



The Orca King

Darragh Foster

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This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents and dialogues in this book are of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is completely coincidental.

Dedication

For Denny. With thanks to Maria Pascua of the Makah Cultural Resource Center. The Orca King is a work of fiction. The mythology contained herein is not representative of Makah, Chinook or Salish traditions, but is a conglomeration of many First Nation legends and the oh, so very tangled imaginings of the author.

The Orca King

Marian had no interest in going up to the top deck once the ferry began to move. An hour drive followed by a three-hour wait had left her exhausted and mussed. Her hair was flat, her neck sore and with the number of small children piling out of SUV's on the car deck eager to explore the ferry, she knew she was better off taking a nap.

She'd won a tribal casino's "Whale Watching Excursion Holiday", a three-day all-expenses paid weekend for two. Sadly, she had been forced to take the trip alone prior to its expiration. It was a use-it-or-lose-it kind of thing. She psyched herself up for this mini-vacation away from her busy but sadly unfulfilling 'real world.' No office. No cell phone. No computer. No Wyatt.

Of course, there was no Wyatt, anyway. Dumped two months prior to the bloody day by her boyfriend of nearly a year, Marian was nursing a broken heart and considered herself amongst the walking wounded. A weekend away might be just the ticket to kick-start the recovery process. She hoped.

The car deck cleared of pedestrians, save for a few stern-faced old men in blue mechanics uniforms putzing around with their tool boxes—not a very reassuring sight when mid-passage.

Marian closed her eyes, fantasizing about her upcoming cruise escorted by the same company hired for exterior shots for the first "Free Willy" movie. "I hope I get to see lots of whales."

She giggled. *Hmmm ... maybe I'll meet a man. A 'Free Willy' fan, or an islander who lives only to pleasure mainland tourists. I wonder if I'll recognize him at the ferry landing. I hope he has all his teeth.* She pulled her jacket over her arms. *Willy's willing willy. God, I need a man.*

She reclined her car seat and fell immediately into a deep sleep.

She knew she was dreaming. It was too good to be real.

She was bathed in sunlight, yet felt afloat. The cool water caressed her naked flesh with the touch of an experienced lover. The sun's heat on her belly sent tendrils of desire through her legs and arms. Her eyes closed, she welcomed smooth, slick hands as they brushed across her breasts and retreated into her lower regions. Fingers slid into her, bringing forth her own wetness to mingle with that of the ocean upon which she rested. Skillful fingers manipulated her clitoris. Her orgasm came immediately; she bucked against the fingers, pushing them deep inside her.

She reached for a head, shoulders ... any other part of her lover. His lips kissed their way up her belly, across her breasts, to her mouth. His kisses were hungry, needful things. She could feel his penis, swollen and hard against her thighs. She opened her legs, inviting him inside her.

She stifled a gasp as he plunged deeply, his thick member filling her, stretching her boundaries between pleasure and pain. She'd never had a man fill her so.

She arched her back as his thrusts grew in strength. She wrapped her legs around his hips, urging him on. He was so deep inside her she thought she could taste his salt on her tongue. With each plunge the shaft of his penis teased her clitoris to new heights. She pulled on his neck, urging their lips to join. She achieved orgasm again, his tongue in her

mouth. She sucked at it as if it were the beast inside her.

He came forcefully, pinioning her against the bed of waves. She had no choice but to break their kiss as he pulled away to vocalize his pleasure. The moans a man might make were joined by a sound she did not recognize. A higher-pitched, melodic sound.

She wanted to open her eyes. She tried, but he kissed them closed.

They sank under the waves together, still joined in sexual union. Belly to belly they floated downward, their mouths locked together, sharing a single breath.

His once rock-hard member slid from her as they descended. She wanted him, again. Her eyes still closed, she wrapped her arms around his muscular torso, feeling her way down his body with her face. He swam upward, pulling them once again onto their bed of light and water.

Her mouth found his penis.

She felt it stiffen and grow at the flick of her tongue. Her hands stroked the shaft while she mouthed the thickening head. His clever fingers tugged at her dark auburn pubic hair, and again slid into her, this time from behind.

With great ease, he lifted her atop him, her mound over his face. While she kissed his penis, dreaming only of impaling herself upon it, he kissed her clitoris, inserting his tongue into her vagina again and again, then flicking it around her anus.

She could wait no longer. "I need you now."

"I need you, always," he replied.

She pulled away from his warm embrace and turned. She lowered her hips to his, enveloping his penis with her eager body. Pushing her clitoris against his shaft with her fingers, she bucked and rode him with a vengeance.

An orgasm shivered inside her. She quickened her pace, manipulating herself at the same time. He grasped her hips, helping her meet his deep thrusts, pressing her atop him as his own climax built.

This time as she came, it was not her voice that rang out in ecstasy. A new, penetrating, exciting sound emitted from her soul. It was his song—the harmonious, tranquil melody her lover had sung. As he achieved orgasm, he joined her, harmonizing perfectly. Riding together on the waves, they sang of their love until both collapsed, exhausted, sated and tingling.

At last, in the post-coital glow of their passion storm, she opened her eyes. The sun's reflection on the water made it difficult for her to see his face. She smelled his musk. Tasted him on her lips. Heard his slow, steady breaths. But she could not see his face.

Marian awoke startled as a group of children ran past her car.

She felt like she'd had sex. Good sex. It had been quite awhile since she'd had really good sex. Certainly not with Wyatt. Not near the end.

She started her car. The ferry had docked.

* * * *

Her sunset whale watching excursion at hand, Marian stood at the prow of the *Solar Flare*, enjoying the heat and spray. The sun's late afternoon rays made the calm surface of the bay shine like a thousand Christmas tree lights. The wind tossed her hair and cooled her sun-kissed face. She raised her arms relishing the force of the boat's motion against the open waters embrace her like a lover. Marian felt alive. Refreshed. The boat ride was invigorating. In the brilliant sun, even the shadows locked in her heart

diminished.

Kim, the *Solar Flare*'s exuberant guide, chatted away while looking out across the sound through binoculars. "We've got a transient—a rogue male—coming about these waters lately. He's a big one, too. The Makah call him *ta-chaw doo-wegs*—Ghost Father. He's old, probably as old as ninety years. He has distinctive saddle markings that have not yet been identified with any pod of Orcas from British Columbia to California. And he's popular with the ladies. We've spotted him with L and J Pods. We think he's sired about a half-dozen calves, so far."

"Where does he go when he's not wooing the ladies?" Marian asked.

"We're not sure. He doesn't seem to travel with any of our indigenous pods. He's playing the field."

"Do the other males mind him cutting in like that?" Marian continued.

"They actually defer to him. They seem to know he's special. We watched two young males actually chase salmon toward Ghost Father last week. Those boys, Ruffles and Cappuccino, were feeding him. And they were the alpha and beta males until he showed up."

"I hope we get to see him," Marian said, returning her attention to the horizon.

The captain's voice boomed from a loudspeaker. "If you think of the boat as a clock, with the bow of the boat pointing toward twelve, you'll see a group of whales at two o'clock. They're coming this way. I'm going to kill the engines and let us drift toward them."

The passengers and crew lined the starboard side of the *Solar Flare*.

"I see them," Kim said.

"Where?" the group responded in unison.

"In between the land and that white boat. Think like you're looking at a clock—they're at two o'clock."

Moments later a shining black and white sea beastie rose from the depths, splashing its head down hard against the waters. The spray shot up like a cannon ball.

"They're fishing!" Kim exclaimed, as her charges 'ooo'ed and 'aww'ed at the awesome sight. "That is not play. They're stunning the salmon by slapping the water. It's a common misconception."

"I see six fins. We're in a pod," Marian said softly.

"We are! It's a good day for whale watching. The salmon are running, the straight is flat and clear and the sun is behind us," Kim replied. "I never tire of this."

The group stood in awe of the Orca for several minutes. A young female breached the surface several times, flipping, spy-hopping, her tail splashing over and over.

"Amazing," Kim said. "That's Mocha. She's trying to attract a male."

"For sex?" Marian asked.

"Yep. She's ready to mate. We may be witness to something very special today, folks."

"Whale sex. Huh. At least someone's getting some," Marian said.

The all-female group laughed in unison. "Maybe we should jump in and see if we can get lucky. I assume a male Orca isn't hung like a hamster!" one of them replied.

Kim giggled. "Yeah, but they only last about thirty seconds, if you know what I mean."

Marian shrugged. "So much for that fantasy."

“Well, the female Orcas don’t seem to mind. They keep coming back for more, after all!” Kim replied. “Especially when Ghost Father is around. He has a harem.”

“Every man’s fantasy,” Marian whispered.

Kim held up her binoculars. “Ah, the ladies are circling. A male must be approaching.” She spoke into her radio. “Captain, would you please switch on the hydrophone?”

The captain’s reply came over the loudspeaker. “That’s voyeurism, Kim.” He laughed a man’s laugh and signed off. A moment later the boat filled with the sound of whale song. Delicate, shrill, far-reaching melodies danced across the waves and into the underwater microphone. In the distance, a faint, sharp “click” joined the females’ song.

Kim closed her fist, pulling her arm back in a gesture of victory. “Yes! It’s Ghost Father. He’s replying to the females’ mating songs.”

“How many can he take on?” Marian asked.

Kim shrugged. “He’s a transient. Who knows what he’ll do. Rogues don’t follow the rules. You can tell by his voice, it’s him. Ghost Father has a distinctive ‘click.’ You’ll see. The closer he gets, the more singular it will sound. His dorsal fin is eight feet tall and straight as an arrow. That’s unusual for a male his age. The dorsals usually start waving—like with Ruffles’, as they get older.”

A slick black and white nose lifted from the water, dancing on the surface—spy-hopping. “That’s Ghost Father,” Kim announced.

“Wow. He’s huge,” Marian uttered, snapping a quick photograph with her digital before Ghost Father disappeared into the calm, black water.

Four Orcas moved off together, their fins cutting through the water with unimaginable speed and grace.

“Mocha is going to get her wish,” Kim whispered. “Watch this.”

Marian hit the zoom on her camera, trying to get as close as she could to the mating pair, now circling each other in a well-choreographed, ancient dance. “Do they do it below or at the surface?” she asked.

“You’ll know when they copulate,” Kim replied. “I’ve never seen it—few have—but accounts detail it as passionate, to say the least.”

“The big one is moving toward us,” Marian said.

“He is, indeed. He must know there’s a boat full of ladies talking about his prowess.”

*

His large shadow darkening the already black waters, Ghost Father moved silently toward the *Solar Flare*. He could smell his mate. He heard her voice call to him from above. He would know her on sight.

Keeping a safe distance, but too close for the comfort of the other whales in the vicinity, Ghost Father spy-hopped, breaching the water. There he remained, his black eyes encircled by pure white, staring at the *Solar Flare*.

*

“Talk about a photo-op. I’ve never seen a whale stay atop so long. It’s like he’s watching us,” Kim whispered.

Marian peered through the viewfinder of her camera, drawing Ghost Father’s image in. He looked right back at her. She felt a stirring in her extremities. A weakness. A chill.

“He’s looking at me,” she said.

“Maybe he heard you aren’t getting any. Could be he just wants to check out all the

horny females out on the sound today,” Kim replied.

Marian giggled. “Shut up.”

“Oh, my God, he’s moving closer. This is unprecedented. We’re not supposed to come within a hundred yards of them, but if they swim up to us…” Kim paused. “Mac! Captain! Do you see it? Turn on the video. Quick!”

The captain replied quickly, “Already on. This is amazing.”

Ghost Father vanished beneath the water. He breached so close to the boat that the sheer size of him made the fifty-six foot *Solar Flare* look small by comparison.

“He’s a thirty-footer. That’s a big boy, ladies,” Kim sighed. “Look at his saddle. The markings have never been recorded. He’s a pod unto himself. His voice is different. His markings are unique. This is a very, very special Orca.”

Ghost Father dove under. A few moments later he returned, pushing a stunned salmon to the surface. Using his great nose, he nudged the fish closer to the vessel.

“Holy Mother of God, he’s courting the ship!” the captain exclaimed over the vessel’s public address system.

“I have been studying whales nearly twenty-five years. In all that time, I’ve never seen anything like this,” Kim whispered.

“Shouldn’t we accept the fish? Take a long net and scoop it out, or something?” Marian asked.

