

# Jack

The seduction of carol  
the sequel to ['Lost'](#)

by eo

© by Erin O'Rielly October, 2004

email: [eorielly@yahoo.com](mailto:eorielly@yahoo.com)

---

## Author's Note:

['Lost'](#) was the best received story I have ever written. As an author, my vision of the story ended with its conclusion. Not so said the readers - we want more - a sequel please. So, I set out to write a sequel knowing that the task would be difficult...I would have to come up with a story that would equal 'Lost', satisfy the reader's need for a happy ending and be true to my original vision for the story. Hopefully this story will do just that.

To fully understand this story you might want to read 'Lost'.

## Disclaimers:

This is a story about women and implies sexual situations between them although nothing graphic is portrayed. If it is illegal in the state, province or country in which you live; or if you are under the age of 18, please close this story and find something else to read.

This story contains no strong language, violence, although there is some emotional hurt and discomfort.

The events portrayed in this story are fictional and any resemblance to actual events and/or people is purely coincidental.

## Acknowledgement:

Thank you to my friends who took the time to read and critique 'Jack', their feedback was invaluable. Therefore I dedicate this story to Julie, Karen, Kay, Kim and T.

---

## Prologue

She stirs as the night of dreams that were disjointed yet connected comes to an end. Opening her eyes, she scans the area wondering where she is and why she is there. *Oh yes, I remember* she thinks, *I am waiting*. Then she lowers her head

onto the soft blanket of fur and falls back again into a fitful, dream filled sleep.

\* \* \*

## Jack

Standing here in the back of the very auditorium where I first saw her I can still hear her voice. Every fiber of my being screamed out as I listened to her speech and when I saw her I knew I had come home.

I understand that you are wondering why I didn't make Carol my own and bed her.

*She sighs deeply.*

Hmm, I think you need to know more about me before I answer that question.

*She takes a seat in the vacant auditorium as a far away look is in her eyes.*

Yes,

*She is shaking her head up and down;*

...you need to understand everything...

\* \* \*

I was born Jacqueline Marie Reinhart the baby in a family of three children. My mother nicknamed me Jaci, pronounced Jackie, because she said it sounded the same but was spelled differently and gave me a distinction from everyone else. I thought it was dumb but what's a kid gonna do? So I held on to the ridiculous spelling until I went away to college where I quickly became Jack.

Early on I realized the power of intelligence married to charm and used it to my advantage continually. When I was eight months old I began walking and I am pretty sure a week later I was running 'cause I've never stopped or looked back.

*She laughs derisively as a memory floats in her mind.*

I can remember in grade school being the most popular kid and the pleasure I got from seeing the looks on the other kids faces when I was always picked first. It was a mix of happiness, envy and hate but leaned more towards the happy side as even then I was a master of manipulation. All through those years I can remember people commenting on how grounded and nice I was and how I didn't realize my beauty or charm...yeah right, if they only knew.

*After a small laugh, her face becomes somber as she shakes her head.*

It was all just a show of smoke and mirrors for deep inside I thrived on being number one and watching the 'little people' suffer for it.

*Her lips press hard against each other and her jaw clenches.*

Even now...even now that Carol is in my life I still enjoy watching others flounder in my wake.

*Again she sighs deeply.*

She has changed me you know...she really has; it's just that old ways are hard to let go of.

*She exhales and stares towards the front of the auditorium. After a long silence where she seems to be lost in a world of her own she begins to speak again.*

I always knew I was gay. I can remember in school all the girls going gaga over this or that actor and secretly inside my eyes were fixed on the starlet or the sexy woman rock star. Of course no one knew after all I was a master of deception and skilled at hiding my true feelings.

*She shakes her head a little then laughs heartily.*

\* \* \*

My family had a lake house that we called 'The Upper Forty'. We would go there every chance we could and the summers would find my mother, sister, brother and me staying there full time with my father commuting on the weekends.

*She smiles fondly at what are apparently wonderful memories.*

It was during a long hot summer I had my first 'lesbian' encounter. Sally Jansen and her family had bought the house next door to ours. >From the moment I saw her my mind screamed out that we were on the same wave length.

Sally had bright red hair which caused her to be teased to no end. She was about two inches shorter than my five nine with a body that although not fat it was not particularly lean or muscular. Her face was full of freckles that often reminded me of my idea of what Huckleberry Finn or Tom Sawyer looked like.

*She laughs.*

Of course, to me she was better looking than any boy in reality or fiction. Soon we became fast friends..well I wanted her so that meant friendship to me. I had always been used to getting my way and taking her wouldn't be any different.

I introduced her to my 'lake' friends and we would often all hang out together swimming, boating, skiing and getting into trouble. When our parents were away, we would all meet up and have a party. Oh, those parties were the stuff legends are made of and Sally fit in perfectly. At one of the parties, we all played a game of dare and one of Sally's dares was to kiss a girl. I knew she would pick me 'cause everyone always did. Her lips were so soft and the kiss had my hormones screaming for more. Of course, I protested but the look in Sally's eyes said that she wanted more.

*Her eyes drift off seemingly making contact with the seat in front of her as if she were mesmerized by the steel grey color.*

Um,

*She says her lips turn inwards and press tightly together before her eyes once again focus on the seat in front of her and seems to be studying a scratch intently. Finally she speaks again.*

I can remember how hot and bright the day had been and we all decided to meet up on my swimming dock after dinner to knock back a few beers. Tony Pagallia was there along with Sally, Chrissie Baldwin, Kevin Holman and Ronnie Blankenship. The beer flowed freely and we were all laughing

and kidding around when Tony picked me up and jumped into the water with me in his arms. I am sure all the other kids were shocked when this happened as no one ever dared fool with me like that before. After all, I was Jaci the one everyone wanted to be like and with. No one dare incur my wrath and it certainly seemed as though Tony was doing just that!

As I surfaced, I screamed out, "What the hell are you doing to me, Tony?" I was pissed and looked around to see his face all smiling and full of amusement. I shook my head so that my long dark hair created a spray of water.

"You look sexy when you do that," Tony told me as he came closer to me.

Treading the water to keep myself upright I lifted my hand out of the water and slapped his face. "Never do that to me again!" I screamed.

He then wrapped his arms around me and began kissing me. I know I heard a collective gasp from the onlookers above us.

Once I struggled free, it was my turn as I began slapping him. "Don't you ever touch me again!" I screamed before swimming for the ladder on the dock.

Tony continued to tread water and for some reason his face still showed amusement until he heard his friend Ronnie, "man, what the hell did you do that for? Shit you must be drunk or on crack or something!"

Soon, everyone but Sally and I were piled in Kevin's boat heading away from the dock.

