathan bloke Molly was with last night?" he suddenly sat up tall in his seat.

The others joined him in looking out the window. Nathan was putting a towel around Molly who had just come from a swim off the Geld's dock.

Electra was quite surprised that anyone would be swimming in the ocean that early in the day, however, she was thinking more about the fact that Nathan, who worked as a boat captain for B.J.'s family, was over with Molly at that time of day. Concerned about Jimmy's feelings for Molly she said, "They are coworkers. Nathan might just be over early to get the boats ready. Knowing B.J.'s mother she probably has a picnic planned with elaborate details of what needs to be aboard the boat."

Electra felt guilty that she had played a role in getting Jimmy's hopes up about Molly. She had only discovered for herself during the party that Molly was dating Nathan. She had known Nathan for years, having gone out on many boat rides and picnics with B.J. with Nathan as Captain. She very much liked the guy, but he was interfering with what she thought was a perfect opportunity for Molly to reconcile with Jimmy. She knew Jimmy had so much to offer and thought Molly deserved a chance at a new life, the kind of life that Jimmy could well afford to offer her.

Jimmy had watched Molly emerged from the water, and looked on with jealousy as Nathan stood up and put a towel around her and kissed her. He felt his chest tighten. "I don't think he is there for the boat. I think he is there for Molly." Jimmy stirred his Bloody Mary with a celery stick. "Ah well, you know yourself, he seems like a nice enough guy," Jimmy said with a sigh and then added. "I think I will go try to lie down for a while before the other lads from the band get up. They'll be wanting to see some more of the island."

B.J. brushed his fingers through his thick dark hair and turned to Jimmy who had already risen from his seat, "I told George, your keyboard player, that I'd take you all out on a boat. How about if we meet back down

here at noon. That gives you some time for a little shut eye.”

“Sounds good to me,” Jimmy replied, excusing himself.

Jimmy went up to his room. After a nice long shower, he put on a robe, and lay on top of his bed. He felt waves of exhaustion sweep over his body, but he continued to lay with his eyes wide opened. He was very irritated. Since the evening before when he had seen Molly with Nathan, he couldn't stop feeling jealous. It was an uncommon thing for him. He had always been turned off by how his girlfriends were always jealous of other girls, particularly during his shows. He couldn't understand why anyone would waste their time being jealous, but there he was feeding the green monster that he so disliked. He kept telling himself that he should be happy for Molly. He remembered how he loved to watch her smile when he brought her to his shows back in Boston, back when he was first starting out as a musician. He loved to see her happy, but it was the first time he had seen her happy with another man. Jimmy knew it was ridiculous to feel the way he did. It had been two decades since they had dated. They had both grown up and moved on with their lives. Had it not been for Electra, they would never have even seen each other again. *At least that is something*, he thought. *I have a part of Molly that Nathan will never have.* Jimmy finally closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

Gina dialed Stew's cell phone number and got voice mail once again. She was livid that he was still not answering. She left a short message with a stern voice, “Call me.” Gina put her phone down and got to the business at hand of preparing breakfast. She kept her kitchen and menu very organized, so she was quick to get the buffet style breakfast set up out on the Geld's sun porch. She dished out a bowl of yogurt and fruit for herself when Molly stepped through the screen door.

“No early risers?” Molly asked looking around the room.

“No, fortunately not.”

“So did Stew find you last night?” Molly asked helping herself to one of the pastries and sitting down.

"The jerk left without me," Gina replied getting up and pouring some coffee. "Would you like some?" she asked while she had the coffee pot in her hand.

"No, I've already had mine," Molly answered and after taking a bite of her pastry she said. "That doesn't make sense. I saw him just before I went back to my cottage last night, during the party. He told me he was going to go look for you."

"Well, he popped his head into the living room where I was talking to one of B.J.'s friends, but by the time I got up to see where he went, he was gone. He left me without a car. I've been up all night. I'm glad I had most of the breakfast prepared in advance. I'm totally beat, and pissed off."

"Hmm." Molly continued chewing on her pastry. "He was awfully upset when I saw him. He had it in his mind that you were breaking up with him."

"What?" Gina asked excitedly.

"On account of you buying the property over in the mainland for your restaurant. He thought since you wouldn't be going to Florida with him in the winter, that you would be breaking up with him."

"I never told him I was breaking up with him," Gina said putting her bowl of fruit down. She picked up her cell and dialed Stew's number again. Once again she got his voice mail.

"I'm not breaking up with you, if that is what you think," she said looking over at Molly. Shaking her head Gina added, so call me already. Obviously we need to talk."

"Aren't you being a little harsh with him?" Molly asked. She knew how fragile Stew had been the night before.

"Hello, were you listening to me. He left me at the party last night. I have every right to be harsh with him."

"I know that wasn't cool, but he probably got upset that you were talking to some guy. I really had to convince him to go find you. I'm serious that he thought you were leaving him."

"Well I just might now."

"You don't mean it. Just give him a little slack. You made the decision about the buying your property and staying in Maine so quickly. I can see how he would have felt insecure."

"Whose friend are you anyway?" Gina asked irritated.

"I'm your friend. That is why I am being honest with you."

"Well, I appreciate it, but it doesn't make me any less angry with him."

"I would hate to see you break up over a misunderstanding."

"There is nothing to misunderstand about your boyfriend leaving you alone at a party."

"No, but it wouldn't be hard to misunderstand that you were thinking of breaking up with him if you decided to spend most of the year in a different end of the country."

Gina knew that Molly was right, but she wasn't ready to let go of her anger. She wondered if deep down maybe she had wanted to break up with Stew. She had followed him to Florida in the winter for five years. She hated it there. He had never asked her if she minded. He said he wanted to marry her, but he never asked. He said he would be willing to settle down somewhere, but he would never talk about where. Her decision to find a place to settle may have seemed sudden to everyone else, but for her, she felt as though she had waited a very long time.

"I guess we'll just have to talk," Gina said. "Fortunately, I have a couple days off after this weekend."

"I'm looking forward to this weekend ending. I don't like knowing that Jimmy is next door. It's so uncomfortable and it's upsetting Nathan."

"I have to tell you that ex of yours, Jimmy was a total wreck himself. After I talked to B.J.'s friend Gordy, I had a chance to talk to him. He told me how he and Electra had been hoping that the two of you would be getting back together."

"What? He and Electra talked about that?" Molly asked. She knew that Jimmy still had feelings for her. She could see it in his eyes and by the way he held her when they first saw each other. She was surprised,

however, that the topic of her and Jimmy getting back together came up with Electra. Molly had promised Electra she would go to Ireland to meet Jimmy's mother. Electra had told her that she wanted it to be a mother-daughter trip. Molly was horrified to think that Electra was purposefully trying to match her back up with Jimmy.

"Yeah, I talked to Electra a little about it as well. They had both been disappointed when you told them about Nathan."

"Oh great," Molly said. "So now not only is it not okay for me to be a housekeeper, but it's also not okay for me to date any other domestic helpers."

"OK, now who is being harsh?"

"They just had a fairy tale like dream that you would all be a family. Think of Electra, she lost all her family. She was probably just excited to think she was getting one back."

"She is," Molly said, "Just not in the fairy book version she is looking for." Gina was about to make another comment to Molly when she noticed her employer, Mr. Geld open the screen door.

Mr. Geld, looking quite dapper despite his previous drunken state the evening before, came out onto the sun porch.

"Good-morning ladies. What kind of treats do you have for us today?"

"It's buffet style. Take whatever you like. I'm also making crepes and eggs to order."

"Oh, this will be plenty for me," Mr. Geld said pointing to Gina's buffet. He turned to Molly and said, "That was quite a surprise for Mrs. Geld last night. Finding out that you're Electra's birth mother. We want you to know that we find the circumstances all a bit odd, but we are very happy with your work and we want you to stay on with us if that is something you want to do."

"Thank you Mr. Geld. I really appreciate this job and I like working here so I have every intension of staying on." Molly ironed out her maid's dress with her hand. She was relieved to hear that Mrs. Geld would not be

asking her to leave. She planned on speaking to her about the situation. Mrs. Geld had very firm opinions, but Molly knew she had a good heart and she had always been very generous to her.

"I'm going to take a plate of food up to Mrs. Geld. She isn't feeling quite herself today," Mr. Geld said as he filled a plate for his wife. "She did ask me to tell you both to be sure to have the picnic ready for Nathan to load on the boat at noon."

"Already taken care of," Gina and Molly answered simultaneously.

"You two make a great team," Mr. Geld remarked. "I heard some folks walking around upstairs so imagine that you will be seeing B.J.'s friends down for breakfast soon." Mr. Geld was balancing a couple plates in one arm as he went to get a cup of coffee.

"Leave those plates on the table," Molly quickly said. "I'll bring a tray up to your room."

Jimmy was dreaming that he and Molly were sitting in the kitchen with his mother at her home in Ireland. In the dream he smiled and went to give her a hug. When he told her how happy he was that the two of them were getting on so well, she looked up at him and said,

"We've decided you should leave." He was about to object when he noticed that Molly had suddenly turned into an old lover of his that had turned very sour.

"What happened to Molly?" he asked his mother in the dream.

"Who is Molly?" his mother asked confused.

"Electra's mother," he had replied with indignation.

"Who is Electra dear?" his mother said, her voice becoming a bit impatient. Meanwhile, the old girlfriend stared at him with the same cross look he had remembered from when she broke up with him.

"Jimmy," B.J. called out as he knocked on Jimmy's door. "Are you ready for the boat-ride?"

Jimmy awoke from his dream and looked around the unfamiliar room disoriented.

"The rest of the band and Electra are down at the dock. Join us if you like."

At the mention of Electra's name, Jimmy snapped back into reality.

"You all go on ahead without me." Jimmy felt way too groggy and was still irritated from his dream.

"Are you sure?" B.J. asked from the other side of the door.

"I'm sorry lad. I guess the sleep finally caught up with me. I'm just going to stay in and rest for a bit if you don't mind."

"No worries. You take it easy. I can take you out later if you like."

Jimmy rolled off the bed, stood up and stretched his arms out. He opened his door and said to B.J. who was already heading downstairs, "You all have fun."

Jimmy noticed that the house had already been cleaned up from the party. The other guests had already departed, and the house was empty.

He went back out to the sun-porch and watched as the gang loaded into the boat. He immediately noticed Molly handing picnic baskets over to Nathan. Once everyone was aboard, he also noted that Molly stayed behind on the dock. *This is my chance, he thought. I can have some time alone with Molly.*

Jimmy went to the bathroom to wash his face and pat down his hair which had become disheveled. He headed back to the porch and stumbled down the sun-porch stairs and hurried across Electra's lawn toward Molly's cabin. He felt as nervous as a school boy. He knocked on her door, but there was no reply.

Jimmy saw Gina in the driveway, and ran up to meet her.

"Have you seen Molly?" he asked slightly out of breath.

"She's upstairs cleaning up after the guests. It's mind boggling what a mess these kids can make after only one or two nights."

"Would it be OK if I went up to speak with her?"

Gina knew that Molly would be angry, but saw the desperation on Jimmy's face and replied, "go on up the backstairs."

Gina pointed to the entrance by the kitchen and showed Jimmy how he could find his way.

Molly was walking out of a bedroom with a handful of towels stacked up to eye level and didn't see Jimmy.

"Excuse me, Molly," Jimmy said clearing his throat.

Molly dropped the towels and gasped.

"Jesus, you scared me half to death. What are you doing up here?" Molly asked.

"I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt. I just wanted to ask you something."

Molly stood with her arms crossed. "What is it?" she asked in a cold voice.

"Well, we didn't have much of a chance to talk yesterday and so I was hoping you might have a chance to do that today."

"I think you can see I am quite busy," Molly replied picking up the

towels.

"Well, later when you are done."

"I have plans with Nathan when I am finished up here."

"Oh OK. Do you think you might be able to come by tomorrow afternoon then? I have something I wanted to give you. I won't take too much of your time." Jimmy said handing Molly the last towel that had fallen.

Molly couldn't imagine what he wanted to give her. It seemed that he was quite determined. "Alright, but it will have to be quick."

"Thank you," Jimmy said. "Can I help you with anything?"

"No. That's fine," Molly answered thinking that it would be funny if she had asked Jimmy to help her with the laundry.

"I'll see you tomorrow then?" Jimmy said retreating back down the stairs.

Back at Electra's house Jimmy picked up a photo of Electra and her adopted father. He once again felt the annoying pang of jealousy. He wondered what it would have been like to know Electra when she was a little girl. He suddenly felt terribly sad that he had never witnessed her childhood. *Oh Electra, I wish I knew ye when you were a little child,* Jimmy said to himself in a whisper.

Jimmy was not usually a nosy type of person, but he burned with curiosity to know more about Electra. He walked throughout the house, stopping to look at pictures on various tables and along the walls of the stairway. He stopped in front of Electra's room. He knew it would be a huge invasion of her privacy to step through the door, but he couldn't help himself. He immediately noticed the picture of Electra with B.J. on her dresser. Jimmy liked B.J. He was happy that Electra and he had recognized their love of each other, and had hopes that they would marry. He had never thought much about being a father until Electra entered his life. He was excited at the chance to be a grandfather.

Jimmy found a photo album on a bookshelf in Electra's room, taking it from the shelf he took a seat on her bed. He noticed that there were

many pictures of Electra with the man who raised her, but not a single picture of the mother. Electra had told him that she left them when she was young. He figured that if there had been any pictures that she must have taken them out. He wondered how anyone could leave a child as special as Electra.

After a couple hours of pouring through the photo album, Jimmy went back downstairs to the living room where he had left his guitar, Jimmy picked it up and started to play. He hadn't been inspired to write a new song in a long time. He was testing out different lyrics about the wish to have seen his child through her young years. As his song began to form, he felt a strange distance from it, as though it was all a situation he had made up. Jimmy felt removed from his life like he had never felt before. He added in lyrics about how his family would come together and know one another again.

"Sounding good mate," George the keyboard player from his band said when Jimmy paused his song for a moment.

"How long have you been standing there?" Jimmy asked. He hated anyone to hear his songs until they were much closer to being finished.

"I just came in from the porch. You missed a great boat ride." George said sitting down at Electra's piano trying out a few chords to match what he had heard from Jimmy.

"I was just messing around," Jimmy said. "Really it's nothing. I have hardly even started the song."

George simply nodded his head and continued to play. Jimmy joined him, but left out the lyrics.

Hearing the music, Electra entered the living room singing along.

"What did you just say?" Jimmy asked her.

"Who we are right now is just divine. Time it's not yours or mine." Electra repeated. "I'm not sure where that came from. Sorry, it just sort of came out."

"I like it," Jimmy said. "It's remarkable really because the lyrics I am working on involve time as well."

"Really?" Electra asked intrigued. "What about time?"

"I was just wishing that I could have known you when you were a little girl. I mean if time was mine, I'd take a step back and jump into a time when you were little."

"And where would we meet and how would you get to know me?" Electra asked.

"That's just it, time is not mine so I don't know. I just feel sad."

"Don't feel sad," Electra said. She gave Jimmy a hug and said, "We have met and that is all that matters. "If you think about it, if anyone could change time, then things would be in a constant state of chaos. Everybody would be wishing they were in a different time. There would be no present because the past and future would become too muddled. It would be like having a million different directors for a movie."

