

Author: Fowler Gray

Title: Give Me That Old Time Religion

Part 2: Plainsong 2: Oh, May I Know

Summary: Set in the late Sixties 'Give Me That Old Time Religion,' or OTR for short, tells the story of how joining the Agapemone Bethel, where sex is considered a sacrament, changes young Jake Gledhill's life.

Keywords: MF mf msolo Fsolo voy

To quench any flames before they start raging, this is a work of fiction. The author does not espouse the pseudo-theology contained in this story nor is he an adherent to its practices.

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Please pay attention to the story codes because they may change with each Plainsong.

A few readers have commented (complained) some chapters of OTR move too slow and don't have enough sex. If you're looking for a quick and dirty stroke story (not that there's anything wrong with those), OTR probably isn't for you.

As opposed to a short story, OTR is a novella where the characters will change and evolve. Some chapters will be slower and have less outright sex than others.

Some of the women who have read OTR have written to tell me they have been put off by its religious tenets and seeming misogyny. Again I can only say OTR is a story about transformation and growth.

While I hope all of you will stick around for the ride, I'll understand if some of you don't.

Finally, remember Celeste's Blow Job Principle which states "If a person expects to get a second blow job, the recipient should make the giver glad to have performed the first." Think of this story, or any story on this site, as the written equivalent of the author giving you head (a handy, gender-neutral phrase encompassing both cunnilingus and fellatio) and be sure to say thank you.

Thank yous for and comments on Gimme That Old Time Religion can be sent to this email address:
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The story codes for OTR2: Oh, May I Know are (MF mf msolo Fsolo voy)

Give Me That Old Time Religion, An Oratorio In Several Plainsongs By Fowler Gray

The Second Plainsong: Oh, May I Know

My dad was worried about me.

His concern was the topic of conversation as we sat at the picnic table in the back yard, brown bottles of Schlitz chilling in the battered aluminum cooler, watching the squirrels fight with the blue jays over possession of the sunflower feeder. Squawking flashes of iridescent turquoise would plunge from the sky, temporarily driving away the furry intruders, only to see the persistent rodents race back to the feeder, stuffing their pouches with seeds before retreating.

For the past three months, in addition to going to bethel with Mom every Sunday, I had spent two hours every Wednesday with the Barbe, a lay preacher charged with the instruction of "aspirants" to bethel membership learning the doctrines. Becoming an aspirant was just the first, easiest level of entry into the bethel. The higher in the hierarchy I wanted to get, the more time I'd have to spend studying.

Dad paused to take the wooden matchstick from the corner of his mouth. Holding it in front of his face he examined it like a trim carpenter might a piece of oak molding. Mom had made Dad stop smoking once they got married. It was the only one of dad's "bad habits" she was able to change. The matchstick remained.

"Why don't you quit all this tomfoolery before you get as nutty as they are, three hours of bethel every Sunday, classes once a week and for what?" he asked. "Elle's a nice looking kid but I don't think she's worth all this, especially since you haven't even gotten as far as first base with her yet.

"There's a couple of girls working at the shop, just outta junior college. Not bad looking, not that they're models or anything but you wouldn't have to put a bag over their heads either. Come on by, I'll introduce you to them and you can have one, hell both if you play your cards right. Believe me Jake, I know they're sure things." he said winking to me as he spoke.

One thing about my father, he never beat around the bush, no matter what the topic was. For him direct conversation was the highest form of manners even when the subject was something others might consider embarrassing.

Dad's ideas about women were simple to him, convoluted and confusing to me. As much as he loved my mother, and he did, he was always flirting with other women. He saw women, in groups or singular, married or not, as fair game. He made no bones about it. Dad was a skirt chaser.

When Dad first started talking with me about sex I was flattered; he was treating me like a real man even though I wasn't even a teenager yet. My appreciation for his frankness and honesty was eventually tempered when it became clear he was sleeping with other women besides Mom.

Where we lived spousal fidelity wasn't a requirement for fathers or even mothers, I knew that. Peyton Place had nothing on our little town. But I had a hard time

reconciling Dad's devotion to Mom with his lust for other ladies.