Sally could feel my anger and tried to comfort me, but that wasn't going to happen. No, I was planning my revenge; sweetly of course, Tony would pay for his violation of me. He would pay dearly I would see to that.

*She stops speaking for a moment collecting her thoughts.*

That was the first time anyone had challenged me and I could feel my body churning with anger and indignation. I could feel the warmth of Sally's body as she sat close to me. *She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.* She was so close

that her thigh lightly touched mine and my rage began to be replaced with a want.

*Her hand moves and gently touches her right thigh.*

Our eyes met and I saw what I now know as the 'familiar want' in her eyes. I leaned into her and kissed her waiting lips. She returned the kiss and soon we were sharing our first real intimate kiss. Suddenly I heard the roar of a jet ski off in the distance and pulled away. I took her hand and said, 'let's go' before we jumped as one into the water and began swimming the hundred yards or so back to the boat dock on the shore.

Once we reached the ladder on the dock, we stopped and there, under the pilings, we kissed again.

*She touches her lips and smiles.*

I can still remember those lips and my first real kisses.

*She goes silent for a long period then shakes her head.*

Anyway...

*She says coming out of her silence,*

...we climbed up the ladder and headed for the boathouse. Once inside we fell into each other's arms our kisses getting deeper and more powerful. Soon we were laid out on a tarp that was used for covering the boat in the winter. Our bodies ground together as kisses found their way to ears, necks and other exposed parts of our bodies. I wanted her so naturally I began to untie her bikini top.

"Stop!" she said as she took my arm and pushed it away before distancing herself.

I was confused but stopped. "Why," I asked her, "don't you want this?"

"This is wrong!" She was heading for the door.

Putting my hormones in check, I looked at her, my anger rising for I wanted her...well, not her particularly, but I wanted the experience. "If you leave don't bother to ever

come back," I spat out in frustration. She left and for **that**, she would pay.

*She snorts softly.*

I knew of my power in getting my way and I knew of her insecurities. I would play on that to get exactly what I wanted. For the next week, I wouldn't talk to her or have anything to do with her.

*She laughs.*

Of course, she finally came around to my way of thinking. The first time we had sex we were in the boat house again where we fashioned a makeshift bed. We both fumbled with clothes and figured where hands, legs and bodies fit best. But, my goodness, did I enjoy myself; I guess Sally did too but that really wasn't my concern.

My active imagination and avid reading led Sally to accuse me of having had sex before. "Jaci, you told me you never did this before!" she accused.

Pulling her near again I whispered, "Darlin' you are my first and are such an inspiration that I surprised even myself."

She pushed me away. "I need to go, my folks will be wondering where I am."

She stood up and began dressing; the light streaming through the boathouse window silhouetted her body. I wanted more and would get what I sought. Standing up and moving close to her I stroked her face and I began kissing her neck. "We have plenty of time," I whispered moving my lips close to hers before capturing them between my teeth.

"Jaci, we can't," she weakly protested before kissing my lips hard.

Inwardly I smiled for I know that she would do my bidding and be a willing participant whenever I wanted her. By the end of summer, Sally was professing her love for me wanting to know when and where we could see each other again.

I smiled my sweetest smile before telling her, "Never."

A look of panic crossed her face. "You don't mean that...not after all we've been to each other..." seeing the look on my face she continued, "noooo, you can't do this," she whined.

Shaking my head, I laughed derisively. "Sally, the summer is over and we had a great time together, but it is time we both move on." Her sobs became wails and I moved in to stop her. "Listen, you're off to your school and I'm off to mine we have different lives it will never work, don't you see that?" I moved in, lifted her face and wiped her tears away with my thumbs. "Sally, you are so beautiful. You deserve someone better than me...someone who can share your life."

Her watery blue eyes were pleading with me. "We can make it work, Jaci. I love you so much. Please."

Even back then I hated whiners and people that begged. I remember clenching my jaw as I saw the tears and heard her plaintiff cries. She just didn't understand that I was done with her and that was that!

"But, I don't love you...I don't even know what love is." I pulled her closer and held her tight while stroking her hair. "Sally, you know I'm right don't you?"

I felt her head shake.

"What do you say I give you a call when I get home? Maybe we can meet." Of course, I did not intend to ever see her again, but this would placate her until my family leaves for the summer.

"Really, you will? Oh, Jaci, I know we can make it work somehow." She was elated.

That was my cue to have my way with her one last time and I made sure it was so explosive she would be left wanting more. It was then that I discovered the power sexual encounters could have for me.

I never called her and the next summer when she arrived, I blew her off and never spoke to her again. Yes, it was cruel, but she had served her usefulness to me and that was all I really cared about back then.

\* \* \*



*She pauses, rubs her eyes and takes a deep breath before continuing.*

In college, I became 'Jack' and found a completely new world open before me. The women were numerous and so pliable that I found myself inventing games on how to lure straight women into my bed.

*She laughs.*

It was so easy! You wouldn't believe the number of women who react sexually to attention and a few compliments.

*Her laugh becomes more scathing than humorous.*

They all thought forever.

*She shakes her head negatively.*

Yeah right! Forever was a word that didn't belong in my vocabulary!

After I graduated, I was able to get a job with a small urban social services organization. Being who I was I knew I could make a difference in the lives of all I touched.

*She becomes very serious.*

It was during that time that I came to the realization of what it would take to really succeed. I would need to do more, learn more, make better contacts and make better choices.

*She laughs.*

I know what your thinking - how could someone like me who is so narcissistic actually be interested in the betterment of mankind or anyone one else for that matter.

*Shaking her head as sadness fills her eyes before she continues.*

When I was growing up I used to talk with Audrey Conklin, the lady next door. She always seemed interested in me and besides, as I got older I realized just how really cute she was.

*A small smile plays around her lips. Well, she was!*

Anyway, when I was thirteen I went over to her house to return her punch bowl my mom had borrowed. As was my habit, I just walked in; after all I had been doing that for most of my life. I found her sitting at the kitchen table crying.

"What's wrong", I asked. She only buried her face further in her hands.

Tentatively I placed the bowl on the table next to her and turned to leave, but something held me there. Going back over to her, I gave her a hug which was completely out of character for me, but it seemed the right thing to do at the time. She looked up at me; her deeply bruised face seemed to plead with me to stay so I sat down. Looking at her, I noticed her arms had purple finger marks...*big fingers* was all I could think. It seemed to me that I had been sitting there for hours. It probably was only a short time, but in that time something happened to me...I felt her pain.

*Sadness invades her features as a lone tear escapes down her cheek. She brushes it away then sighs deeply.*

Six weeks later they found her broken and battered body in her living room after the police received a domestic violence call. She died three days later.