"The future's past is the present." George chimed in. We are all exactly where we should be, doing what we are supposed to be doing for the future to exist, and the only way we could have arrived at this moment is from the unique consequence of the past."

"True true," Jimmy said picking up his guitar and resuming to play. Joining him on the piano, George said, "I do believe a song is born."

Electra sat down on the sofa and then put her feet up and stretched out. She looked at Jimmy and smiled. Electra thought of all the possibilities for the song they had started and how happy she was with her newly found life. A year earlier she would have never believed how her past could make her future so perfect.

Chapter 2

The first time Toby checked voice mail in his new apartment, he was certain that it had been meant for someone else.

'Hey Toni, its Melissa." The message started out. "I just found out about a party up in Maine. It's a big deal for my friend Electra and I really need to be there. Normally I wouldn't do this, but can you do me a huge favor? Can you come by and feed my cat Coonie while I'm gone? I'll leave the key in the usual spot under the geranium pot. Thanks, I'll owe ya one.'

This Melissa lady obviously didn't bother to listen to my outgoing message which clearly says, 'this is Toby' and not 'this is Toni.' Toby thought as he looked at his call list with the intent of redialing her number and letting Melissa know her mistake, but 'private' was all that showed. Toby looked at the time and the date the call came in, and saw that it was left on Friday and it was already Sunday. Toby who loved animals, was worried that some poor Coonie cat was very hungry. He felt he needed to at least attempt to find out where the cat lived. Toby knocked on the door that connected his apartment to the main house, and then shouted out, "Mrs. Applegate," as he walked through. He could hear her shuffle from the den, a couple of steps at a time, and then the thump of the cane that followed each shuffle. As she got closer to him, Toby, shouted out, "Good afternoon. Mrs. Applegate, I was wondering if you could tell me if you know if any of the neighbors have a cat named Coonie?"

Mrs. Applegate leaned slightly on her cane while she looked at Toby thoughtfully and after a few moments answered, "No. Not that I know."

"Oh. OK. Thanks," Toby replied.

Mrs. Applegate who was looking past Toby for a cat asked, "Did you find a lost cat?"

"No, nothing like that." Toby told her. He was going to explain the voice mail that he received, but Mrs. Appleton was a little hard of hearing

and he was afraid the conversation would take too long. He liked his landlord and was grateful that she rented him a small apartment in the back of her house on the village green in Woodstock, Vermont in exchange for his assistance with some chores. Toby supposed Mrs. Applegate was a little lonely and that she liked having a young man around. It was a good arrangement, but there were times when she bent his ear a little more than he would have liked.

Mrs. Applegate didn't give the question about the cat too much more thought. She was glad that Toby had popped over to her house. She had needed help getting a box of old photos down out of the closet. After helping Mrs. Applegate, Toby told her that he had an appointment. The sight of a box full of pictures and an old woman with many stories to tell was a bit too dangerous.

"You are welcome to come back over whenever you like and I will show you these pictures after I sort them out a bit," she told Toby as he politely excused himself out her front door.

Toby walked around the immediate neighborhood on the Village Green, but did not see any houses with a pot of geraniums out front. He crossed a cover-bridge and started to walk down River Road. *She must have called her friend Toni to confirm that she had received her message,* Toby thought. *This is probably all a silly goose chase. Of course Melissa would try to reach her friend Toni again to confirm the arrangement.* Toby knew he should be worrying about finding himself a job and not chasing around town looking for a cat that lived in a house with a geranium pot out front, however he continued to spend his afternoon walking up and down the streets of Woodstock.

Toby moved to Woodstock from Boston after selling his condominium in Back Bay as well as his Jaguar. Almost a month had gone by since he had been laid off from his job as Marketing Director for a start up in Boston. It was on the same day that he had been laid off when he received a call from his mother in Oregon informing him that his father had been diagnosed with an un-treatable brain cancer. At first he had wanted to

move back home and be with his father, but after Toby spoke to his father he did not think that would be an option.

When Toby called his father to tell him how sorry he was to hear the news, his father had said, "Don't you worry about me. It's your mother we need to worry about. I'm just so thankful that you have such a high paying job." He continued telling Toby, "It's a relief to know that if my savings don't hold up through this, that you will be able to send your mother some money and make sure she is taken care of after I am gone."

Toby didn't want to start a new job in Boston with no vacation time when his father was dying in Oregon, but he also knew that he wouldn't be able to get a high paying job like the one he had in Boston in Oregon. The only option that he could think of at the time was to let his parents believe that he still had his job. Shortly after the conversation with his father, Toby had taken a road-trip up to Vermont and it was then that he had seen Mrs. Applegate's posting for the apartment for rent. Toby signed a month-to-month lease. He had hoped that with minimal expenses and a little bit of his money left, that he would have time to come up with a plan of what to do next. He liked being out of Boston. Getting let go of his first major job had really felt like a breakup. He couldn't bear to walk around the streets of Boston knowing that the life as he had known it was over. The economy had changed and companies were just not hiring young guys like him as a Director of Marketing. He had tried to apply to lower level marcom and PR jobs, but the hiring managers of those positions weren't interested in hiring someone down from a Director. It seemed to Toby that over the last several years he had not worked his way up the corporate ladder as he had thought, but that he had worked himself out of a job all together.

Toby passed several houses before he realized that he hadn't been looking for the geraniums. When he turned back to check the houses he missed, he saw that the second home he passed had a geranium pot on either side of the door. He carefully lifted both pots, but there was no key. He cupped his hands and tried looking in the windows to check if he could see a cat. Finding a cat named Coonie who needed to be fed, seemed so

much simpler than trying to figure out how to get another high paying job and be with his father in Oregon. It was almost a welcome distraction. He had called home the night before and talked to his mother. His father had been napping. She tried to sound brave, but Toby knew that she was frightened and he wanted to be of more comfort to her than he knew he was. He was having a hard time being brave himself.

Somehow he felt if he could get this cat fed that he would feel better. He could be a hero for a day. Toby wanted to be a hero. He turned the corner from the house with the geraniums at the front door when he noticed there was a deck that faced the river. He walked around the yard and was happy to see another geranium pot on that deck. He lifted it and there was the key. As soon as Toby had opened the door an enormous dark orange Maine Coon cat jumped down from a sofa that was beside a picture window, meowing loud complaints. Toby searched for the kitchen and found cans of cat food with an opener on the counter. There was also an empty bag of crunchy food that apparently Coonie must have gotten into. "I don't blame you buddy," Toby said to the large cat who was still complaining. You must be hungry. Coonie rubbed against Toby's legs as he opened a can of cat food and searched the drawers for a spoon to dish it out.

Toby was refilling the cat's water bowl from the refrigerator when he noticed a picture of two girls, arm in arm smiling back at him. One of them had long wavy hair, a striking face and he also noticed dimples, he loved dimples. "Who is that?" Toby asked the cat who was licking the juice from the canned food. "She is beautiful. She looks like an angel." Coonie paid no attention to Toby, who was still staring at the photo wondering if the woman in the picture was Melissa. *Maybe it is Toni*, Toby thought. *Whoever it is I'd certainly like to meet her.* Toby reasoned that Melissa had expected Toni to feed Coonie for six days after counting six cans of cat food. Several days had already passed. Toby bent down to pet Coonie, *"don't worry buddy, it's just a few more days. I'll come by and feed you."* Coonie jumped up enough for Toby to rub his head and cheeks. "You're a friendly guy, huh?" Toby said. He thought he should probably leave since the cat

had been fed, but Coonie's insistence for attention convinced him to sit down on the sofa under the picture window and visit a little. Coonie jumped up on the sofa as soon as Toby sat down.

"Now tell me Coonie cat, you didn't answer, who is that girl with the dimples?" Toby asked as he continued to rub the cat's chin. "Not that the other girl is too hard to look at, but wow, there is just something about the one with the dimples and those eyes of hers. "She looks very intelligent." *And somehow very familiar*, he thought. Toby noticed how comfortable the sofa was and he stretched out while Coonie repositioned himself on his chest. "Comfortable are we?" Toby asked the cat. "I know it must have been tough on you to see all those cans of cat food and not be able to open them, but really this is not a bad set up you have here. I don't have a single comfortable chair to stay in at my place." The cat continued to purr. "Yeah, yeah, life is hard." Toby said realizing how much comfort the cat was providing him. "You're like a giant teddy bear," Toby said to the cat. The cat started to knead his paws. "Hey hey, watch the claws there bear," Toby said gently lifting his paws from his chest. "Do you mind if I call you Bear?" Toby remembered his father bringing him a stuffed bear to the hospital when he was nine years old. He had fallen from his bike going down a steep hill and broken his arm. He remembered the disappointed look on his father's face when he had told him, "I'm a bit old for Teddie Bears Dad." At the time, Toby was trying to be a big boy in his father's eyes. He wished now that he had been more appreciative. "You see Bear," Toby started to tell the cat, "My Dad is real sick. They say he is going to die." The cat stopped kneading his paws and stared at Toby who could feel his empathy. "Thank you Bear, Toby said to the cat as he closed his eyes, "thank you for listening. You're a good friend." Toby fell asleep and the cat moved to his usual spot on a blanket that was draped across the top of the sofa.

Toby returned again on Monday and repeated the previous day's exercise of feeding the cat and then retreating to the sofa.

"Well, Bear I guess it's nap time," Toby said scratching the cat behind his ears. "I called my mother today. She said my Dad was resting

so we didn't disturb him. She wanted to know when I might be able to get out there and visit. I told her I had a pretty packed schedule." Toby sighed as the cat lifted his head. "Isn't that terrible?" Well, I do have my appointment with you each day now don't I?" Instead of jumping back on to the top of the couch, this time the cat snuggled into the crook of Toby's arm as they both fell asleep.

Toby woke to a scream, and he bolted upright.

"Who are you?" a woman, who he noticed, was one of the women from the photo on the refrigerator (and he noted with disappointment not the one with dimples,) screamed.

"I can explain," Toby said quickly, and wiping cat hair from his shirt he stood and put his hand out, "My name is Toby."

"That's nice, but what are you doing in my house?"

"You must be Melissa. I came to feed your cat," Toby answered. Coonie had jumped down from the sofa and was back over at the food bowl finishing the remaining food.

"What do you mean you are feeding my cat?" Melissa asked confused.

"You left the message about the cat on the wrong voice mail. I'm new to Woodstock. I hadn't recorded an outgoing message yet, so maybe when you got the wrong number you didn't notice that it was me and not your friend Toni."

"Well, that is very odd, but even if that is true, how did you know where I lived?"

"In your message you mentioned the key being under the geranium pot." Toby gave a self satisfied smile and added, "I looked for a house with a geranium pot. Here is your key," Toby handed the key to Melissa who still had a very concerned and confused look on her face.

"But I called Toni back a second time from Maine since I had only got her machine and she told me it would be no problem. Is this some kind of joke?" Melissa reached in her purse and pulled out her cell-phone to call

Toni.

"I got her voice mail," Melissa explained as she closed the phone back up. "Are you free right now? Toni works down at the coffee shop. What do you say you and I go get a cup of coffee."

Toby wondered if Toni was the girl with the dimples and quickly answered, "Sure I'm free."

As Melissa closed the door behind them she asked Toby, "Are you Toni's new boyfriend?" Melissa remembered that Toni had told her about some new guy.

"No, but if she is the girl in the picture next to you on the refrigerator than I'd like to meet her," Toby said with a boyish grin.

Men are all alike, Melissa thought remembering her time with Electra at Juilliard, where every guy practically fell over himself when in her presence. "Wipe that grin off your face. That's my friend Electra. What were you doing looking at pictures on my fridge?"

"I was getting the cat some water?"

"Why would you get water for the cat from the fridge?"

"It's filtered isn't it?"

"It's just a cat. You don't have to give the dang cat filtered water."

"Why not?" Toby asked unable to understand why the cat should drink chlorinated water any more than humans.

"Never mind. Thank you for checking in on my cat." Melissa had been so surprised by seeing Toby on her sofa when she returned home that she hadn't given much thought to the fact that her cat, who was usually aloof with strangers, had been snuggled up in the crook of Toby's arm. "He certainly took a liking to you," Melissa added. "He isn't usually friendly with strangers."

"Animals tend to like me. Probably because I like them," Toby responded and added ."

"Anytime you need someone to take care of him, I'd be happy to do it," Toby said hoping for more time with his new friend.

"I'll keep that in mind," Melissa said taking another good look at

Toby. "Are you sure you're not Toni's friend?" she asked.

"No, I told you I just moved to Woodstock."

"What are you doing here?"

"That's a pretty good question. I'm not sure yet. I'm looking for a job."

"What do you do?"

"I am a marketing guy."

"Shouldn't you be in the city for that kind of work?"

"No, I hate the city," Toby responded automatically not even realizing the truth in his statement.

"I'm not sure what kind of marketing jobs you're going to find around here. Maybe something across the river in Hanover, New Hampshire."

"It would be weird working there," Toby said kicking a leaf out of his path.

"Why is that?"

"I went to Dartmouth. It would just seem like I should have moved on from there I guess. What do you do?"

"I teach music at the high school in Woodstock and give private cello lessons."

"I always wanted to learn cello," Toby said although he had been previously unaware of this desire.

"Thirty dollars an hour and I'm all yours," Melissa said with a smile. "for cello lessons that is," she added quickly.

They came up on the coffee shop and as they opened the door, Toby noticed a "help wanted" sign in the window. *That is it*, he thought. *I will work in a coffee shop and take cello lessons.*

"Oh my God, Melissa!" A woman behind the counter squealed. "Your cat. I forgot about your cat."

"So you don't know this guy?" Melissa asked pointing at Toby.

"I've seen him come in for coffee, but no." Toni looked Toby up and down. He was a bit too preppy looking for her taste with his blond hair

looking like it was styled in a salon, untucked oxford shirt, chinos and docksiders. She had to admit though that he had beautiful eyes. They were a penetrating grey-blue color. He also had good coloring like he was outdoors a lot.

Melissa noticed the way that Toni was looking at Toby and it was obvious that she didn't yet know the guy. "Toni this is Toby, Toby Toni," Melissa made introductions.

"Nice to meet you," Toby said stepping forward and extending his hand.

"So how do you two know each other?" Toni asked interested in how Melissa always seemed to have such good looking male friends.

"It seems the first message I left for you about Coonie, I left on his voice mail. You two must have similar phone numbers."

"Well, that is a coincidence," Listen I am so sorry about that. Is Coonie OK?" Toni asked genuinely concerned.

"He's fine, but what happened? You told me it was no problem."

"Do you two want a coffee? It's on me?"

"Sure I'll have a dark roast," Toby answered. The smell of coffee in the shop was very inviting.

"How about you? Your usual?" Toni asked Melissa.

"Sure," Melissa answered.

Toni picked out a couple glasses and as she prepared the espresso for Melissa's capaccino, she said, "So, it's kind of a wild story actually. Remember I told you about a guy I met, Jesee," Toni swirled the milk container as the foam bubbled over, then she shut off the steam and scooped the foam into Melissa's cup. She continued with her explanation, "Well, it was really all kind of sudden and last minute, but he invited me to New York to participate in a healing circle at a friends house. We left early Friday morning, and to be honest I just completely forgot about Coonie. I am so sorry."