I loved my father and looked up to him, hoping I could at least come close to being the man he was. At the same time, I hated the thought he was betraying Mom every time he had sex with another woman.

Emboldened by my third beer, my newfound religious fervor running through my head, I bluntly asked him, "Why are you fucking around on Mom?"

I don't know what I was thinking, the words spilling out of my mouth made me cringe when they reached my ears. Christ on a crutch, I thought. Now you've done it. The old man's going to blow higher than Krakatoa. I'd be unable to sit for days.

For a moment Dad sat perfectly still as stunned as I was by my question. Then he slowly put his beer down turning to face me.

"If anyone else asked me I'd punch 'm in the face. You get a free pass on this one Jake, because maybe some straight talk now will save you some pain later. I doubt it, but you never know.

"As you get older you're going to find there's a difference between sex and love. A man needs both, not always from the same woman. Yeah I know you're heads over heels about Elle right now. Might be love, might just be you're horny and she looks to be available. Doesn't really matter. One of these days you're going to see another girl, maybe even an older woman, your dick'll get hard, your brain will go soft and you'll get your first piece of strange. Trust me, nothing makes you forget about love like sex."

"Is that what happened to you?"

"Don't use that disapproving tone with me," Dad said sternly. "You don't know shit about sex. You know even less about love. Whacking your willy every night while you moan 'I love you Elle, suck me, suck me deeper,' doesn't mean a goddamn thing. Lemee tell you what does." As I sat uneasily Dad began to tell me his

version of why he married Mary Anne McClure.

"I know your mom already told you we had to get married. That's not true. I was only 19, a few months past turning 18 when Mary Anne told me she was pregnant. She was 24 then. I coulda said she seduced me, that would have been close to the truth, although I like to think we seduced each other. I coulda said she was the older temptress who took advantage of a young kid. But that one wouldn't have been true." Dad paused to take a sip of his brew.

"Driving her across the state line to Robinson County for an abortion was out, not that I would've, Mary Anne was determined to have you. I spose I coulda let her have you then pressured her to give you up for adoption. There's any number of things I coulda done to dodge my responsibility to your mother. What I couldn't dodge were the consequences of dodging my responsibilities.

"If we hadn't married your mom would still have had you; I would still have a son. But I wouldn't have been involved in your life; wouldn't have watched you grow, wouldn't helped to mold you," he said his voice growing more calm as he spoke.

"Instead what I woulda done would be to make Mary Anne a single mom; there was no way she was going to put you up for adoption. She'd be struggling to raise you on a waitresses' salary. I may not make a hell of a lot but it's a shitload more than your Mom earns in the diner. She might have had to take a second job. She'd be spending even less time with you. Not the kind of life I wanted for your mom or you."

"Shit," he said pausing to spit little fragments of the masticated toothpick from his mouth, "Mary Anne might even have married someone else; let another man raise my son. I'll tell ya there was no way in hell I was going to let that happen."

"But Dad, you dropped out of school to get married."

"Damn it Jake, I'm a mechanic, not a doctor. I'm a pretty good mechanic. I don't need a college degree to

do what I do. Hell, I didn't even need a high school degree. My senior year I was just marking time in school, just going half days, spending the other half working maintenance at the plant. Quitting early didn't hurt me. Anyway that's not the point.

"There's only two things only a man can't hide; when he's drunk and when he's in love. I was in love with your mother, still am. She loves me, despite all my faults, and I mean all my faults. I love her despite hers."

I must have had a disbelieving look on my face because he gave me a rueful smile before continuing.

"Sometimes things aren't as logical as that Dr. Spock guy on TV makes them out to be."

"Mr. Spock," I said automatically; Dad never did get Star Trek.

"Dr. Spock, Mr. Spock, who cares? Point is love doesn't have anything to do with logic. Your mother loves me in spite of myself. I love your mother; not only for what she is, but for what I am when I'm with her. I'm not a high-browed philosopher or a fancy-pants poet but your mother makes my heart sing."

"But it's not enough is it, because when you're not with her, you're sleeping around?"