*She stares off into the air, grief evident in her eyes. Again, she wipes away errant tears.*

I vowed I would do whatever I could to see that never happened again. I can still hear the wailing of the ambulance's sirens as they carried her away. It just wasn't right...

*She trails off and her head bows as she tries to collect her emotions.*

I promised I would do all in my power to prevent **that** happening again and never failed on a promise yet. At first, I thought law enforcement, but realized that they only came along after the fact. I needed to be there before it happened to make sure it didn't.

*Her passion is evident in her voice.*

Sorry about that. I thought it was important you knew that about me so you can understand where I'm coming from.

It was during my first job that I decided the best way to make a difference was to get into a government agency. They were, after all, the policy makers and I felt that through tough comprehensive standards social workers could have the tools to make a difference and save lives. Save the Audrey Conklin's of the world.

*She sighs. Her face is full of what can only be described as being in deep reflection.*

If I was going to do that, I needed to go back to school and get higher degrees so I enrolled in graduate school.

\* \* \*

Now, I don't want you to think during this time I lived a celibate life...oh far from it...very far from it. I dated many and bedded many more but for me I needed to have someone there to take care of my needs. I was at a point in my life when I was tired of coming home to an empty apartment and since I was spending most of my time studying, it would be a bonus for me to have someone there with a clean house and a hot meal.

*She laughs.*

It was tricky to find just the right person who was needy enough that they would do anything just to be with me. Casey Higgins was perfect.

*She sits up straighter and a feral smile crosses her face.*

I mean perfect! And, most important of it all, her father held a high level government job. To be frank, the first thing that attracted me to her was her father.

*Her laugh comes from deep inside this time.*

No, I wasn't interested in him, far from it.

*She chuckles.*

My goal in life was to work at the Department of Health and Human Services and eventually be the director. When I heard

about a grad student whose father was a government employee, I made it my business to find out exactly what he did. Once I discovered he held a high position she became my target. The woman's father would be my perfect 'in' to get the job I coveted with the.

*She shrugs her shoulders and lets out a slight breath.*

Casey was the means to an end. If I hadn't found out about her father's connections, I doubt that I would have even noticed her. She was rather plain looking with straggly hair and a soft body, but we both had the same profession and I could at least bounce ideas off her and get a decent response. Casey and I dated on and off and I played it very cool one week calling her then waiting a month before I called again. With the passing of time, I could tell she was falling into my web. Fortunately, her father was not adverse to her lifestyle and welcomed me into the family with open arms.

You see, I was the master of deception and charm so no one ever realized my true intentions. Just before I finished my thesis and was about to graduate I asked her to move in with me and become my partner. Of course, she readily agreed and six months later, I was hired in a mid level position at HHS. Everything was falling into place and for me life was good. As for Casey, she thought she had won the prize and I certainly wasn't going to tell her any differently.

Casey was a good partner she cleaned, cooked and even did the ironing. I couldn't ask for more. She was nothing special in bed, but I didn't mind for I could always find a willing bedmate when I was out of town or in town for that matter.

*Her face scrunches up in disdain.*

Faithful was not a word in my vocabulary then. At that time, I wanted to get ahead. I had my sights set on being the head of HHS and the only way to do that was to work twenty-four seven. I liked coming home to a hot meal, clean house, clean sheets and a smiling face so my arrangement with Casey was perfect. She was malleable enough and I knew she would always be there; after all I was Jack and always got what and who I wanted.

\* \* \*

We had been living together for ten years when an opportunity came up for us both to attend the same conference in Dallas. I was to be a keynote speaker and Casey was interested in attending several of the workshops since this was a worldwide convention drawing the top in the social and welfare fields. Each filled with new and innovative ideas for social workers. For me this was probably the most important event I ever attended. The wealth of knowledge and expertise would be unparalleled and I was just the sponge to soak it all in. If I was going to move farther in the department than a deputy, I would need an edge to make a significant mark in the field.

*She smiles sadly.*

I can remember thinking to myself that the trip would be life changing for all I could get from it.

*Her head turns as she watches the early arrivals for the ceremony.*

I had no idea just how prophetic that thought would be for my life did change dramatically at that convention.

*She sighs as her eyes close and she becomes very quiet.*

Sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself. Getting back to Casey...the past year of our relationship had been rocky for us because she began demanding more and more of my time and I was unwilling to give it to her. I liked things the way they were and intended not to change anything especially for her.

I had hoped that the trip to Dallas would be a time to cajole her into seeing things my way. After all, she would have my undivided attention for five full days and that was what she wanted. For me it would be difficult to satisfy her needs for my time, but I would try for I was used to her and liked all that she did for me. I guess in some way it was love on my part...I know it was on hers.

I remember how pleased she was when we entered our hotel suite. She beamed because she thought she had me all to herself and to be truthful that is what I planned on doing.

*She shakes her head and smirks.*

Really it was! I had no idea what the fates had for me there in Dallas, Texas. It all started out innocently enough.

*She pauses and clears her throat.*

The day had come for my speech and I was engrossed in preparations for that when Casey tried to interrupt my chain of thought...

"Jack, I want to catch the lecture in auditorium B," Casey told me trying to get my attention. "Are you listening to me?"

I listened to the drone of her voice while trying to concentrate on the notes for my speech. Finally, when she tugged on my arm I replied, "Yes, I'm listening, but I need to finish this, Casey. Can you give me a minute?"

"Take all the time you need, Jack, I'm heading over there now come and find me when you're done."

Although Casey's words sounded understanding, I knew she is seething inside. As hard as I tried this trip wasn't working out the way she planned. Because of my position with the HHS, the demands for my time were such that I couldn't wine and dine her and therein laid the rub. In three days her demeanor had become so bitchy that I hated to be around her.

*She sighs.*

Actually, it probably was my fault, as I really wanted to be out and about and not stuck with only her. I know that doesn't sound nice, but at the time it was important for me to be out there listening and understanding what the attendees were saying about their jobs. If I was going to come up with a plan to revamp the system, I needed to know the lay of the land so to speak.

As for Casey, nothing that I did seemed to make her happy anymore and at that moment, I really was fed up with her whining. Nevertheless, I did care for her and really didn't want anything to permanently change so I did what I could to make our relationship work. I finished my review of my notes I headed to the auditorium and Casey thinking, 'Maybe tonight we can have an early dinner and then spend the night in each other's arms.' It had been a long time since we did that...made love.