“I’m not sure we should. We can’t have contact with the whales. It’s not good for them,” Kim replied.

“Kim, I’m no whale expert, but he’s obviously offering us the fish. Either this guy is a trained escapee from Sea World, or he’s trying to communicate with us,” Marian said.

Kim nodded. “That could explain why we’ve never tracked him before this year. Maybe he was reintroduced into the wild by some private institute. I’ll get the net.”

The languishing salmon, floating belly-up along side the *Solar Flare* bobbed in rhythm to the waves caused as Ghost Father circled the boat, his tall fin cutting through the water with obvious pride.

Kim scooped the salmon aboard. “Okay, we’ve accepted his fish. Now what? Do we roll over? Flip? Spy-Hop? I don’t want Ghost Father to end up like Luna, that little whale that follows ferries around like they’re his mother.”

Ghost Father breached and rolled, showing his shining white belly, and more, to the ladies.

Marian choked out her words. “I don’t think we have to worry about Ghost Father thinking the *Solar Flare* is his mommy. If I’m not mistaken, is that not the whale’s dick?”

The other passengers laughed. The Captain’s loud chortle could be heard through the glass windows of the pilothouse.

Kim panicked. “Yes, that is exactly what *that* is. He wants to mate with the boat. I knew it!”

Marian laughed. “What? Do you rub female Orca pheromones on the hull?”

“We don’t even use regular diesel! We use a bio-fuel that burns completely clean. No fumes, no residue. Even our paint is sealed so as not to leak odors under water.”

“Well, the big guy is ready. Why isn’t Mocha swimming over?”

Kim shook her head. “If I knew that, I would be the Queen of All Whale Experts.”

Ghost Father leaped up, spy-hopping the *Solar Flare* again. He was so close; so very, very close. His magnificence was overwhelming. He was the stuff of dreams. A magical

sea-beast from the depths, yet alive and pulsing with warm blood.

"Maybe he wants his fish back," Kim suggested. "There are stories about Orca spy-hopping all around pleasure boats out fishing, because they can see the salmon aboard them. They have incredible eyesight."

It's like he can see right through me. Without forethought Marian stretched her right arm out over the bar, her palm to the rippling bay.

Ghost Father sank under, moving within twenty feet of the vessel.

"We're too close!" Kim called into the radio.

The captain responded immediately. "I don't dare start the engines. We won't drift into him. Let's see what happens."

The frisky whale lifted his nose in an aerial scan. He then logged the surface, keeping a closer watch on Marian's hand. She stooped, picking up the dead salmon by its gills without pulling her other arm in. "I'm going to give him the salmon."

It was a large fish, almost too heavy for her to toss with one hand. The salmon landed with a heavy splash, breaking the still silence.

Ghost Father dove with a grand tail splash, resurfacing mouth open, the salmon sinking between his gaping jaws.

Marian could feel the beastie's presence. Actually feel the droplets cascading off his shining black back and white underbelly. Smell his salty aroma. She could taste the salt spray on her lips. He looked at her as if he could see right through her. She whispered, her arm still outstretched, "Ghost Father, you are magnificent."

Kim, obviously overwhelmed, tried to make the moment a learning experience. "Orcas are a toothed whale, unlike the baleen..." Her voice trailed off, clearly struck almost speechless by the awesome event. "This is amazing."

Ghost Father closed his gaping mouth, spy-hopping one last time before sinking under.

He reappeared moments later, beside the shy Mocha, who had swum about erratically as Ghost Father addressed the vessel.

Their courtship stunned the ladies of the *Solar Flare*. Ghost Father was an expressive and tender lover. Mocha, who had not yet calved, fell right into his tail swishing, head thrusting motions. It was a behemoth dance of love upon the ocean.

Mocha raised her body up, displaying her beautiful white belly to Ghost Father. He sprang up from the ocean as well. So much larger than she, he covered her entire body with his as they mated, belly to belly.

Ghost Father thrust into Mocha, who pushed forward onto his monster shaft. Their faces touched. Their flukes caressed. Then, it was over.

Ghost Father splashed backward, performing a magnificent flip. Mocha retreated to the safety of the other adult females swimming nearby.

"I wonder if he'll go have a smoke now," Marian said.

One of the other women laughed, "And a snack."

Breathless, Kim spoke into her radio. "Did you record it? Has anyone ever caught this on video before?"

The captain replied, "I got it all. Holy Mother of God." Mac paused. "Ladies ... I don't know about you, but I need a drink. How about we head back to the island and I'll buy us all a round of beers at the pub."

The captain had said it all. Marian needed a drink. Two drinks. And a good time. She

turned to Kim. "What can possibly top the viewing of behemoths of the sea having sexual intercourse? Jesus! There must be a sonnet or epic poem in there somewhere. Maybe after a few beers, I'll be able to praise Ghost Father and his ladylove in some appropriate fashion."

Kim smiled, resting her gloved left hand against Marian's shoulder. "We should just twitter like birds or something. I don't think there are human words expressive enough to convey what we just witnessed."

Marian giggled. "Chirp!"

* * * *

The island pub was crowded. Friday night crowded. The locals were out en-force and tourists, with their sunburned faces and camera bags, were running rampant. Captain Mac pushed two tables together in the dark rear of the crowded pub, motioning for the waitress to bring a half-dozen brews to the table.

"Got your own little pod going on here tonight, Mac?" Sarah, the island's most delectable local chided.

"Always room for one more, Sarah." Mac helped her pass around the bottles. "Thanks, Hon."

"I heard about that bull out in the sound today. He apparently put on quite a show. Boat radios were buzzing in the harbor and tongues have been wagging all night about old Ghost Father taking on Mocha right in the middle of the bay with a half-dozen whale watching boats, *whale watching*."

Marian spoke up. "We saw the whole thing. It was amazing. If he were a man, I'd never let him go."

"Honey, if he were a man, you sure wouldn't be wasting your time drinking a beer with this old salt!" Sarah teased.

"Oh, come on, Sarah. You love me," Mac replied.

"Now and then. Now and then, Mac." Sarah turned her shapely backside to the table, hurrying to take an order from another group.

Mac took a long sip of his beer. Marian watched, noticing how Mac's eyes followed Sarah, even though he was addressing them. "How about that excursion today, ladies? Was that a memorable experience, or what? And you ... you fed him a salmon!" he exclaimed, looking over to Marian.

"That was a bit exciting, yes," Marian replied.

Mac took another swig. "This is big. I wonder if National Geographic will want in on this. Whales just don't behave that way. It was like Ghost Father wanted you to see him do the deed with Mocha!"

Marian scooped up a handful of chips. She hadn't eaten all day. "They mate facing each other. Not like other animals where the male climbs aboard from behind."

"Yes, true. Cetaceans mate belly to belly. They are very gregarious and loving creatures. That's what gets them into trouble," Kim said. "Mac, I'm afraid for Ghost Father. He's a transient. We don't know where he goes. Or where he came from. He's a target due to his size and behaviors."

"And he's protected, Kim. No one is going to harass him. I'll call the Oceanographic Society tonight. I'll let them know our rogue is about to make headlines." Mac paused. "Jesus. I wonder how much money I can make off that video. I'm the only charter out

there with an underwater camera. I know! I'll sell a copy of the tape to the highest bidder as long as they agree not to make a 'whale porn' site out of it. I'll pay off my boat and give a bonus to my crew. Especially Kim here. Not every naturalist can work the whale watching circuit for twenty-five years and still find it exciting."

Kim laughed. "Especially after today!"

Marian picked up a crumpled paper menu from the center of her table. "God, I'm hungry. If I eat all these chips I'll just get sick. I need something more substantial."

"This place makes a mean bowl of chili. But that, however, is the highlight of their evening menu. If you want something more substantial, you can run over to the east side. Couple restaurants over there stay open late during the summer," Mac replied.

"Got a map?" Marian asked.

Mac took a swig of his brew. "Don't need one. Just follow the main road. Don't go off it, though. Side-roads aren't kept up and can end rather abruptly."

Marian stood. "Ladies, Mac. It was a pleasure watching whales humping with you today. No ... that didn't come out quite right. God, I am hungry. You know what I mean, right?"

Mac tipped his beer toward Marian. "Drive carefully. Deer all over the roads this time of night. Sunset brings out all kinds of things from the woods."

"I'll be careful. Thanks, again."

Marian popped the last chip from her hand into her mouth. Her stomach growled. *Nope, chips just aren't going to cut it. I need food!*

She walked up the hill to her cottage where she'd left her car. *Solar Flare* Charters was just below her "private" balcony attached to two other "private" balconies at the Ferry Terminal Cottages. *Private* must be relative on the island. Then again, an island is a whole world unto itself. Mainland rules don't always apply. Especially with building codes.

She entered her cottage and spied a rather inviting lace-comforter covered bed. "No, I'd better eat or I'll wake up famished and with blood sugar so low they'll have to wheel me to breakfast." She pulled off her sweatshirt and bra. The night was hot and a little perkiness added to top off her half a beer might just set the mood...

Marian laughed. *Who am I kidding? I'm not going to pick up some islander. The best I can get tonight is a naughty dream of whale dick.*

She donned a black tank top and pulled her auburn hair up into a neat ponytail.

"Follow the yellow brick road," she said, starting her car. She recognized the familiar feel of the heart-shaped stress ball keychain in her hand. Wyatt had given it to her. A painful twinge hit her gut. Wyatt. He would have loved watching a male whale in rut. They might have come back to the cottage and did a bit of damage themselves after witnessing such a sight.

"Knock it off," Marian demanded of herself. "Just knock it off." *Put on a bra and frumpy blouse, go eat and just knock it off!*

A familiar tightness in her groin cascaded through her legs. "Great. Now I'm going to start thinking about sex. With no prospects in sight. Maybe I should row out and see if Ghost Father likes redheads."

The village lights dimmed. Ahead of her the road glowed from her headlamps and the last few rays of the setting sun as she drove deeper and deeper into the wooded west side of the island.

Huge trees jutted up from the forest floor right next to the road, reminding Marian of giant phalluses, straight, hard and proud. Her nipples began to tingle. "I never knew trees could be so sexy," she commented.

Every now and then a signpost would glow in her high beams. *Enchanted Forest Lane. I'm on Enchanted Forest Lane.* She laughed. *And here it bisects with Lover's Lane. Ha! This, I simply must see. I bet this is where all the islander kids hang out in the backseat of daddy's car.*

She turned off the main road. Lover's Lane was a long, well-groomed stretch of road heading dead-center of the isle. She didn't want to drive too far off the main road. Hunger was eating at her.

A glow appeared ahead. The canopy of a white canvas tent came into view.

"Campers," she whispered. The road ended abruptly. Lover's Lane was a dead end.

"Wow, it looked endless." Marian put her car in reverse. Its engine died with a loud gurgling sound. "Crap!" She shifted into 'park,' trying to restart her car. The engine sputtered miserably.

A tall figure appeared from beyond the glow of the campfire. He walked slowly, not disturbing so much as a twig with his approach.

"Car trouble?" he called.

In the city Marian would have kept her window rolled up and doors locked. But this was an island, and AAA was a long ways off.

She took a chance, and rolled down the driver's side window. "I think I flooded it. I just thought the name of the road was cute. I didn't mean to disturb you."

The man stepped into the glow cast by her dome light. "You didn't disturb me. I heard you coming. I'm sure the car engine's just flooded, like you said." He spoke with a soft, low-tone. "My name is Tamanass, but folks around here call me Chief." He held out his hand. "Can I offer you a cup of coffee while you wait for your engine to settle down?"

Marian had always been attracted to dark men. The darker the hair and eyes, the better. Chief had golden brown skin and features so well defined and chiseled he looked almost statuesque. He wore his long black hair pulled back in a braid. Around his ears strands of white, pure white, not gray, framed his face. He was a classically handsome Native American man. *Lovely!*

"Yes, thanks. I'm Marian Wines. Nice to meet you." She opened her car door. "You're camping?"

Chief smiled, extending his hand to help Marian from her car. "I'm researching nocturnal activities of island fauna. I'm quiet. They trust me. I keep my fire low and they are unafraid."

"You're a scientist?"

"No, not really. I just help out every now and then. Come on, I've got a crate with your name on it."

Marian laughed.

"No, seriously. I use wooden wine crates as chairs when I'm in the field. One of them has your name on it."