"You just don't get it do you Jake" he said. "Let me tell you something about enjoying life; the secret is in seizing your chances for pleasure as they go by. Sex isn't only a pleasure; it's a way to kick death in his bony ole ass before he finally gets around to you."

I was pondering Dad's last statement when he asked me a question. "You know I don't go to church right?" I nodded in agreement. "Know why?"

"Because you don't believe in God?"

"Oh, I believe in god, with a little 'g,' but not the god you find in most churches.

"When I was a kid my mother, your Grandmother Laurell, used to take me to church. I learned two things on Sundays. One is God loves you and you're going to burn in hell. The other is sex is the most disgusting, dirty, sinful thing on earth and you should save it for someone you love. Let's see your Spock guy make sense out of that.

"Listen to the preachers you'd think God created the torso, head, legs and arms, but the Devil slapped on the dicks and pussies. They're creating shame and guilt where they should be celebrating life."

I couldn't let my dad's error stand uncorrected. Even at this early stage of my learning I knew the importance of witnessing. Here was my chance to help bring him to the light.

"That might be true in Grandma Laurell's church but that's not what they're teaching me at the bethel. Sex is a sacrament not a sin. Sacraments are meant by God to be shared for the joy and salvation of all," I said earnestly.

"Think about that for a second Jake," he responded. "Use the logic they're always talking about on that show. You say sex is a sacrament to be shared by all, right?"

I smiled as I nodded my head, secure in my belief I could argue rings around Dad. "That's right. It's food for the soul. The barbe says..."

"Wait, don't get ahead of me here. So if sex is a sacrament, have you shared this sacrament with Elle yet? No? With anyone other than your right hand? No? That's what I thought. So if sex is a sacrament why hasn't the bethel let you fuck Elle or at least get a blowjob or two?" Dad sat back waiting for my response.

As he drank the rest of his beer, I explained to Dad how things worked in the bethel. Once the barbe was satisfied I was a genuine convert I would become an "acceptant," allowed to participate in some but not all of the bethel's sacraments. I didn't admit at the top of the "not all" list, at least as far as I was

concerned, was theopathy. It was only after the Oblate Council had exercised its power of advowson or right of appointment, only after I had knelt on the prie-dieu in front of the altar and heard Reverend Cassell declare my status before the congregation as a "sanctified" could Elle and I enter into a covenant courtship.

"That's bullshit Jake. There's no shortage of pussy in this world; it's just the delivery system's messed up. Getting religion to get laid is like buying an airplane for the free peanuts. It's effective but there's easier ways to get what you want."

Dad stopped to open two more beers, handing one to me before taking a swig from the other.

"You asked me how I can cheat on your mother. Well, I don't think of it's cheating. Neither does your mother. If you don't believe me and you've got the balls, go ahead, ask her. Just be sure you're ready to hear what she tells you."

"Why, what's she going to tell me," I asked."

"The truth Jake. Your mom will tell you the truth. After she tells you the truth, you come see me and we'll talk some more."

I stewed for a week before I got up enough courage to ask my mom. This time I made sure we weren't in Couf's. It was just the two of us sitting at the formica kitchen table drinking coffee when I gingerly brought up the subject of my conversation. Dad would be at work for at least another three hours, which would give us plenty of time to talk.

Mom didn't hem and haw or beat around the bush, she just reared back and let fly.

"First of all Jacob, let me tell you how disappointed I am in you. Not because you asked your father about our relationship, but the disrespectful way you did it. I'm ashamed of you. You ought to be ashamed too. When we're done here, I expect you to apologize to your father."

I couldn't believe my mother's reaction. Being upset with me because I stuck up for her was unfair. Fiercely I asked "How can you sit there and defend him with what he's done."

Her reply was as cold as my question was hot. "Now I'm not only disappointed in you, I'm angry with you as well. I'm not defending your father because he hasn't done anything needing defending. Maybe you should reconsider becoming a member of the bethel, you certainly don't seem to have taken any of the teachings to your heart so far."

Not softening a bit, Mom continued to correct me, a basilisk stare locking my eyes with hers.