Opening the door to the auditorium, I heard *'If we ignore what has happened in the past we never will recognize what is familiar about now...'* The voice was like music to my ears beckoning me to the owner. Fixing my eyes on the speaker, tingles seared my body as somewhere in the deepest recesses of my soul I knew her. I was mesmerized by the stranger and stood against the back wall of the room spellbound before making my way down the aisle to sit as close to her as I could.

The woman next to me glared at me as if I was invading her space. I remember thinking that whoever the speaker was she must have cast her spell on others too. Finally, she stopped speaking and began fielding questions. The hands raised were numerous and the woman deftly answered each one. I wished I had something to ask her, but for the life of me I couldn't think of anything to say. The questions ended and she was instantly surrounded by attendees. With my eyes fixed on her, I made my way towards the front of the auditorium. I wanted, no needed, to speak with the woman.

At last, I was standing there close enough to her to feel the heat of her body. I couldn't see her face clearly and my heart skipped a beat as I knew in the deepest parts of my soul that I was where I was suppose to be. I knew her! There was no doubt that we have been one in the past. The feeling was so overwhelming that I felt dizzy and exhilarated at the same time. She was the one...definitely **the one!** She was beautiful...absolutely gorgeous! She had shortish blonde hair, with fair skin and a body that I would love to feel close to mine. Although I was right there next to her I could not seem to make eye contact with her so I couldn't see her eye color. Ah...

*Her hand is resting over her heart and a serene look is on her face.*

It still gives me goose bumps to think about that moment. Tentatively I reached out to touch her and just as she was turning towards me I heard, "Jack, there you are. I said B not D! Don't you ever listen?"

The bitch was back! Rolling my eyes, I turned around and saw Casey standing there, but her presence didn't register in my brain. So, I spun back around to the woman only to see her retreating towards the exit. I felt bereft and the feeling of euphoria was replaced with one of great sorrow.

*She is visibly shaken by the memory.*

Once again, I hear Casey speaking but I don't seem to understand her words. Finally, I feel a hand on my shoulder as it firmly spins me around.

"What is going on with you?" Casey demanded. "I've been standing her talking to you and you act as if I don't exist! Some great vacation! Why are you in this auditorium?"

I know I was looking at Casey and hearing her words, but for me they seemed like a foreign language. "Do you know the name of the woman who just spoke?" I asked her.

"How the hell would I know?" she barked at me. "Probably some nobody just filling up time."

Those words I did hear and I felt rage towards the woman who had shared my life for ten years. "You are wrong, Casey, she was definitely somebody...a very powerful speaker with an equally powerful message. And, obviously I am not alone in that thinking since the auditorium was packed."

I bent over and picked up a discarded program. *Carol Barngate 'Lessons of the Past - A look at how we can use past events to predict the outcome of abuse. The ethical and emotional support for battered women'* I read the name repeatedly envisioning her face and hearing her voice. I knew I must find her and speak to her...she was my home.

"Jack, are you coming or not?" Casey's grating voice made me feel like I had just gotten aluminum foil between my teeth.

"Yeah, I'm right behind you."

\* \* \*

Once I returned to DC and my office I made it my mission to find out all about Carol Barngate. My position with the HHC made it rather easy to track her down. It was then that I began my preparations for meeting, bedding and making one Carol Barngate mine.

*She crosses her arms across her chest seemingly to close out the world.*



Her credentials were first rate and I wasn't surprised to learn she had quite a good reputation among other social workers. She had written many papers analyzing methods and practices that made the job social workers do more tedious and less effective. I read everything ten times over. I was so haunted and consumed by her that I couldn't eat or sleep. It was such an odd feeling for me for I had never been so taken by anyone before. After all, I was Jack the master manipulator, the one always in charge and yet, there I was absolutely obsessed with a woman I hadn't even met.

*She laughs.*

Do you get the irony of the situation?

Casey, of course noticed, and would harp on me all the time about closing her out. "If you'd only let me in, Jack...I'm not the enemy you know."

*She sighs deeply.*

How could I let her in? What would I say? 'I found the one and you're not it.'

I needed a plan - a way of bringing Carol Barngate into my life. Suddenly it was there staring me right in the face - my plans for redesigning the system and her concepts of making the job work for the clients. It was perfect.

*She laughs dryly.*

Of course, I needed a working plan to redesign everything and if it was to be done right, that would take years.

My mission had become Carol Barngate and nothing would stand in my way. Over the next four years, Casey and I drifted apart but I really didn't care because for me she was no longer part of the equation. We'd go through the motions of our lives, living together and although she tried to make it work, it didn't. One day I came home during lunch to pick up a journal I had left behind and found Casey and some woman in my bed.

*She has a look of resignation.*

I probably should have gotten mad or shown that somehow, it mattered but I didn't. Instead, I turned around and walked

out the door. Later I called and told her to be gone before I got home.

\* \* \*

Finally, after years of preparation, my plan was ready to be activated. By that time, I knew everything there was to know about Carol Barngate. Her eyes are green; she is five foot six and wears corrective lenses. I also knew her home address, banking accounts and what perfume she preferred.

*She inhales.*

Allure. That was her fragrance and I would spray the pillow each night with the scent dreaming she was there with me. Oh, as you have guessed I had it bad. Do you know how stupid I felt doing that? But, I had to; it was a deep, overpowering need I had to be near her in any way imaginable. I was in love with a dream albeit real, she was only a dream to me then.

I also knew that every Wednesday she would have lunch at a small Italian restaurant named Vinny's with Nancy Delarosa her friend and immediate supervisor. That fact would factor into my plan so I could innocently meet Carol.

The first person I contacted was the city's mayor whom I approached with the idea of one of his health workers cooperating with the HHS in streamlining the system. Of course he was interested why shouldn't he be it was a feather in his cap. I purposely set up a meeting with the mayor, the director of health services, Oscar Barony and his assistant, Nancy Delarosa for a Wednesday morning. I was certain I would be able to charm my way into having lunch with the Delarosa woman and Carol Barngate.

The meeting was interesting as the mayor strutted about puffing himself up with self importance and implications that the whole thing was his idea. The director was not too much better, but at least he listened to what I had to say. I made eye contact with Nancy as if to say 'help me' and she responded with a smile.

*Jack laughs and shakes her head.*

Oh, I had to play it cool and not let on what my real intentions were, but she was so easy. 'Of course I would

have lunch with her' and 'oh how sorry I was to intrude on her plans'.

*Her laugh is hearty and genuine.*

It was my plan after all and it was working perfectly.

Panic doesn't even begin to describe what I felt when I walked into Vinny's. Casually I spoke with the proprietor all the while my eyes covertly following Nancy's progress towards my goal. Seeing Carol sitting there smiling fondly at her friend set millions of butterflies all flapping their wings at once in my stomach. Oh, I was acting so very casual lingering in my conversation with the man all the while surreptitiously watching Carol. For the first time in my life, I felt unsure of myself.

