

Author: Fowler Gray

Title: Give Me That Old Time Religion

Part 5: Plainsong 5: What Would You Have Me Do

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: Fm

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.

All of the usual legal disclaimers regarding the laws of your jurisdiction apply to reading and/or downloading this story, which pursuant to the Berne Convention, is copyrighted with all rights reserved by its author, Fowler Gray, unless explicitly indicated. Reproduction except for personal use and reposting without the author's written permission is prohibited. This story may not be reproduced on any commercial site.

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.

Reader feedback plays an important role in keeping this story going. It's not necessarily a pathetic attempt at validation of my efforts (although I'd be lying if I said there wasn't at least an element of that involved), the feedback often sparks other ideas that keep the creative juices flowing.

All that being said, it's also nice to know your work has found an appreciative audience. Writing is a lonely, solitary profession. Getting feedback for what you've written is the difference between a writer's literary efforts being masturbation or intercourse.

So 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:
fowlergray@yahoo.com

The story codes for OTR5: Hand In Hand (MF)

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

The Fifth Plainsong: Hand in Hand

No question about it, I was lost in uncharted territory without a map or a compass.

I didn't know the first thing about seducing a woman and anyway Toddie was supposed to "fuck at the drop of a hat." I suppose when we got back to her apartment I

could just drop a hat and see what happened but somehow I didn't think that was going to be enough to sweep her off her feet and into bed. The "Secrets of a Successful Marriage" book my dad had given me was a "how-to" manual, not a "how to get them to" guidebook so that wouldn't be any help either.

Desperate for at least a little breathing room to solve the problem, I resorted to the time-honored technique known to every man alive: "When in doubt, bluff like hell."

The third time I'd gone out with Debbie she'd told me she liked the difference she saw in me. "You're more self-assured than you were before. That's good. Women like confident men, confidence is sexy." At least that gave me a starting point.

With poise I really didn't feel I entered the fray. "Did I tell you about the special qualities of my watch," I asked Toddie. "It's state of the art you know."

"That's just an old Timex," she said dismissively. "You can buy one of those at Brown's Five and Ten anytime."

Shaking my head I said, "Not one of these. It uses alpha waves to telepathically talk with me."

"All right Jake I'll bite. What's your telepathic watch telling you now?"

"Well, it says you're not wearing any panties."

"Looks like you wasted your money then because I'm wearing panties. You know that because you saw me in them when I pulled on my shorts."

Frowning, I started tapping on the watch face. "Damn thing must be running fast again."

Toddie broke out a reluctant smile. "Ok you got me with that one but that doesn't mean you're going to get me into bed."

It was at that point my inner Mr. Spock asserted itself. Looking at it logically, Toddie not only was willing to sleep with me, she wanted to. Why else have me over for the weekend? At the same time, she needed to be different than Debbie so rather than racing right to sex, she wanted to come at it slowly, make me "seduce" her, an outcome she'd do her best to help me achieve. All I had to do was make a decent effort, keep from being a bigger jerk than I normally was and her natural impulses would take over. I could do this.

After hopping off the oak, I took her slim waist in my hands and lifted her up. "Let's walk up the creek to Mattson Bridge," I said as I gently lowered her down in the water, gently maintaining my hands on her abdomen even after her feet had reached the creek bed. "It's only about a half-mile away. Then we can head back to your place and figure out what to do about dinner."

As we strolled up the creek, I was careful to maintain physical contact with Toddie. Nothing overtly sexual, just casual touching to keep her aware of our bodies; brushing a fallen leaf from her hair and letting my fingers stroke her cheek along the way, rubbing her back between her shoulder blades, leaning forward when she talked to me then leaning back to answer, intertwining her fingers with mine and making as much eye contact as I could.

I reviewed our earlier conversation, especially her answers to the "Spanish Inquisition," looking for things I could work with to help set the stage for our lovemaking, starting with her penchant for dirty jokes.

"John's just graduated from clinical psychology and opens his first office," I started. "After some successful advertising he's astounded to have nearly 50 people wanting to be in group therapy. John decides to rent a big hall and invite the entire group. To break the ice, and to get the therapy started, John decides to ask a show of hands how often the attendees had sex. First he asks for a show of hands of all the people who had sex almost every night. A modest number of hands go up. He then asks, how many had sex once a week? This time a larger number of hands shoot skyward. John then asks how many had sex once or twice a month? Again, a

few hands go up.

"After John polls his group a couple more times he notices one guy sitting off to the side with this huge beaming grin on his face but he also knows the guy hasn't raised his hand yet. So John asks him how often he has sex. The guy says, 'Once a year!' Stunned, John asks him 'Why are you so happy if you're only getting laid once a year?' The grinning guy responds, 'Tonight's the night!'"

The dirty joke fest went on until we reached Mattson Bridge, each of us taking turns, as before each trying to top the other. Along the way Toddie began to return my touches; letting her thighs rub for the briefest moment against mine, stroking the back of my neck, massaging the small of my back, her fingers sneaking just under the waistband of my shorts. Moreover, she smiled a lot, big smiles creasing a relaxed face, upper and lower teeth exposed.

Figuring the pump was primed by enough dirty jokes, I moved the conversation on to other topics as we walked back to her apartment, always concentrating on Toddie, what she said and how she was reacting to me, using her responses to gauge my next action.

Our discussion continued though dinner, a medium pizza with pepperoni, mushrooms and sausage from De Milo's, Toddie joking if we ordered a large we'd have to eat it on the landing. We washed the hot pizza down with cheap Chianti, the dry wine's rough bite cutting through the grease that was the hallmark of every Italian pie from De Milo's, thick enough to soak into the box and turn the cardboard transparent.

While I did what little washing up there was to do, Toddie stood next to me, her head cocked a little to the left, one foot behind the other with her hips ever so faintly pushed forward. During dinner she'd been running her hand up and down her glass of wine and now she was playing with the plastic bracelets on her arm, stroking them so they turned in small circles around her wrist. I decided it was time to try to move things forward.