Melissa was used to Toni's spontaneity and she felt bad about her own rush to leave for the weekend without confirming someone to feed the

cat. "Well, it's OK The cat is fine." She said taking the prepared coffee from Toni, "Thanks for the coffee,"

"You're welcome. So how was your big party up in Maine?"

"It was amazing. I can't wait to tell you all about it," Melissa looked over at Toby who was leafing through a book.

Toby felt her gaze and looking up said, "Don't mind me, you girls catch up. I was wondering though about the help wanted sign. Can I fill out an application?"

"Not much of a marketing opportunity here," Melissa said and with a sarcastic tone she added, "people who come in here are pretty much already interested in coffee or tea." Melissa turned to Toni and explained, "he is looking for a marketing job," and then added, "He's a Dartmouth grad."

"Well, we're an equal opportunity employer," Toni replied handing Toby a job application form. "We don't discriminate against Ivy League grads, but do you have any barista experience?"

"I've made myself a lot of espresso at my old start-up company."

"That's fine, don't worry I'll train you."

"Then I am hired?" Toby asked.

"Sure why not," Toni said and then added, "But you still need to fill out the paperwork."

"I'm moving up in the world," Toni explained to Melissa. "They made me store manager last week."

"I see you're very thorough in your interviewing process," Melissa said teasingly.

"Well, he looks competent to me," Toni said smiling at Toby who was working on the application. "So when can you start?" she asked.

"Anytime," Toby answered.

"Finish that later, Toni said pointing to the application. Toni handed Toby an apron, showed him how to use the cash machine, and then poured herself a cup of coffee and said, "Great how about now. I'm just going to be down by the brook to have a little visit with my friend Melissa. You let me know if you have any questions."

"That was kind of sudden. Don't you think?" Melissa asked as they walked down the steps and settled into a picnic table that was set up next to the brook.

"I figure the best interview is a day on the job. We'll see how he does. It's not too busy on Monday afternoons anyway."

"So you go first," tell me all about the big party in Maine."

"Well, Electra was stunning as always." Melissa sighed trying to be happy instead of jealous of her good friend, she continued, "She is practically engaged now. She hooked up with her neighbor in Maine. They've been friends since they were born. "

"Now that makes me sick," Toni said.

"I think it's kind of sweet, but I have to admit I am a bit jealous. B.J. is all that and a bag of chips too if you know what I mean."

"So was that the reason for the big party? Did she announce her engagement?"

"No, it's much more juicy than that," Melissa said with enthusiasm.

"She announced that she was adopted and then she introduced her birth parents, and get this," Melissa held her breath for a moment and then blurted out, "Her father is Jimmy from the band The Quarter Moon."

"No way!" Toni who had all the Quarter Moon's cds, and who played them repeatedly at the coffee shop was impressed.

"Seriously it was crazy. He was there with his whole band and they played for the party. Listen to this it gets even better. Electra is now singing back ups and playing with the band. She toured with them in August in Munich."

"I thought you said she was some kind of recluse up at that place of hers in Maine?"

"Well she was for a long time until she decided to look up her birth parents. Pretty crazy huh?"

"What about her mother? Who was her mother?"

"You're going to love this. Her mother is her boyfriend's family housekeeper."

"Come on. Are you making this stuff up?"

"Hardly. Seriously, everything I told you is true."

"The mother wasn't always the housekeeper. She went to Maine to go meet Electra, but didn't get up there when she first arrived on the island. I guess the mother, whose name is Molly, - was running out of money and ended up getting a job with the neighbor by coincidence."

"So you're not yanking my chain? Electra's Dad is really Jimmy O'Conner? When are you going to introduce me?"

"Slow down it's not like I'm president of the fan club." Melissa wanted to tell Toni about how she had stayed up all night with Jimmy, but thought it would be rubbing it in just a bit too much.

"Well, I have to say I am very impressed." Toni said. Toni wasn't too surprised that Melissa would end up rubbing elbows with someone famous. Melissa had come from a very affluent New England family. Toni had first met Melissa because Toni volunteered time at a local hospice where Melissa's grandmother had been before she died. Melissa was very close to her grandmother and as her only grandchild she had inherited the house on River street where she was now living. Melissa was very grateful to Toni for all the comfort she had given her grandmother, especially while she was still living in New York and going to school. After her grandmother's funeral, the two had kept in touch, and over the past couple years built up a friendship.

"Now tell me about your weekend. What was this healing circle?"

"A far cry from the party you were at for one," Toni answered not even knowing quite how to describe the experience she had. "There was music, but not exactly from a rock star. It was a Shaman from Peru. He played a myriad of instruments, and then he invited different people from the circle to share their music during ceremony."

"What exactly was this ceremony?" Melissa asked interested in the esoteric events that Toni seemed to continually discover.

"Each person set an intention for what they wanted to receive from the evening. We all drank a tea that was really more like sticky molasses, and then we meditated on a different level of consciousness."

"So what was your intention?" Melissa asked having no idea what Toni was talking about when she said they meditated on different levels of consciousness.

"I don't remember to be honest. It seemed like whatever I asked for didn't really matter because Mama Cita was going to show me what she wanted."

"Who is Mamacita?"

"The spirit of the plant in the tea. A great teacher."

"So what did this Mamacita show you?" Melissa asked slightly rolling her eyes, not sure if she really wanted to know.

"Gratitude. She showed me gratitude," Toni answered.

Uncomfortable with continuing the unusual conversation, Melissa changed the subject "And this guy you met. The one who took you there, what is he like?"

"Jessie? He is pretty cool, but I don't think anything is going to happen there. No spark if you know what I mean?"

"You are so fickle?"

"I'm not fickle, just waiting for the right guy."

"I wouldn't exactly say you're waiting," Melissa teased her.

"Well, at least I am getting out there and not hanging out with a guy who lives hours away and who you have already rejected. What about this guy Toby? What's the deal with him. He's pretty cute. Not my type, mind you, but pretty cute."

"Everything I know about him I have already told you," Melissa answered, "Speaking of him, are you sure you're comfortable leaving him up there by himself."

"How much harm can he do. It's just a coffee shop. And anyway, don't worry I have a good sense about people"

"If you say so," Melissa smiled.

They sat quietly for a few minutes and then Melissa got up, picked up her empty cappuccino cup and said, "I need to get back to my place. I have a cello student coming soon."

"OK, I really am sorry about Coonie, but you know it might just have been fate," Toni said pointing up at the coffee shop.

"Sure he can be your fate," Melissa waved and left.

When Toni got back to the shop, she saw that Toby was easily whipping up froth while engaging in a conversation with one of the regulars.

"I see you're getting the hang of it," Toni said after the customer had paid up and moved to a spot by the window where she had already settled in with a book from the loaners. "Margie usually stays for a while, she saves a little bit of her latte and then has me give her a refill with medium roast. She likes an additional dollop of froth. Just charge her fifty cents for the refill," Toni informed Toby.

"No problem. So what days and times do you want me here?"

"Thursday through Sunday. I'll open up, but if you could get here by 8:00 and stay until 6:00, you can take your lunch whenever you want. Or actually maybe it's better to say whenever it works out. Where do you live?"

"I'm just down the street right here in town."

"Good, then you won't be late," Toni smiled. "Any other questions?"

"Yes, actually, what is Yerba Mate? And how do I make that?"

"It's a tea from South America, and it's very popular with our customers." Toni opened up the Yerba Mate container and scooped some out, putting it in a tea infuser. "Let that brew for three minutes and then try it. You should know what it tastes like in case anyone asks you. In fact, each day try to taste each of the different teas and coffees."

"So the coffee is free for the employees then?" Toby asked.

"While you're here yes. And you get 20% off for whatever you take home."

"Sounds fair to me. So aren't you wondering why a Dartmouth grad would want to work in a coffee shop?" Toby asked as he took a sip of the Yerba Mate.

"It's none of my business. I'm sure you'll tell me if you want to?" Toni said matter-of-fact. "So what do you think of the Yerba Mate?"

Toby shook his head after his sip and said, "I think it must be an acquired taste."

"Try it a few mornings instead of coffee. It's a nice change. Plus the Yerba Mate we buy helps indigenous peoples in South America. I love that it is so popular here in the northern part of the U.S." Toni patted herself on the back and then added, "I'm responsible for bringing it to the shop. There is a bunch of information on it over on the counter. We even sell the gourds and straws people traditionally use for drinking it."

Toby noticed that Toni wore an embroidered shirt and vest that looked like it came from somewhere in South America. "Did you spend some time in South America?" he asked.

"I wish," Toni said with a sigh. "I'm hoping to go to Peru next summer. How about you? Have you traveled much?"

"No, not really. I traveled to trade shows with my old job, mostly to San Francisco, but I have never been out of the country. After I lost my job in Boston, I thought about going to Tibet."

"Why Tibet?"

"I don't know. I just needed to get out of town. I think I might have seen a special on PBS. I thought it might be a nice spiritual boost."

"Looking for religion are we?"

"No, I mean maybe. I don't know. I was having a midlife crisis or something."

"That's silly, you're not even thirty years old."

"I know. I don't know what's wrong with me. I just can't seem to get with the program since I lost my job."

"Why didn't you go?" Toni asked interested.

"I found out that my Dad has cancer. I didn't want to be so far away."

"Oh," Toni replied surprised. She wasn't expecting an answer like that. "Are you staying with him then?"

"Actually, my Dad lives in Oregon, in a little town outside of Portland."

"You sure are full of mysteries. If you didn't want to be so far away from your Dad, how come you didn't go to Oregon?"

"It's complicated,"

Toni looked at Toby with sincere empathy. "Well, I am sorry to hear that he is not well. If you ever want to talk about it I am a good listener."

"I didn't mean to blurt that out," Toby said embarrassed that he had said anything about his Dad to this woman who he hardly knew.

"I'm sure it is heavy on your mind. Really any time you want to talk let me know. Seriously I know a lot about people dying. I have volunteered at a hospice visiting the sick since I was eighteen." Toni looked around the shop and since Margie was the only customer still there she said, "You can go if you like. I'll make sure this hour is paid once we get your paychecks going. I will see you again on Thursday."

"Thank you so much for the job. I really appreciate it. I will be here at eight on Thursday." Toby picked up some of the flyers on Yerba Mate and headed toward the door.

Just before Toby walked out Toni said, "I mean it about talking. Anytime."

Toby decided to walk down to River street and then loop back home by crossing the covered bridge to his apartment. He wasn't quite ready to go home. He was a little surprised with himself for taking a job at a coffee shop. It wasn't quite the high level job he had in mind. But somehow it felt right. It would help pay a few bills, cover food and most importantly it would get him out of his apartment.

Toby also thought about Toni. He really liked her. She seemed to really live in the now and that was something Toby wanted to do. He didn't want to think about the past or the future. Neither held too many good thoughts for him. Toby hadn't been around people like her since he lived back home in Oregon. Toni reminded him of some of his friends from high school which felt familiar. He wanted to go home. He really did, but he did not yet know quite how he would do it. He needed to have a plan. He also

knew he needed courage. Everyone always said he had so much courage taking the scholarship and going to college across country and then turning down a big advertising firm in New York for a start up company in Boston. He never felt it took courage to do those things. It had been what he wanted to do.

Toby passed by Melissa's house. He could faintly hear someone playing scales on the cello. He wished that Melissa had been a little friendlier. He wondered how Melissa and Toni had become friends. They seemed like polar opposites. Toby also wondered again about the girl in the picture with Melissa, he tried to remember his Greek mythology. *Who was Electra?* He knew she was a Goddess of something. He made a mental note to look it up on his computer later.

A little further down the street, Toby stopped at a graveyard. He turned in and walked around. He found himself reading the different names on the tombstones. He took a second look when he saw the name Macguire on one of the smaller stones. He bent down to read it. It read James Macguire 1860- 1916. Toby did the math. *How did you die so young?* Tobey whispered. *My Dad is a Macguire as well. His name is Patrick. He is only sixty one years old.*

Toby sat in front of the grave as though it were his family. He bent over and put his hands together and started to pray. He prayed for answers for what he should do.

Toby wasn't sure how long he had been sitting like that when he felt the presence of someone getting closer to him. He opened his eyes and was surprised to see Melissa's cat Cooney approaching him.

"Bear, what are you doing here?" He said. He felt as though the cat had shown up to answer his prayers personally. The cat rubbed up against his waist a couple of times and then jumped into his lap. "I've had a lot of surprises today, but I think this is the biggest one yet. Good to see you buddy boy," Toby said scratching the cats neck. He stayed seated there with the cat for a while and when he got up to go, the cat followed him. I would love to bring you home with me, but I can't. The cat ignored him and

continued to trot behind. "All right have it your way," Toby said and he turned around and headed back toward Melissa's house. I will give you a walk home." When they arrived at Melissa's house, Toby stopped and looked down at Coonie who was quickly catching up. Now you are home. You stay here. OK." The cat kept walking and then stretched out in the driveway at Melissa's house. "That's a good boy. You stay there OK" Toby said turning and he walked back down River road without turning around.

Melissa had been gazing out the window as her student packed up her cello case. She was astonished to see her cat Coonie walking down the street behind Toby.

"So I will see you the same time next week?" Her student asked.

"Oh, yes, you did a good job today. Keep practicing," Melissa answered getting up from her chair. She wondered why Toby was coming toward her house again. *Perhaps he left something*, she thought. Melissa followed her student toward the door and when she opened it to let her out, she saw that Toby had already turned around. She also noticed the Coonie was stretched out in the driveway as though he had never left.

"See you later, Miss Windsor," her student said as she stood in the doorway.

"Bye," Melissa replied still standing in the doorway.

"Coonie," she called, "Come on in. Din dins." Melissa said trying to get the cat's attention. The cat lifted his head and looked at her. "Where did you go Coonie? You like Toby don't you?"

The cat got up and slowly walked toward the door. "What has gotten into you?" Melissa said closing the door behind the cat as he entered. "I'm sorry I left you," she said on the way toward the kitchen. "How about a nice can of mushy food to make up?" Melissa opened the cat food and put it in Coonies bowl. The cat sniffed the food and then walked away and jumped up on the sofa where she had found him with Toby.

CHAPTER

Standing once again in front of Electra's front door and facing the brass lion-face knocker, Molly felt a deep sense of resentment. She had found a new life in Maine with Nathan that suited her and she didn't appreciate having to take this step into the past. I suppose if it weren't for Electra opening this door to the past, I would still be in Seattle and never have met Nathan or Gina, Molly thought to herself, reasoning that she owed it to Electra to settle things with Jimmy. Molly had no idea what she would say, but she needed to make it perfectly clear that she had no interest in being a part of his life, except of course with things that related to Electra. Molly raised her hand to the brass lion-face, knocked and stepped back.

Jimmy had sent Electra and B.J. out on a boat ride so that he would be alone. He had been pacing from the sun-porch to the living room ever since they left. Jimmy was anxious and felt this was the one chance that he had been hoping for all those years to finally find out what had happened to his first love. He patted his coat pocket to make sure that the Blue Tiffany box was still there and went to open the door.