"When you first asked me about the bethel I told you it was woman in the form of Eve that led man in the form of Adam into sin. I thought you understood by our actions, our subservience to our men, we women redeem Eve's actions in Eden when she disobeyed the Heavenly Father. Our willingness to make this sacrifice preserves our souls and our place in the kingdom.

"Have you forgotten the lesson in Ephesians that the husband is the head of his wife and wives should submit to their husbands in everything? Or that Corinthians calls on women to be obedient with deep respect and sincere loyalty to our masters, to please them and wholeheartedly do their will," she asked. "The creed of obedience is basic to our values. If you don't share it, I mean really believe it in your heart, maybe you don't belong in the bethel."

I felt like a man trying to extract himself from quicksand. I had to move slowly and carefully or I'd sink beneath the surface. If Mom thought I was just pretending to believe in order to get into Elle's pants she'd tell the barbe. That'd be the end of everything.

As a bethel member almost all of her life Mom had been expected to marry within the faith. She hadn't. Worse than the fact the man she married wasn't a member, Dad was openly scornful of the bethel and most of its teachings. As a result, I was being treated with more skepticism than a normal aspirant.

Not only were the sins of the parents being held against this child, the fact I hadn't shown a real interest in the teachings of the bethel until I developed my interest in Elle, just increased the level of scrutiny I was under.

The ironic thing is they were right; I started all of this just to get into Elle's pants. But as I sat through the lessons with the barbe what I was being taught began to make sense to me. I felt like the slow student in school who suddenly understands what the teacher is talking about. God did exist. Living in accordance with his plan was a life-enriching experience.

I wanted to become a member of the bethel; not because of Elle, not because of theopathy, OK not just because of Elle or theopathy, but because receiving God's word was filling a spot within me that I never even knew was empty. Now all that was at risk.

Sliding my coffee cup around the table to give me the time to choose my words cautiously, I tried to steer the conversation from my beliefs to Dad's actions. If I could just get a foot on ground that was firmer not only theologically but emotionally maybe I could climb out of this quagmire.

I told Mom I understood her duties toward Dad. I wasn't questioning her devotion or the teachings. But didn't my father have duties and responsibilities too, including remaining faithful to her?

"Jake your father has never been unfaithful to me. He's never failed in his duties to me, just as I hope I've never failed in my duties to him."

"But mom," I sputtered, "how can you say he's been faithful. You have to know he's been sleeping with other women?"

Sighing deeply, Mom shook her head in sadness at my ignorance. "Don't equate sex with love. They're not the same thing. Oh, there's a small element of love in sex, a degree of intimacy and trust. When we

experience an orgasm, we let our egos die for a moment, giving us the chance to experience a true connection with another person. But the connection is Eros, the instinct of life, not love, just a pale imitation, which is why you should never believe someone who tells you they love you while you're having sex.

"Casual sex may be very intimate at the physical level, but there usually isn't much personal or emotional depth involved. Even where there is it doesn't come within a mile of matching what your father and I have."

Mom reached across the table to take my hand in hers, a beseeching look on her face. "You know King Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. I don't think Len has gotten anywhere close to Solomon's total, although not from lack of trying," she said making a joke of my father's lust. "While I get us some more coffee I want you to think about something."

"Your father wasn't the first man I slept with. I was well into a covenant courtship with another member of the bethel when I met your dad, who the other man was isn't important. What is important is I loved your dad, loved him so deeply I was willing to risk being proscribed to marry him. I didn't do it for the sex; I did it for the love."

As she got up, I pondered my mother's words. Clearly the old man's extra-curricular sex life didn't seem to bother her, or if it did she was putting on a good front. But what she told me only raised more questions, questions I needed answers to if I was to fully understand what both my parents were trying to tell me.

When she got back, Mom not only had two mugs of hot coffee, she also had a plate of fresh cinnamon rolls. Mom was a terrific baker; her pies, rolls and breads were always among the first to be sold at the local bake sales.

We sat in contemplative silence as I chewed a roll, its flaky texture melting in my mouth, leaving behind the warmth of cinnamon dissolving on my tongue.

Ever since I was a little boy my mother could read me

like a book, no matter how hard I tried to disguise my thoughts or feelings behind a poker face. This day was no exception.