Marian frowned. "How odd."

"I guess you were supposed to be here tonight. Otherwise I would have hauled out 'Ernest and Julio' to sit on."

"I didn't know there was a wine named after me. Or maybe I'm named after the wine. I guess I'll have to ask my mother."

"I don't drink, but the crates are sturdy and come in awfully handy when offering aid to a lady in distress," Chief replied.

Marian sat, holding her hands out before the campfire.

"Black okay?" he asked, pouring coffee from a thermos.

"Fine. Thanks."

Marian took the coffee gratefully. She'd dressed a bit too provocatively to be alone with a man in the woods. The cup gave her a reason to hold her hands in front of her.

"Warm night. Lots of deer will be out. The males are trying to prove themselves by head-butting and mock-fighting. There's a field just beyond the end of Lover's Lane. I watch them from the shadows. So, what brings you to the island?"

"I won a contest."

"I guess that's one way to get mainlanders across the sound. Which contest did you win?"

"Kind of a 'how many chips in the jar' thing. A casino back home sponsored it, and I won."

"You from Vegas?" Chief asked.

"No."

"A tribal casino?"

"Yes."

"I helped design the Orca sculpture at the Tulalip casino," Chief added. "I modeled for it, you might say."

"The bronze spear-fisher? Nice. That's where I won the contest. I went out with ... I entered this drawing. And I won."

"Not the bronze statue, exactly. But the Tulalip casino is an attractive facility."

"Are you Tulalip? With that tribe? I mean, you look..."

"No, I'm not Tulalip. I'm Makah."

"Makah. Your people gave Ghost Father his name. I saw him today on a whale watch."

Chief nodded his head. He took a sip of coffee. "It's nice to have black coffee after the sweet drink I had earlier today."

"What was that?" Marian asked.

Chief leaned forward, his black eyes dancing in the firelight. "Mocha. I had a Mocha earlier."

Marian laughed. "So did Ghost Father!"

"*Ta-chaw doo-wegs*," Chief corrected, placing emphasis on the correct syllables.

"Yes. I'm sorry, I don't know how to pronounce the whale's true name."

"True name? Only he knows that. He will share it with his mate one day, however."

"*Ta-chaw doo-wegs*—Ghost Father—mated with a young female named Mocha today. I saw it."

"But she is not his mate. He is simply siring offspring to keep the pod bloodlines strong. He is a rogue. He does not return home to Grandmother as do other males after fertilizing willing females. He will choose one. And there he will stay."

"And that's rare?"

"Yes. He has been looking for her for a long time. Over a hundred years. It is said

that Ghost Father will offer his mate a salmon before siring one final calf with a young female in his adopted family. He will leave his bloodline amongst them to ensure their future. It is said that his chosen mate will not keep his salmon, but will return it to him. Thereby, their bond is sealed and they will be together for all time.” Chief took another sip of coffee.

“That’s really strange. Ghost Father pushed a salmon up to the *Solar Flare* today. We thought he wanted to woo the boat.”

“Was there a female nearby?”

“Yes.”

“How many females?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t get out and lift up the whales’ skirts,” Marian replied.

Chief smiled teasingly. “On the boat how many females were there?”

“On the boat? Five women and one man, Captain Mac. He tossed a salmon onto the deck. I returned it to him. It was all very exciting.”

“He was searching for his mate. Tell me, Marian, did Ghost Father sing to you? Did you feel his song through the wind and spray?”

“Sing to me? I heard whale song, yes. The *Solar Flare* has a hydrophone. I don’t know if it was directed at me, however.”

“He would not sing with his voice when above the waves. It would be a song of heart and spirit. Did you feel it?”

Marian blushed. “Yes, I did. I felt *him*. He is the stuff of legends, isn’t he?”

Chief nodded. “Your connection to the whale is strong.”

“Um, thanks. I think,” Marian responded.

“Our belief systems are different. I believe that we are connected to the Orca, the Eagle and the land, itself, in spirit as well as body.”

Marian sighed. “I don’t know what I believe, Chief.”

“Perhaps it is time you asked yourself which path you should take. You can go home, and remember your day on the water and the mating of the whales as nothing more than a fine memory, or you can go home, and cherish the bond you have made with a mystical, wise creature, and change your life for the better.”

“Hmm. All this from one cup of coffee in the woods. I’m overwhelmed, Chief. And, I’m starving. I was driving to Eastsound for dinner.” She paused. “Would you like to join me?”

“Why don’t you let me fix you dinner here? I am a very good cook.”

Marian felt comfortable. She felt safe. This man—this gorgeous man with his long black braid and cheekbones to die for—was not going to rape and strangle her and bury her body in the woods. *This is okay. I’m okay.* “Yes, I’d love that. Thank you.”

“I’ll get my cooler.” Chief stood, stretching, his hips thrust forward.

Magnificent. Tall, strong. And, oi vey, a very nice package. Jeez. What am I doing? “Need help?” she asked. *Put your tongue back in your mouth, Marian.*

“No, thanks. I’ll only be a moment. Stay close to the fire. No bear or coyote on the island, but you never know what might try to get you.” The tone in his voice teased her.

“I’ll keep that in mind, Chief,” Marian replied. *Oh, man. He’s got a nice butt, too.*

Chief wandered into the twilight of the woods. She could just barely make out his shadow amongst the trees as he returned with a red and white cooler.

“You keep your cooler in the woods?” she asked.

“There’s a little stream back there. Cold as ice. It runs all the way from Mt. Constitution to the bay. That’s why I study wildlife at the end of Lover’s Lane. They come to drink.”

“So, what’s for dinner?” Marian asked.

“Smoked salmon, sea vegetables and the queen of all foods, chocolate.”

“Sounds great. Are you sure you have enough to share?”

“I have more than enough.” Chief opened the cooler, removing a sealed gallon-size baggie full of delicious-looking smoked salmon. “I made this myself.” He handed Marian a very large chunk.

“Oh, this is way too much. I’m hungry, but I can’t eat a whole fish!” She broke the chunk of salmon, handing half back to Chief.

He extended his hand to receive the fish. His long, slender fingers encircled the salmon, brushing against Marian’s own French manicured ones. Like a magnet to steel, the friction between their hands sizzled and pulled. Their eyes met.

Marian wanted to look away. Afraid that he would see her hurt, would feel the broken heart in her breast.

*

Chief’s gaze pierced Marian’s soul. Through her green eyes, her sea-green, shining eyes he saw beyond her happy façade. He smiled. “You know, this is the second time today you were offered salmon, and returned it,” he whispered. He raised the chunk of salmon to his full lips, touching it with his tongue to taste its salty sweetness before using his teeth to rip off a bite.

“I kept half this time,” Marian responded.

Chief smiled. “So you did.”

They ate in silence for a moment. Chief handed Marian a small container.

“What’s this?” she asked.

“Kelp.”

Marian wrinkled her nose. “Kelp?”

“It’s delicious. My people have utilized sea vegetables for centuries. It is most nutritious. You need to keep your strength up. You have not been eating right.”

“Now how do you know that, Chief?” Marian asked, taking a small, tight ball of kelp from the container.

“You have been hurting. You have weariness about you. But Marian, your pain is yesterday. Your joy is tomorrow. Today is the journey. And besides that, you’re too skinny.”

*

Marian leaned back and laughed. *Too skinny? I’m a size sixteen for chrissakes. I’m busty and hippy and my belly is anything but flat!* “Chief, forgive me, but you’re being a bit presumptuous, aren’t you? You don’t know anything about me, except that I flooded my car while snooping down Lover’s Lane.”

“I know you, Marian.”

“Are you psychic?”

Chief laughed. His laugh was magical, musical. “No. I am just a quick study.”

Marian blushed. “All right. Yes, my boyfriend broke it off recently. It still hurts.”

“You don’t need him.”

“No, I don’t need him. But having a companion is rather nice. Are you, involved

with anyone, Chief?" *Here's the big question. Are you married? Gay?*

"I am unattached, but looking. It is not right for a man to be alone. He needs a woman to make him whole. Just as a woman needs to be with a man."

Okay, now we see about his politics. "I don't think the gay and lesbian community would agree with you," Marian said.

Chief smiled and leaned closer to the fire. "In the beginning there were three peoples. Man/man. Woman/woman. Man/woman. They were happy and content. The old gods were jealous gods, and were not pleased that the people lived in peace and harmony. They separated the people, cursing them to forever seek their other half. If a man chooses to love another man, it is only because he has found his soul mate. If a man chooses to love a woman, same thing."

"That is not Native American lore, Chief," Marian laughed. "It couldn't be."

"No. Greek. But I believe it. I know my soul mate is female. I believe she is very close."

"Lucky you."

"You don't feel the coming of your true love? That man who broke your heart—he is not your true love. You should not waste energy on him."

"Wyatt? He's a jerk. And no, I don't feel my true love on the wind."

"Do not slander another person, Marian. It scars only you."

Marian took a small bite of kelp ball. It was surprisingly good. "Thanks, Dad."

"Marian, when you spoke with Ghost Father today, what did he say to you?" Chief asked.

"Hello, gorgeous. Want some salmon?"

Chief frowned. "No, really. What did he say?"

"Chief, I don't know. I don't know. He is so grand a creature. I cannot express to you, in words, how it felt to be so close to him. He communicated with his eyes and by scent. It was all kind of," she hesitated. "It was all so mystical."

"Will you walk with me?" he asked.

"Here? It's dark."

"Yes, here. The woods are tranquil. Peaceful. I think you will hear Ghost Father's words when you are at peace and all is quiet around you."

"Y'know, Chief ... my mom always said never to walk with a strange man in the woods at night."

"I am not your enemy, Marian. I am not going to hurt you. Ever."

"I don't know, Chief."

"Do you believe in destiny? Fate?"

"I guess so," Marian replied. *Is this his pick-up line? He's such a hunk. Should I be flattered?*

"It is no accident that you met Ghost Father today. It is no accident you drove along Enchanted Forest Lane and turned off onto Lover's Lane when hunger wished you to drive to Eastsound."

"Okay..."

"I was waiting for you, Marian. Ghost Father spoke to me today, as well. He told me to wait in the forest, and to bring salmon."

"I appreciate your Native American spirituality, Chief, but I was not raised speaking to whales or listening to advice from the wind."

“Never too late to learn. Walk with me. I think you will find it beneficial.”

Marian had never been one to take risks. Perhaps it was time to try something new. Nothing too extreme...but perhaps just a little dangerous. Putting fear, and perhaps reason aside, she stood. “Lead on, Chief.”

He stood, holding out his hand. “I shall guide you.”

“No flashlight?”

“It’s not dark.”

“It’s dark, Chief.”

“Darkness is relative. We shall walk in the light, though around us, night unfolds.”

Marian took his hand. “Chief,” she began.

“Yes, Marian,” he replied.

“What’s your real name?”

“I can share that only with my true love.”

“Oh. Okay. ‘Chief’ will have to do then.”

“For now.”

Hand-in-hand, they entered the woods. Moon and starlight shone through the branches and leaves, illuminating the forest in a pale, magical glow. Below their feet, dry leaves crunched softly. Marian heard the slow trickle of the stream.

“Will we see deer?” she asked.

“Probably. There is an outcropping of rock nearby. We can climb atop it. From that vantage point, we can see forest, ocean and night sky.”

“Sounds beautiful.”

“It is.”

“So what was it like growing up Makah?” Marian asked, the silence of the forest unnerving her.

“What was it like growing up Irish Catholic?” Chief replied.

Marian feigned shock. “How did you know that?”

“Your name. Your red hair. Your mother’s conservative guidance. You were raised Catholic, but now shun those teachings.”

“On the nail. Boy, do you pay attention.”

“I do.” He squeezed her hand. She felt a painful tingle in her breasts again. Her nipples were hard. *And I wore a damn tank top*, she thought, unable to conceal her bosom without looking too obvious.

“Shhh,” Chief whispered. “Deer.” He pointed ahead of them.

There, resting in the leaves was a fawn. Its head was down, as if it were sleeping.

“Mom must be eating. Let’s leave it be. Come, this way.” Chief led Marian away from the fawn, deeper into the woods. “The rocks are just up ahead.”

“Rock climbing in the dark. Who would have thought,” Marian replied.

“We all have a mountain to scale. It is best to do it with a friend.”