Molly stepped in past Jimmy when he opened the door. "Hello," she said sitting down in the living room before giving him a chance to give her a welcoming hug.

"Thank you for coming," Jimmy said taking a seat across from her.

"Like I said yesterday I don't have much time. Nathan and I are going to sail over to Hopeville and take a look at Gina's new place."

"Yes, I heard she is going to open a restaurant," Jimmy replied.

Molly crossed her legs and then blurted out, "I am sorry I rushed off yesterday. It's just been a big surprise seeing you. Actually, it is a big enough surprise seeing Electra."

"I understand," Jimmy said trying to catch Molly's eye.

Molly was looking out the window, avoiding his eye contact.

"She is a beautiful girl," Molly said and while still looking away from Jimmy she added, "I really am sorry that I didn't tell you that I gave her up for adoption."

"It's OK Molly," Jimmy said his voice sincere. "We were young." Jimmy wished that she would turn towards him instead of staring absently out the window, but he was glad to finally be able to talk to her.

"It's hard to believe that Electra is older than we were then," Molly said reflectively.

"It's a grand thing that she also found her true love," Jimmy said this time reaching his hand out to touch Molly's thigh. "We were crazy in love then weren't we Molly?"

Molly froze, both from Jimmy's touch and his words. She removed his hand and then stood up and walked toward the piano. "She plays the piano beautifully doesn't she?" Molly asked avoiding Jimmy's question.

Jimmy thought perhaps she was waiting for his apology. "You know yourself, I am very sorry that I moved away to New York without finding out what happened with you." Jimmy paused and then added, "I came to your Uncle's pub looking for you, but I always missed you. I didn't know that your Uncle never let you know."

"I knew you had come."

"You did?" Jimmy asked surprised.

Molly couldn't quite admit the truth, that she had hidden from him, but she didn't want Jimmy blaming her absence on her dead Uncle. "Yes, I knew that you had come by to see me, and I am sorry that I did not talk to you then."

"You must have been so angry and hurt, not to have called me back." Jimmy said, hating the thought that he had caused her pain.

Molly said, "Like you said we were young. It was a long time ago Jimmy. I think we are both sorry about what happened, but the fact is we have both been given an opportunity to know Electra." Molly finally turned her gaze toward Jimmy and added, "Let's just be grateful for that."

"I am more grateful than you could ever imagine," Jimmy said

reaching into his coat pocket and pulling out the Tiffany box. "That is why I wanted to give you this. Something to celebrate Electra finding us."

Molly's eyes darted to the box Jimmy was holding as he placed it on the table in front of her.

"What's this?" she asked still staring at the box.

Jimmy opened the box, and Molly gasped when she saw the sparkle of the diamonds and the emeralds.

"I know you have a lot of money these days Jimmy, but this is not appropriate."

"I do have a lot of money. I can afford this and I want you to have those. They are made for you."

"I would never have anywhere to wear such jewelry."

"I could take you places. Molly this is a chance for us. We had such a perfect love."

"I have a boyfriend now Jimmy."

"Yes, but we were in love. First love Molly. You can't deny or compete with that. I think that is why I was never able to marry anyone else ."

Molly felt trapped. "That was in the past Jimmy."

"I am so sorry that I wasn't ready for it then, but I am ready now." Jimmy said desperate for Molly to understand how she was the one for him.

"I am glad that you can forgive me for the past, and I truly forgive you. What I hope most is that someday I will be able to forgive myself."

"What do you mean by that?" Jimmy asked confused.

"I feel ashamed that I would not let you talk to me when you did try to find me. It was wrong. I didn't think about what was good for anyone but myself."

"You are being too hard on yourself. I would do anything to go back in time and tell you what I couldn't tell you then. If I had at least told you I loved you, maybe you would have spoken to me."

"That is just it Jimmy. We can't go back to the past."

"I love you Molly. I truly love you. There is no other girl for me."

"Jimmy there is someone for you. You deserve someone who loves you. We all do. I am not the girl for you. Really."

Jimmy was frustrated he wanted Molly to understand that no one would ever love her as much as he did. "You are the one for me Molly. That is what I am trying to tell you." Jimmy let out a slight sob, "The only one."

"I am not the one Jimmy. I don't love you."

Molly closed the Tiffany box and said, "I really cannot accept this. I think I better leave now."

Jimmy watched Molly leave the room, and he realized it wasn't just Molly who was leaving, but the girl who he had always imagined her to be.

CHAPTER 3

Melissa had followed her cat Coonie into the sitting room when the phone rang. It was Electra.

"Melissa, it's Electra. Did you get back safely?"

"Yeah, it wasn't such a bad drive. It gave me and Gordy a chance to catch up and gossip about you of course," she answered curling up on the couch with the phone resting on her shoulder. She was surprised to hear from Electra who wasn't much of a phone person. Besides it was also probably pretty late on the East coast. "You're calling kind of late aren't you? Is everything OK."

"Yes, everything is fine. I just wanted to thank you for coming. I know it was a long drive and I really appreciated it. I also wanted to say I was sorry for not spending more time with you. I had hoped we'd be able to visit more."

"Don't worry. I had a blast. I still can't believe your birth father is a famous rock star," Melissa paused and then added, "or for that matter that you are now a famous rock star."

"Hardly," Electra said. "I sang back up vocals and one solo."

"Don't be modest. I've read the reviews."

"Well thanks. So what did you think about Jimmy?"

"He is very cool. That's a shame about him and your birth mother."

"What do you mean?" Electra asked concerned. She wanted to know what Melissa's impression had been.

"Well, about him wanting to get back together with her and her being with that other guy already. I mean the other guy is cute, in a manly sort of way, but come on there is no competition. Maybe she'll change her mind though. You never know. I think she would be an idiot not to at least consider Jimmy." Melissa reached up to where Coonie was sleeping and scratched behind his ears.

Electra was out on a sun deck that connected to her bedroom. She wanted a private spot to speak with Melissa. It was also a full moon so it

was bright enough and surprisingly warm enough as well.

"I just feel really terrible about encouraging Jimmy to even think about getting back together with Molly."

"What do you mean you encouraged him?" Melissa asked.

"Well, I may have exaggerated how much she wanted to see him. The truth was she didn't even want to see me at first. Or maybe I shouldn't say she didn't want to see me. She was afraid to see me."

"Well, maybe that is all it is. Maybe she is just afraid and this new boyfriend is just some kind of temporary security." Melissa said trying to sound upbeat.

"I don't know. It could be, but they behave like a couple that has been together forever. You saw them the morning after the party. The way he handed her a towel and they kissed."

"It was hard to miss since we were all gawking at them from your sun-porch."

"I saw the effect it had on Jimmy," Electra said wincing slightly over how doleful he had looked watching Molly with Nathan.

"I wonder if Jimmy is still going to give Molly the jewels."

"What jewels?" Electra asked surprised.

"He bought her a matching set of emerald earrings and a necklace. He said they would match her eyes and that he was going to give them to her to celebrate meeting you."

"No, he didn't tell me about that," Electra sat down on a chez lounge and put her knees up. "I'm surprised. She was over here today. He sent B.J. and I out on the boat to have some private time with her. When we got back he said that they had a nice chat, but he didn't say anything about giving her precious gems." A shooting star caught Electra's attention and she looked up to see it fade in the evening sky. "I wonder when he bought them. It must have been in New York when we landed from Munich. He said he had to run an errand.

"Probably. He showed them to me on the sun-porch the night or should I say morning after the party. The box was from Tiffany's. He must

of spent a fortune on them."

"Now I feel really terrible. I shouldn't have told Jimmy that Molly was excited to see him. I don't know why I did that. I think I was worried that they would be nervous and I thought if they both thought the other wanted to see them that it would make it easier. I also feel bad because everything is going so well with me and B.J. I hate to flaunt that while he is so miserable."

"That is an understatement," Melissa said stretching her arm that wasn't holding the phone over her head and then down to massage her neck. "I am so jealous. B.J. is such a catch. But it's OK You can flaunt it. We're all so happy to see you being social again. I am a little surprised that you ended up with B.J. though."

"You knew I had a crush on him back in the Juilliard days."

"Yes, and I also remember when you told me he was gay."

"Oh, yes, that was a bit of a misunderstanding."

"Were you trying to keep him all to yourself?"

"Yes, I am trying to keep him to myself," Electra smiled up at the sky, "Seriously it's a long story, but I did think he was gay."

"Why did you think that?"

"It's stupid really. I confided in the Geld's old housekeeper last summer that I was in love with him and she told me he was gay."

"And you believed her? How would she know?"

"Well, you know housekeepers clean up the rooms in the morning. Anyway, he had a frat brother staying with him that summer so after she told me that, I guess it started making sense. Plus he never dated anyone. You saw how he always went to all the parties alone."

"I also saw how every girl at those parties wanted to be the one to go home with him," Melissa went to pat Coonie again, but he jumped down off the sofa.

"So I have something really crazy to tell you," Melissa said watching where Coonie was going. "I was in a hurry to meet Gordy in Manchester, New Hampshire to go to your party. He flew over from New York to

Manchester and we met there to drive up to Maine together."

"Wait before you tell me. I just have one question for you?"

"What is that?"

"Why don't you just date Gordy? You're not seeing anyone else.

Lord knows you won't be meeting the kind of guy you like in Vermont."

"That's not open for discussion."

"All right, tell me your crazy story then."

"Like I was saying," Melissa cleared her throat to be dramatic. "I was rushing out the door to meet Gordy at the airport when I realized that I forgot to ask my friend Toni to come and feed Coonie. When I called her, I got voice mail so I left a message that Coonie needed to be fed. Turns out some guy named Toby who just moved to Woodstock and who has a phone number one digit different from Toni got the message I intended for her."

"Didn't you notice it wasn't her message?"

"No, it was the generic voice-mail."

"How did the guy figure out how to feed Coonie?" Electra asked.

"In my message, I mentioned that the key was in the usual spot under the geranium pot," Melissa said and then added, "Can you believe this guy Toby who got the message walked all over Woodstock until he found my flowerpot on the side porch entrance and then he let himself in to feed Coonie."

"Wow, that is pretty crazy," Electra said. "Coonie must have an angel watching over him or maybe you have an angel. What's he like?"

"It's not a love interest if that is what you're after?"

"Why not? Is he a dog?"

"No, he's a good looking guy."

"Then why not? Sounds like a nice guy going out of his way to feed a cat."

"I don't know. He just seems a bit odd you know. I don't know what he is doing in Vermont. He said he got laid off from his job in Boston, but that doesn't explain why he would move to Vermont."

"You won't even take a job in Boston or New York so that sounds

perfect."

"No really I don't know what he is doing here. He seems pretty unsettled."

"Well, didn't you say he just moved there? "

"Yeah, but I mean the guy is different. Trust me. He told me he was a Dartmouth grad and that he was looking for a marketing job, and when I took him to the coffee shop he accepted a job with Toni on the spot. He is working in a coffee shop now. It doesn't make sense."

"Interesting. So you don't want a guy who takes a big job in the city and you don't want a guy who leaves the big city and goes to Vermont. What do you want?"

"I want a guy who lives in Vermont and who knows what he's doing," Melissa said decidedly.

"Well, we're twenty-two years old so good luck with that," Electra replied.

"I made the choice to live here, and I know what I am doing at twenty-two so I don't think it's that far fetched."

"Maybe not, but you have pretty high expectations."

"And why shouldn't I? You held out for the love of your life. Or wait did you? I completely forgot. Jimmy accidentally told me something about a guy named Matthew. He said you would tell me. So do tell."

"There wasn't much time to tell you about Matthew. It was a pretty quick fling I had over in Ireland."

"Ah, an Irish lad ey?"

"No. He wasn't Irish. He was a journalist who was covering a story on Jimmy and the band. You know the one that came out in Spin Magazine. It's a long story, but Jimmy invited him to tag along with us on our trip to Ireland. He was very charming and I have to admit a lot of fun."

"You are surprising me everyday. You're not really the fling type."

"Well, I wasn't expecting it to be a fling. I was starting to fall for him, but then I found out that B.J. had feelings for me and I got to know the guy a little better."

"OK, but how was it Matthew's idea for you to join the Quarter Notes?"

"We were sitting in on one of the rehearsals in Dublin and I started singing. Matthew took it upon himself to pitch the idea to Jimmy that a female voice, and mine in particular, would be a good thing for the band. That and all the publicity of a Father/Daughter reuniting."

"Well, you have to admit he was right on that one."

"It's funny he wasn't the best of men, but I don't regret hooking up with him. As Jimmy says, he helped pull me out of my shell."

"Well that is a relief. Are you going to be moving back to Manhattan?"

"Honestly, I have to admit I am getting a bit nervous about B.J. living in New York. I don't know if I am quite ready to move back there. I'll be traveling a lot with Jimmy's band, and when I am not traveling, it will be hard to choose between B.J. and going to Maine. I completely understand how you feel about not wanting to live in a big city."

"Ah do I detect trouble in paradise?" Melissa said.

"Not trouble, just inevitable compromise," Electra said.

"See now this is exactly why I am not dating Gordy. I don't want to compromise. Not at our age."

"One short fling and one boyfriend doesn't make me too much of an expert at relationships, particularly given the fact that neither my real parents nor adopted parents stayed together to give me an example of a successful relationship, but I don't think age or time of life has anything to do with whether or not you will need to make compromises."

"What I meant was I don't want to tie myself down or get so deeply involved that I find myself moving to New York."

"Maybe Gordy just isn't the one for you."

"That's not necessarily true. If he decided to move to Vermont I'd date him. I have money, it's not like he would have to worry about making a decent income here."

"But he would need to make all the compromises?"

"No, that's the point. He doesn't have to make any compromises. I'm not asking him to move here or date me. I'm just saying if he chooses to live here then I'd consider dating."

"You sure have limited the geographic opportunity for finding your soul mate."

"Well, I'm pretty happy with my life here so until that changes, I don't see any need to rush into a relationship, particularly one that would start out with geographic challenges."

"Like you pointed out, we're young so you never know who you might meet. Maybe that Toby guy will get his act together and you'll fall madly in love."

"Don't hold your breath on that one."

B.J. opened the screen door out to the porch when he saw Electra stretched out on the chester lounge.

"Having a private moment or may I join you?"

"Come on out. I'm just on the phone with Melissa, but I'll be off in a second." Electra said waving for B.J. to join her.

"I'm going to need to get going," Electra told Melissa as she watched B.J. looking at her. "I'll let you know what I find out about the Tiffany box."

"Keep me informed. I'm rooting for Jimmy," Melissa said enthusiastically.

"OK. I will take care and thank you for the chat."

"My pleasure. It's been a long time since we've had a chance to talk. And really I am so happy for you. I think B.J. is great. I'm also thrilled to have a best friend in a famous rock band. I expect many back stage passes."

"Thank you," Electra said. "And you will get back stage if you feel like going to the West coast. That's our next tour."

"What about this Tiffany box?" B.J. asked with his eyebrows raised.

"I was just talking to Melissa. She told me at the party that Jimmy

showed her some jewelery that he bought for Molly. It's really odd though because he never said anything to me. Did Jimmy say anything to you about that?"

"No. But now that you mention it, this evening he gave me a brown paper bag and asked if I would bring it over to Molly when I go back to my house. He said she left something when she was visiting today."