"You've been looking everywhere in the room but at me. I know you're not that interested in the cream pitcher and even though the pattern on the sugar bowl is fascinating you've still got things on your mind. Talk with me Jake. What do you want to know?"

After gathering my thoughts I peppered Mom with questions that would have been unthinkable before now. She answered them frankly and honestly, pulling no punches.

Her acceptance of Dad's sex life outside their marriage wasn't because of her duty of obedience. Dad had never once made a secret of his conquests. He had never ordered her to look the other way or to just accept his wanderings. To my mother there wasn't a lot of difference between his golfing with another woman or going to bed with her "In both cases he's just trying to get his balls close to a hole," she joked.

More seriously she told me, "Remember Jake, sex is another way to find God. Maybe your father doesn't believe the same things we do in the bethel, maybe those women don't either. But God moves in mysterious ways. Who's to say these women won't find their way to salvation through casual sex?"

We talked for another half-hour, sipping coffee and munching on rolls when I asked the question that would reshape my universe in ways I didn't fully understand then.

"Don't you feel left out when Dad's with other women, when he's sharing things with them he doesn't share with you?"

Her immediate answer was a deep breath, followed by a slow exhalation. Now it was Mom's turn to get lost in an admiration of the kitchen decor. After a few minutes of silence, broken only by the tick-tock of the tail on the Felix the Cat clock above the sink, my mother took another deep breath then faced me directly.

"You're just on the start of the road to becoming a man; oh I know you think you're there but believe me, you have a long ways to go. One of the duties your father and I owe to you is to guide you along that path. I've talked with your teachers; your secular schooling is going fine. The barbe says you're as an attentive a pupil as he's had for years, although he still wonders about your motive in joining the bethel. But Jake in your life you're flunking basic sex ed."

The sheer shock of Mom's last statement made me snort coffee out of my nose. Once I stopped choking and we got the mess I made cleaned up she continued her recitation of my deficiency.

"Honey, sex is a body-contact sport. It is fun to watch but more fun to play. All those magazines and books you have in your room don't do it justice. They're like looking at a photo of a roller-coaster as opposed to riding one. The photo only shows you a two-dimensional image; being there you get it all, the wind blowing your hair back, the queasiness in your stomach as you slowly climb closer to the top; the exhilaration as you make that first plunge, every muscle in your body shaking in fear and excitement as you race through every swoop and turn. Then, when you get to the end, spent and limp you race back to the line to do it all over again. Even masturbating while you look at those magazines your father gives you doesn't prepare you for the real thing."

There was a difference in the bethel between being a convert from outside and being raised in the faith, Mom explained. Sex and sex acts weren't secret; they were an every day occurrence no more hidden than doing the laundry or washing dishes, although unlike most household chores it wasn't considered polite to watch without an invitation.

Parents were encouraged to teach their children about sex at an early age. "We knew about human anatomy and sex but it was all conceptual. When I asked my mother about how babies were made she simply told me. When my friend Janet asked, her parents took her on what's called a 'visitation.' They left her overnight with

another couple from the bethel and she got to watch everything they did. So I was disappointed not to get the same sort of show and tell."

From that moment on, curiosity about sex blazed like a prairie fire in my mother; the grainy black and white French postcards she found in her father's dresser drawer only whetted her appetite. She began spying on her parents, trying to catch them in the act.

"They always kept their door closed while they were having sex but even through that thick old farm house door I could hear the sounds of their coupling. It always sounded like they were having so much fun I just had to see what they were doing."

Mom took to waiting outside her parent's room, using the volume of the noise to time her reconnaissance. When the din got loud enough, she'd fling open the door, asking for a glass of water or claiming she had a nightmare. After the first time she tried this tactic she never really saw much. Even the first time she only saw her mother's back as she was sitting on top of her father, rocking back and forth.

It didn't take long for my grandparents to figure out my mother's game, placing a hook and eye on the inside of the door to prevent its opening while they were in flagrante delicto, an action that just made my mother more determined to see what was going on.

Her determination finally paid off in a very unexpected manner.