*She inhales deeply.*

When our eyes actually met, I was lost in the warm glow of her soft dark green eyes. I extended my hand to her and when she took it, every nerve ending in my body exploded with excitement. I had actually met my quarry and inside I was as doubtful of my abilities as I had been so sure of them all my life. But, I did regain my composure and put on the charm that had gotten me so far in life and once again, it didn't let me down.

*She focuses on a distant place seemingly trying to gather her thoughts.*

You know, that when you long for something and then get it there is always the possibility that it will never live up to the fantasy you created. Not so with Carol. Although it was our first encounter, it was as if we had known each other forever.

*She shakes her head.*

All my life I always was the user...the player who never let anyone in to see the real me. For me, the hunt and the game were foremost and the individuals involved in my sport unimportant. Yet, there I was sitting with this remarkable woman feeling completely naked and open. Even more surprising it didn't seem to bother me or send off alarms of protection.

Still the game was on. I recognized in her eyes the want...the need...I had seen it often enough before. I knew that she would be mine it was just a matter of the right time and place. Oh, I played it to the hilt, manipulating every situation to my advantage. When we hadn't eaten our lunch I made plans with her to have dinner. I knew she was married and would have to make a choice, but I was confident I would win.

*She becomes pensive.*

I am not proud of what I did next for it was cruel, but you need to understand this was how I had lived my life and at that moment, it seemed the right thing to do.

I had told Carol I would call her after my meeting with the mayor and other officials and set up a time and place for dinner. When the meeting ran over I could have called her, but I felt a power play was in order so I blew her off. I can remember standing looking out the window of the conference room and seeing Carol cross the street towards the parking garage. Inwardly I was smiling because I knew at that moment I was in charge. She would go home wondering what had happened why I didn't call.

*Again her eyes drift to a far away place.*

I knew her home number and could have called her there, but I wanted her to spend the night thinking about me, agonizing over the lost opportunity and wanting me. I left a message at her work number knowing that once she heard it all her hateful thoughts about me would end and her interest in me would pique her even more. I was, after all, the mistress of the sport.

*She chuckles.*

I had played this game a thousand times. Why would I participate any differently then? Carol deserved better and I knew that in my heart, but I wasn't into listening to my heart - I hadn't in the past so why start. And, yet, I knew I loved her.

*Her voice is pensive and holds a measure of sadness.*

The game was on and I played it to perfection. She would be mine there was no doubt in my mind about that fact. I had

taken women away from men before and Carol's situation didn't bother me at all.

*She pauses as her hands rest in her lap and her eyes narrow.*

Although, I do remember feeling twinges of jealousy when she received the flowers from her husband. It was such an odd feeling for I had never felt jealous of anyone or anything in my life. Looking back I can now see that she was the first person to change this narcissist into a real caring person. Well, she actually wasn't the first...my neighbor, Audrey was, but that was different. Audrey gave me a purpose where Carol, I later realized, gave me life.

*She pushes her back hard against the seat and sits straighter.*

The game was going perfectly. I wanted her to have the best so I arranged for her to have a room in the Hotel Monaco on Capitol Hill at my expense. I of course had the room next to hers, but she didn't know that for it was all part of the game.

I picked her up at the airport and it was there that I made my first move on her. I gave her a big hug then took her arm as we walked to the baggage claim area. When she didn't rebuke my advances, I knew my objective was in sight. When I asked her if she was ready to go and her response was, 'Yes, ready to go with you anywhere,' I knew all I needed to do was reel her in and I would do just that after the symphony.

Once we arrived at the hotel, I was pleased to see she liked the room. It was then that the game got interesting as she began to flirt with me. I have had women come on to me enough to know when they are very interested in more. Carol was no exception and I remember inwardly smiling in victory. When we kissed for the first time something strange happened to me...I felt tenderness and love. For me it had always been the game and the win...most importantly the win. I never entered an encounter where I felt anything for the other person except lust. Yet, when her lips touched mine, my whole body reacted not in lust, but in a feeling I had never felt before - I felt peace.

*A calm expression covers her face for a moment before she sighs.*

With that one kiss, I knew she was mine although I didn't realize at the time how much I wanted that to be. I could tell she wanted more and it would have been so easy to take her right then and there but something held me back.

*She raises an eyebrow.*

I remember thinking 'there is always tonight I need to let the fire burn a bit longer.' I wonder if I had known then there would never be a 'tonight' would I have acted at that moment and taken her? Actually, knowing what I do now I am glad I didn't act for it would have been a disaster.

*She shakes her head and laughs.*

I know, I know, you are thinking that I must have been daft to not bed her; to not carry my plan out to its conclusion. After all, I had spent five years on developing a way to find, meet and bed Carol Barngate and just when victory was in sight I dropped the ball. Bet you think I choked that I fell in love and became all noble and selfless. Nope, that didn't happen, well at least the noble and selfless part. I did fall in love with Carol from the moment I first heard her voice. So, why didn't I claim my love? Why didn't I steal her away from her husband and make her my own? You need to understand the rest to appreciate why I did what I did. Why our love at that time could never be.

*A lone tear trickles down her cheek.*

Our dinner date had been wonderful and for the first time we shared that we both found the other familiar as though we had never met before. I had told her about seeing her in Dallas at the SWOA and how I knew her first by her voice. A song about meeting someone and knowing them kept running through my mind, but for the life of me, I couldn't find the words. I knew if I could sing it everything I was feeling would be explained. But, it never came.

*She becomes quite still and her face is devoid of all emotion as she sits as if in a trance. After a long pause, she speaks again her voice filled with wonder.*

We were sitting next to each other listening to the plaintive sounds of the Pastoral by Beethoven. From time to time through the performance, Carol would reach over and touch my arm or hand. Once, when she touched me and it set

off all kinds of bells and whistles. My body was on high alert and I craved to feel her body next to mine only to suddenly have the strangest feeling come over me. It was as if I were in a dream and Carol was calling out to me...holding out her hand begging me to come to her. Kismet...perhaps, but it seemed to be more.

It was in that moment I knew we had done this before many times. And, as I sat there with Carol's hand lightly resting on mine, knowing that tonight was the night I would make her my own, terror struck my heart and panic filled my mind. Flooding into my brain were all the past lives of my taking Carol away from another to make her mine. Then there was something else...there was disaster, death and bereavement. Suddenly, I understood the game; I understood how it needed to be played for I had played it many times before with Carol. As the music reached a crescendo, I felt myself shaking inside. When I heard the plaintive sounds of the of the symphony's familiar theme I knew what had to be done...what I needed to do to make things right.