When I was in junior high we had an annual Halloween Festival. Each classroom used for a different attraction. One might be a haunted house, while another would be turned into a miniature cider mill.

In seventh grade I'd been selected to be the gypsy fortuneteller, complete with an old red handkerchief wrapped about my head, a clip-on gold hoop earring clamped on my ear, and several teeth blacked out. I'd taken the job seriously, going down to the local library and checking out several books on divination and foretelling the future.

Mom thought I was taking things a bit too seriously. "It's only make-believe, Jake. Nobody will expect you to really be able to tell their fortune. It's just for fun." I never did get her to understand that, even with make-believe, the more realistic it was the more fun it was. I spent days pouring over two books on palmistry, not because I believed in it but because I wanted to do the best job of faking it I could.

My stint as a fortuneteller was a hit, despite the fact my "gypsy accent" was terrible and my "crystal ball" was actually a magic eight ball. Not only was I asked to do it again when I was in eighth grade but I made a return appearance in my freshman and sophomore years as well, finally retiring and returning my earring to Mom's jewelry box when I was a junior because it just wasn't "cool" to be having fun with seventh and eighth graders.

I suffer from a condition Dad calls "sponge brain." My mind soaks up some of the most esoteric trivia possible, often crowding out far more practical and constructive knowledge I might actually be able to draw on. Tonight though I was going to put some of that arcane information to good use.

"Ever had your fortune told," I asked Toddie, remembering her interest in astrology.

"Sure. There's a lady over in Casper who does charts and tarot card readings. I had my chart done last year and she's done a couple of card readings for me."

Alright. The door had just opened wide for me; now all I had to do was stride through.

"I'm a pretty accomplished palm reader. How'd you like to have me predict your future?"

Toddie gave a disdainful snort before answering my question. "Come on Jake you can do better than that. I show you my hand; you give me some mumbo-jumbo about how we're fated to sleep together and then we hop in the sack and fuck like rabbits. Please..."

In my most serious manner, I reassured Toddie this was no cheap parlor trick designed to fool her into sleeping with me.

"A lot of people laugh at palmistry, I don't. I know it reveals things about people and not only their future but also their past. Tell you what," I continued. "I'll make you a deal. You let me read your palm and if you think I'm just making things up, saying crap like 'people can't get to truly know each other until their bodies know each other,' then you can throw me out of your apartment.

"We're going to talk about sex," I warned her. "It's a major aspect of anyone's personality but if I start giving you come-on lines instead of insights, well it'll be a sad and lonely bike ride home."

"What's the other side of the deal? If I don't throw you out of the apartment, you get to sleep with me," she asked skeptically.

"No, the other side of the deal is maybe you learn something you didn't know. Nothing else, no obligations of any sort. What about it? Are you game? I'll make it even fairer, I'll tell you how it works before I do the reading. That should help you tell whether or not I'm bullshitting you."

"Ok, you're on but I have to warn you I'm a tough audience," a smile returning to her face as she gracefully gave in.

While Toddie lay sprawled across the daybed, I prepared

the apartment for her reading, closing the drape over the front window, shutting off all of the lights, save for a single gooseneck lamp on the chest by the daybed, and replacing them with the soft shimmering lights from candles to give the room a necessary element of shadow and mystery.

To further develop the atmosphere I wanted, I lit a cone of sandalwood incense I had found on the chest, its soft woody smoke perfuming the room's air with the delicate scent of rose, jasmine and earth, shutting off the box fan to allow the aroma to linger. For my final touch, I tuned the small radio in the kitchen to the Bearskin Rug show on one of the local stations, a music program playing not rock but "tunes for lovers," mainly orchestrations of "sensuous" classical music. Satisfied by the setting, I turned my attention to preparing Toddie to be receptive to her reading.

Without asking her permission, I began removing all her jewelry; bracelets, watch, even the ankh around her throat because "their aura can throw off my perceptions." Nonsense of course, but I wanted to get her subliminal acceptance of the fact I was not only allowed but also encouraged to undress her.

"Everything matters in palmistry," I explained, giving Toddie a basic primer in palm reading. "The size of your hand, its shape, color, temperature and texture, they're all important indicators of who you were, who you are and who you will be. Even the way you move your hand while I do your reading reveals something about you. It's all very connected.

"The hand you use to write with is your dominant hand, that's the one that shows the actual manifestation and realization of the inner you."

I asked Toddie to give me the hand she wrote with. She held out her right.

"There are four major lines on your palm: heart, head, life and fate," I said, holding her hand cupped softly in my left. "The heart line shows how you feel, the head line how you think, the life line how much physical vitality you have and your fate line how

chance and external events will affect your life."

As I explained the nature of each line, I gently ran the edge of my fingernail along their paths, eliciting a tiny shiver from Toddie.

"Beside the four major lines, there are two minor lines, the sun line and the love line, which is about relationships, not sex. On the edge of your palm, underneath your little finger are the mounts of the Moon and Pluto, which tell us more about your love life and relationships. Your Venus mount is underneath your thumb and it's all about your sexuality," I said an impious grin on my face as I massaged each of Toddie's mounts with my index finger.

"Clear deep and unbroken lines indicate strong predispositions in an area, lines that are criss-crossed, broken, faint show weaker tendencies. Raised mounts mean strength in an area," I finished, knowing she'd be lucky to remember a quarter of my explanation. Nevertheless, the fact I'd taken the time to give her the so many details would add an air of legitimacy to my findings.

Having finished my tutorial, I began my reading. I positioned Toddie on my left, turning her body at a slight angle to mine, squeezing her tight against me. With some longhaired piano music playing liltingly in the background, I took one last look into her eyes, her dilated pupils and slightly open mouth revealing her interest, before turning my attention to her hand.

For five minutes, I turned her hand this way and that, stroking and caressing it and making little noises of surprise, satisfaction and concern as I did so. Throughout it all I leaned unobtrusively against Toddie, delighted when she did the same with me, each of us adjusting our positions to remain pressed together. Without the air circulation the fan provided the apartment was getting progressively hotter, our twined bodies rapidly gaining a thin sheen of sweat.