Too perfect to be a part of her world, the outcropping looked as though it was constructed for a fantasy movie set. Bathed in the glow of the rising moon, surrounded by tiny white flowers, it was simply magical.

“It’s beautiful at night. The rocks shine. I love it here,” Chief said. He took a step up, pulling Marian along with him. It was an easy climb. The rocks had been stacked like blocks by some ancient giant-child, each one slightly smaller than the last. She hardly felt winded from the exertion.

Marian gazed out across the island. "This is amazing. Right here in the middle of the forest is this fantastic vantage point and no one has tried to build a hotel on it."

Chief slipped his arm around Marian's shoulders in more of a protective stance than one of seduction. "This is a better look-out than even Mt. Constitution. From here, you can see forest, sea and sky. Even the lights of Eastsound look beautiful from here."

"Ah, yes. There's that pizza place I was heading to!"

He turned, facing Marian. "Now that we are here, upon the sacred stones of my people, let me guide you to an understanding of your spiritual connection to Ghost Father."

"How so?"

Chief knelt. "Sit, close your eyes."

Is this where he makes his move? Or is he for real? "All right," Marian replied, sitting. She wiggled around to find a comfortable spot, then turned to Chief. "I'm ready."

"Do not be alarmed. I must get close to you."

"This isn't going to hurt, is it?"

Chief shook his head. "Close your eyes."

Trusting her gut, Marian surrendered to Chief.

She could feel him squatting beside her, whispering words she did not understand. His native language, perhaps. His breath was hot and sweet.

She was startled for an instant as his fingers traced a line down her throat, and his lips pressed to her ear, a whispered song filling her mind, heart and soul. Electrical current seemed to stream from his fingertips as he traced patterns on her face.

He eased her backward, sending her into another realm. Ghost Father's realm.

She was aboard the *Solar Flare*, her hand extended over the smooth-as-glass bay. Whale song filled the air. She understood it.

No barrier shall keep me from my love

No sea shall come between us. No land shall divide us

Not you without me or me without you

We are made whole

She replied.

No barrier shall prevent our passage

Land and sky and waves shall be our marriage bed

Forever joined

We are whole

Ghost Father appeared. Huge, shining, sleek and awesome. His heart spoke to hers. She heard his plea. Felt his emptiness and longing.

Marian dove into the black waters.

Like in her dream aboard the ferry, she saw herself making love on a bed of water. Her lover's skin glistened under the sun.

He entered her.

She cried out in ecstasy, utterly fulfilled in body and soul. "Ghost Father!"

It was he who was her lover. They had been too long separated by a cruel trick of nature. It was time to mate for a lifetime. All their lifetimes.

Marian bolted upright, nearly knocking Chief off his feet. He was bare-chested; magnificently bare-chested.

"What was that?" she asked, scrambling to her feet.

"A vision quest," Chief responded.

"Did you drug me? If you did..."

"No, of course not. I helped you relax enough to cut through the noise of your life. I helped you to understand Ghost Father. He is more than Orca. He is the greatest of men, reborn. You are his soul mate. Do you not feel it? You must help him cross over."

"I think I'd like to go now. Will you take me back to my car? And what's with the shirt off, guy? Were you planning on getting a little while I was under your spell?"

Chief put his hands on his hips. "Marian, if I wanted to make love with you, I would come out and say so."

Marian squared off, putting her hands on her hips, too. "Well, do you?"

"Yes, I do. But that's not why I brought you here."

"I've never been one to screw strangers, Chief." *But for you, I might make an exception.*

"I'm not a stranger, Marian. Do you feel, in your heart, that I am truly unknown to you?"

Marian shook her head. "No."

Chief took a step closer. "Not you without me or me without you. We are made whole."

Marian's jaw dropped. "That's what I heard in that dream thing you just did to me."

"Yes, I know."

"How could you know? Subliminal technique?"

Chief reached out quickly, pulling Marian to him. "I know the words, because I said them to you on the bay. I am Ghost Father."

Marian tried to pull away. She could not. "Bullshit! How could you be an Orca and a man?" She could feel the bare flesh of his smooth brown chest pressing against her breasts. So much for the protection of a tank top. Her nipples responded to the stimulation.

"There are more things in heaven and earth than you know, Marian. I am Ghost Father. I have been waiting for you for a very, very long time. Mate with me, and set me free." He touched his full lips to her throat, kissing her.

Oh, my God. This is too much! "I don't make it a habit of sleeping with nut jobs."

"Not you without me or me without you, Marian. Make love to me."

She tossed her head back, welcoming his lips as they trailed across her breastbone. He dipped his head, flicking his tongue across her nipples, now poking out from the fabric of her shirt like homing beacons. He slipped his hands under her shirt, pulling it over her head. "I can take you places no other man ever will." His hands cupped her breasts as he showered them with magnificent kisses.

Marian couldn't breathe. He slid a hand between her legs, stroking her through her jeans. She felt a flood of readiness. He unsnapped the clasp and tugged the zipper down. He reached inside her panties. She let him.

Clutching her tightly, his mouth on hers, he stroked her blossoming clitoris to orgasm. It didn't take long.

She quivered against him, experiencing pleasure so deep she thought she would explode. "Make love to me, Chief. I want you."

He released her, stepping back. Murmuring what Marian believed were prayers, prayers of thanks, prayers to his love, he undressed.

Standing before her was a god. A man with a body so perfect, so muscular, yet lithe. His penis jutted out from a mass of black curly hair just like the tree trunks along Enchanted Forest Lane.

“Remove your clothing,” he whispered, stroking his penis.

Without looking away, Marian slid off her jeans and wet panties.

Chief lifted Marian, penetrating her with one thrust. She wrapped her legs around his hips, wondering where he got the strength to hold her so tightly while moving his hips with deliberate, deep strides with nothing to support his back.

It was the most intimate experience of her life. They were joined in a way so intense that their two bodies ceased to exist. They were one. Her clitoris pressing against his groin with each thrust, she envisioned how deep he was inside her. How completely he filled her. She could see her body moving in rhythm with his. No ... not his body. Not hers. It was their body. A shared existence for that brief moment of blissful copulation.

Still holding Marian aloft, Chief knelt, placing her gently onto the mossy rock at their feet. Her legs flew up as she accepted his powerful thrusts.

She threw her arms around his neck as she came. She knew he was achieving orgasm simultaneously. He exploded within her, filling her with an ocean of love and hope.

Marian slowly re-entered the world from the high realm Chief had taken her. She was completely satisfied, the after-glow of their union warming her. Chief kissed her gently. Her eyes, her lips, her throat.

“Thank you,” he whispered.

* * * *

Marian awoke in her car, belted in behind the steering wheel. It was morning. She had hit a tree. The front end of her car was smashed.

Her head throbbed. She reached up to touch her forehead and pulled away fingers stained with blood.

“I hit a tree, hit my head and it was all a dream. Damn!” She opened her car door. “Of course it was a dream. What man could make love to me the way he did? The way Chief did.”

Pressing tissue to her forehead, Marian inspected the front end of her car. “Okay, so I hit a tree on Lover’s Lane. No, wait. This isn’t Lover’s Lane.” She turned, looking around. The road bore the double-yellow no passing lines. “This is Enchanted Forest Lane. How did I get back here?” She ran her hand over the damage. “It’s not that bad. I bet I can drive out of here.”

She crawled into her car and started up the engine. “Probably is no Lover’s Lane. I hit this tree and wandered into La La Land.”

The drive to her cottage at the ferry landing didn’t take too long, considering she was nursing a headache and possible brain injury.

As Marian passed the general store, she spied Kim exiting with a bag of groceries and pulled over.

“Christ, Marian, what happened to you?” Kim exclaimed through the open car window.

“I guess I hit a tree—well, I know I hit a tree—on the way to dinner last night. I’ve only just awakened.”

“Scoot over, I’m driving you up to the doc’s place,” Kim said. Obediently, Marian

slid over on the bench seat of her late-model sedan. Kim got behind the wheel, turning the car.

"I would have never found this place," Marian said, as Kim drove the switch-back road to Doc Nelson's place.

"She likes seclusion. Why she became a doctor in the first place is beyond me."

"She?" Marian responded.

"Yeah. Doctor Marjorie Nelson."

At the gate to the Nelson Manor, high on a hill overlooking the harbor, Kim sounded her horn. The gate opened automatically.

"Nice," Marian said.

"Yeah. Money can buy all kinds of toys."

Doctor Nelson was waiting at the top of the driveway. "Hi, Kim. Bring me a tourist nearly drowned off that tub of yours?"

Kim frowned. "No. This one ran into a tree with her car. Hit her head. Can you take a look?"

Marian crawled out of the car. Her head hammered with the effort. "I've got Blue Cross," she murmured.

Doctor Nelson nodded her head. "Bring her inside, will you?"

It was the nicest examination room Marian had ever seen. A huge picture window looked out over the bay and the décor would have pleased even the toughest critics with its muted shades of green and lavender. Marian eased onto the periwinkle-colored examining table, assuming standard procedure still applied in such a lovely setting.

"Let's take a look," Doctor Nelson said, donning latex gloves. "What time did this happen?"

Marian winced as the doctor pressed the cut above her left eyebrow. "Around ten last night, I suppose."

"Where?"

"Enchanted Forest Lane. Although I thought it was Lover's Lane."

Kim and the doctor exchanged a nervous glance. "Lover's Lane?" the doctor asked.

"Yeah, that's what the sign said. But I may have been reading it while unconscious. I had the most remarkable dream."

Dr. Nelson whipped a little flashlight out of her lab coat pocket and checked Marian's eyes. "You don't show any sign of concussion. I think a few steri-strips should seal up this cut. No need for stitches. Do you have any Ibuprofen with you? If not, pick some up at the store. You're going to need it." She paused. "Want to tell me about that dream?"

Marian laughed. "Oh, God. It hurts to laugh."

"I bet it does," Kim replied.

"My dream. Wow. It's so clear. I could swear it really happened." Marian stretched. "Doc, my back is killing me, too. Could you take a look?"

"Here, I'll help you off with your shirt," Kim offered. "Jeez, Marian. How did you get these bruises?"

"Bruises?" Marian asked.

"I guess the impact could have caused you to compress the springs in your car seat, causing these bruises on your shoulder blades..." Doctor Nelson began.

Marian interrupted her. "It was the dream. I was ... I was doing it on this big rock in

the forest.”

Doctor Nelson raised her left eyebrow, reminding Marian of Mr. Spock from the original Star Trek series. “Doing it?”

“There was this guy in my dream. This Indian guy. We did it on this outcropping of rocks just beyond the end of Lover’s Lane.”

“Wow. Maybe I should go run my car into a tree and see what kind of dream I get!” Doctor Nelson replied.

“It was so real. I mean, the bruises are one thing ... but I feel like I’ve had some pretty rough sex. I’m sore, if you know what I mean,” Marian said.

“I could give you an exam. I suppose it’s possible some deviant tourist took advantage of you in your unconscious state, though on this island, it’s doubtful.”

Marian shook her head. “No, it was just a dream.” She turned to Kim. “It was about Ghost Father.”

Kim coughed. “The whale?”

“Yeah. He was a man. And we had sex. He said we were soul mates, and that’s why he offered me the salmon when I was out on the *Solar Flare*.”

“You’re the woman the Orca nudged the salmon to?” Doctor Nelson asked.

Marian nodded her head.

“Well, that experience would be enough to give anyone wild dreams. You should take it easy today, okay. How long you here?”

Marian pulled her shirt back on. “Until Tuesday.”

“Good. Look, Kim—would you mind checking in on Marian for me later? Page me if something comes up. I’m catching the puddle-jumper over to San Juan Island later. I can radio the medics for assistance if necessary.”

Kim laughed. “Yeah, sure. I’ll tuck her in bed with an ice bag and the remote. How’s that?”

Marian moved slowly off the table. “Thanks, Doc. I’ll get my medical card. I have a co-pay ... do I pay you?”

“Yeah, just leave me a check. I’ll have my mom send in your billing slip and office notes. Chances are good, however, that your medical insurance will turn this over to your auto insurance carrier. I mean, forty-seven dollars is an awful lot to fork out when someone else can pay it.”

“Do I detect disdain in your voice, Doctor Nelson?” Marian asked, reaching for her handbag, which Kim had been thoughtful enough to bring in.

“I loathe insurance companies,” the doctor responded, busying herself with changing the paper on the examination table.