"Mr. and Mrs. Wilson from down the street were our guests for dinner that night. I went to bed early, right after dinner was done, but set my alarm to go off later that night. I knew your grandmother would look in to make sure I was asleep before she and your grandfather started enjoying themselves. I thought maybe if they saw I was asleep they might not lock the door, might even leave it open a crack and I could peep in," she told me.

The alarm went off as scheduled. Mom snuck down the hall only to find the door shut. Frustrated, she was

going back bed when she heard sounds coming from the living room. Naturally she investigated.

"What I saw was my mother on her knees in front of my father, both as naked as the day they were born. I was so surprised I knocked a bottle right off the coffee table.

"After he heard the bottle hit the floor, my father stopped my mother and whispered in her ear, pointing toward me. She took him out of her mouth and whispered back to him. I tell you Jake; I thought I was in for it then. Your grandfather didn't spank me very often but when he did it hurt like the dickens," she told me, her voice seeming to come from some faraway place.

"Looking right at me your Gramma Lindsey told me it was OK, I should get closer. I knew my Mom wouldn't hurt me or let me be hurt so I got real close to them. 'This is a way for us to honor the Lord,' she told me."

"It was over in just a few minutes. My mother told me what I had just seen was a gift from God.

"While my dad went for a drink of water, my mother took me by the hand and walked me back to my bedroom. Along the way she told me how disappointed she was in me; how all my sneaking around showed disrespect for my parents and God. I was in tears by the time we got to my room."

The rest of the night my mother spent on her knees, praying for forgiveness and the gift of obedience in all things.

"After that I got to do my visitation. Your Grandpa Samuel took me to spend the night at the Wilsons. They were both pretty matter-of-fact about the whole thing since this wasn't the first visitation they'd hosted. Mr. Wilson made sure I got a good look at everything that went on. I think he liked being watched and he knew I liked watching. After that I made three or four visitations to different members of the bethel, each one focusing on some different aspect of sex."

I couldn't look at Mom's face as she told me this tale.

Instead I focused my eyes on her breasts, her nipples tenting against the front of her blouse despite a heavy fabric bra. She kept squirming in her chair as though this talk was making her as uncomfortable as I was. Finally pulling my gaze from her tits, I found Mom's eyes were closed as she relived this experience from her childhood.

Those jade green eyes snapped open with my next statement. "My god, mom that's child abuse. You grew up with a bunch of pedophiles."

"Put that thought right out of your mind now," she commanded. "We kids may have watched some adults having sex but no adult ever touched one of us. That would be a sin, one that would be unforgivable in the bethel. Adults other than our parents never even saw us naked, let alone played touchy-feely with us. Our bethel isn't some strange child sex cult. No grownup ever had any sort of sex with any of us. We never had any sex with them.

"That's not to say we kids didn't do a little experimenting on our own," she said in a milder voice. "My first experience with giving oral sex came with my cousin in his corncrib. Not a very good one for either of us I'm afraid. Not only didn't I have any experience but all the dust made me sneeze. I think I bit his penis three or four times before we were done."

"As kids we were encouraged to fool around with each other, within the prescribed limits. Petting and oral sex were acceptable, actual intercourse wasn't. When we turned 16 all of our sex play stopped, forbidden by the bethel until we were given the privilege of theopathy."

I thought it was strange enough listening to Dad talk about his sexual exploits; having my mother tell me about her's was really blowing my mind.

Putting the question of why I never went on a visitation aside I asked, "Mom, Why are you telling me all this right now? It can't just have to do with my talk with Dad?"

"You questioned your father about us. Now you're

getting the answer. It might not be the answer you wanted but it's the answer you need. Once you start asking questions, Jake, innocence leaves and wisdom begins to take its place."

Brushing a stray hair away from her face, Mom explained Elle was an "in bethel" child, raised in the same way she had been, including "all of the sanctioned sex play."

"You need to catch up with Elle. She's much more mature than you are right now, not only physically and emotionally but sexually. She may still have her maidenhead but she's only technically a virgin. Your father's right, you need to broaden your experience. I want you to go out with those girls from the shop and have fun. Find out what sex with another person is really like."

"But what about Elle?" I sputtered.