Still holding her hand, I began to give Toddie her reading, starting with the shape of her right hand.

"There's four types of hands: air, earth, fire and water. You've got 'fire' hands. Lots of lines and very firm warm skin. People with fire hands are positive, confident and inventive, always willing to try something new or take the lead. They also bring those qualities to their lovemaking. The fact you have small hands relative to the size of your body shows you prefer action to worrying about what might happen later.

"The back of your hand is very delicate. That's a sign you're romantic and very sensitive to physical touch. The skin is smooth and warm, means you're warm hearted and that you enjoy sex just for the sheer fun of it."

Toddie raised one eyebrow high as she said, "So far all I'm hearing about is sex. Should I get your bag for you or is there more to this?"

"Toddie, I told you there'd be some discussion of sex. You're a very sexual person, that comes thorough loud and clear in my reading but there's more and not just about sex."

"Such as," she asked pleasantly but with a skeptical tinge in her voice.

"OK, there's your head line. It's separated from your life line showing real enthusiasm for life and you're confident in how you're living it.

"It's a shorter line than the others. Means you're intelligent but more intuitive than reflective. It swoops down towards the heel of your palm, again confirming you're imaginative and creative. There's several places where it's 'islanded.' Islands in your head line are another sign of sensitivity."

I watched as Toddie unconsciously nodded in agreement. So far, so good.

"Your head line is broken in one place very close to the heel. That shows something happened when you were young that changed your way of thinking. There's also a cross in about the same place indicating a crisis around that time. Your head line isn't the only place

this shows up but we'll talk more about that later."

Toddie sat a little straighter as I made this pronouncement, letting me know I was on the right track.

"You've got a very deep fate line. Events control your life more than you do, even though you don't necessarily like it that way. You've got several breaks in the line indicating changes in your career or location. The good news is it says you'll have the help of others to achieve the success you want."

A quick look at Toddie's face showed an amused interest in my reading. Time to take it up a notch.

"Close to the heel your fate line touches your life line and then separates. This means you put someone else's interests ahead of your own for a period in your life. As close as it is to the heel, I'd say it was as a child, maybe a teenager but not later than 14 or 15."

Once again Toddie stiffened, a sure tell there was something there, something worth exploring further.

"The lines separate again, so you regained the control you gave up. With all the other signs I'd say there was some sort of childhood trauma, maybe even involving your parents."

Her eyes narrowed as I made my last statement, another indicator something had happened when she was a kid, although I still didn't know what. Whatever it was, it could still put Toddie on edge all these years later.

"Your fate line has some breaks higher up toward your fingers. These breaks would indicate troubles ahead but they're very short so you'll easily overcome these difficulties." The change of subject and the positive reinforcement of her abilities caused Toddie to relax again. "At least one of them corresponds with a change in career or location."

"You have a very interesting life line. It's deeply etched and well formed which says you're enthusiastic about life and put a lot of effort into living it to

its fullest. It leads outward so you're bold about life and exploring life's possibilities. In some places it's doubled so you have an active sex life, not that there was any doubt of that," I said moving still closer to her. "And it also swings wide around your Mount of Venus meaning you have an expansive and giving nature in matters of love.

"The heart line is all about your emotions and how they're expressed, including love. Yours is very long; shows you got a lot of emotion in your personality. It's curved so you're sentimental, intuitive and you openly express your feelings. It's deep so you're comfortable with your emotions. It's deeper than your head line which means your heart rules you more than your head.

"You've got dual forks in your heart line. Means you long to establish deep and lasting relationships but you have problems letting go of your independence. The line touches both sides of your palm. That tells us you've had and will have a lot of different relationships. You've got quite a few spots of puffy redness that indicating periods of great passion.

"I can also read several breaks in your heart line, so you've had some disappointments in love and friendship, one of them fairly recently, I'd say within the last three months or so.

"In some places the line goes upward meaning you're flirtatious by nature but three times it dips down, again that's a sign you've had some troubles in the past but the upward swings show you've put them behind you.

"There's an island close to the heel of your palm and your head line. Remember when I read your head and fate lines I saw you had had some childhood problems. This island tells us it left you with a feeling of being unloved or abandoned. Putting 'm all together I'd say it was some trouble between your parents. Maybe they even separated and you had to choose which one to live with or they chose for you and chose wrong. I can't be sure about that without reading their palms as well but I can tell something happened and you never really got

over it."

For the first time, I saw Toddie nonplussed. Pulling entirely away from me, she got up off the daybed and asked skeptically, "Who told you about my parents? What did they tell you?"

Jackpot. My hunch about some trouble between her parents had been right on.

"No one told me about your parents," I responded, my voice heavy with sincerity. "I really don't know anything about your parents other than what your palm reading told me, that and what little you told me while we were playing the game."

"Swear to me that's true Jake," Toddie asked, a hint of tartness in her request. "That you didn't know about them before you came here."

I had no problem honestly swearing to Toddie that no one had told me anything about her parents, reminding her that we'd really only met about seven hours earlier, and that all of my knowledge came from my reading.

The secret to a good con is always letting the mark con themselves. While my fortune telling wasn't a total hoax, since most of what I was telling her was accurate, I didn't feel the need to reveal my reading itself was hooey, a clever concoction of vague generalizations she could adjust to fit her own self-image and experiences.

Which of us didn't feel unloved at one time or another as a kid? Propping the whole act up was the specific information she herself had given me. That's how real fortune telling works; you don't tell the customers about themselves, they tell you.

"God, maybe you weren't putting me on when you started this whole palm reading business," she said, looking at me as though I was a guru who held the key to spiritual enlightenment.

"I thought it was just a clever way to get into my

pants, you'd spin me a story about how destiny had brought us together and we'd be foolish to fight against the fates. But my folks, I've never told anyone here about what happened with my folks and yet you look at my hand and you know what happen. Shit, you're making a believer of me Jake."