"Oh my God. Do you think it is the jewels?" Electra said excitedly. "She must have turned them down. Go get it."

"We can't snoop into a bag intended for Molly."

"You're right. I wonder why Jimmy is being so secretive about it."

"He has been acting a bit strange this evening. He is usually so chipper, but tonight he was definitely a bit morose."

"Do you think I should talk to him?" Electra asked.

"No, guys hate that. He'll talk to you if he wants."

"Ok. Good to have a guy's perspective," Electra said leaning forward and kissing B.J. He had sat down at the end of her chair. Electra pulled her legs closer to her to give B.J. more room and then put her head back to look up at the night sky. Electra pointed toward the sky "quick look do you see it?"

"What?" B.J. asked.

"A shooting star," she said excitedly.

B.J. looked but it was already gone. "Did you make a wish?"

"Yes, I wished that we'll get married some day," Electra said.

"You're not supposed to tell anyone your wish," B.J. said, and scooting up toward Electra he put his arms around her and said. "It's ok though. You know I want to marry you."

"I don't think your mother would be too happy about it," Electra said thinking about how his mother had been so put off at the party when she learned that Electra was adopted.

B.J. stroked Electra cheek and said, 'Don't worry she will come around. She only wants what is best for me. She will see what a perfect pair we are. Just give her time.'

"Well, your Mom is pretty intimidating and she has pretty strong opinions, but hopefully you're right. I know how close you are to her so it's important to me that she like me."

"She will. My Dad loves you," B.J. said changing the topic because he was also worried about his mother's reaction to him being with Electra.

"How is your Dad doing?" Electra asked and then added, "I've never seen him as drunk as he was at my party. Usually he is so suave."

"To be honest I am a little worried about him," B.J. said. "He is really stressed out about business."

"I was surprised when he told your mother that me opening an account with your firm saved the business."

"It's true though. The account you opened with the money from your Munich show really did save us."

"Well, you know our grandfather's did business together for years, I couldn't possibly have done anything else with that money."

"We'll make them proud," B.J. said, and then added, "And my mother will understand that it doesn't matter if you were adopted, your father left you in control of his company and you made sure that the partnership that our grandparents set up stayed in tact." B.J. looked back up at the sky hoping to find a shooting star for himself to wish on the success of his business. "My father understands the significance of what you did," B.J. said and then added, "And my Mother will too."

"Well, let's not talk about business," Electra said. "Let's just enjoy the evening. We don't get too many warm nights like this," Electra paused and then added, especially not with a full moon.

Electra straddled her legs and then pulled B.J. closer to her. The weight was a bit much for the *chez lounge* and one of the ____ broke and B.F.'s butt sunk.

"Upps," Electra laughed.

They sat like that for a little while longer and then B.J. said, "We should go check on Jimmy and see how he is doing?"

Electra and B.J. walked back in the house and then downstairs, where they found Jimmy in the living room reading Spin Magazine.

"What are you reading?" Electra asked.

"I am reading the article that Matthew wrote about us."

"How many times have you read it now?" Electra asked, teasing him.

"I'm not counting," Jimmy said. "Sometimes I read it just to check if I am not dreaming. Life has really taken some strange twists."

"Are you OK?" Electra asked.

"You know yourself. I am just feeling a bit nostalgic. What do you say we work on our new song some."

B.J. took this as a cue that it would be a good time to leave father and daughter alone. "I'm going to go next door and check on my parents."

"Don't forget to bring Molly her bag," Jimmy said as B.J. excused himself.

"Sure," B.J. said. "He was tempted to ask about it, but thought the better of it. "I will drop it off at her cottage before I go up to the house."

B.J. knocked on Molly's cottage door and Nathan answered.

"Hello Nathan," B.J. said awkwardly.

"Come on in," Nathan replied. "We just got back from the mainland. It's a calm night, but Molly's hair got a bit messed up so she is taking a quick shower to comb it out.

"I don't want to interrupt. I just had something to give to Molly. I guess she left this bag over at Electra's," B.J. said putting the bag down on the coffee table.

"You don't need to rush off." "Do you want to stay for a drink?"

"Not this time. I want to check on my parents. If they are still awake that is."

"Ok. I'll let Molly know about her bag," Nathan said as B.J. walked out.

"Who was that?" Molly asked taking her hair out of a towel and shaking it out.

"B.J." Nathan answered. "He said you left something over at Electra's so he brought it over. " Nathan pointed at the bag on the coffee table.

Molly went over and opened up the bag and was shocked to see the same blue Tiffany box she had left behind after her meeting with Jimmy.

"What is it?" Nathan asked curious because of the expression on Molly's face.

"It's nothing," Molly answered closing the bag back up.

Nathan reached out to take a look and Molly grabbed the bag away from him. "I'm sorry I shouldn't have been nosy, but you said it was nothing."

Molly plunked herself down on the sofa. "I don't know what the guy thinks," she started to say. "He must think he can buy me."

"What do you mean?" Nathan asked fairly sure she was talking about Jimmy.

"Go ahead take a look," Molly said.

Nathan opened the bag and pulled out the elegant box. He opened it and his jaw dropped. "Was this for you?"

"Yes," Jimmy gave it to me this afternoon. "But don't worry I turned them down."

"They are made for you," was Nathan's only comment.

"What are you talking about?" Molly said.

"If I could afford something like this I would give it to you."

"I don't need anything like that so don't worry."

"Of course, no one needs something like this," Nathan said picking up the necklace and putting it around Molly's neck. "But somethings are just made for certain people."

"You're not suggesting I keep them?" Molly said aghast.

"What did he say when he gave them to you?"

numbers

"He said it was to celebrate Electra finding us."

"I might be crazy, but I think you should keep them."

"He should be giving them to Electra. She is the one who found us."

"Yes, but you brought her into the world. I think you should keep them."

"I am shocked that you of all people would say I should keep them."

"You've already told me you're not interested in Jimmy so I'm not worried that this will change anything between us."

"It's just not appropriate," Molly said.

Nathan pulled Molly off the couch, and he he walked over to the mirror with her. He moved her hair to one side and then opened her robe wider around her neck he said. "Just look at that. You have to admit that looks stunning on you?"

"Yes, it's beautiful, but it's from another man," Molly said taking the necklace off and putting it back in the box.

"Well, yes, but if you think about it, it's because of him that we have met."

"I really can't believe you Nathan," Molly said walking into the kitchen to get herself a glass of water. Taking a sip she said, "I'll keep them, but God knows I'll never have any occasion to wear jewels."

"Not true," Nathan said. "The moment is now."

"What are you talking about?"

Nathan said, "It's a full moon. Keep that necklace on. We're going for a sail on Irish Eyes.

"Are you crazy?"

"No, not at all, put some clothes on and meet me down at the dock. "You don't get many warm nights like this in September and with a full moon taboot."

B.J. was on the landing when he looked out and saw Nathan and Molly jumping aboard the motor boat. He felt bad for Jimmy that Molly didn't reciprocate his feelings, but he just didn't see the match between the

two of them. B.J. saw Jimmy as being very international; whereas, he saw Molly as being very provincial. B.J. thought Nathan and Molly made a really good couple. He also had to admit, he was not entirely comfortable with the thought of Molly and Jimmy together. Even though they were the biological parents, he preferred to keep his relationship with Jimmy separate from Molly, especially since she had chosen to stay on as an employee of his mother's. B.J. thought again about his parents. He was very worried about both of them.

When B.J. got to the top of the stairs, he noticed it was very quiet. Even though it was still early, his parents bedroom door was already closed. Wanting to give them their privacy, B.J. turned around, and headed back down the staircase. He went into the study and started up his computer to log on to the internet. He hadn't minded going out on the boat with Electra before the rest of the band had left. He loved every moment he had with her, but he was a bit stressed out to be away from the stock market. He had no idea how it had closed. His green fund stocks had been taking a bit of a dive. He needed to find some more diversity. He was worried that the start-up green technologies he had been investing in were just a bit too risky. He was thinking of setting up a new fund that invested in more traditional companies that had green policies in place. *That could still be considered a green fund*, he thought to himself. *Sometimes you need to add a little bit of reality to idealism*. B.J. looked up at the wall at pictures of his family through the years with various boats. *I can't afford to risk losing this legacy. And I have a diamond to buy*. He thought, justifying this change in his fund profile.

B.J. selected some Fortune 500 companies by the amount of renewable energy credits they purchased in their energy management portfolio. He had originally pitched his green fund as a green innovation fund. The companies he added did not exactly have that innovation, but they did have a green strategy. *It's all about how you spin it*, he thought. He felt the pressure to be a bit more conservative. Electra had opened his second largest account. He didn't want to lose her money. She would be

disappointed in his new stock picks, but she would just have to trust that he had their best interests at heart.

When B.J. got back to Electra's house he saw that Electra and Jimmy were back at the piano. Jimmy caught sight of B.J. and stopped playing his guitar.

"Come over here lad," Jimmy said with enthusiasm.

B.J. walked over surprised by his change in mood.

Jimmy said, "We want you to be the first to hear this," Jimmy nodded to Electra who started to play the piano, and then he joined her on guitar and the two of them sang a duet."

B.J. didn't really understand the lyrics and he thought that the melody was OK, but looking at Electra and Jimmy, he could see that they were both pleased with what they had come up with.

"what do you think?" B.J. asked slightly out of breath when they had finished.

B.J. lied and said, "It was great."

"Really you like it?" Electra asked jumping up from the piano and going over to B.J. to give him a hug.

"That's what we were working on when George was still here. I think he is going to be blown away," Electra said also a little out of breath.

"What do you say we celebrate with a little champagne."

Electra was going to protest, but Jimmy had already left the room. He came back from the kitchen carrying three beers. "Well, I guess I was wrong. I can't find a single bottle of bubbly."

Electra said, "We can check the wine cellar. There might be champagne down there. I'm not much of a drinker myself so I haven't really checked it out since my Dad died."

"You have a wine cellar here?" B.J. asked surprised. I didn't know about that."

"I actually sort of forgot about it to be honest."

"How can you forget about a wine cellar?" B.J. asked.

"This was the first party I have had. The caterers brought the wine.

Anyway, the wine down there is all collectors wine.

"It's probably gone bad by now," B.J. said wondering how Electra could leave something like that unattended.

"Let's go have a look then," Jimmy said turning to Electra he added, "Lead the way."

Electra led B.J. and Jimmy out the door and around the back of the house. She pulled open the cellar doors and walked down some stone stairs. B.J. expected to find some kind of crawl space and was astonished to see a fully finished basement. There was a table set up with a framed wine chart next to it.

"Where is the wine?" Jimmy asked not seeing any bottles.

"They are in temperature control," Electra said leading the men down a hallway. "My Dad's wife set this whole thing up before she left. She was such a snob. Always had to have the best."

B.J. pulled out a bottle of Chateau Haut Brion and then another bottle of Rothchild Lafette..

"The best is an understatement. I can't believe you could just forget about this," B.J. said.

"Take anything you want."

"This is a special occasion," Jimmy said turning to B.J. and winking "Choose wisely."

"This is unbelievable," Jimmy said checking out the corner racks."

"What did you find?" B.J. asked.

"Single malt Scott. Bottles of it at that."

"I don't think you need that," Electra said.

"Come on now Electra. We need to find out how it is keeping," B.J. said and then looking through the selection pulled a bottle. "We'll just test this one out. You know, to make sure nothing is going bad."

"A little quality control," Jimmy said to Electra taking the bottle from B.J. and inspecting it.

"Go ahead and take that, but I'm not drinking that. Find something else for the celebration toast."

"I found some champagne," B.J. called out from a corner of the basement, " don't know how champagne would keep, but let's give it a try."

"This is just for a toast. We have had enough drinking this weekend." Electra remarked to the two men as the glasses were poured.

B.J. gave Jimmy a look and then taking Electra's hand and heading back out of the cellar said, "Of course just a toast."

B.J. toasted to Electra and Jimmy on the completion of their new song. The three drank their champagne marveling how well it had aged.

"Shall we have a cigar and test the scotch?" B.J. asked Jimmy.

"No lad, you two need your privacy," Jimmy said not wanting to upset Electra any more than he already from the night he stayed up drinking at the party. "We can try it out tomorrow." Jimmy also knew feeling the way he did after hearing that Molly did not love him, that it would be a dangerous slope to open a bottle of whiskey.

"Thank you Jimmy," Electra said kissing him on the cheek. She collected the champagne glasses and went into the kitchen.

"He seems a lot more chipper than earlier," B.J. remarked as he closed their bedroom door.

"There is no better high then when you create song like the one we played tonight." Electra undid the buttons of her sweater, took it off and placed it neatly on a side chair.

"Well, he did seem to be in a better mood. Did you find out anything more about what happened with Molly today?" B.J. asked.

"No, he just said that he was glad he finally had a chance to speak with her alone," He did say one odd thing though. He said that she had told him that they couldn't change the past, and that he understood that, but that he was certain no matter what happened in the past it was always possible to change the future."

Toni couldn't believe that her good friend Melissa had met Jimmy from the Quarter Moon band. She had it in her mind that she would find a way to get to the next show. Melissa had come in for coffee on her lunch break and mentioned that they would be playing on the West coast and that she would be able to get back stage passes. Back stage passes, Toni thought, *This is too good to be true* as she went to the bands website on the internet to find out the details. It looked like they would be playing in Vancouver, Seattle and Portland on their next tour dates. Toni hoped that her new hire at the coffee shop, Toby would work out. She thought he would be able to cover for her so that she could go to a show. The owners would not be too happy with her for having someone fill in for her again so soon after her weekend in New York, but Toni felt the whole point of staying on at the coffee shop as long as she had was because of the flexibility.

Melissa was pleased to see Toby was even a little early for his first shift on Thursday.

"You're here on time," she said unlocking the door. "That's good. I'll show you how to open the store."

Toby followed Toni in to the shop. "Well good morning to you too."

"I'm sorry, good morning," Toni apologized. Toni showed Toby the routine for getting everything set up for the day.

Later that morning Melissa stopped in for her usual.

"I looked up the dates," Toni announced as she handed Melissa her capacinno. They play Vancouver on Thursday, Seattle on Friday and Portland on Saturday the beginning of next month.

Melissa took her cup and smiled at Toni, "Wow! You really don't waste any time do you?"

"You said you could get us back stage pages," Toni said excitedly, "Hell, if I am going to snooze on that one."

"I can, but it's a long way to go for a show."

"Well, they already played the East coast last Spring, so unless you

think you can get to Tokyo that will be a closest venue for a while."

"Hmm." Melissa said blowing at her drink to cool it down.

"Please," Toni begged her telling her, "The coffee is on me."

"Oh that is a good trade," Melissa teased her. "I have to teach on Thursdays, but I suppose we could leave on Friday and make it to the Saturday show in Portland.

Overhearing the last comment, Toby said, "If you're going to Portland, you can stay with my folks."

"Thank you Toby," Melissa said, "I think we can afford a hotel for a couple of nights."

"Speak for yourself," Toni quickly replied.

"You can share a room with me. I don't want to go stay at some strangers house. "

"That was very nice of you to offer that Toby," Toni said.