Marian opened her bag, reaching in for her wallet. “This is odd,” she murmured, withdrawing a folded gallon-size Ziploc baggie. She unfurled it.

“Smells like smoked salmon,” Kim said. “Yum.”

“It is. It’s his smoked salmon. The dream man.”

Kim took the bag from Marian. “How could that be?” She opened it. The pungent aroma enveloped the trio. “Man, this is the good stuff, too.”

“I didn’t buy any salmon yesterday, Kim.” Marian collapsed into a nearby chair. “The bruises, and that funky feeling between my legs. And now the salmon. It was real. All of it.”

“Should I phone the sheriff?” Doc Nelson asked. “Do you believe you’ve been

raped?”

Marian shook her head. “I don’t know.”

“If you’ve been assaulted, I’m going to need to do an exam. The sooner the better.”

Marian stood and walked to the window. “I can’t believe that while I was experiencing the best sex of my life in a dream, that some slob was raping me. Wouldn’t I have known it? I mean, I hit my head, but jeez ... I’m not dead!”

“Women who’ve passed out drunk and been raped often do not recall the event—until it’s too late.”

“Too late for what?” Marian asked.

“A rape kit. DNA collection. The morning after pill.”

Marian stood quietly, gazing out to sea. “I like the view here, Doc.”

Doctor Nelson walked up behind Marian and placed a gentle hand upon her shoulder. “Marian, do you believe you’ve been raped?”

Marian shook her head. “No, I don’t. And I don’t want an examination.” *Whatever he did to me, whatever he left inside me, I want to keep.*

“I’m going to have to note this in your chart. Your refusal to be checked needs to be on file. For my insurance, if nothing else.”

“Yeah, fine. Thanks for taking a look at me. Kim?” Marian asked.

“Yeah, Marian?”

“Will you take me back to the cottage now? I’m really tired.”

Kim looked to Doctor Nelson, who shrugged. “Page me later. Okay?”

* * * *

Kim drove Marian to her cottage by the sea. The sky was a bit overcast and a chill had set in.

Marian had not yet spent any significant time in her cottage. She’d dropped her bags and walked straight to the dock for her whale-watching trip. Everything was just as she had left it. In a state of utter disarray.

“You crawl into bed. Did you bring Ibuprofen?” Kim asked.

“Yeah, it’s in my suitcase.”

Kim brought Marian a glass of water and the pills. “Take these. And, I’m wondering if you’d tell me more about your dream.”

“About Ghost Father?” Marian asked.

“Yes. And about the Indian.”

Marian snuggled into the bed. “Well, he was tall. Really tall. And was built, if you know what I mean. He had muscles and a tight ass and looked damn fine in his blue jeans. He had really classic Native American features. The brown skin, of course. The eyes. Piercing black eyes. And cheekbones to die for.” Marian paused. “He had a tattoo on his left shoulder. Gorgeous design. Reminded me of a bull—but I’m not sure what it was.”

“Was he older?” Kim asked.

“Early forties, maybe. He had just a hint of white hair around his ears. He pulled it all back into a long braid.”

“And he offered you salmon.”

“He did.”

“And he made love to you on Parker Rock.”

“Parker Rock?” Marian asked. “It has a name?”

“It’s the only large outcropping of rock surrounded by forest on this side of the island. It’s a place with a bit of history, quite frankly.”

Marian rolled over onto her back. “Do tell.”

Kim pulled up a well-padded wicker chair. “Island folklore says that Parker Rock, which has a Native name I can’t recall, was lifted from the sea by the Orca King. He wanted to rule not only the sea, but the land. By placing a portion of his ocean kingdom on dry land, he was supposedly able to move amongst humans.”

“And I suppose he was a big Indian guy, right?” Marian surmised.

“Yep. They called him ‘Chief.’ I guess back then it wasn’t considered derogatory to refer to a Native male that way. I sure wouldn’t try it now.”

“I’m not surprised at all. Kim, he said his name is Chief.

“No shit,” Kim gasped.

“No shit,” Marian replied.

“Jeez. Anyway, the Orca King fell in love with the niece of a Sister from Shaw Island.”

“Wait, the niece of a sister...”

“Yes, actually, the niece of a Sister—capital “S”. As in nun. Shaw Island’s had a convent for over a hundred years. The nuns run the ferry landing, in full habit! I dunno ... early in the Twentieth Century—maybe the late Nineteenth Century—one of the Sisters became guardian to her orphaned niece. The girl came to live on this island, as it was the only one with a school back then.”

“Okay. I get it. The Sister had a niece and the King loved her. If I didn’t have a headache before, I do now!”

“The niece was a good Catholic girl. Around eighteen years old. Almost an old maid back then. She said her prayers at night and worked hard for her landlord to earn her keep, so that she could finish school. Then she was going to join the convent with her Aunt, the Sister.”

Marian chuckled. “Aunt Sister.”

Kim nodded. “I know. Anyway, the Orca King saw the niece working in the landlord’s garden. He fell instantly and madly in love with her. He lured her to Parker Rock, and seduced her. Ruined her. I guess he thought it was okay for him to claim her, because he left the landlord this huge mother of a salmon in the garden where the girl had been working.”

Marian took a sip from her glass. “Of course, the salmon has to come into play. Let me guess, the girl committed suicide. And her last name was ‘Parker,’ right? Otherwise, the story wouldn’t have survived. Only bad stuff continues. No one passes on the happy stories.”

“After she gave birth, yes, she...”

“She had his child?”

“She took the baby to the rocks where she’d been seduced and killed him. Then she killed herself. She thought her life was over. She was shunned, excommunicated and labeled a whore. A fallen woman.” Kim paused, raising her eyebrows at Marian for emphasis. “There used to be a trail off the road leading to the rock. It was there when my grandparents were kids. It’s been overgrown for years, because the sheriff was tired of chasing drunken teenagers away from the area. They called it ‘Lover’s Lane.’ Many an

island high school girl lost her virginity up there. Including me.”

“Oh, my God.” Marian whispered.

“The Orca King was devastated. He carried the body of his love and their child to the sea and dove in, vowing to honor and protect all women until such time as his true love was reborn and returned to him. He declared, or so the story goes, before he waded into the bay, ‘Not me without you or you without me.’ Something like that. I don’t recall the rest of the verse.”

Marian sat up. “So I had sex with the Orca King.”

Kim laughed. “I think I should have taken you to the local psychic instead of the physician.”

Marian looked Kim straight in the eye. “No barrier shall keep me from my love. No sea shall come between us. No land shall divide us. Not you without me or me without you. We are made whole.”

“How did you know that?” Kim asked in astonishment. “That’s the verse.”

“I’ve heard it before. Last night.”

“In your dream?”

Marian nodded. “In my dream.”

* * * *

Marian and Kim discussed the Orca King no further. There was too much to digest. Too much truth hidden in legend and dream.

Marian couldn’t eat, but choked down a few saltines to settle an upset in her stomach caused by the Ibuprofen. Kim left her, promising to check back. Marian wanted to be alone, anyway.

As she drifted into that quiet place between awake and asleep, her thoughts lingered on Chief, and the way he had made love to her. Richly. Fully. He held nothing back, and gave everything. As tired as she was, her body responded to memories of his touch. She wanted to dream of him again.

But Marian did not dream.

She slept soundly for several hours, awakening to a gentle knock on the door of the cottage.

Marian groggily opened the door, after forcing her eyes to focus on the smiling face of her rescuer, Kim, through the porthole like window opening of the cottage.

“I had Minnie whip you up some lunch. Here,” Kim offered.

Marian yawned. “It’s not salmon is it?”

“No, it’s turkey on whole wheat. Minnie made it special. She runs the deli in the grocery store.”

“Tell her ‘thanks.’ Man, I’m sore.” Marian set the sandwich down and walked gingerly to the miniscule bathroom built onto the cottage as what could only be construed as an ‘afterthought’.

“But other than that, you feel okay?” Kim called.

Marian flushed the toilet, washed her hands and splashed cool water on her face.

“Yeah. I’m okay. Thanks for bringing me lunch, Kim.”

“I’ve gotta run. I’m working the sunset cruise again tonight.”

“Give my best to Ghost Father. Tell him not to be such a stranger. Goodness knows, I may want a little more action at some point in time.”

Kim smiled. "If he's around tonight, I'll give him your love."

* * * *

Marian thumbed through her "rewards" packet from the casino. Was there anything left for her to do that did not involve driving her car into a tree or sleeping with the Dark Prince of the Forest?

Whale watching. Check.

Free dinner for two at Smoke House Pizza. Not ready to drive there!

Free video rental at Minnie's General Store. There's a thought.

Ten-minute pre-paid calling card. So who would I phone?

Complimentary ten-minute psychic reading at Granny Tillikum's, ferry landing terminal.

Marian paused. "I could do that. It's close. It doesn't involve my car, Native American men or whales. I wonder if she's still open." She flipped the gift certificate over. "Ah, hours of operation: by appointment or chance. Well, chance it is."

She showered, allowing the hot water to cascade over her until it went cold. Dressing was slow. And painful. The headache had dulled, but the bruises on her back were tender and swollen. "That's what I get for not dreaming of feather beds and silk sheets. Stupid me!"

Marian locked up her cottage and walked down the hill to the ferry landing. Granny's was at the back of Minnie's General Store. A hand-painted sign graced the rather non-descript entrance. In fact, it looked like the freight entrance of the store.

"Hello?" Marian called, pushing the door open. The small room was painted bright yellow. A single table and two chairs filled the area to capacity.

"Yes? Can I help you?" An elderly Native American woman emerged from behind a beaded curtain at the back of the little alcove. Marian had not expected to see a psychic who looked more like a tintype photograph from the Nineteenth Century. The woman's skin resembled an old leather saddlebag, and her hair was snow white and long.

"I have a coupon for a free reading. Is now a good time?" Marian asked.

"How'd you get that injury to your head, daughter?" Granny asked.

"Long story. Um..."

Granny shrugged. "I have *time* in my back pocket, daughter. But, yes, now's a good time. Sit down. Would you like tea?"

Marian pulled out one of the chairs, sitting. "Tea would be nice, thanks."

"Good. I was just fixing some. Must have known you were coming."

"Well, you are the psychic!" Marian hesitated, waiting to see if her joke amused or insulted the old woman.

Granny smiled. "Yes, and a damn good one at that. I'll get the tea." She disappeared beyond the beads. "Ever had a psychic reading before, dear?"

Marian smiled. "No. No, I haven't. I don't know what to expect."

Granny returned with two steaming mugs of sweet-smelling tea. "This is my own creation. Smells good, yes?"

"It smells heavenly. What's in it?" Marian asked.

"Ancient First Nation secret ingredients."

"You never divulge your secrets, do you, Granny?"

"No, Marian, I do not."

“How did you know my name?”

Granny smiled a loving, but toothless smile. “Chief told me.”

Marian choked, spitting her sip of tea back into the mug. “Chief? Who is he? He’s real?”

“Of course he’s real. He’s my adopted grandson.”

“Are we talking about the same man?”

“The man who helped you in the woods last night. Correct?” Granny took a sip of tea.

“Yes. But, it was a dream. I hit a tree. I was unconscious all night.”

Granny set her cup down. “It was real.”

“But my car...” Marian protested.

Granny reached out, taking Marian’s hand. “You did not hit the tree until *after*.”

“Why didn’t he help me?”

“He didn’t know. He had to leave. He was beside himself when I told him about your accident. He can’t stay ‘Chief’ all the time, you understand. He must return to the bay every now and then or the magic will end, at least until he is reunited with his true love. Wouldn’t do us any good to have him suffocate on the beach now would it? You know, a beached whale?”

Marian squeezed Granny’s hand. “Granny, am I going crazy? I am having a hard time believing that—all that—was real in the first place, much less that I am involved with a spiritual whale-being.”

“Why not believe it? When I was a child there was no automobile. No telephone. No rocket ship. Running water from a faucet was an amazing advent for my people. All these things are a part of the same magic. Who’s to say what other magics have not yet been discovered?”

“But a whale-god who walks on land as man, awaiting the reincarnation of his true love ... Granny ... I’m not sure I can go there.”

“It’s too late. You already did.”

“Okay. Okay. I had relations with your grandson in the forest last night. I hope you don’t think I’m forward. It’s just that it seemed the right thing to do. At the time.”