The other secret to running a good con is not to take the mark too far. It was time to reel in Toddie a little without destroying too much of the illusion.

"Look, the fact is I really don't know what happened with your parents," I told Toddie. "Your reading didn't tell me specifically what went on, only that something did and roughly when it occurred.

"Like I said, all this stuff ties in together. By themselves, individual lines and mounts don't tell us much. Put them together, see where they reinforce each other and you've got a reading. I guess from your reaction, my reading was pretty accurate."

Toddie put her hands, fingers laced together, behind her head, and began running them from her neck up to the crown of her head and back down again, turning the ends of her fire-touched hair into a bird's nest of snarls.

"Yeah, pretty accurate," she said, "right down to the reason. I was 14 when my parents separated.

"Look Jake, do you mind if we don't talk about it. It was sort of a bumner back then. And I need a flashback thanks. I'm just glad you got it from your reading and not from some town gossip.

"So," she said, perhaps a shade too cheerfully, "what other mysteries of the unknown are you going to reveal?"

"The next secret is that you need to relax and regain your center," I told her. "Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. That's right," I said watching her closely. "Now do it again and then one more time.

"Feel better? More relaxed? Good, now cuddle up next to

me and I'll finish the rest of your reading."

Toddie scooted over on the daybed until we were again skin-to-skin. This time I put my arm around her shoulders, allowing my hand to drop down along against her ribcage, still well away from the flat expanse of her chest. Even with my palm resting lightly on her body I could feel the pulsing of her heart.

"Well then," I intoned trying turn to the reading away from her parents and back to sex, "your sun line is deep and full. That's a signal you have a real talent for making friends and the self-confidence to make the most of your abilities and achieve success.

"Your love line confirms the facts your other lines revealed. When a love line is light and fine with many breaks like yours is it means you've had more casual affairs than deeply committed relationships."

"That's certainly true," she said in a self-deprecating tone. "Anything else?"

"Yeah, there's still your mounts. Your Pluto mount is raised above the center of your palm, so you have a great resiliency about you. It's not always going to be easy for you but you have the ability and the determination to rebound from life's difficulties. That's important Toddie." I said offering her positive reinforcement. "Remember your fate line said you'd overcome all your troubles and there would always be friends who would stand by you and help you. Your sun line and your Venus mount agree."

I gave her a moment to digest this.

"Your Venus mount is very fleshy and firm, indicting a love of pleasure and a very strong sexual nature. You've got prominent horizontal lines across the mount which means your lovers find you charming," Toddie giving me a genuine smile when she heard that, "and you've got a crescent shape on that mount meaning you are very seductive as well as a triangle which indicates you've had at least one extramarital affair, something we both already knew."

Mentally crossing my fingers, I went for the gold.

"You're an interesting and intriguing sex partner, very creative in how you make love or at least that's what your raised moon mount means, while the raised penile mount in my pants indicates that I hope to have a chance to find out whether that's true or not. That part of my reading was very uncertain."

My eyes focused on her as I waited anxiously for her reaction. Had I been attentive and charming enough to win her over? Forcing myself to breathe slowly, I sat still, a plaintiff waiting the jury's verdict.

"I think you've earned your chance Jake, more than earned it in fact," she responded, the corner of her mouth lifting in a wry smile. "Is my reading over now?"

Keep cool, I reminded myself even as a wide smile illuminated my face. Don't spaz out now.

"Not quite, I left the most interesting piece of the reading until last."

"More interesting than my 'strong sexual nature,'" she asked twirling her hair between her fingers.

"Well maybe not that interesting," I said, obviously running my eyes up and down her body, "but interesting all the same and with great application to tonight."

Without giving her a chance to speak I continued, "Earlier I told you your hands indicated you were a 'fire' person but there were also traces of an affinity for water. Unusual since water extinguishes fire but they were there or at least I think they were. If you wouldn't mind I'd like you to help me find out, sort of an experiment. Of course it'd be solely in the cause of improving my palmistry skills."

"Oh, of course it would be," Toddie said playfully. "And just what would I have to do in your little 'experiment?'"

"Not a lot, just let me immerse you in water and see

what happens."

"Come on Jake, I don't want to walk back to the creek just so you can dunk me. I've already been baptized, thanks just the same."

Taking her hand in mine, I raised Toddie's thin body off the daybed. "No, I had something far closer in mind. The shower at the end of your apartment should do just fine and it's a two-fer, we get to test my findings and get clean at the same time."

Our mouths met in silent agreement, our warm breath scented by the Chianti and pizza. Hands moving with ardor, we stripped each other of clothing, discarded garments marking the trail to the shower. As we moved, I could feel her heat radiate through my skin, my dick throbbing as though Toddie already cradled it in her palm.

Water running in the shower behind us, I slid my hands down her ribcage, hooking my thumbs over the elastic band of her panties and rolling them downward, careful not to catch any of her public hair in the fabric. But there was no thicket to snag, just pale white flesh with only the barest hint of red stubble visible, her crotch a wheat field just after harvest.

My complete astonishment at seeing Toddie shorn smooth stopped me dead in my tracks and brought an amused laugh from Toddie.

"Usually I'm hairy as a goblin down there but I thought I'd be 'creative,' so I shaved it a couple of weeks ago. You like?"

I told her I'd never seen anything like it before, my admission bringing another tinkling laugh from her.

"And just how many unshaven pussies have you seen then," she asked. "I'd put the over/under at one."

Ruefully, I admitted she was right. "But I do like the way yours looks."

"You better because it's a bitch to live with. If I

don't shave every day it gets itchy, and if I do I get razor burn."

"Poor baby, want me to kiss it and make it better," I asked with a leer in my voice.

"We'll get to that later, Jake. Right now I'd like to take that shower. It's getting pretty hot in here since you turned the fan off and this steam isn't helping. I'm starting to feel a little dizzy."

As small as the bathroom was, it didn't take long for the billows of steam rolling out from the shower to fill the area. I was feeling a little dizzy myself, although whether it was from the steam or the sight of Toddie's no longer bearded clam was a toss up.