Melissa took out her wallet and pulled out a credit card. "I tell you what, I'll pay for the hotel if you make the reservations. I need to get over to the highschool."

"Don't forget to call your friend Electra and let her know we're coming," Toni reminded her taking her credit card and slipping it in her jeans pocket.

"I hope you decide to stay on," Toni said to Toby "I'll need you to cover for me that weekend." Toni poured herself some drip coffee and took a few sips. "Actually, since you mentioned we could stay with your folks, I wanted to offer to go in and check on them for you."

"That is not necessary," Toby said also getting a cup of drip coffee.

"No Yerba Mate today?" Toni asked and then added, "Seriously, I would like to go see your folks. After all you are doing me a huge favor, and I really think you'd feel better if you knew how they were." Toni took another sip and then added, "I mean how they really are."

"It will be a bit odd," Toby said.

"You just offered that we could stay at their house."

"True, but that would be different you would be there for a reason."

"I would be there for a reason. I would tell them that you asked me to check on them."

"I dunno," Toby said

A few people came in and lined up at the counter.

"Well, think about it. I'm happy to do it," Toni said taking the first order.

As soon as the crowd died down a little Toby, who was filling up the dishwasher, looked over at Toni who was back to sipping her coffee and said, "You'd really go all the way to Portland for a weekend just to see a band."

"This isn't just to see a band," Toni explained. "We will have back stage passes."

"Oh," Toby said still not really understanding why she would go through that much trouble.

Toni put her coffee down and went over to the stereo system, "Maybe this will help you understand," she said putting in a Quarter Moon cd.

After the CD had been playing for a bit, Toni asked, "So now do you understand?"

"It's nice," he said.

"You don't sound convinced," Toni said and then added, "Well, maybe after they put out a CD with Electra on it. I saw the video from their show in Munich. Oh my God can that girl sing."

"Did you just say Electra?" Toby asked, and his interest suddenly piqued.

"Yeah, that's how we're getting the back stage passes. Melissa went to school with her. Pretty crazy huh?"

Toby thought to himself he'd go to Portland to meet that girl. "Do you think I could get in?"

"What are you talking about. You're covering the shop."

"I know that, but another time. When they play somewhere around here."

"Why the sudden interest?"

"Just curious."

"I haven't even met Electra yet, so hold your horses on that one," Toni said and then smiled at Toby and added, "but I'll owe you one so I'll see what I can do."

An elderly couple came into the shop, and it made Toby think more about his parents and Toby's offer to check in on them.

"If you really think you could fit in the time, I think I would like it if you went and saw my folks," Toby said stacking the coffee mugs on the shelf.

Toni looked over at Toby and smiled, "I'm glad. I think you'll feel a lot better."

Still feeling a little uneasy about sending someone to see his folks before he even went, Toby said, "Well, just if you have time."

"I will make the time," Toni said decisively. "You know I was thinking as well, maybe you would like to volunteer with me over at the hospice. I just go in and visit with some of the folks. Particularly the ones who don't have family. "

"How did you end up doing that?" Toby asked, "I mean deciding to volunteer at a hospice?"

"It was actually my mother's idea," Toni who wasn't shy about speaking of her past. I was a terribly depressed teenager. I tried to kill myself when I was sixteen."

Toby was taken aback by her being so direct.

Toni noticed the look on Toby's face and quickly said, "I know what does that have to do with the price of tea in China? Anyway, the point was I saw all kinds of psychiatrists, but really the most helpful thing was my mother's suggestion, or maybe I should say, insistence that I volunteer for some place where people were less fortunate than myself." A customer came in and ordered a drink, however that didn't stop Toni from finishing her story. "I let her pick the place and so she choose a hospice here in town."

"So what was it like?"

"Well, at first I had my doubts that a suicidal kid was going to cheer anyone one up, but on my first visit, I was so embarrassed," Toni looked out the window and then said, "no not embarrassed, I was ashamed. I felt so ashamed for being unhappy when all those people had no choice in living or dying."

"I would think that would be even more depressing." Toby looked around to see if any of the seated customers were listening to them, "I mean I know what you're talking about. After I lost my job in Boston, I was so depressed, but I felt ashamed. That is exactly it, I felt ashamed because it's not like I was dying, I just lost my job. I would pass by street people and think, *I'm a lot better off than that guy*. But then I felt even more depressed because I felt guilty for being depressed. Like you said, it's not like I was sick."

"But that is just it," Toni explained, "being depressed is being sick. I felt ashamed, but I think that is what woke me up to understanding that even though my hair didn't fall out from Chemo or I wasn't skinny as a rail, I was sick and though it wasn't visible, it was every bit as real as the people I was visiting. The people I visited back then in the hospice had so much courage. I remember this one older woman Edna. I'll never forget her. She had shingles in her eyes, and could barely see, her disc had collapsed after chemo, yet she always wanted to try to go for a walk with me outside. At first I thought I would just need to stick around, you know not try to kill myself, until Edna passed. I had to be there for Edna, but as the days went by I realized I was looking forward to my visits, not only with her, but with other people as well. It really felt good to help another person. Aside from normal bummed out moments, I don't think I have been depressed since then.

Toby filled the dishwasher with a new set of mugs from the morning rush. He wasn't sure what he should say and simply replied, "That's a nice story."

Toni looked at Toby thoughtfully and asked, "Have you been around anyone who was dying before?"

"No, not a person anyway. I was with my childhood cat when he died," Toby answered remembering how his favorite cat lay limp in his arms.

"I think it might be helpful for you," Toni said. "I mean forgive me for saying this, but you do seem a little depressed. I know it helped me with that."

"I'm not about to kill myself," Toby said and then realized how that must have sounded to Toni after what she had told him, "I'm so sorry, I didn't mean anything against you."

"Don't apologize. I'm not ashamed of it anymore. It was just part of my journey." Taking the finished load of cups out of the dishwasher and stacking the cups and saucers, Toni said, "It's pretty shocking to see someone when they are really sick. I think if you could visit with some folks, it might be easier for when you go see your Dad."

Toby, who still could not imagine having the courage to go see his father, but could also not imagine not visiting him, replied. "How about if I go with you on Sunday."

"Sounds perfect," Toni said "I'll bring the leftover pastries from the shop. "They love that."

Nathan invited Molly to go for a sail on his boat, Irish Eyes, that he had recently completed and named for her. Molly who had only learned to sail that summer, was a bit nervous on Nathan's 3_ ft. boat, but he seemed to handle it quite well on his own with only minor help from her. It was a nice day and so she agreed and had also offered to bring a picnic.

"I'm here," Molly shouted out as she let herself in the front door.

"Like I couldn't hear your truck drive up," Nathan said teasingly as he greeted her with a kiss.

"You're in luck, Gina is back from the mainland and she helped prepare the picnic."

"Are you saying I won't like your cooking?" Nathan asked taking the basket from Molly, lifting one side open and taking a peak, "I might have to renege on that marriage proposal.

"No, my cooking is edible," Molly said and added, "If you like pub food."

"Well, it's OK, anyway because I am not a fussy eater," Nathan said setting the picnic basket back down he added. " Before we go, I have something to show you," and he took Molly's hand and led her out his back door toward his back. Once they were in the barn he took her over to a corner where she saw his tool table and she immediately noticed two of her most recent paintings in beautiful hand made frames.

"What do you think?"

"When did you do that? I didn't even noticed those were missing from my cottage."

"I only took them before I left this morning. I measured them last week. I knew you were excited about showing them at Gina's restaurant once she gets set up so I thought they better have proper frames.

"You just don't stop surprising me do you?" Molly said giving Nathan a big hug and a kiss. "Those are beautiful. "It's so expensive to frame, I was going to just matt them."

"I hope I can keep surprising you," Nathan said pleased by her reaction.

It was fairly calm on the water that day which pleased Molly. She loved being out on the boat with Nathan, but she was still getting used to helping with things like pulling in the main sheet and she preferred less wind.

"You are an amazing artist yourself you know," Molly said pulling out the sandwiches and handing one to Nathan. "I still can't believe you built this boat."

"You know what?" Nathan said unwrapping the sandwich and taking a bite, "I can't believe it either. "I guess all those years working at the boat yard paid off, that and paying attention to my Dad."

"Did your Dad build boats?" Molly asked curious because Nathan talked about his sister a lot, but he never mentioned his parents.

"No, he never built boats. He was a carpenter, he specialized in cabinetry."

"I don't hear you talk about him that much?" Molly said.

"I'm sorry. I normally do talk about them. I just thought with you having lost your parents so young, that maybe it would bother you."

"No not at all. They're a part of your life, I would love to hear about them."

"I've been feeling bad about not introducing you, but with the Electra's party and you meeting Electra for the first time and seeing Jimmy, I thought you had enough on your plate."

"I don't want to seem unsocial," Molly said worrying about his parents not liking her.

"Don't worry I told my parents they'd meet you soon enough." Nathan said. I told her to wait a bit until later in September after the Geld's leave. And I told her nothing fancy. I was thinking we'd go to the old pub on a Saturday night. My friend Doug owns the place now. It's not a pub anymore, but every other Saturday he opens the doors and folks gather. Some people bring an instrument or two. It's a pretty good time. I've been meaning to take you, but I haven't been myself since I met you. Guess I have liked having you to myself whenever we have time off together.

"That sounds perfect to me. I'm definitely comfortable in a pub environment." I haven't told Electra yet, but I have decided I can't go to Ireland with her. It would be too weird to meet Jimmy's mother, especially now that I know he had hopes of getting back together with me. I mean I might someday, but not now." Molly quickly added, "I mean I might meet his mother, not get back together with him."

"She'll understand," Nathan said. "It was a lot for her to ask of you."

"I really do want to do a mother/daughter trip. Something away from here. I heard the band talking and found out that they are going to be playing in Seattle next month and I was thinking that I'd go and see Electra play there and have that be something for us to do as mother/daughter. I could show her where I lived. I also need to do something about the stuff I have in storage."

"So then you decided not to move back to Seattle?" Nathan asked with a grin on his face.

It struck Molly for a moment, that she would really be leaving Seattle and not just going on a trip. Molly was excited about living with Nathan, but the finality of it made her feel uneasy. She hadn't expected that.

"It will be odd," Molly replied. "You know as much as I always said I wanted to live in a little cottage, I don't believe I have every lived anywhere but a city and always in an apartment." Molly pondered that reality again. "I mean except of course for this summer here on the island, but that was always meant to be temporary."

"Is that OK with you?" Nathan asked a little concerned because he noted the expression on her face.

"Of course it's what I want to do. It's just a little funny thinking about it that way."

Toni and Melissa walked to the back of the plane. They had a window and middle seat. Toni let Melissa take the middle seat hoping that maybe the aisle would remain free. It seemed it would, until a woman about their age carrying a knapsack stopped in front of their aisle.

"Excuse me," the girl said taking a book out of her knapsack and putting it down on the free aisle seat, "This is my seat,"

Melissa looked up at her and smiled, and Toni said, "I think there should be room above if you want to put your knapsack up there," noticing that the girl was trying to shove it under the seat in front of her.

"You never know what you might want to retrieve," the girl replied. "But thank you." She sat down and put her book in the pocket in front. "I'm Angie," the girl said turning to Toni. "I was afraid I might not get this connection. I had a connecting flight from Barcelona."

"I'm Toni," Toni replied and then pointing to Melissa who already had her earphones on said, "and that is my friend Melissa."

"Nice to meet you," Angie replied.

Toni thought she noticed that Angie had an Australian accent. "I like your accent," Toni said. "How exciting to come from Barcelona, What did you do there?"

"Barcelona was great," the girl replied. "I wasn't there too long though. I was Wwoofing in the countryside."

"What's Wwoofing?" Toni asked curiously.

"I knew you were going to ask that," the girl said laughing, "World Wide Organic Opportunities in Farming. It's a volunteer program. You find a place you want to travel and if there is a host you can volunteer your time in exchange for room and board. Kind of like being a short term indentured slave." Angie pulled her knapsack from under the seat and took out a water bottle. She took a long sip and then said. "The organization has been around for years. I'm surprised so few people have heard of it."

"It's the kind of thing, I'd love to know about, but never have," Toni said.

"Are you from Boston then?" Angie asked.

"No, I live up north in Vermont," Toni answered. "So are you flying back to Australia?"

"Actually, I am from New Zealand," Angie corrected her.

Toni put her hand to her mouth quickly and said, "I am so sorry."

"It's ok, happens all the time." Angie took her book out of the pocket and squeezed the water bottle in."

"I'm going to Portland. I met a guy on a different WWOOF trip in Ecuador who lives there. I plan on visiting with him for a while. How about you? Are you going to Portland or connecting on to somewhere else?"

"I wish I was traveling further," Toni replied and then with emphasis added, "I love to travel." Toni reached under the seat and pulled out her purse. She kept a small notebook in it at all times. "Is there a website for that organization where you volunteer?"

"Sure, go to WWOOF," Angie answered.

Toni wrote it down in her notebook and put the name "Angie from plane" next to her note to be sure she wouldn't forget why she had noted it." "I can't complain too much about this trip," Toni told Angie, "My friend" and she pointed to Melissa who was gazing out the window with the headset still on. "Melissa knows someone in a band so we're going to go see them."

"Wow, that is a long way for a band?" Angie commented. "Would I know who the band is?"

"The Quarter Moon," Toni answered.

"No way," Angie said excited. "I know them. They're huge in Australia. "Who do you know?"

"She knows Electra?" Toni answered.

"OH, must be a different band," Angie said sounding disappointed. "The band I am thinking of is all men."

"When is the last time you heard them?"

"Oh, God not for a while."

"Well, does Jimmy O'Conner ring a bell?"

"Yes, my God, that is the guitar player and lead singer."

"Then it is the same band. Electra is his daughter she just joined

the band."

"I didn't know he had a daughter," Angie replied.

"No one did, including him until this year." Toni pulled the copy of Spin Magazine with the story out from the pocket in front of her. I've already read this a few times, but I brought it along. Take a look."

"Thanks," Angie replied. "You can look at my book if you like." Angie handed Toni a book with a butterfly on the cover. It was titled, "Co-Creation" It's a series called the Ringing Cedars. One of the girls in Spain turned me on to the books. Have you ever heard of Anastasia?"

"No, see this is why I would like to travel more," Toni said flipping through the pages of the book, "you learn so much. Thank you I will take a look at this."

As the plane took off Toni read Angie's book, Co-Creation while Angie read the story about how Electra came to join the band The Quarter Moon, neither one of them knowing how the two stories would later touch each other.

Melissa took her headset off to give her drink order. "Angie sitting next to me is just back from Spain. She was volunteering on an organic farm there," Toni said to Melissa.

"That's nice. Sounds like your kind of person," Melissa replied disinterested as she poured her Diet Coke into her glass and put her headset back on.

Toni ignored Melissa's comment and poured her own tomato juice.

"How do you like the book," Angie asked Toni, "Can you follow it or is it too hard with all the references to the others?"

"It jumps around a little, but I really relate to a lot of what this guy Vladimir is writing." Toni flipped through some of the pages and added, "I have to admit I went straight to the pictures of the plots of land. I know some folks in upstate New York and Vermont who are setting up similar plots for sustainable living. I like the idea. Of course for myself personally, I think rather than settling down on my family lot, I'd like to travel more like you."