“Do not think I am embarrassed by sex, dear. I bore seventeen children, and at ninety-one, still enjoy a good romp with my husband—who by the way, is ninety-five!”

Marian laughed. “Granny!”

“The fact that my adopted grandson is a shape-shifter is no secret to our people. They know him as their spiritual leader. The *buh-buh-thlid*... you Anglos—ignore his presence. They do not want to believe in him. They see Ghost Father, hear his song, but do not open their hearts to it.”

“I heard Ghost Father sing,” Marian replied.

Granny took up her mug. “And soon, you shall hear his song from within you.”

“I’m pregnant,” Marian guessed. “We didn’t use protection.”

“Oh, goodness, yes. Don’t think you can couple with a magical being and walk away unscathed. A sheath would have done no good, anyway. He carries powerful seed.”

“So what am I supposed to do?” Marian asked. “I cannot live in the forest, nor can I join Ghost Father in the bay. I’m not game for raising a child alone, either.”

“If you love him, as he already loves you, your path will open up before you. He awaits you now. At *shuh-chee-yuh-ba-e-is he-yuh-thluhb t’ih-dee-chook*.”

“Where?”

“*Forever Beloved* rock. Parker Rock.”

Marian shook her head. “I’m afraid.”

“Then he will wait another lifetime for you. And your child will never know his true heritage.”

“I don’t have to keep it. I have choices,” Marian replied.

“Your path is your own. I am only here to show you options. Which road you take is up to you. I cannot interfere. Nor can Chief.”

Marian paused for a moment. “You said Chief was your *adopted* grandson. What does that mean?”

“I offered Ghost Father the first salmon of the season a long, long time ago. I was a highly sought-after maiden. It was my honor and privilege to go in the canoe with the men and toss Ghost Father the fish.”

“And he came to you—as a man. Later.”

“Yes. Shortly after I wed.”

“Did you make love with him?”

“Yes. But I am not his true love. His seed only strengthened the blood of our people. I was newly married when he came to me. My husband does not know that our first son is not his.”

“Ghost Father gave me a salmon. I returned it to him. Last night, Chief and I shared some salmon, and today, I found more in my handbag.”

“Of course. It is a traditional and very old custom for lovers to exchange salmon before they wed. The salmon are then cooked and eaten at their feast.”

“Why salmon?”

“It is the staff of life to my people. Without the salmon, we are lost. Without our brothers and sisters to chase them into our nets, we would starve.”

“The Orca?”

“Yes.”

“Granny?” Marian began.

“Yes, daughter?” Granny replied.

“What kind of child am I carrying? I mean ... is it human?”

“More than human. It is the child of the Orca King. The lost child, reborn.”

“I don’t want to be the mother of the next savior.”

“The only people the child will save have already been accounted for. Marian, go to him. He is calling to you. Do you not hear his song?”

Marian closed her eyes and listened. Rolling in like a slow tide, his voice found her.

“I don’t know. If I see him, I will want him. And I don’t know if I’m ready to love like that again.”

“You did not love Wyatt. Or Mark. Or Jared. All the men you have seemingly loved in your adult life were false dreams. Empty promises, without hope. There are things bigger than destiny, daughter. There are forces greater and magics stronger than even the ebb and flow of time. Love—true love, is one of those things. Here you have an opportunity to reunite with your soul mate. Your other half. Be filled. Be whole. Go to him.”

Marian stood. “I can’t promise you that I will love him forever. I don’t know how I feel about all of this. It’s too far outside my comfort zone. I’m not dismissing it, but I’m

not able to accept it at face value.”

Granny finished her tea. “That is your choice.”

“Thanks for the tea,” Marian said, exiting the sunshine yellow glorified closet of Granny, the island psychic.

The day promised to close in a brilliant sunset. The skies in the west were already painted delicate shades of pink and orange. Marian drove mechanically, assuming her car would remember the way. In the twinkling early evening sunlight, the trees of Enchanted Forest Lane took on new grandeur. They were sentinels. Watchmen. Perhaps even a wedding color guard, crossing their swords aloft as the bride and groom make passage from ceremony to new life.

She did not recall hitting the tree. She did not even recall how she got back to her car after making love with Chief. However, every delectable, passionate moment with him was burned into her memory. Each kiss. Each gentle touch of his hands. The amazing orgasm.

Marian giggled. *Make that orgasms. Plural.*

She pulled to the side of the road and parked. Nothing looked familiar, yet all of it *felt* familiar.

“Hello, Marian.”

Marian turned her head, startled. It was Chief. “How did you do that? I didn’t even hear you pull up,” she said.

He opened her car door. “I didn’t drive. I’ve been here for a while. Waiting for you. I know you have questions for me.”

Marian exited, locking the doors, double-checking that she had the keys. “Yes, I do, actually.”

Chief motioned toward the woods. “Step into my office.” Marian didn’t smile at his joke.

He reached out for her. She recoiled. “Don’t touch me. I can’t handle that right now.”

“I love you, Marian,” he whispered.

“How could you love me? You don’t even know me! Sure, you figured me out pretty quick in the sack, but you don’t know anything about me, really.”

“I know you, Marian. I know you well. Shall we?” Chief took a step off the road. “The forest awaits us.”

Marian wiped her eyes with the back of her hand. She would not show him tears. “For what?”

“Walk with me. All questions shall be answered. I promise.”

Marian folded her arms across her chest and followed Chief down the gentle slope off the road and into the wood of Enchanted Forest Lane.

“Ask,” he commanded.

“Why me?”

“We were mated long ago. Our love stems from causes made in the infinite past.”

Marian chose not to pursue that line of questions just yet. “Are you a whale?” she asked.

“Sometimes.”

“So, you are a Native American shape shifter, older than the hills, who believes it his solemn duty to impregnate female mammals of the aquatic and human kinds, for the sole

purpose of strengthening the herd. While you await the reincarnation of your true love.”

“My love has been reborn. I wait no longer.”

Marian stopped, facing Chief. “Did you violate a young girl, impregnate her and abandon her and your son to depression and suicide?”

“Mary Kathryn Parker.”

“Parker Rock,” Marian whispered.

“Is that how the story is told now? That I violated her? That she committed suicide?”

“That’s the story I was told,” Marian responded.

“May I set the record straight?” Chief asked.

“Please.”

“Come with me,” Chief said, reaching out, and grasping Marian’s hands. “There are words, and there are memories. Words can lie. Memories cannot.”

Marian did not pull away. “Memories can be recalled without true accuracy, however.”

“Only when shared with words. I can take you into my past. The past is set, it cannot be changed.”

“Time travel, too? There are government agencies that would kill for this,” Marian replied.

“All creatures have the power to recall the past. It is one of the forgotten secrets of our grandfathers. There will come a time when the secrets are revealed. Until then, I am their keeper.”

“I’m having difficulty with all this Native spirituality stuff. I mean, you are a really sexy man—probably the best lover I’ve ever had, too, but I’m not quite able to wrap my head around whale gods and time travel. Y’know?”

Chief leaned forward, tilting his head. “I’m going to kiss you. Please don’t pull away.”

Marian slid into the waterfall of his kiss. His tongue darted between her lips, urging the kiss onward to satisfying intimacy. She responded to his embrace more deeply than she had planned, clutching his hands tightly as their mouths spoke the sensual language of love. *He smells so good. He arouses me like no other man has ever ... I am lost in him. I’m afraid I might be lost without him.*

* * * *

She stood in a garden, bending to pull weeds. She wore an ankle-length calico skirt, under which heavy muslin petticoats clung to dark stockings. A long-sleeved button-down white blouse and shoulder-to-ankle apron completed the uncomfortable ensemble. She wore a little straw hat to shade her milky complexion from the summer sun. Stalks of corn and poles of beans grew high around her.

Marion knew whose body she now shared. Mary Parker’s.

The clip-clop of a heavy draft horse’s hooves alerted her that someone was approaching the manor house and gentleman’s farm. The landlord didn’t often receive guests or visitors of any kind. She straightened her tired back and smoothed her skirts.

“Hello,” the guest called, leading his horse and wagon to the graveled road leading to the manor house. “I’ve come to repair the back steps.”

Mary smiled. “Oh, of course. Mr. Winslow said he was going to hire a carpenter when he went into town.”

“Has he returned, Miss?”

“No, but please do go about your business, sir. You can stable your horse. He is a lovely creature.”

“Thank you, Miss.” The man smiled. “My name is Tamanass Tyee. Please call me Big Tom, for short.”

Mary wiped her right hand on her apron and extended it to the carpenter. “My name is Miss Mary Kathryn Parker. You’re an Indian, aren’t you? I’ve never seen an Indian before. I recently came from the east coast.”

“I am Makah. My people are whalers and fishermen.”

“But you are a carpenter.”

Big Tom leaned forward, frightening Miss Parker just a bit. “I get seasick. Shhhh... Don’t tell anyone.”

Mary giggled. It reminded Tom of bells pealing in the distance.

“Your secret is safe with me,” she replied.

Big Tom tipped his hat and urged his horse on to the rear of the manor house. “Thank you, Miss.”

“Will you be staying for supper, Mr. Tyee?” Mary called after him.

“Yes, ma’am. Mr. Winslow asked me to reside here until the work is finished. A week, perhaps,” he called back.

Mary smiled and returned to her gardening. “Good,” she said softly. *He is the kind of man described in those risqué and sinful books Mrs. Winslow hides in her stocking drawer. Tall and silent. Strong. True-hearted. I believe I may be about to experience my first girlish crush. Wait until I tell Eugenia at Mass, next Sunday!*

After stabling his horse, Mary watched with great interest as a few minutes later Tom walked briskly across the yard and into the woods across the road carrying the largest axe she’d ever seen.

He disappeared into the heavy growth. Mary half-heartedly continued picking beans for supper. A slow, loud cracking noise emitting from the forest shocked her so she nearly dropped her apron-full. “He’s cutting down a tree,” she said, curious. Too curious. Holding the corners of her apron so as not to spill the beans, Mary left the garden, meaning to see the felling.

She followed the sound as it vibrated around the tall trunks.

Big Tom had already cut one tree. She imagined his strong arms took but two whacks with his axe before the tree simply buckled and dropped from the threat alone. He stood now beside a second, smaller tree.

He had heard Mary’s approach the moment she crossed into the woods. “The milled wood I brought with me isn’t enough in quantity to rebuild the porch properly. I can saw planks. It will take a bit longer, but I assure you, Miss, the extra time will be worth it. I’ll need to pitch the boards, too. Exposed to the bay-side cliff like that, it’s no wonder the porch rotted away before its time.”

“Oh, I’m not concerned over time and price, Mr. Tyee. It is my landlord, Mr. Winslow who shall give you remuneration, after all. I have never seen a tree fall before. May I stay and watch?” Mary called from a safe distance, still cradling her apron-full of pole beans.

“What would your guardian say? You being alone here in the woods with a man? An Indian.”

“Mr. Winslow is not my guardian, sir. I work for my room and board and attend school. I am emancipated. When I finish my education, I shall join my Auntie on Shaw Island.”

Tom nodded. “You’re entering the Order?”

“As a nun? No. But I am going to teach the children in a convent foundling house.”

“Indian children?” Tom asked.

“Yes, some.”

“What will you teach them?”

“Reading. Writing. Geography. Art,” Mary responded.

“No Bible stories?” Tom asked.

“I suspect, sir, that the Nuns are better suited to the spiritual education of the children than I.”

“What about the ways of their people? What will you teach them of their tribe? Their village?”

Mary smiled. “Whatever stories you share with me over the course of your employ by Mr. Winslow, I shall pass on to the children.” She paused. “I would be honored to learn them, sir.”

*

“How old are you, girl?” Tom asked. *She is saucy for her age. And beautiful. Her spirit shines greater than those red curls of hers.* He felt his groin tighten. *I would like to entangle my hands in those fiery curls.*

“I’ll be eighteen soon,” Mary responded.

“You’re too young to live in a cloister, Mary Parker. You should be planning a grand tour of Europe.” *You would be a queen amongst them. Amongst any people.*

*

“Time will tell where I belong, Mr. Tyee. Right now, however, you have work to do, and I believe the sights around here are noteworthy enough for my tastes.” *Was that too bold? I shouldn’t be so bold.* “Now, please, may I stay while you cut the tree?” *I want to be near you. God preserve me, I want to be near you!* Mary smiled sweetly.