*Tears are rolling down her cheeks.*

I knew that if I continued the cycle, Carol and I would be lovers in this lifetime but doomed to repeat the mistake in future lifetimes. For, in all our past lives, I had taken what wasn't mine to take and for that, I was sentence to lifetimes of repeating the same game until I got it right. The first words I ever heard Carol speak echoed in my mind, 'If we ignore what has happened in the past we never will recognize what is familiar about now...' and I understood what those words meant. She was familiar to me for we have walked this path before yet we never recognized the mistake until it was too late.

*Her eyes roll upwards.*

I remember wondering to myself just how many lifetimes we had wasted because of my bravado and stupid insistence on having things my way. And I knew in my heart it had always been me...I was always the one that took. In some ways, I think fate brought me to that auditorium at the exact moment Carol spoke those words. Somewhere in the universe cosmic tumblers were trying to tell me to listen to her words and learn from them. I think that is why I never forgot them and why from time to time they would haunt my subconscious. A lesson was there to be learned if I would only listen.

*She leans her head back and rests it against the seat back.*

Once I understood the powerful message, I knew I could never take Carol away from her family. And, somewhere deep inside me I knew I could never share the message with Carol. She had to find it out on her own or we would be destined to repeat this life over and over again. The problem then was how to stop what I had started...the seduction of Carol.

After the symphony we returned to her room. She invited me in for a drink and I obliged her because although I knew we would not make love, I still needed to feel close to her. I know it was selfish, but I was weak. We kissed and it took all the strength I could muster to turn away and leave her there wanting more.

Instead of going to my room next door, I continued on to the elevator and out of the hotel. I needed relief and went to a local lesbian bar. Once inside I found myself searching for a Carol look a like but soon realized that only the real thing would do. It was so ironic that for the first time in my life I found myself feeling loyalty to someone.

Once back at the hotel I arranged for Carol's breakfast, undressed and flopped into bed. Although the walls in the old building were thick and soundproof I swore I could hear Carol sobbing.

*She closes her eyes and purses her lips.*

I remember thinking that I was responsible and wondering how was I ever going to undo the harm I had done.

\* \* \*

I remember standing in a conference room at the Department of Health and Human Services as the most pleasurable feeling invaded my body. Carol was there I knew it without actually seeing her. Just as I felt her sorrow of the night before I could feel her presence enter the room. When I found her beautiful dark emerald eyes I knew once again I was home. Her gaze pierced through all my defenses until it came to rest on my inner most being and I was not afraid. I welcomed her with an open heart.

Throughout the day I found myself drawn to her and would often pass by her and reach out and touch a shoulder, back



or arm. I needed to feel the connection; mostly I needed to feel for my heart had found what it had been aching for all my life. I realized that all the games, posturing and bluster of my life were a sham to hide the emptiness of my soul.

That night we went to a local night spot called Madam's Organ along with all the other symposium attendees. In reality, I wanted to spend the time with Carol only, but since I was in charge it was imperative that I make all the members feel important. When that slime ball Ron Cutbert made the gesture for me to sit next to him I felt revolution. Throughout the night, he leered at me and shot daggers at Carol.

*She laughs.*

Carol certainly put him in his place! Her abilities at playing and winning their little card game forced her to drink seven shots.

*She laughs again but this time it is exaggerated.*

I remember marveling at how well she could hold her liquor yet the drinking would give me a perfect excuse for not taking her to bed.

*Disgust fills her face.*

I know that I hurt her for she saw my refusal to make love with her as a sign of rejection. I remember after she stormed away from my car I sat there for a long while before I finally parked and went into the hotel. I went to her door wanting desperately to see her and explain yet something stopped me. I stood outside her door helplessly hearing her sobs and my heart and body ached with regret and sorrow. I wanted nothing more to knock down the door and take her as my own, but, that could not happen, not then, not ever.

*Shaking her head she laughs mockingly.*

Being noble is a bitch.

\* \* \*

I knew that although I wanted nothing more than to wile away the hours with Carol, it was necessary to conduct the

business that I had brought everyone together for. The next day was all business and I had everyone break down into pairs to tackle different aspects of their jobs. Again, as the day before, I am drawn to Carol and find myself often in her vicinity stealing glances and listening to the beautiful melody that I have come to know as her voice. At one point I actually touched her and could feel her body quiver at my touch. I remember feeling a deep sense of regret for my actions.

When our dinner arrived, I saw Carol bolt from the room and I was concerned for she hadn't spoken to me all day much less look in my direction. After she had been gone for five minutes I went to the ladies room to find her. As I opened the door, I could hear her sniffles and I knew she was crying. I berated myself again for causing this and decided at that moment it was time to share my epiphany with her.

*She is shaking her head positively.*

Yes, I would share the reason for seemingly to hurt her so badly. I waited until the meeting ended and when I saw Carol was the first to the door to leave, I spoke out. "Carol, could you give me a minute?"

She stood in front of me her eyes seemed to be searching my face and I wondered what I could say to make things right. She deserved to know, she needed to understand everything. Of course, the old Jack surfaced and with all the bravado I could muster, I asked what her problem was. I was not prepared for her cold reply or the fact that she intentionally moved back to create distance between us.

"It sure hurts and feels like rejection. Obviously, I misunderstood your actions. It will not happen again. Now if you don't mind I need to go!" The tears on her face were evident.

Her words pierced my heart but I knew she wouldn't go. After all, I was Jack, no one ever had turned me down, and Carol would be no different.

*She laughs.*

Was I ever wrong! She walked out on me!

Despite my momentary lapse back to the old Jack, I did hear her words and they broke my heart. She was hurting because of me. The sweet wonderful woman who gave my soul life was being destroyed by my rejection of her. She had to know! I needed to make it all better and vowed to do just that the next day.

\* \* \*

The group was gathered, but one was missing...Carol. Repeated calls to her room went unanswered and I became terrified something had happened to her. Leaving the group, I sped through the busy DC streets until I reached the hotel. Once I arrived in front of her door, I pounded loudly until I heard a stirring in the room. Finally, when she opened the door I was overwhelmed by what I saw. There she was all warm and tussled from sleep. Her blonde hair was all spiky as if Jacques, the nighttime hairdresser, had paid her a visit. And, much to my surprise and pleasure, she was completely naked.

"Are you okay?" I asked trying hard not to stare at her nipples that were definitely reacting to the change in temperature.

*A bold lusty laugh can be heard.*

She suddenly realized why I was there and spun around losing her balance. I caught her and found myself drowning in the need and want of her.

*She touches her lips with her long fingers.*

Our kisses at first were soft then progressed to hot and intense. The feel of her bare back under my finger tips only ignited my desire more and I knew that soon there would be no turning back.