"My Dad has a lot of acreage in New Zealand. I hope to someday set up an eco-village on it, but I'm not done traveling yet either." Angie pointed to the picture of Electra in the Spin Magazine article. "This is an incredible story. That is so cool your friend knows Electra."

"Yeah, tell me about it," Toni replied. "I would invite you to the show, but it's Melissa's friend. If you give me the number where you are staying I can find out if we'd be able to get you and your friend in to the show."

"Oh, don't worry, I wasn't looking for an invitation," Angie said, "but here is my friend Garth's phone number." Angie wrote her friend's cell phone number down on a napkin and handed it to Toni. "If you can get us tickets that would be great. I'm down to the last of my funds otherwise I'd just offer to buy it myself. Anyway, I'm not sure what Garth has planned."

Toni tucked the number away in her purse. She knew that Melissa would be agitated, but thought if there was an appropriate moment she would ask Electra herself. She really liked Angie and was grateful for her tips on the organic farming organization.

Toni was very surprised when they got off the plane to discover that Electra had personally come to greet them.

"I'm so excited you're here," Electra said running over to Melissa and giving her a hug. "Do you have any checked bags?" she asked noticing that Toni was carrying a knapsack and Melissa had a carry on with wheels.

"No it's such a short trip," Melissa answered.

"Great, we have a driver out front to take us to the hotel," Electra said putting her hand out she turned to Toni and said, "I'm Electra it's so nice of you to come."

"Toni took her hand shook it and said, "I'm Toni. Melissa can tell you, the pleasure is all mine. I'm a huge fan."

"I'll vouch for that," Melissa said rolling her eyes as she handed Electra's driver her suitcase. "How was your show in Seattle?" Melissa asked, slipping in to the back of the limo.

"It was great," Electra answered, "Molly came. She is still in Seattle packing her stuff up into a Pod to ship to Maine, she is moving to Ridgeport." Electra paused and then added, "We've got lots to catch up on."

"So where is B.J.? Is he at the hotel?" Melissa asked.

"He was going to try and make the West coast shows, but he just couldn't take the time off quite yet."

"I thought he might have gone with you on your first real tour" Melissa said a little surprised that B.J. wouldn't be there.

"It's just a critical time for him in the business. Plus the second stop was Seattle and that was time for me and Molly to spend together. He didn't want to get in the way of that."

"Oh, ok." Melissa said. "So how are Molly and Jimmy getting along? Did he give her the emerald and diamond jewelry?"

"He did,"

"And did she accept it?"

"Yes, and no."

"What do you mean?"

"She didn't accept it at first, but then he sent it over to her and she kept it."

"Wow, that's great. I told you I was rooting for Jimmy," Melissa said.

"Well, don't get too excited," Electra replied. "Molly is planning to move in with Nathan back in Maine.

"The sailer guy?" Melissa asked.

"Yeah, Captain Nathan."

"So how is Jimmy taking it?"

"He's been a total gentleman actually." Electra said and then added, "although he makes her uncomfortable because he is still trying to dote on her. In Seattle he got us both the best rooms in the hotel."

"As he should. He can afford it and you are his daughter and she is your mother."

"True. True. I asked her if she would just humor him because he wanted to contribute to our mother daughter trip. She went along with it

and we really had a nice time."

"I am so envious," Melissa said sighing. "I've never had a mother daughter day, and I can't stand my Mum. Even my grandmother didn't like Mumsy that is why she left her house to me instead of her."

"I have to admit your Mom is a lot like my Dad's first wife. She also made me call her Mumsey, by the way."

Melissa pulled her hair from her face and added, "I wouldn't mind finding out that I was adopted, but unfortunately if you ever look at a picture of my mother I look just like her."

"That's not so bad really, I think you're beautiful and you're not at all bitchy so I'm sure the only thing that got passed down was the good looks."

Toni listened to this interchange between Electra and Melissa and thought to herself *Electra must not know Melissa too well* as she had been witness to many a bitchy moments with Melissa. Toni often wondered why she stayed friends with Melissa, but then she would remember the promise she made to Melissa's grandmother that she would look out for her.

"Thanks for the compliment," Melissa said to Electra, "But getting back to Molly. I don't know why she didn't go for Jimmy."

"Well, at first I was disappointed," Electra said, "I mean for Jimmy. You know how I told you I felt responsible for encouraging him to be with her again" Electra stopped talking and pushed the button to open her window. "But she is really happy and in love."

Toni who had been silent said, "Well, that is what counts, right?"

"Yes," Electra answered turning to Toni. "I'm sorry we have been chattering away. It's really nice to meet you. I have heard so much about you and all that you did for Melissa's grandmother."

"Her grandmother was a special woman," Toni said, "I was honored to have time with her."

"I never had a chance to meet her myself," Electra said as the car pulled up to the hotel.

Toni wasn't sure how much time they would have with her before

the show and so she asked, "I was wondering Electra, if you might be able to get a couple more people into the show," Melissa gave Toni one of her dirty looks, "I mean not back stage passes or anything, just regular tickets. I met this really nice Australian woman on the plane,"

"Oh no not another Australian woman?" Electra said laughing. "Remind me to tell you about the Australian woman who was at the Munich show," Electra said to Melissa.

"Toni, I cannot believe you are so rude," Melissa scolded her friend. Here Electra is picking us up at the airport and giving us backstage passes and you're asking if some hippie you met on the plane can get a free pass."

"I'm sorry," Toni said and then added, "never mind, Melissa is right I shouldn't have asked."

"I mean really Toni why don't you just ask Electra to get you your own hotel room while you're at it?"

"Actually, Jimmy has already taken care of it. He has upgraded everyone and Toni does have her own room," Electra chimed in.

"That was awfully nice of him," Melissa said privately happy that she would have her own room and a nicer one at that.

"Jimmy is always very generous," Electra said. She took a card out of her purse and handed it to Toni. "This is our manager. Give him a call and let him know the names of the people you want to invite and he'll make sure they're taken care of at "Will Call."

"Thank you, " Toni said taking the card and sticking it in the side pocket of her knapsack."

As they unloaded from the limo Electra said, "Why doesn't everyone check-in and get settled. We have just about enough time before sound check to have a drink together. Jimmy is inviting us all up to his suite so when you're ready come on up to the Penthouse suite."

"This is so exciting," Toni gushed to Melissa as Electra left them to check in.

"You better not ask for any more special favors," was all that Melissa said in reply.

"I'm sorry. I don't think it was such a big deal. Electra didn't seem to mind."

"We'll it's because she is polite and has good manners."

This was another moment when Toni just wanted to strangle Melissa for being so uptight, but as she stepped up and checked into her own luxury room she decided it wasn't so bad to be traveling with Melissa.

"I promise I won't ask any more favors," Toni said and showing Melissa her room key she said, "I'm in room 812. Call me or come get me when you think it would be appropriate to go for the drink."

The door to the Penthouse was opened when Melissa and Toni entered. They seemed a very unlikely duo. Melissa had bought a new cocktail dress and set of heels, and Toni was dressed in hemp pants and a peasant blouse.

Electra greeted them and instantly commented on Melissa's outfit.

"Wow, you're looking very Glam Glam."

Melissa smiled because she knew she looked good.

"Hello Melissa," Jimmy said stepping forward and giving Melissa a kiss on each cheek. "Who is your friend?"

"I'm Toni," Toni answered putting out her hand. "I am so honored to meet you. I've been a fan for a long time."

"The pleasure is Mine. I am flattered that you came all the way from Boston," Jimmy said taking her hand and shaking it.

"Vermont actually," Toni said still holding Jimmy's hand.

"Well, Toni from Vermont come on in and have a cocktail," Jimmy said leading her into the sitting room. "What's your pleasure?"

"Actually a beer would be great."

"A beer it is," Jimmy said. "And how about for you other ladies?"

Melissa noticed the open bottle of champagne. "I'll have some champagne," she answered sitting down and crossing her legs. Electra helped herself to a glass of sparkling water with lime.

Jimmy poured a glass of champagne for Melissa and then got a couple of beers for himself and Toni.

"See what you think of this," he said handing Toni a Redhook ESB. "We had these in Seattle."

"Thanks," Toni answered. "I love RedHook."

Jimmy took a seat next to Toni. "So what is your favorite song?" he asked her.

"Dragon's at Stonehedge," Toni answered quickly.

Jimmy took a sip of his beer and then took a long look at Toni, "Now I am really impressed. I think that one might be our least known song. In fact I don't think we have ever played it live."

Toni was about to ask if he might play it that evening, but she remembered her promise to Melissa not to ask for any special favors.

Electra noticed that Jimmy seemed to be enjoying talking with Toni and so she sat down next to Melissa.

"Where did you get your dress?" she asked.

"In Woodstock, there is a shop on the same side of the street as the coffee shop where Toni works. They have some really nice pieces." Melissa answered.

Electra noticed Melissa checking out the dress she was wearing and she quickly said, "Don't worry this isn't what I'll be wearing on stage." Electra got up and went over to the closet and pulled out a garment bag. She unzipped it and pulled out a blue silk dress.

"Talk about Glam Glam," Melissa said with approval.

Toni who had been talking to Jimmy about the Dragon song put her hand on Jimmy's knee and in a quiet voice said apologetically, "I'm sorry I didn't dress up more like Melissa and Electra."

"You know yourself. I'm not big on dressing up either. This is what I will be wearing tonight and he pointed to his cotton shirt and jeans." Jimmy took Toni's hand and without realizing what he was doing he kissed it.

Electra and Melissa were busy talking about Electra's outfit and did not notice this exchange between Toni and Jimmy.

Jimmy blushed when he realized that he had just kissed her hand. "I'm sorry I hope that didn't make you uncomfortable," he said brushing his hair from his forehead.

Toni reached for Jimmy's hand and kissed it in reply. This time both Electra and Melissa were watching. Both girls were a little shocked, and so they resumed their conversation.

Jimmy finished off his beer and got up to get another. "Toni, would you care for another," he called out from the bar.

"I don't want to keep you all if you need to get over for a sound check."

"We have time," Jimmy said looking at Electra to make sure she didn't object. "

Electra had seen Jimmy around plenty of women and particularly plenty of women who were fans, but she had never seen Jimmy behaving as he was with Toni. She thought he was actually flirting with the girl.

Electra waited until Toni and Jimmy were deep in conversation and then she leaned over to Melissa and said, "I think Jimmy is flirting with your friend."

"I noticed that. I nearly spit out my champagne when I saw Toni kissing his hand. I'm so sorry I brought her. Really I didn't know she would misbehave this badly. I am also sorry she asked for tickets too."

"She's fine," Electra said.

"No, really I have to apologize. And look how she dressed. You'd think she was dressed for lawn seats at the Grateful Dead."

"Aren't you being a bit hard on your friend?"

"I just feel responsible. You know for bringing her."

"Well, it doesn't seem like Jimmy minds, and I am happy that she got you here."

"I would have come on my own," Melissa said defensively.

Electra gave her a look. "Well, anyway, I'm glad your both here." Electra waited for a pause in the conversation that Toni and Jimmy were having and said, "Toni, I gave your friends names to our manager and they are on the "Will Call" list."

numbers

"Thank you so much," Toni answered.

"You have some friends coming?" Jimmy said with interest wondering if she had a boyfriend.

"Well, an acquaintance really. It's a girl I met on the plane. "

"Oh," Jimmy said and then added. "I thought maybe it was your boyfriend."

"Which one," Melissa said sarcastically.

Toni brushed the comment aside and said, "I don't have a boyfriend."

Electra pointed to her watch and said, "I think maybe we should think about getting over for the sound check." She turned to Melissa and said you're welcome to come over with us, they usually have some good food available or if you and Toni prefer you can stay at the hotel and have dinner here.

"We'll come to the sound check," Melissa answered.

"If we won't be in the way, that would be a huge thrill for me," Toni said enthusiastically.

I'm sure it would be Melissa thought to herself. Melissa realized that she was a little jealous that Jimmy was paying so much attention to her friend. It wasn't that she had a crush on him, he was one of her best friend's Dad, but she felt put off that there she was dressed to the nine's, and in her opinion a lot prettier than her friend Toni, but yet it was Toni who was getting the attention.

"I can't believe you kissed my friend's father," Melissa said with disgust as they walked behind Electra and Jimmy over to the sound check.

"I kissed his hand and it was only because he kissed mine first and had felt awkward about it."

"He kissed your hand?" Melissa asked in disbelief.

"Yes, is that so hard to believe. You're acting like you're jealous."

"Jealous. That's my friend's father. He is a middle aged man. It's

gross."

"Well, whatever. I think you're acting jealous. He's not that old. He's only in his forties."

"Oh, yes of course you've dated guys in their forties."

"No, as a matter of fact I haven't. It was just an innocent kiss on the hand. I think he was happy that I knew one of his more obscure songs."

"You seemed to get along well with Toni," Electra said to Jimmy.

"She is a lovely girl."

"Yeah, girl. You know she is my age?"

"Are you saying I'm too old for her?"

"Are you saying you're interested in her?"

"Would that bother you?"

"Well, I guess not. It just seems a little strange. I've also never seen you flirt before."

"I know I was pretty pathetic."

"No, you were cute, but I guess I'm just not used to having a parent flirt. It was just kind of weird."

"I can't believe she knew the song Dragons in Stonehedge."

"I don't even know that song," Electra said.

"It was on our first CD. It's a song I wrote based on some Celtic mythology."

"I'd love to hear it," Electra said.

"I'll play it tonight," Jimmy said decidedly. But don't spill the beans. I want it to be a surprise."

"For Toni you mean?"

"For everyone," Jimmy said.

When they got to the theatre Toni noticed a row of payphones in the lobby. "I need to make a quick phone call," she said to Melissa.

Electra overheard her and asked, "Would you like to borrow my cell phone."

numbers

"No, that is fine. It's just a quick local call."

"Are you calling your hippie friend?" Melissa asked.

"No, actually I'm calling Toby's parents. I told him that I would visit with them."

"Toby from Woodstock Toby?" Melissa asked interested.

"Yeah, his parents live in Portland. His Dad is not well and I said I would check in on them."

"That is nice of you Electra said."

"Exactly when were you planning on doing that?" Melissa asked.

"Well, I hoping they could see me in the morning. Our flight doesn't leave until late afternoon."

Electra pulled out a back stage pass and gave it to Toni. "Take this in case we lose you."

"I'm going to find out where our dressing rooms are," Jimmy said to Electra and then asked her "Have you heard from any of the guys in the band?"

"Yeah, George called they're on their way.

When Jimmy was out of earshot, Melissa said, "Do you want me to talk to Toni about behaving herself around Jimmy?"

"I'm afraid that won't do much good. It's Jimmy you need to talk to. He seems to be the smitten one."

"But why Toni?" Melissa asked not thinking about how that would sound.

"That's not a very nice thing to say about your friend."

"Well, I just meant, a guy like Jimmy could have any girl, including young girls. I'm just surprised that he went for her."

"I was surprised just because she is so young and because it's only been weeks since he said that Molly is the only one for him."

"Do you think this is just because Molly is moving in with Nathan? Maybe he is just flirting with someone because of that. Maybe he picked Toni because she's safe. I mean obviously not someone he would take seriously."