Either way the steam was condensing on the other surfaces in the bathroom, creating a slick film of water everywhere. I turned on the small exhaust fan and then gestured to Toddie to precede me into the shower. "After you, my lady," I said, holding the plastic shower curtain open.

"Thank you, kind gentleman," she replied in a mock simper, placing the tip of her left index finger under her chin while bobbing her head to one side.

It was even hotter inside the shower than outside, the swirling clouds of vapor creating a London pea soup fog inside the stall. I asked Toddie if I should turn the temperature down. "Nah, I like it like this."

The stall was bigger than a phone booth but not by much, with barely enough room for one person at a time, let alone two. Siamese twins couldn't have been any closer than Toddie and I were, not that I was complaining, but for both of us to wash up would require some Olympic-class acrobatics.

After some false starts, we managed to wriggle into a stance that seemed to work; me with my back to the rushing shower, Toddie snuggled up against me, her firm, slippery buttocks pressing against my jumped up manhood. It was arousing and maddening at the same time since even a circus contortionist would be hard

pressed to find a way to have sex in this confined space.

I began with her hair, emptying handfuls of water over her head, running those thick red locks between my fingers as I massaged viscous green apple shampoo onto her scalp, listening to Toddie's deep sigh of satisfaction as I worked the lather well into her tresses.

Leaning backwards, I pulled Toddie with me, allowing the water from the showerhead to rinse the shampoo from her hair while being careful to keep my balance. The last thing I wanted was a repetition of the fiasco at the creek.

Using a duck-shaped yellow sponge I did my best to wash Toddie's front, the jasmine-scented soap producing tons of froth, epaulets of rainbow-colored bubbles hugging her shoulders, tickling my nose when they popped as I kissed and licked the back of her neck and ears.

Guiding my hands where the sounds Toddie was making, satisfied susurrations when I was on the path of righteousness, low gruff growls when I strayed.

Paying great attention to Toddie's breasts, I circled their areola, feeling not the subdermal fat of a full and heavy mammary but rather the xylophone of rib bones that supported the hard nub of her nipples, listening to her sibilant intake of breath as I rolled them between my fingers.

As my palms slid down the taunt expanse of her abdomen, Toddie twisted her head around, her open mouth demanding a kiss. Our tongues danced a lingual tarantella. Toddie's legs opened wider, welcoming my questing fingers into the slippery folds and crevasses of her womanhood. Waves of pleasure washed over both of us as I gently toyed with the hood of her clit, occasionally pinching the bud of flesh underneath.

Pulling her mouth from mine, Toddie broke off our kiss. "You've done enough for now, let me wash you."

Cautiously we maneuvered until we had reversed our

positions, Toddie's breath puffing softly against my neck as she began to wash my hair, slowly pulling handfuls upward until my scalp stretched away from my skull.

I gave myself over to the sheer pleasure of Toddie's flesh sliding against mine, every muscle in my body kissed by the hot water cascading down, its liquid warmth both soothing and invigorating.

Now it was Toddie's turn to tease and arouse; her damp hair feathered across my shoulders, lips nuzzling the base of my neck, fingers twisting my nipples until they rose in silent protest.

Abandoning my chest, her right hand moved up to my face, her thumb circling my mouth, brushing insistently against my lips until they parted to allow entry. As I suckled and chewed on her thumb, Toddie's left hand descended to my groin, taking a slippery and tenuous grip on my engorged member, leisurely sliding up and down my pole, masturbating me in rhythm with my sucking.

With an audible "pop" Toddie pulled her thumb from my mouth, returning her right hand to behind my back. She spider-walked her way down my spine, whispering in my ear. "I know what you want, you dirty boy," she said huskily. "You want to put your big thing up my little ass, don't you?" The action of her left hand sped up as she interrogated me.

"You want to take me from behind and ride me deep and hard. You want me on my knees with my nose buried in your pubic hair and your balls resting on my chin. You want to fuck me until I can't walk and then fuck me some more. Come on Jake, that's what you want isn't it. You want to take me everyway you can and twice on Sunday. You can be honest with me Jake, I won't mind. That's what you want isn't it?"

I croaked out a "yes," trying to concentrate on anything but sex. I didn't want to shoot my wad in the shower. I wanted to save it for when it counted, when I was deep in whichever orifice of Toddie's body I was using.

"You love it when I talk dirty to you," she said, her hand moving with the speed of a hummingbird. "I can tell because your dick is pulsing like a gas pump hose during a fill-up. But I'll do more than talk dirty Jake, I'll do all those disgusting things you've been ashamed of thinking about even in your fantasies. We'll do them together Jake and it'll be fun. Just wait until you see how inventive I can really be. Don't worry about being too rough. I'm in the mood for rough tonight."

I couldn't take it any longer. The tip of my dick was tingling and my toes were being to curl. Just a few more strokes and I'd be painting the wall of the stall with sperm. Desperate and disregarding the dangers or the consequences I spun out of Toddie's grip, my wild gyrations tearing open the shower curtain allowing the water to spill out onto the bathroom floor.

Savagely I took Toddie in my arms, mashing my lips against hers as though I was an alcoholic and she was the last few drops at the bottom of the bottle. We exchanged hungry, deep, insistent kisses. Her inflamed passion matching mine, she was a succubus bent on devouring my soul with her inhalations.

Lust ran through my body like fire through a lumberyard. I hardly winced as Toddie ran her nails down my back, peeling off strips of skin, leaving red stinging stripes in their wake.

Lifting her off her feet, I stepped out of the shower carrying Toddie with me. Quickly striding to the daybed, I unceremoniously deposited Toddie on her back, forcing her legs wide open as I sprawled heavily between them.

Pinning her arms down with my hands, I kissed the smooth slope of her throat, lips firmly caressing the long sinuous line of her throat, tonguing the hollow at its base, reveling in the salt tang clinging to her skin even after the shower.