Big Tom returned Mary’s smile. Her heart melted. His heart swelled.

* * * *

Tamanass Tyee and Mary Kathryn Parker had fallen in love, there, in the woods a hundred years prior to, and on, the very spot where Chief and Marian stood locked in their mystical embrace.

* * * *

Marian awoke from the trance of the kiss slowly, feeling warm and relaxed. “I was Mary Parker. I *am* Mary Parker,” she whispered against Chief’s lips.

“Yes,” Chief replied.

“You were younger,” she teased.

“Even I age.”

Marian rested her head against Chief’s broad chest. “She loved you—loved Big Tom deeply. I feel that.”

“And I loved her more than I love stars at night or the waves against my back.”

“But she died. She committed suicide.”

“Let me reveal the balance of the memory to you. It will all make sense after that,” Chief said.

Marian lifted her head, eager to resume the magical kiss.

Chief laughed. “We must join more deeply than with a kiss if I am to take you into the past again.”

Marian raised her left eyebrow, displaying teasing suspicion. “And how might we accomplish that?”

Chief pulled away, reclining onto the leaf-strewn forest floor. Resting on his elbows, he motioned for Marian to join him.

Facing him, she straddled his hips, lowering her body atop his. Their pelvises met through the fabric of their Levi’s. She could feel the inviting rise under Chief’s zipper.

She giggled and reached between her legs to unzip his jeans. “Just call me *Whale Rider*.”

His jeans pulled down to his bent knees, and hers cast aside completely, Marian impaled herself upon Chief’s staff. Once he was fully inside her, she rested against his hipbones, motionless—not allowing him to thrust upward.

“Now, give me the memory, Chief.”

Chief rolled his eyes back in his head, nearly unable to concentrate. He grabbed Marian’s hips, lifting her up and down against his shaft.

The memories came flooding in.

* * * *

She was Mary, lying breathless against the mossy rocks. Her bodice was open to her waist, exposing her small breasts with their delicate pink nipples. Her petticoat and skirt were bundled up at her hips. Her pantalets lay twisted beside her. In their place, Big Tom’s silken head feasted.

“Oh, my God. Tom! Tom!” she cried, wanting to close her legs to his oral invasion, afraid to succumb to the all-encompassing intensity of the moment. “I never dreamed it could be like this.” *And the Winslows thought a new frock would excite me on my birthday! Oh, my God! Holy Mother of God, if this is the epitome of sin, then I am a fallen woman! Let me burn in Hell or wait a thousand years in Purgatory! I have never felt love so deeply as I do for this man!*

Tom didn’t reply. He was lost in the blissful, delicious, virginal flesh of his Mary. There was no greater pleasure for him than to bring her to climax, over and over again.

Mary arched her back, disobeying every womanly lesson she’d been taught in regard to lovemaking and the duty and chore it was. *Be silent and let your husband have his way with you? Be silent? Be silent? Oh, my God!*

She screamed. Not a scream of terror or fear, but of sweet, sweet release.

As her body relaxed, Tom pulled back, resting on his knees between hers.

“Are you ready?” he asked.

“Yes. Yes,” Mary sighed. “Let me see it first. I want to touch it. I want to taste it as you tasted me.”

“Are you certain?” Tom asked.

Mary sat upright and grasped Tom’s penis. It felt soft and smooth in her hands, yet was in fact, as hard as the rocks they rested upon. It was as large as one of Mrs.

Winslow's homemade sausages—the thick, overstuffed links that set the old women at church picnics to twittering. Mary finally understood the joke. “It will never fit,” she whispered. “It’s too big.”

She ran her hand up and down its shaft, marveling as it swelled even further under her touch. “How do I ... what do I do to pleasure you as you have done for me?” she asked.

Big Tom rolled off his knees and onto his back. “Explore it as you wish. Anything you do to me will bring me great pleasure.”

Mary leaned over, breathing against Big Tom's member. “I should like to kiss it, Tom. I should like to put it in my mouth and caress it with my tongue.”

So she did.

Tom reached out, stroking Mary's red curls. “I can deny you nothing, my love.” He laughed, allowing Mary to explore his body, holding back his welling seed as best he could.

“I taste your maleness, Tom. See, it brims as I flick my tongue across the slit here at the tip,” Mary marveled.

“Then, my love, you must allow me passage so that we do not waste a drop of it,” Tom responded.

Mary again reclined against the rocks, opening her legs to Tom. “I'm ready, Tom. I want you.” Boldly, she added, “I want you inside me.” Not the most proper or ladylike thing to say—but it was the truth. “Please. Now.”

Blocking out the sunlight it seemed, Tom covered his shining Mary Kathryn's pale white skin with his own tanned, dusky darkness. He kissed her tenderly, mixing their scents and nectars. He guided himself gently into his love. The barrier was slick and gave way easily.

He thrust into her. “You are now a woman, Mary. And, my wife.”

Mary responded passionately to Tom's thrusts. “I love you, Tom. I love you!” she cried.

Tom came sooner than he would have liked. The pleasure was too intense, more than even a man-god could take. It pleased him that Mary bloomed in orgasm in concert with him.

He held her, still joined. “When a man and woman reach pleasure at the same moment in time, a baby is sure to follow.”

Mary kissed Tom's smooth, brown face. “I want your child, Tom. I want to birth you many strong sons.”

Tom smiled. “I'd take daughters, too.”

* * * *

Marian returned to her body just as the first wave of orgasm struck her. She screamed, grinding her hips against Chief's. She could feel his seed erupt inside her, flooding her body with warmth.

Before she could roll away to bask in the afterglow of intercourse with Chief, she was whisked away again—to Mary's bedside.

* * * *

“Push, Mary!” the midwife commanded. “The baby is coming. Push!”

Mary’s face twisted in agony, her hands clawing the bed sheets, she forced the child from her body. The pain was extreme, sharp, culminating and joyful. Mary’s labor had been short and intense. The midwife’s arrival had coincided with the crowning of the baby’s black-haired head.

The shoulders out, the baby slid from Mary quickly. There was little need to prompt the child to cry. One second out and the babe was squalling. Never had there been more fine or holy music to Mary’s ears.

The midwife’s normally gentle face grew stern. She paused for a moment as she passed the wailing infant to Mrs. Winslow.

“What is it?” Mary asked, seeing the concern in Mrs. Turner’s eyes.

“Mrs. Winslow, wash the baby, clean its nose and mouth, then swaddle it while I stitch Miss Mary,” the midwife directed, seemingly ignoring Mary’s request. The rather puritanical, but forgiving Mrs. Winslow took the baby gently into her arms.

“What is it?” Mary demanded. She was too eager to hold her child—Tom’s child—to feel pain and exhaustion.

“You have a son, Miss. A fine, healthy boy. Now, one last push for old Mrs. Tucker and you’ll be done.” The midwife paused, waiting for Mary to expel the afterbirth. “Good girl. There you go. Good. Now, hold still while I take the needle to you. You’ve torn from stem to stern, God help me.”

Mary bolted upright. “Is my son well? Give me my son. Please, Mrs. Winslow. My son.”

“He’s fine, Miss Parker. It’s just that he’s not ... he’s not white, Mary,” the midwife cursed under her breath.

Mrs. Winslow carefully placed the baby into Mary’s arms. “He’s brown, Mary. He’s a beautiful brown boy. I now know the father of your illegitimate child, I’m afraid. This leaves me little choice but to ask you a most delicate question. Mary,” Mrs. Winslow paused. “Did the man who fathered this child—and I believe I know who it is—take indecent liberties with your body?”

Midwife Tucker straightened her back. “Tom Tyee. No wonder he left the island,” she whispered sharply as if pins were being inserted into her tongue. “You were savaged by that big carpenter. No island boy would have had his way with you and left you to deal with the outcome all on your lonesome.”

Mary held her reply for a moment, wishing the old hens would leave her alone with her perfect child. “Tom Tyee is the father, but there was no force involved. I love him.”

Mrs. Winslow swooned. With well-rehearsed dramatic flare she fell back, catching herself on the bureau. A hand went to her heart and she began to sob hysterically, choking and gasping for air. She left the room, her heavy skirts flying behind her and her handkerchief to her mouth. Quite the performance from the woman with scandalous novels secreted away in her stocking drawer.

Moments later Mr. Winslow burst in, his pistol drawn.

“Did he take advantage of you, girl? Did that big Indian rape you?” he asked, his face beet-red with rage.

Mary looked at her son and stroked his perfect face. “No. He did not take liberties with me, Mr. Winslow.” She paused. She hadn’t told them. “He is my husband.”

“That cannot be,” Mr. Winslow gasped. “I gave you no leave to marry. You can’t

marry without consent of your guardian. You're a ward of the Church."

Mary leveled her gaze at Winslow. "It is the truth. We married in secret."

"An Indian can't marry a white woman on this island. It's against the law."

"Nevertheless, Tom is my husband. This beautiful baby is his son. And when Tom returns, we will be leaving with him."

The midwife stepped closer. "Better we take both these children to Shaw, right away. It's fashionable to adopt Indian children back east right now. There will be no shame heaped upon him once suckling on the teat of a society wet-nurse. Miss Parker can make peace with her Lord and be absolved..."

"Be absolved for what? Falling in love is not a sin, Mrs. Tucker. Thank you for delivering my child, but I'd like you to leave now," Mary said hotly.

"I'll take my leave, Miss. But mind you, mixing colors is against God's way. White with white. Red with red. That's the natural way of things."

Mary shook her head. "Love is love, Mrs. Tucker. Love has no barriers of race, creed or color."

Mrs. Tucker coughed. Her voice tight, she replied, "You're talking like one of those hussies making all the fuss about their rights in Seattle and San Francisco. A woman's place is with her man. A man of her own kind."

"Tom is my kind! We're both human, after all!"

* * * *

Marian awoke resting in Chief's arms. "She didn't know. She didn't know that you..."

"That I am the Orca King? Ghost Father and Tamanass Tyee? No. She did not have the capacity to understand my transformations until she was forced by circumstance to do so. It was the times. The times were innocent and people believed only what their fathers before them believed."

"So you waited for her to be reborn."

"I knew I would find her, again."

Marian kissed him gently. "Tell me—show me how she died, Chief."

"No."

Marian pulled away. "No?"

"I cannot show you her death."

"Look, you started this. Now, finish it!" Marian exclaimed.

"You have her fire, Marian."

"Please."

Tom sighed. "In truth, Mary Parker and our son died only in the eyes of the islanders."

"Show me, Chief," Marion insisted.

Tom nodded. "We must go to the rock."

* * * *

Mary sat rocking on the strong porch Tom had built for Mr. Winslow. A soft flutter in her belly told her Tom had created something else strong, too. She looked across the porch and grassy cliff to the beach. She loved the beach. After their secret marriage, the

beach had been her marriage bed. She touched the slight rise of her stomach. "Grow strong, baby. My first baby. My child by my one true love. Oh, how I miss him," she whispered.

In the dead of night, when even the stillness of the bay made it seem as though it, along with the rest of the island, was asleep, Mary stole into Tom's arms.

Even as her belly grew, a fact she concealed from society by hiding it inside heavy folds of fabric, they made love, and made plans for their happy future.

Mary's heart sank when Tom had announced his departure the night of the harvest moon as they walked hand-in-hand along the shore, the waves lapping at their bare feet.

"I don't want you to go, Tom," Mary responded, squeezing his hand tighter.

"I will return for you and our child. You have my word on this. I must make the journey to my village to prepare a home for you. A proper home," Tom continued.

"Why can I not leave with you?"

"Our child might be put at risk, and I will never allow that to happen. It is better you stay with the Winslows, for now."

"Will you be back for his birth?" Mary asked.

Tom sighed. "No, I will not. Our child is due to make his appearance in February, yes?"

Mary nodded.

"I cannot return before March or April," Tom replied.

"I can't be away from you, Tom. I can't have this child without you! I need your strength! The gossip is terrible. There's so much talk about me—I hear the old biddies whispering at church. I don't attend the dances with the other girls and I don't primp and festoon myself in God-awful party dresses to attract the young men. What is to happen to me when I birth your child? Tom—in their eyes we can never be wed. Our love is unlawful."

"They believe you are going into the Convent. I have heard the talk. And Mary—our love is sacred."