"Believe it or not honey, you're doing this for Elle. Right now you're infatuated with her, with the promise of the theopathy to come. Get some experience under your belt, the experience you would have had if you'd been raised in the bethel, you might find your feelings will change, that it was all about getting laid, not about receiving God's word. I hope not. I pray not. But better to find out now, before anyone gets really hurt, than later."

"I don't know Mom, I like Elle, I really do. I don't want her to think I was cheating on her like..." my internal censor kicking in just a second too late to do any good.

"Like your father cheats on me?" she asked coldly glaring at me.

"No that's not what I meant," I said trying to cover up for my big mouth.

"Damn it Jake," my mother said more in sorrow than in anger. "I thought we'd straightened all that out. I guess you didn't believe a thing I said." Her chair

squeaked against the linoleum floor as she pushed back away from the table. "I want you to come with me. We are going to settle this for once and for all."

As I followed her down the hall she told me I needed to be aware of the full nature of her relationship with my father, her husband and master.

"You may find it hard to deal with some of the things I'm going to show and tell you. Being able to understand things the way things really are is an important step in growing up, even if things turn out to be different and much more complicated than you ever thought they would be."

We went into my parent's bedroom where Mom told me to sit on the edge of the bed. Turning away from me, she opened the closet door, rummaging around on the top shelf until she pulled out a rectangular black metal box with a miniature padlock. The key to the lock was in a small covered china dish on her dresser.

Handing me the box and the key she told me to open it. Even as my hands pried open the top, I knew instinctively I'd gotten myself into a situation I wasn't ready for.

The box contained photos; some were Polaroids, some were taken with a film camera. There were maybe two hundred or more, photos taken in places very familiar to me; friends' homes, the Boathouse at Thistledown Resort, spots we vacationed at. The loose photos were organized between tabbed cardboard dividers, each tab listing a date and place. I pulled the ones from last year's trip to Thistledown.

These were vacation pictures all right but pictures of a very different vacation then I remembered.

At first the photos were fairly innocuous. My mother lying on her side on a bed in the black one-piece bathing suit she wore at the resort, one hand propping up her head, the other on her hip as she smiled coquettishly at the camera. My mother wearing black shorts and a red tank top, coyly lifting the tank top to expose the lower curves of her breasts.

The next set was more salacious, with my mother wearing her sheer lime green sundress but without anything underneath it, her breasts clearly visible through the clinging translucent fabric.

Soon my mother was nude, leaning slightly forward, her blond hair falling over her shoulders, its ends brushing the slopes of her breasts. When I was younger and could get away with it, I used to find excuses to go into the bathroom when my mother was taking her bath, just to get a glimpse of those breasts; each one the size and shape of a small cantaloupe, their areolas like dark gingersnaps cookies topped by a ripe red currant. Now here they were immortalized in overlapping layers of photosensitive dyes bonded to paper.

It got bad after that.

My mother giving a handjob to a strange cock, a perky smile on her face. My mother wearing only white panties and black knee-high mesh stockings, bent over a man lying on his back on a bed the tip of his prick between her lips her cheeks collapsing inward from the force of her suction, right hand on the shaft, left hand cupping his balls in her palm. On her knees another dick deep in her mouth. Lowering herself onto the rampant cock of a man sitting on the edge of a coffee table. In the doggie position getting it from behind.

Even as anger and bitterness flowed through my body, souring my stomach and sending tendrils of nausea creeping up my throat, a rush of blood engorged my penis causing it to throb painfully with sexual excitement.

I felt like a naive simpleton; so concerned about defending my mother's honor against what I saw as my father's besmirchment I never considered the possibility they were two peas from the same pod.

For my father was in these photos too. Women I had grown up respecting were slobbering over his dick like a child eating a Popsicle. He himself was humping away like a dog in heat with female after female, including

one woman who was clearly pregnant.

I couldn't look at the photos anymore. Faking a composure I didn't feel, I put them back into the box, handing it to my mother.

A rope in a tug of war being pulled two ways at once, that was me. Part of me found these photos and what they represented repulsive and horrifying while part of me found them sickly arousing.