Descending further down her sylphlike torso, I reached her breasts, even in arousal as flat as a piece of

paper. My tongue assailed her nipples, circling them with a feathery touch, watching them crinkle in response as I dampened their flesh with my saliva, her brown eyes softly unfocused as she gave herself over to the moment. I bit down, not too hard but hard enough to draw a squeak, but no protest, from Toddie. Emboldened, I moved down the level plane of her stomach, leaving shallow tooth marks as I passed.

As my head drew level with her crotch, I released Toddie's arms. She used her newfound freedom to reach down and push my head closer to her pussy, scraping my face on the five o'clock shadow of stubble crowning her mons.

Her labia presented itself to me, a thick petaled flower swollen and glistening with the proof of her arousal, exposed and vulnerable in its nakedness. The scent of her filled my nose, lightly musky with a strong overlay of ... strawberries?

Squirming, Toddie wriggled back and forth until she could prop her back up on a pillow. Her hands left my head to pull her labia apart, love dew seeping from the darker depths of her vagina. She hissed when my tongue touched her clit before dipping inside, swabbing her inner tunnel only to retreat to flatten itself against her labia once again.

One lick was all it took; Toddie's cunt not only smelled like strawberries, it tasted like them too.

She moaned in total wantonness as I returned to her clit, slipping two fingers into her slick center, her labia stiffening as blood rushed into them. Arching her back, Toddie thrust her crotch at me, wordlessly imploring me to bring her to orgasm.

Lost in her taste and smell, my brain besotted with Toddie, I closed my eyes and concentrated on bringing her off, plumbing her depths with my fingers as she ground herself against my mouth, her clit standing straight out of its hood as I swiped my tongue back and forth against its surface.

The sheet underneath us grew sodden with her juices as

I continued to suck, lick and thrust at Toddie's cunt, her breath coming faster now, short little pants, her body reduced to electrified nerve endings, aching for release. My tongue teased her, tasted her, caressed her until she bent over to again rake my flesh with her nails.

Ignoring the burning of raw flesh meeting air, I drove my fingers in and out of her, adding first one finger and then another, moving with a frenetic rhythm to push her over the brink.

Breath sucked in, Toddie went rigid then began shaking, cunt squeezing against my fingers, thighs slamming against my ears, partially drowning out the sound of a strangled, half-whispered scream as she thrashed her way to orgasm.

Even as her climax took her, I was moving up Toddie's body, my arousal a yet unquenched fire. Without warning or nuance, I buried half my cock deep into her pussy, payback for the crosshatching of oozing welts her passion had left on my back.

Toddie's eyes shot wide open as I entered her, my second thrust fully sheathing my cock inside her sopping vagina. Urgently I pumped away, feeling as though I was going to fall apart with every stroke into and out of her silken cavern.

Recovering from the shock of my unexpected entrance, Toddie began to respond, moving her hips in counter punctual cadence to my thrusts, squeezing and relaxing her enveloping muscles around my pistoning rod in an effort to milk the sperm from my balls.

"Fuck me, fuck me hard," she moaned, flicking her tongue in my ear. "Use me Jake, ride me, fuck me. Use me, ride me, fuck me. Do it, do it hard. Give it to me Jake, give me your cock."

Her words filled me with an even greater desire, spurring me to pound even faster at her crotch. Her frenzied movements matched mine, urging me to abandon myself to her, give myself over to wild animal sex with all politeness and manners forgotten,

Only sensation mattered to me. The touch of her velvety cunt contracting around the hardness of my cock as I plunged deep into her. The fruity taste of her on my tongue. The smell of our rutting, musky and pungent. The sound of her voice as she muttered obscene instructions in my ear. The look of desire in her eyes as we coupled.

Toddie moved against me, rolling her hips until I could no longer control my strokes. My cock buried itself to the hilt inside her, the intense sensations she'd generated running wild through my body. Orgasm arrived like a clap of thunder, clouds of red exploding behind my eyes, the release from my spending rushing through every shivering muscle as I slumped bonelessly against her, trying my best to keep my weight on my forearms.

Silently we huddled together, lost in our thoughts as we stroked each other's bodies, reluctant to allow the intensity and grandeur of the moment to recede into memory. We exchanged feathery kisses, little murmurs of thanks as our heaving chests slowly fell back into more normal rhythms. With a sigh of contentment, Toddie rolled out from under me, repositioning herself beside me, resting her sweaty head on my shoulder.

"God that was great, Jake," she said, her fingers lazily tracing little circles around my nipples. "I can't believe how good that was, how good you were. Are you sure I'm only the second person you've slept with because you sure don't fuck like a rookie?"

Whether she meant it or not, Toddie's praise was music to my ears. I felt my face break out in a wide goofy grin as I told her she really was only my second woman. Even we talked I couldn't shake the nagging feeling I was forgetting something important. Well, it couldn't be that important otherwise I'd think of it. In the meantime I was content to hold Toddie in my arm and listen to the gentle rain falling outside.

"Shit," I exclaimed loudly, springing up from the daybed like a demented Jack-In-The-Box, "the shower's still running."

Laughing like loons, Toddie and I made our way to a bathroom that had more than a passing resemblance to Pickett Creek, a steady stream of water swirling across its floor. Including our second shower of the evening, this one far more sedate and quick than the first cold water not being conducive to romantic interludes, it took us until ten o'clock and every towel, dishrag and spare sheet in the apartment to get everything mopped up and semi-dry.

Since Toddie was out of towels and Carl's "Wash and Dry" Laundromat was open until midnight, and since there was far too many things to hang over the porch railing, it was an easy decision to go into town and put everything into the dryer.

Bags of soaking wet towels hung over our shoulders, Toddie and I walked hand in hand through the soft summer darkness, the garland of heaven's stars lighting our way to the outskirts of town where the more modern but less romantic streetlights would take over the chore.

Nightfall had turned the day's green grass into a shimmering black cloth while the moon played peek-a-boo through a thin layer of high clouds. From the west a warm gentle zephyr flowed around our bodies, keeping the mosquitoes at bay.