When our long, intense kisses ended she pleaded with me to make love to her. Oh, how I wanted nothing more; how easy it would have been to lose myself in her forever. But, I could not let that happen yet, was reluctant to let her go. I couldn't really blame her for pushing away from me or berating my intentions. The anger on her face was evident, but for me, the hurt was more noticeable and I knew it was because of me.

Once again, I decided I needed to let her know the truth. "Carol we need to talk. Will you have dinner with me tonight? I promise to answer all your questions."

Her reaction was understandable. "Questions, I don't have any, Jack. You've made your feelings perfectly clear; there is no need for explanations or to have dinner." The sight of her tears ripped at my heart. "Look at this," she said pointing at the tears on her cheeks. "I don't cry for anyone nor do I beg!" I could tell her anger was turning into rage. "I don't know what you want from me nor do I care anymore! I won't let that happen again...it hurts too much." She turned away from me. "I need to get ready, I will be there within the hour...you can show yourself out."

\* \* \*

I of course waited to drive her to the meeting. The cold inside the car was palpable as words were left unsaid. Once we were inside and at the meeting I couldn't erase her face and the pain I inflicted upon it from my memory. All I wanted to do was take her in my arms and make it all better, yet to do that would only make things worse.

When we broke for lunch I saw her approaching me and was eager to end my conversation with Ron and speak with her. Our eyes made contact, but I was unfortunately drawn back into the discussion with Ron. Suddenly, I heard the crashing of a chair and looked up to see Carol looking at me all flustered. I couldn't help but smile for in that instant she was so very adorable.

For me, all hope had been lost that I would ever get the chance to speak privately with Carol until that moment when she was inching towards me. When I heard her speak, "What time are you picking me up for dinner?" before adding, "I have to warn you ahead of time, I'm not a cheap date." My mind and body were on fire for I knew that I would ignore all else and give into the desire raging in my body and soul.

\* \* \*

I took her to a small, intimate out of the way restaurant that had been a favorite of mine for years. Never before had I brought anyone there for it was my special place when I wanted to just have a good meal without the difficulty of

another person there. But, Carol was not a complication; I welcomed the opportunity to share this private place with her.

As always, the meal was superb and our conversation was light and casual. It was over dessert that she said, "You know, Jack, it is like I have always been with you."

I knew the moment had come to tell her everything even if that niggling little voice kept cautioning me. "Remember when I told you I had seen you at a conference several years ago?" I said to her.

*Swallowing hard she continues.*

The conversation went something like this..."When I opened the door the first thing I heard was your voice and that is what drew me in." I was speed talking I know but I had to get it out. "I remember your words, 'If we ignore what has happened in the past we never will recognize what is familiar about now...' Something deep inside me was crying out to listen to the beautiful music that your voice elicited in me. I had heard you before deep in a memory...perhaps a dream, but I knew you."

*She takes a deep breath and blows it out.*

"Then, when I was close to you my heart rejoiced for it knew I had found what I had been searching for all my life."

I remember sitting there in the dimly lit restaurant looking into her eyes and seeing such a depth of love and was shocked by the realization that her love was for me. I was pretty sure no one ever loved me with such depth before. The connection, the desire and the love were undeniable and it was time to act upon those feelings.

"I think it is time we go back to your room," I said as the fire burned hot inside my soul.

I knew that there would be no excuses, no turning away. We would be one and not only would she be mine, but I would be hers. The rightness of it all seemed so clear to me yet the voice deep in my soul protested and became louder and more insistent. By the time we reached the hotel I understood what the voice was telling me, 'do this now and be forever sentenced to repeat this for all time.' This was our last

chance to get it right and if I acted on my emotions our souls would never join and be one.

*She lightly snorts shaking her head and frowning.*

You see I had no other choice. Her words back five years ago were clear and unmistakable. *'If we ignore what has happened in the past we never will recognize what is familiar about now...'* They were calling out to me from long ago insisting that I listen and understand the message.

\* \* \*

When I arrived at her hotel room the next day I really wasn't surprised that she had left. I couldn't blame her for I had hurt her deeply without any real explanation of why. She deserved better...what I did was out of love. You understand that, don't you?

Anyway, when I got back to my office I wrote her a letter trying desperately to explain what I was feeling and why things had turned out as they had. Over that weekend, I found myself picking up the phone and dialing her number only to hang up before it connected. She had to understand that I loved her enough to let her go.

When my phone rang on Monday, I was elated to hear her voice. From that point forward we forged a wonderful bond that was based on a deep and abiding love. As time passed, we became more and more in tune with each other's feelings and needs. When the day would be overwhelming for me she would call and make all my troubles disappear. Often we would say to each other *'how do you always know the perfect moment when I need to speak with you the most?'*

Although we never physically met, again we had a rich and full friendship filled with long phone calls, letters, emails and instant messages.

*She laughs.*

Often we would spend our entire lunch times just talking and laughing in a remarkably easy and familiar way.

Today I will see her for the first time in almost a year. Somewhere deep inside me I long to touch her and feel her presence. I am to present her with an award for her

outstanding achievement in developing a new structure for social services. I am glad her husband, Mike, is coming with her for it will take the some of the sexual tension we will feel away.

*She looks at her watch.*

She should be arriving any moment now...I need to get down to the front of the auditorium.

She rises from her seat and begins to walk towards the crowd that has gathered there. A seasoned politician would be proud of her performance as she works the crowd. She smiles and shakes hands taking a moment to speak to each one she meets seemingly remembering everyone's name. All the while, her eyes are scanning the auditorium searching for the one person that will make her whole again.

Carol has not arrived yet and apprehension fills her mind. Suddenly, she becomes still as a look of disbelief then horror crosses her face. Standing there among the crowd of people she begins to shake before letting out a wail of pain. Everyone turns their head towards the sound and slowly a circle of onlookers gaps at the woman standing there with her arms encircling her body as if holding it from collapse.

"What's happening? Is she alright? Isn't that Dr. Reinhart? Is she having a seizure of some sort or a heart attack?" is whispered amongst the crowd around her.

A woman pushes through the crowd and approaches the woman then puts her arm around her. "Its okay, Jack, I've got you," is whispered to the incoherent woman.

She is lead to the back of the auditorium where she sits and rocks as she sobs. Casey wraps an arm around her and holds her tight. "I've got you."

A woman in the front of the immense room taps on a microphone, "May I have you attention please," her voice low and serious. "Our honoree and guest speaker, Carol Bargate, has been in an accident on her way here and is in the hospital. Please join me in a moment of prayer for her speedy recovery."