After returning the box to its place in the closet, Mom told me she was going to get me a glass of cold water from the kitchen, departing to leave me alone with my thoughts. No matter how I finally felt about what I'd just seen, and at that moment I didn't know how I felt, I'd never view my parents in the same simplistic cardboard cutout way again.

Mom waited until I finished my drink before she took my hand, leading me out of the bedroom down to the kitchen.

For close to fifteen minutes, we sat in an uncomfortable silence as I looked everywhere in the room but at Mom. Above the table I was stiff as a board. Under the table I was also stiff as a board, this time between my legs, which were vibrating like a Tudor electric football game.

Finally Mom came around behind me and began to massage my shoulders. "Come on Jake, talk with me. If you hold it in much longer you'll have a stroke." This time I knew I wasn't imagining things; those were the rock hard nubs of her nipples rubbing themselves against my back. Was sharing her secret sex life with me turning my mother on?

"Don't make me get on my knees and beg Jake," Mom said in a soft low voice, the phrasing of her request filling my head with a vision of her naked, on her knees begging for a cock to fill her mouth and not just any cock.

Peter van Gulik High may have been a rural school but we studied classical literature as well as farming.

I'd read Sophocles' Oedipus The King. I knew how that one turned out for Oedipus and Jocasta, even if the tent in my pants didn't. Sometimes there's a very good reason for fantasies to be forbidden.

Pulling my mind out of the gutter, I tried desperately to regain my composure. Surely, Mom wasn't coming on to me. It was just my overactive teenage imagination transforming her from a loving mother to object of sexual desire. Well, my imagination and those photographs.

"Why," I asked her in a thin reedy voice.

"Why what, Jake?"

"Why were you having sex with all those people. Why did you let them take photos?"

Without a hint of embarrassment Mom told me why she was having sex with people other than my father was a question she wasn't going to answer for me, at least not right now.

"Oh, I could give you an answer Jake but you don't have the experience or knowledge to really make sense out of it. It'd be like trying to teach calculus to someone who hasn't had geometry or algebra yet. You'd just get more confused. You're already confused enough," she said her massaging hands having moved from my shoulders to my neck. "You're so rigid right now it's a wonder you don't pop something."

The feeling of her hands rubbing up and down my neck, coupled with the memory of those photos had me on the brink of blowing my wad into my shorts. To avoid the humiliation of making her last statement come all too true, I started to stand up, only to realize such a move would expose the raging hard-on between my legs. I sat back down with an audible thump.

Voice tinkling with amusement, Mom stepped back and said "Jake, I need to go to the bathroom. You need some time to get a firm grip on yourself. So here's the deal. You go out with the girls from Len's shop and I don't just mean one girl on one date. Have a good time.

Get yourself some experience. Then you come back to me and we'll have that calculus discussion. Now I have to go relieve myself before I burst."

Straightening up she began to walk out of the room, pausing at the door; my mother was big on the whole pausing at the door bit, a regular Lauren Bacall.

"Pay attention to what I'm telling you Jake. Before you go on those dates it wouldn't hurt you to talk to your father about how to read the signals women give off, but only after you've apologized to him," she said stressing the last portion of her advice.

I must have sat in the chair for at least five minutes before my dick got soft enough to let me walk without pain. Passing the bathroom door I could hear Mom humming to herself and, underneath the murmur, a fainter fleshy sound, liquid and languorous. I thought I recognized the sound; I made its frenetic male counterpart almost every night.

The suspicion Mom was masturbating in the bathroom led me to take my first bite out of the apple. Silent as a snake, I slid down the hallway slithering into my parent's bedroom. Fearful of discovery, I took the photo box out of the closet as quickly and silently as I could. For a moment I was torn by indecision, not about my actions but about which photos to take.

Quickly I took five pictures out of the box, all of my mother, all from earlier vacations, all action shots that also showed off her beautiful full breasts. Tucking my plunder into my pants pocket, I cautiously returned the box to its former position in the closet, replacing the key in the china dish.

Retreating from the scene of my crime, I managed to hide the snapshots between the mattress and box springs of my bed before Mom got out of the bathroom. I'd find a better hiding place later.

I went through a half box of tissues that night.