"Do you really feel that negative about her?" Electra asked.

"What?" Melissa asked. "It's just an observation, " she said defensively.

"I'm just surprised by how you keep putting Toni down," Electra said.

"I thought you were my friend, why are you defensive about Toni?"

"I've just never seen that side of you before," Electra confessed.

"What side?" Melissa asked irritated.

"You know," Electra said.

"No, I don't."

"Well to be honest you really are behaving a little bitchy to Toni. Maybe you were a little jealous of her relationship with your grandmother."

"Oh, not you too. I'm not jealous of her. Seriously. She has no career, a different boyfriend every few months, and a pathetic wardrobe."

Electra was stunned to hear her friend Melissa talk. She had never noticed what a snob she was. Electra saw Toni waving at them and picking up her pace to catch up with them. "I'm glad you brought her. I hope you two can have fun."

"Hey," Toni said a little out of breath.

"Were you able to reach them?" Electra asked.

"Yes, and his mother sounded very happy that I was going to stop in and say hello. They're in Beaverton which is about eight miles out of the city."

"Jimmy was serious about you using our car service," Electra said.

"You are both already doing so much," Toni objected although she really did want to take them up on the offer.

"I insist," Electra said with finality. "It's a nice thing you are doing for your friend Toby. Consider it my contribution."

"I'll let Toby know."

"You better not do that," Melissa said.

"Why not?" Electra asked.

"He saw the picture of you that I have at my house and he was

drooling."

"Oh, yeah, come to think of it when he found out I was coming to see the band that you are playing in he did seem a little over zealous."

"Well, girls," Electra said holding her ring finger up for them again. "I'm taken so you needn't worry he won't get the wrong idea." Electra saw George the keyboard player and excused herself from Toni and Melissa.

"Are you ready?" George asked Electra.

"Yes, Electra answered and she turned to her friends, "You know Melissa, and this is Toni."

"Good to meet you. I hope you'll enjoy the show," George said and then turned back to Electra. "We better get going. Jimmy is already out there. Electra gave Melissa her backstage pass and excused herself.

"This is so exciting," Toni said to Melissa.

"Not quite the symphony," Melissa replied.

"Do you even like this band?" Toni asked curiously.

"Do you think I'm bitchy" Melissa asked suddenly.

"Whoa, where did that come from?"

"Just answer the question?" Melissa said agitated.

"Well, sometimes you can be a little snippy."

"Hmmm." was all Melissa said.

"Well, you asked," Toni said sensing that she had been looking for another answer.

"Yeah, I guess I did." Melissa said.

"We still have plenty of time before the show and I brought an extra dress if you want to go back to the hotel room and change, you can borrow it."

"No, I am fine. Why are you uncomfortable being seen with me. We can sit apart if you want."

"That's not what I meant," Melissa said. "Geez, I was just trying to be nice. "

"Well, thank you," Toni said "I appreciate it."

"Not that I am encouraging you to be chasing after a middle aged

man, but if you are interested you might want to take me up on my offer."

"Jimmy and I just made a connection and what I wear is not going to change that."

"So then are you going to go for him?" Melissa asked.

"I'm not going for anything," Toni said. "I'm here to see the show."

"So then you are into Toby huh?"

"No, Toby and I are friends. Why are you suddenly so interested in my life?"

"Electra told me that Jimmy has a thing for you. I just thought I'd try and help you out. You know make up for being bitchy."

Toni was not quite sure where Melissa was going with the conversation. "Well, thank you. I guess." She finally said. Let's go check out the food situation."

As they started walking again, Toni noticed that Melissa was slightly stumbling. *Ah she thought to herself she is drunk. That is what is going on.*

"You doing OK?" Toni asked Melissa.

"Yeah, just a little too much champagne I guess."

While Toni and Melissa were eating their dinner, Melissa asked, "do you think I should date Gordy?"

"I thought you didn't want any long distance relationships," Toni who had talked to Melissa about Gordy before commented.

"Well, I don't, but I was thinking I'm not getting any younger."

"You're hardly getting old either. The point is do you have feelings for him?"

"I do. I love Gordy." Melissa paused and then said it again. "I love Gordy."

"Then maybe you should try and make something work."

"I can't believe I just said that," Melissa looked around the room. "where do you suppose their bar is?"

"I don't think you need anything more to drink,"

"Well, I can't drink any less," Melissa said and started to laugh.

Toni had never seen Melissa drunk before. She wasn't sure what to

think. In Toni's experience this type of drunk was usually the type of drunk that ended up in tears by the toilet.

"Maybe we should find Electra's dressing room and see if you can take a little nap."

Jimmy spotted the girls and went up to join them. Melissa had already put her head down on the table.

"She's drunk," Toni said to Jimmy.

"That was fast," Jimmy replied.

"I don't think she gets out much," Toni replied. "I was thinking we could get her to Electra's dressing room and have her rest a bit.

"Sure, here I will help you with her," Jimmy said gently tapping Melissa on the shoulder. "Melissa how about getting up and taking a rest in Electra's dressing room?"

Melissa mumbled something and got up. Leaning heavily on Jimmy's shoulder she let him lead her to Electra's dressing room.

"Electra is still on stage," Jimmy said as they walked into her empty room and set Melissa down on the sofa. Melissa turned toward the back of the sofa and curled up in a fetus position.

"I hope she doesn't miss the show," Toni said pulling Electra's dress from the closet and taking a closer look at it. "I really am sorry I didn't dress up more," she said to Jimmy who was watching her.

"No worries. I would feel out of place if my audience came all dressed up. Electra's dressing up for stage." Jimmy turned and looked over at Melissa and said, "And I'm not sure what she is dressing up for, maybe she's planning on going to the symphony after this." Jimmy said laughing.

"Yeah, well there is not much occasion to dress up in Vermont and I know she was really looking forward to your show so she meant it as a sign up respect to dress up which is why I feel bad for not dressing up."

"You're fine. I am so glad you came to the show," Jimmy said stepping a little closer to her. He wanted to kiss her, this time on the lips. Toni sensed his desire and stepped forward and kissed him and then stepped back. "You still didn't get any food. Let's get back to the food."

Jimmy was surprised by Toni's confidence and slightly giddy from her kiss. "Yes, I'm not too hungry, but let's get you something to eat and I need to find the rest of my band."

The band played several songs before Electra joined them. When she stepped on stage to sing backup for the song ___Quarter Moon.. the crowd went crazy . The applause was so loud that Jimmy motioned for Electra to come forward center stage and he had her switch to lead vocals while he stepped back and sang back up. When the song ended Electra walked toward the front of the stage and took a bow. Fans threw roses at her feat and as she bent down to pick them up she looked up and saw a couple in the front row with T-shirts that they had spray painted, "Thank you Toni," as she caught the eye of the girl wearing the T-Shirt the girl threw a book. It didn't quite make the stage. Electra motioned to one of the body guards and pointed at the book. The body guard picked the book up and Electra took her book and flowers and brought them back stage while Jimmy stepped back on to center stage.

He combed he hair back with his fingers and said, "Thank You Portland. It is so good to be here. We love the West Coast," then as the crowd applauded even louder, Jimmy motioned his hand downward to silence them. When the applause had died down a bit he said, "That was my lovely daughter Electra," and the crowd applauded again. "This is an amazing audience we have here tonight," Jimmy said. "Tonight I have something very special for you. I am going to play a song I have never sung live. It's inspired by Celtic mythology and it's dedicated to a very special fan who is here all the way from Vermont, This one is for you Toni." Jimmy played Dragons at Stonehedge.

When Electra stepped back stage after her applause she handed the book that had been tossed to her to Toni. Toni immediately recognized that it was the book she had been reading on the plane. "Co-Existence" by Vladamir _____. Toni opened the cover and saw that her acquaintance from

the plane had written - thank you for the tickets, you're co-creating a beautiful world." Love and Light from _____. Toni could not ever recall an evening when she had been so happy. She thought about the healing circle she had attended several weeks back, and how she had felt such tremendous access to gratitude. She felt somehow that the two events were somehow connected. As though the awareness of such gratitude had opened a floodgate of more things to be grateful toward.

After the show Jimmy went straight back stage and lifted Toni off her feet and twirled her around.

"What's that for?" Toni asked when he put her back down.

"I just want to thank you. You're my muse. That was the best show I have ever done."

"I think it's me who should be thanking you. Dragons and Stonehedge was completely mind blowing. I'm so glad I didn't miss it though," Toni said pointing to Melissa who was talking to Electra. "I couldn't get her out of Electra's room before the show so I went back just before you did that song, and fortunately we made it backstage before you started it."

"How is she doing then?" Jimmy asked.

"She's fine. Just a little embarrassed."

"Oh, I wanted to tell you that I saw a couple in the front row with T-Shirts that were spray painted "Thank you Toni," I think it might have been your hippie friends.

"Front row?" Toni commented. "Wow, that was really nice of your manager. I guess that is how they were able to get this book to Electra,"

"A book?" Jimmy asked surprised. "I've had underwear and bras thrown up to me, but I have to admit, nobody has ever thrown a book at me."

"It's the one I was reading on the plane. It's very interesting. The book is about a recluse in Russia who falls in love with an entrepreneur who happens upon her. She convinces him to write a book to tell the world about her visions and what is interesting about it is that it isn't sold through a

traditional publisher, yet millions of copies have sold just by word of mouth and probably millions more have been shared like the one that Electra received tonight."

"You know yourself, I'm not much of a reader besides the tabloids, and even then I have to admit I mostly only read about myself," Jimmy said slightly laughing. "I guess I'm not that deep."

"I wouldn't say that. Your songs are very deep to me, and you've been doing what you love your whole life," Toni looked out at the crowd that was quickly exiting the theater, "most people never do what they love or even dream of having a vision beside what society tells them their life should look like."

"You're too kind," Jimmy said taking Toni's hand. "Let's see if the others are ready to head back to the hotel."

"We we on tonight or what?" Charlie the drummer said to Jimmy.

"Are you and the other lads up for a quick drink back at the suite?"

"I wouldn't mind, but I think George wants to rest up for San Fran tomorrow." Charlie answered looking at Jimmy with interest as he hadn't seen him with a girl in a long time. "Who's your friend?" Charlie asked.

"This is Toni," Jimmy said and Toni put out her hand.

"And I'm Melissa," Melissa chimed in.

"They came here all the way from Vermont to see the show," Jimmy said,

"Ah," Charlie said raising his eyebrows, "So you're the Toni from Vermont."

"Charlie go find that manager of ours and let's get out of here." Jimmy said starting to walk toward the exit.

Toni noticed that Electra had left the roses that had been tossed to her by the side of the stage. "Aren't you going to bring those with you?" She asked.

"I know it's a pity to just leave them, but we'll be on a plane again tomorrow."

"Let me take them then," Toni said. "I'll dry them out." Toni found

a bag and gathered the roses. "I have your book as well."

"Oh right the book. That was from your friend."

"I know, Jimmy told me about their shirts," Toni said.

The band was met by their limo driver at a back entrance to the theatre.

"What time do you need to get to Beaverton tomorrow?" Electra asked Toni on the ride back to the hotel.

"I told them I would stop by around 10:00."

Electra gave instructions to the driver to be back at the hotel at 8:30 the next morning to pick Toni up. Electra gave Toni the drivers card and said, "Just call him when you're ready to leave. We don't need to leave for the airport until about 2:00 so you should be fine."

"I imagine you'd be wanting to get some sleep since you have plans in the morning," Jimmy said to Toni.

"I'm ok. That's what coffee is for," Toni answered. "And anyway, it will be good to be tired for the flight, then maybe I can sleep the whole way back."

"Oh, God, I cannot sleep on a plane," Jimmy said.

"Really? That must be hard with all the travel you do."

"You know yourself, I can't complain. We travel first class. I get some of my best thinking done up in the clouds."

"I've never flown first class before,"

"It's not what it used to be, but I can't complain." Jimmy said reaching his hand out he took Toni's hand and asked "what about checking out first class tomorrow. Come with me to San Francisco and then on to L.A. We'll be back before the end of the week."

"I have never received an offer as good as that before, and I realize that managing a coffee shop is not the highest of profile jobs, but the owners have been really good to me and also very flexible so I really don't think I

can take more time off right now."

"No worries, it was just a crazy impulsive idea. I just don't want to say good bye to you quite yet."

"Well then don't," Toni said. "Let's stay up all night."

"Did I mention I don't just not sleep on plane, I also don't sleep most places," Jimmy said "I'm a terrible insomniac."

"Have you ever tried Vetiver?"

"What's that?"

"It's an essential essence," Toni said, "I'll get you some. It always works really well for me. Sometimes I add lavender."

"I suppose it's healthier than whiskey, that's the essence I usually dip into," Jimmy said finishing off the last of the beer he was drinking. "Can I get you another," he asked walking over to the bar.

"If I am going to make it all night, I'm going to need to switch to water," Toni said.

"Do you mind if I have another beer?" Jimmy asked.

"You worked hard tonight," Toni said. "You deserve whatever you want."

"Whatever I want?" Jimmy said with a mischievous tone to his voice.

Toni looked Jimmy in the eye and said, "When I suggested we stay up all night I didn't mean it like that."

"You must think I am a total cad," Jimmy said. "I didn't mean whatever whatever," he stumbled on his words, "Well I did mean it, but I don't expect it." Jimmy put his newly opened beer down and went to pour himself a bottle of water.

After Jimmy had sat back down on the sofa, Toni got up from her armchair and sat down at the other end of the sofa and put her legs up on Jimmy's thigh.

Jimmy started to massage her feet.

"Now that is a whatever you can do," Toni said smiling. "Give me your feet,"

"Oh no, I'm ticklish"

"Come on give me your feet. I promise I won't tickle you. I know reflexology."

"What is reflexology?"

"Just give me your feet."

"So you said that the owner of the coffee shop where you work is flexible. How about if you choose a place and time and I will fly us anywhere. You choose."

"Anywhere anywhere?" Toni asked mimicking his 'whatever whatever.'

"Yes, anywhere anywhere," Jimmy said.

"Well, I've been saving up to go to Peru?"

"Peru?" Jimmy asked surprised. "Most girls would choose Paris or Vienna."

"If you haven't noticed, I'm not most girls,"

"True true," Jimmy said. He stopped massaging her feet for a moment to think. "Come to think about it, I have never been to Latin America," Jimmy said.

"I would have thought you had traveled everywhere."

"It seems like it," Jimmy said, "Oh, wait I lied. We did play a show in Rio Je Janiro, but like most the places we travel to play, I didn't see any of the city."

"I'm not sure I really see you in Latin America," Toni said, "but then never in a million years would I have thought I'd be sitting in a hotel room with you massaging your feet at 2:20 in the morning."

"Not so bad ey?" Jimmy asked.

"Not bad at all," Toni answered twirling the foot that was not yet massaged.

"Hold your horses. I am going to get to that foot."

"That's not what I was doing," Toni said. "Just stretching my ankle muscles a bit. You know this feels really natural being here with you like this. I feel like we're old friends just hanging out."

"I felt comfortable with you the first time I saw you," Jimmy said giving his own foot a twirl. "I guess that is why I kissed your hand."