\* \* \*

Casey and I had gotten back together several months before the event.

*Tears roll down her cheeks...she still couldn't bring herself to say accident or death.*

I don't know how I would have gotten through the years without Casey by my side. She is a remarkably warm and loving woman who loves me deeply.

After it happened, Casey comforted me and, in time, made me want to live again. It wasn't too long after the incident that I shared with Casey what Carol was to me and what she meant in my life.

She told me, "She must have been someone very special, Jack, for I noticed the change in you after you first saw her. I saw the way you looked at her and I knew in that moment I had lost you." Casey always had the knack for getting right to the heart of the matter. "I was such a bitch and turned to another in an attempt to protect myself from you and I hoped it would hurt you. But, I knew it made no difference to you because I could see how this stranger had bewitched you. Every day you were changing and growing further away from me."

I remember how Casey put her arm around me. "I am glad she came into your life, Jack. It must have been so confusing for you to realize all the implications true love could make in your life."

*She is rigid as her eyes fill with tears.*

Casey was amazing in her compassion, understanding and yes, in her love for me in spite of me. I felt guilty for not loving Casey as much as she deserved. In the past I had been...I guess the only word is cruel...

*She purses her lips, closes her eyes and shakes her head positively.*

...yes, I was cruel towards Casey. I used her for my own selfish purposes yet, to me, I saw nothing wrong with that at that time. Knowing and loving Carol taught me that was indeed wrong.



*She opens her mouth and takes a deep breath before expelling it.*

The self centered taker that I was no longer exists because of her...

*Tears are flowing now.*

The one, the love of my life, my home was gone. For me, life at that moment and still is, nothing more than going through the motions of day to day living without really living.

*She bows her head for a moment.*

Now don't get me wrong...I do love Casey and we are happy, but there will always a place in my heart and mind where she will never reside. I think she understands that...at least that is what she has told me. Each day I wonder and wait for my time so I can be with Carol again. Until then I have made a life with Casey as the kinder, gentler Jack.

With Carol's passing I lost all my ambitions to become the director of HHS. Somehow it just didn't seem all that important to me anymore. I wanted to get out of policy making and get back to making a difference on the local level. Of course I would be over qualified to apply to just any social services office.

It was Casey that suggested I call Nancy Delarosa Carol's old boss and ask if she had a job for me.

"Jack what can it hurt to just call her?" she conjoled. "Who knows you may be the answer to their prayers." She handed me the phone. "Go on, what do ya have to lose."

She really didn't give me a chance and I was such a basket case there wasn't any fight left in me. "Hello, Ms. Delarosa, this is Jacqueline Reinhart. Is there any chance I could get a job with you?"

"Dr. Reinhart?"

"Jack, please."

"All right, Jack, why on earth would you want to work here? With your qualifications you should be the director not a case worker."

"I want to give something back...can you understand that? I want to make a difference and it seems to me that one on one with clients is the way to accomplish that."

I guess I sounded pretty pathetic because she gave me the job.

*Tears well up in her eyes.*

Entering into the office that once was Carol's sent me into a downward spiral. My mind flashed back to the first time I walked into her office and her brilliant smile greeted me. Walking around, I touched the desk on which she once worked and then sat in her chair. I think I sat there for a very long time when a strange thing happened...I began feeling Carol's presence. She was there with me, holding me, surrounding me with her love...the warmth I felt was overwhelming.

My mission became doing all I could to help those people that couldn't help themselves. The battered women, neglected children the older neglected parents they all needed help. It felt so right being there carrying out Carol's work...visiting her clients getting to know the people who affected her life. In time, I found myself discovering more and more about the woman who had stolen my heart so many years before.

In time I found peace...she was my guardian angel and spirit guide.

\* \* \*

It has been seven years since I lost Carol. I am standing before the granite marker and squat down and trace the name Carol Elizabeth Barngate with my fingers. My heart is heavy with longing and bereavement. Each year on the anniversary of the first time I heard her voice I come to the cemetery to visit her and lay a white rose on her headstone.

Every day since her passing, I have cursed myself for listening to some absurd idea that I needed to break a cycle. She is gone from me and I never knew the complete joy of being with her. How could I have been so stupid? Me, Jack

the invincible, listening to some mystical babble that left me with nothing more than a shell of a life.

I am now paying for all the hurt and anguish I have caused everyone in my life. Cancer is ravaging my body, but I welcome the pain for it means soon I can go home and be one again. A song - Like a River - has been running through my head for several days now. I can't seem to get Casey Chambers' voice or the words to stop...

*Sometimes you walk like an angel, sometimes you walk like a man, sometimes you crawl like a baby, makes me forget who I am. Have you ever been held before - like honey to the bees? I've never been held before - like you hold me. You make me feel like a river, like a water overflow, wanna shout it out from the mountain, wanna sing it on the radio, I'd sell my soul like a sinner if it means you'll never go. I think the sun is finally rising, it's burning down because I miss you, I'm gonna to walk right through the fire cause all I want to do is kiss you. Oh rainfall, wash this away, I built a stone wall to make you stay...I'd sell my soul like a sinner if it means you'll never go...never go...never go...*

*She looks away, tears flowing down her cheeks; a chill creeps into her body with the sudden appearance of a mist creeping along the ground.*

She struggles to rise but the mist is so thick and she cannot see where she is going so she crawls along lost and alone. Her body seems to have a mind of its own as it begins floating through the mist.

\* \* \*

She is sitting in a clearing near a peaceful lake. The sun is rising and the fire of the night before is but warm embers. She clutches a large blanket around her shoulders to ward off the early morning chill. The dreams of the night before have once again haunted her as they have every time she awakens.

The morning mist is still rising from the lake and the air is sweet with the perfume of a new day. A buckskin stallion with a flowing mane and long tail grazes nearby on the tender shoots of new grasses.

She is waiting. She has been waiting for a very long time.

In the distance, out of the mist comes a vision and she instantly knows her wait is over. Her heart is filled with the never ending joy and peace of coming home. She arises and walks towards the apparition until green meets blue. "I have been waiting for you," she says softly.

The vision reaches out, takes her hand and slowly lifts it to eager lips that reverently and oh so lightly place a single kiss on each finger. "I came as soon as I could," she whispers.

"I understand why it had to be this way. I knew you would come."

"I am sorry I hurt you."

"Walk with me." An outstretched hand is immediately taken.

"I will always be with you."

Green meets blue in love and acceptance.

The emerging sun is warm on their faces and they are engulfed in the light of their love as they begin their journey to forever.

The End

---

Constructive comments are always welcomed:

email: [eorielly@yahoo.com](mailto:eorielly@yahoo.com)

---