Mother Nature was holding her own courting ceremony that evening. Fireflies weaved through the air, their luminescent flickers of glowing absinthe signaling their availability. The eerie, mellow mating warble of a Screech Owl floated through the night, contrasting with the high-pitched trill of the field crickets, one wing rubbing against the other in a seductive symphony. Overlaying all of it was the strident caterwauling of a tomcat on the prowl. Silently I wished them all the same luck I had had that night.

"About my folks, Jake," Toddie said suddenly but in a tentative hesitant voice. "I guess I owe you an explanation."

"Hey, you don't owe me anything and there's no reason for you to dredge up unpleasant memories."

"No," she persisted, her voice a little surer. "I think I'd like to talk about it, not that there's much to talk about," she said, her feet scuffing at the dirt as she spoke.

My lucky guess during her reading had been pretty accurate. Her parents had split up when Toddie was 12, leaving her at home with her mother.

"I wanted to go with Dad," she explained a lingering note of melancholy in her voice, "but he was always driving that damn truck of his somewhere so I wound up with Mom.

"Don't get me wrong, I loved my Mom and it was the best choice for me. But nobody loves a daughter the way a father does. Dad was always the fun one, bringing me little gifts, silly souvenirs from the places he'd been, tourist junk mostly but I really liked the Jackalope he brought me back from the Black Hills; it was so tacky it was cute. Another time he brought me a little wind-up cable car from San Francisco. I used to play with that all the time until Chaz sold it to a friend of his for a quarter," she told me, giving her head a shake as though she still couldn't believe what her brother had done.

"After about a year they got together again. For the kids they said, but I think it was more out of habit than anything else. They had trouble living together but they really couldn't live apart. It was never the same though," she said regretfully. "Too much distance between them I guess, too many things they said they couldn't take back. They both live their own lives now. They've got that 'whole ships that pass in the night' thing going; still married but without any passion, more like friends rooming together than anything else."

"Why'd they split up in the first place," I asked, intrigued despite knowing better.

"Don't know. Why do people split up? Sex, money, drinking? Chaz thinks Dad was banging everything he could while he was on the road, still is he says. At least that what Chad used to think, we haven't heard

much from him since he moved to that ashram.

"Rita doesn't say much," she continued, "other than they weren't spending enough time together. Dad's being on the road so much meant they didn't have all the things in common they used to and so became unmoored from each other, let the tides carry them in different directions. I know Rita spent a lot of time and energy trying to get things back to the way they used to be, as if there was any chance of that."

"And what do you think?"

"Me, hell I think they're both right. I love my father but he's a man and most of you guys will fuck a snake if you can get it to hold still long enough. I imagine he got more than a little extra trim when he was on the road. I think Mom knew about it and didn't let it bother her; I remember 'Uncle' Alan and 'Uncle' Herb used to come around the house a lot when Dad was gone so I'm not so sure she was pure as Caesar's wife herself.

"They're wrong you know, all those people compiling those books of quotations. Absence doesn't always make the heart grow fonder. Sometimes it just hollows it out until you don't have any other choice than to fill that aching emptiness with someone else. Continents drift further apart every day, so what chance does a long-distance marriage have? Anyway, my parents' marriage is what it is and if it works for them, fine. Nobody said it had to work for their kids too."

"Be nice if it did though," I responded, more to keep up my end of the conversation than out of any real concern. I was enjoying this evening stroll with Toddie and talking about anything too heavy would just take away from the afterglow of our coupling. "But you're right; it doesn't have to work for you, just for them."

We had been walking in companionable silence for a few minutes when Toddie cleared her throat. "How do your parents manage," she asked me.

My mind had been concentrating more on the pleasure of walking hand in hand with Toddie than on our previous

discussion so for a moment I didn't know what she was talking about.

"Manage what," I asked.

"Manage their relationship Jake. That is what we've been talking about isn't it, our parents' marriages?"

This sudden expansion of the topic came as a surprise to me. Toddie had wanted to talk about her parents; I couldn't recall volunteering to talk about mine. I might have been a moron but I wasn't a fool. I knew better than to blurt out something along the lines of just how the hell did my parents get dragged into this anyhow, so I tried beating around the bush.

Fingers crossed I said, "As far as I know they manage just fine. It's not like either one of them come to me for counseling. They're both pretty private people."

Toddie wasn't buying it.

"Pull the other one sport, it's got bells on. Your Dad is one of the least private people I know. He makes the town gossip look like she works for the CIA. He's told me all about you, your Mom, the bethel, your future girlfriend, even that bunch of swappers they run with. Shit, he actually asked Debbie and I if we wanted to play. It's not like I'm asking you to spill any secrets here. And don't pretend you don't know any of this because Lennie told me you do."

I was stunned at the extent of my Dad's indiscretions. It was one thing to talk about himself, even talking about me was OK, but to bandy stories about his wife and with one of his lovers at that; how could he do that? What the hell was he thinking? Then I remembered how wrong I'd been about him cheating on Mom. I wasn't going to make the same stupid mistake twice, at least not without giving it a lot more thought.

"It's OK, Jake. I doubt you can tell me anything I don't already know," Toddie said.

With an effort, I tried to piece my splintered composure back together.

"If you know everything already, then there's nothing for me to tell you," I retorted, amazed at how even my voice sounded. It certainly didn't reflect my inner turmoil.

"You like to play with words don't you Jake? You use them like a magician uses his props, as a way to misdirect your audience. That's fine," she said, forestalling my protest. "As games go it's a fairly harmless one. Your dad said you took a lot of pride in your ability to talk your way around things. Called you a 'golden-tongued orator,' said you could out yap an auctioneer and argue rings around a shyster lawyer. 'Jake's a complex kid,' he told me.

"Lennie isn't as complicated as you are Jake. He's more like a light switch. They have just two settings, off and on. Lennie's two settings are true and false. Get the door would you?"

Get the door? I looked up and discovered not only were we in town, we were standing in front of Carl's Wash and Dry.

Loading the wet towels into the dryer, the buzzing florescent lights casting a sickly yellow hue over the room, Toddie picked up our conversation.

"Like I said, Lennie doesn't exaggerate. Hand me some quarters will you? Thanks Jake. And he's always straightforward, even when he's lying."

As the towel began to tumble in the dryer, Toddie levered herself up onto one of the folding tables, her feet swinging aimlessly in the air.

"I've got some ethics, you know. I usually won't sleep with a married man; your Dad's only the second one I've gone to bed with and I wouldn't have done that except he convinced me Mary Anne would be fine with it," she said defensively.

I nodded, not in agreement but as an indication I understood what she was saying. Internally I was still smarting from her spot-on analysis of my defensive

shields. You'd have thought she was the palm reader.

"So which setting was Lennie on when he told me your mother wouldn't mind? True or false?"

With the cat already out of the bag, I knew I owed Toddie an honest answer with no evasions and no qualifications, just a simple declarative sentence.

"True. He was on true."

"Thanks Jake, that's good to know," she said, her relief at finding my father had been honest with her visible. "I just wasn't sure. I know what I hoped but I just wasn't sure."

"Mom knows about you just like she knows about a lot of Dad's paramours. And if it bothers her, she does a good job of hiding it. I don't think she's that good an actress.

"I actually confronted her once, asked her how she could live with Dad's cheating on her. She told me in no uncertain terms she didn't view it as cheating. Actually she sees it as your path to salvation."

"My path," asked Toddie incredulously. "You mean me. Your mom thinks my fucking her husband will get St. Peter to open the Pearly Gates for me? You're joking right?"

"Not really. Mom says God moves in mysterious ways. You already know our bethel believes sex is one of God's highest sacraments, right?"

"Yeah, Lennie made an off-hand comment about it. Do you believe that's true," she asked me with a strange look on her face.

Admitting I did, I went on with my attempt at enlightenment.

"A sacrament brings grace to those participating in it or receiving it. Grace is the infinite love, mercy, favor and goodwill shown to mankind by God. Those are basic tenets of all religions, not just mine," I said,

trying to keep my explanation simple.

"If you accept sex is a sacrament it follows that sex, even casual sex without any meaningful commitment, bestows God's grace on the participants and receiving God's grace puts you on the path to salvation. So yeah, fucking my Dad, even fucking me for that matter, could get St. Peter to admit you into heaven. Even the fallen angels will ascend again one day."

"Wow, I'll be honest with you Jake," she said, in the tone you would use to talk with a backward child who belief in Santa Claus you didn't want to shatter. "I'm not sure what to make of all that. You have to admit that's a really unusual take on things you've got there. When I was a little girl we went to a Baptist Church and the preacher never mentioned we could screw our way to Heaven, just the opposite. Harlots like me were doomed to an afterlife of torment in a smoke pit of fire and bubbling brimstone. Maybe I ought to come by your bethel one Sunday, bring Debbie with me."

"Now you're making fun on me and what I believe," I said, annoyed at Toddie's cavalier attitude toward my faith.

"Teasing you a little maybe, making fun of you, no. But you have to admit your church..."

"Bethel," I corrected her a little less tartly.

"Sorry, your bethel has a very different way of looking at things. I've never heard any other denomination preach the virtues of uninhibited sex, let alone tout it as a sure way into heaven. There's got to be something here you're not telling me because otherwise every loose woman in the county would be filling up the pews on Sunday," she said, in a more accepting manner than before.

"There's more to it than just sex. Sex just puts you on the path; you have to choose to make the journey."

"And what does making the journey involve?"

"Obedience, humility, submission but not chastity," I

said with a grin, my temporary disgruntlement receding. As with all new converts to a belief system I wanted to spread the word, have others validate my decision by making the same choice themselves.

Well practiced by now, I quickly gave Toddie the basic outline of how woman's subservience and obedience to their man redeemed them from original sin while their willingness to obey in all things preserves their souls and their place in the kingdom.

"See, I knew there was a catch. Don't be offended but I don't see myself as the submissive type. But Debbie, yeah, now she's more the sort of woman you're after. Loves to be tied up and you can't get much more submissive than that."

I had to laugh at Toddie's comment. It was clear she was trying to atone for her earlier error by changing the topic. "Huh, she never had me tie her up. Sounds like it would have been fun too. What'd I do wrong?"

A mischievous grin split Toddie's face. "You just weren't around her long enough. Another date or two and she'd have been bringing out the silk ties for sure."

"Come to think of it," I said, folding towels while I talked, confident our conversation about religion was over, "I haven't put my big thing up your little ass yet either. And that sounds like fun too. What am I doing wrong there?"

Toddie stopped packing the folded towels into the bags, long enough to stick out her tongue and blow me a raspberry. "Same answer Jake. You just haven't been around me long enough. But then we still have the rest of the weekend to ahead of us."

The greatest joy that weekend wasn't the joy of sex but the simple yet ethereal pleasure of sleeping with Toddie in the same bed, lying nestled against each other, our arms and legs tangled in a lovers' knot, our breathing gradually deepening, our heartbeats slowing and lengthening until they became soft throbs as we welcomed the visions from Morpheus.

It was having someone warm to hold during the cool morning hours, beads of sweat intermingling; our bodies conforming to the same shape then pulling away only to rejoin in a different configuration, instinctively embracing each other.

It was the breaking of the day, its radiance slowly entering the room, gray at first then pink then silver; each chromatic change illuminating more of Toddie, her eyes, her nose, her face shaded by damp tendrils of red hair, its tips stuck to the corners of her soft pouting mouth.

It was the moment when we first woke up, looking at each other through bleary eyes, heads turned to the side to minimize "morning breath" but happy we had "walked in the ways of our hearts."

Most of all my first night with Toddie, so new and wonderful, taught me the wisdom behind the question in Ecclesiastes, "If two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm?"

The Bible wasn't talking about physical warmth but the warming of the soul, molding one another's dreams, holding each other's fragile hopes in our hands, sharing joy and touching others' hearts.

Of course, all that sex didn't hurt either.