"Convent? It's a bit too late for me to marry Jesus—although I do wish I had a gold band."

"You could not openly wear a ring, Mary. That is why I have not provided you with an outward symbol of my love." He touched her belly. "Except of course, for this."

"Which I must keep hidden."

"Our love must be secreted until my return—you know how the islanders feel. We will be met with prejudice. Soon, beloved, I shall escort you and our child to a new life—a life filled with love. A life without shadows where I can make love to you during daylight hours."

Mary wiped tears. "When will you leave?"

Tom wrapped Mary in his muscular brown arms. He drew her to him, holding her with his uncanny gentle strength and light, mesmerizing touch. "At dawn. I sail with the morning tide."

Mary buried her face into Tom's chest. His wool jacket smelled of campfire smoke and salt spray. "I love you, Tom. I love you so fiercely I think that I shall die without you."

Tom soothed Mary's hair against the nape of her neck, stroking her like a cat. "You must live, Mary Parker. You must."

"I feel my heart breaking now, Tom," Mary replied.

Tom lifted Mary's chin. "Then allow me to bind its errant halves with a kiss."

Tom had a way of seducing Mary's fears into valor. His kisses left her hopeful and nourished.

It was the memory of his kiss—his embrace—that sustained Mary in the months following Tommy's birth. It was the lingering hope Big Tom had imparted through his touch upon her lips that helped warm her as winter's icy grip took hold of the strait.

Winter meant seclusion for the islanders. There was little shipping traffic between the mainland and Orcas Island when the gales of November blew in.

A few months after Tommy's February birth spring came to the island. As she rocked and nursed her son on the porch imprinted with Tom's goodness and strength, Mary spied the return of the whales to the bay. Too many dorsal fins to count, the straight filled with their shining black and white bodies after the spring sun melted winter into memory.

The return of the whales meant the return of Big Tom. She was sure of it. A deep glow of satisfaction enveloped Mary. She felt completely at peace—like she did in the moments after making love with Tom. Whole. Well. *Tom is coming home.*

Her elation was cut short as a sullen voice called to her from inside the house. "Mary Kathryn?"

Mary covered her breast and entered the house. "Yes?" A pleasant, but care-worn nun stood beside the Winslows. "Aunt Patience?" she asked, surprised to see the one woman she had purposely avoided contacting over the course of her gravidity.

"You should address me with formality when in the company of others. I am called Sister Ruth. In our cell, you may call me Auntie." She approached Mary. "I received this letter from Mr. Winslow, but had to wait until now to make the crossing from Shaw. I'm sorry it took so long. I know you have made some mistakes, Mary. I'm here to take you home—to the convent. We can pray together and find peace."

"I need to stay here. This is where Tom expects me to be," Mary replied, clutching her son.

Sister Ruth crossed herself. Her eyes downcast, she spoke slowly, but clearly, "Mary, Tom Tyee is dead."

The bottom fell out of Mary's life. "What? How?"

Mr. Winslow took a step closer to Mary. "I brought your aunt here to make the news easier for you to bear. Tom died in a fishing accident along with a handful of other Makah. The news reached us a month ago, but I didn't want to say anything until you had family here."

"What?" Mary asked again.

Sister Ruth approached Mary, who fell into her aunt's arms, sobbing. "Come with me, Mary. Bring your son. We can pray and fast. We will ask the Holy Mother to intercede on Tom's behalf, to shorten his time in Purgatory."

Mary looked up. "If my husband is dead, then it is with his family I must stay. His son must not be raised in the cloister as a foundling." Mary stood quietly for a moment, a concentrated look wrinkling her delicate brow. She stared intently at the angelic, peaceful face of her son. "I shall make the arrangements to leave immediately." She paused, then turned to the shocked faces of her hosts. "Thank you for your kindness, Mr. and Mrs. Winslow."

“Mary Kathryn Parker, you cannot sail off and join life on a reservation! It’s just not done! It’s too primitive and a lone white woman would be subjected to horrors I simply cannot express in the presence of ladies!” Mr. Winslow bellowed. “You are leaving today, with Sister Ruth!”

“I would be accepted and loved as Tom’s wife, Mr. Winslow. And how much more primitive could life at Neah Bay be than this? We pump our water. We have candles and oil lamps. There’s no electricity in this house. No—I’ve made up my mind. I’m going to Neah Bay,” Mary replied. She turned and briskly returned to the porch. She followed the wide cedar steps downward, then disappeared around the corner of the house, calling out in her wake, “I am going to find Tom’s family!”

The sheriff was waiting for her at the front of the house. “Well, that’s an awfully determined statement, Miss Parker.”

“Sheriff! What are you doing here?” Mary asked. She cringed when the sheriff smiled. She loathed his yellowy-toothed smile. He smelled of whiskey and tobacco and had a nasty penchant for taking young girls by their upper arm as he spoke to them—even at church! He’d had his eye on her a time or two, and she had done her best to avoid his steely, vulture-like gaze by steering clear of him.

“Well, Miss. I looked the other way when you and Big Tom broke the law. Mrs. Winslow begged me not to have you arrested for committing carnal acts. Seems she has a soft spot for wayward girls, bless her heart. But now, it’s time for you to make amends. You’re a bad example, if you’ll pardon my saying so.”

“Sheriff, Tom and I are married. I am a married woman awaiting the return...” Mary stopped. “Since Mr. Winslow tells me Tom has died, I am a widow with a young child. Is that not acceptable on this God-forsaken island?”

“By what authority were you married to Big Tom, Miss? You know as well as I do that your child is a soulless heathen born out of wedlock,” the sheriff continued, eyeing the shape of Mary’s full bosom under her loosely fastened white shirt and waistcoat.

Mary turned pale. “We were married, Sheriff, in the eyes of God and God’s is the ultimate authority. My child is, therefore, not a soulless heathen, but a child conceived of a blessed union. Please don’t refer to him in such a horrid manner.”

“That child of yours wasn’t conceived on a marriage bed after a proper church ceremony, Miss Parker. Knowing Tom Tyee and his Indian ways, no doubt you took part in some heathen ceremony,” Mr. Winslow added from the front stoop.

Enraged, Mary turned, directing her words to each of her accusers. “I suppose you would consider an outdoor ceremony heathen, now, wouldn’t you?” Mary wanted to shock them. She wanted to turn the tide on her accusers and see them go pale. She continued, cradling her son and speaking in a low, somber tone, “We pledged our love and married in the Lord’s eyes, in His holiest of cathedrals—the forest. And then we made love under the stars—and more—I liked it. I loved it.”

Mrs. Winslow went pale. “Oh, my Lord!” She fell into her husband’s arms.

“Not now, Mrs. Winslow. Pull yourself together!” her husband commanded.

Mary smiled. She had meant to shock them. She was so tired of being whispered about behind her back. The fallen woman of Orcas Island. The Indian’s whore.

“Yes, quite. I need to sit down,” Mrs. Winslow said, pulling up a stool.

“He ruined you,” Sister Ruth intervened. “No one need know your shame. You can stay with me, Mary, on Shaw Island. In a year or two, I’ll send you back east. You

needn't keep the child. We'll see he's given a good home with God-fearing Christians. You can start over. A new husband need never know you were spoiled by the likes of that seducer, Tom Tyee."

Mary held her son close. "Spoiled? Ruined? What are you saying? I have no intention of leaving my son. Damn you your very thoughts, Sister!"

Sister Ruth took a step closer. "I forgive you your blaspheming against me, Mary Kathryn. Give me the boy. Come inside now, you need to go pack."

The sheriff snatched Tommy from Mary's arms, nearly toppling her. "No!" she cried. "Give me back my son!"

"Mary Parker, you are under arrest for unlawful carnal acts. Your bastard-child is hereby made a ward of the court, and is remanded to Sister Ruth for care in the foundling home on Shaw Island. Get your hat and coat. You're coming with me. A night in a cell might make you see the error of your ways," the sheriff commanded.

Mary clenched her fists so tightly her nails dug into her flesh. "Give me back my son."

The sheriff shook his head. "Mr. and Mrs. Winslow, take Sister Ruth and the boy upstairs. Pack Mary's things. Pack the boy's things. I want to have a little chat with Miss Parker."

Obediently, Mrs. Winslow retrieved Tommy from Sheriff Pendergaast's arms. She then followed Sister Ruth and her husband upstairs.

"What do you want from me, Sheriff?" Mary hissed. "I'm worldly enough to know that glow in your eyes is not for love of justice and ridiculous island laws."

"Come with me, Mary. And watch that smart mouth of yours." He took her roughly by the arm and pulled her up the front stoop and into the parlor. He drew the pocket doors shut behind them.

"Why make such a scene, Mary? I can fix it so that you leave this island with your son, but not with the Sister."

Mary could tell by that hellish flare in the sheriff's eyes what was coming. "How?"

"Give me what you gave Big Tom."

"I gave Tom my love. My heart. That is something you shall never have."

The sheriff lunged toward Mary, knocking her onto the settee, ripping open her bodice. Rough hands seized her tender breasts. "Scream, and I'll hurt you bad, girlie." He held her down, forcing her skirts up, and legs apart.

"Come on girl, you gave yourself to the big Indian. Why not a white man? We do it quick and quiet and I'll fix things for you, just like I said."

"I'd rather die than let you have me!"

"You lower your voice, Miss. You hush now or I will stuff something in your mouth and hush it for you." The Sheriff paused, fumbling with his gun belt and trousers. "You'd like that, wouldn't you? You've been Indianized, and an Indianized white woman isn't shy between the sheets." Pendergaast lunged his hips lewdly at Mary's face. "Help me undo my pants there, girlie. Put it in your mouth. Come on. I know you did it for Big Tom. Do it for me."

Mary weighed her options carefully as the sheriff continued his rude and lascivious behavior toward her. His rank body odor made her choke. The sheriff seemed the lesser of the poor choices she could make. Mary knew she could persuade old Pendergaast into just about anything ... if she gave him what he wanted.

Mary turned her head to stifle a gag reflex. The man smelled so bad! “Sheriff—did you bring your wagon?” she asked.

“Of course, why?”

“I didn’t notice it out front, that’s all. Did your half-wit deputy come with you?”

Pendergaast backed off Mary just a little, his trousers still open. “Just me. What you getting at?”

“I’ll do whatever you want if you’ll promise to get me away from here. I cannot allow my son to be adopted off. I...” Mary paused, thinking quickly. “I can’t do it here—in this house. I need to go near the woods. Like Tom taught me,” she lied.

“Oh, girly. I see your plan. You won’t try running off now, will you?”

“You’ll have my son in your wagon. I won’t leave him. I won’t run off.”

The sheriff closed his trousers and tucked in his shirt. “Fix your clothing. Let’s get going. I got an itch needs scratching.”

Mary chuckled. “I bet you do.”

The sheriff opened the pocket doors. “Oliver” Mary called—using the sheriff’s given name as seductively as she could. “I’ve never had a white man, before.”

The sheriff strutted like a rooster out the parlor doors. “I’ll see what I can do, Miss Parker.”

Mary smiled. “Thank you, sheriff—for everything.” *You damned fool.* She pocketed a glass paper weight as she walked out of the parlor.

Puffed up with his lawman’s egotistical pride, Oliver Pendergaast rocked back and forth on the heels of his boots as he addressed the Winslows and Sister Ruth. “Mary has agreed to come with me. She’ll be taking her son along with her. I promised her we’d send a wire up to Neah Bay and try to find some of Tom’s kin to take in the child. Once that’s settled, Mary has agreed to enter the convent. I’ll accompany her to Shaw Island, myself.”

“Bless you, sheriff. This seems a more than acceptable solution to me,” Sister Ruth replied.

Mr. Winslow nodded his approval, catching a glint of something sinister in the sheriff’s eyes. “I understand. Thank you for your time, Sheriff. Mrs. Winslow, give Tommy back to his mother. I’ll load your bags into the buggy, Mary.”

Mary took her son from Mrs. Winslow, eager to hold him—eager to never have him taken from her again. She turned her back to the Winslows and her aunt, and walked directly out to the sheriff’s wagon.

“I’ll see you on Shaw!” Sister Ruth called hopefully.

Mary didn’t bother with pleasantries. She needed to keep her blood boiling and mind alert for what she had in mind. The weight of the thick glass orb in her waistcoat pocket seemed to grow heavier with each step she took closer to the sheriff’s cart. Her heart pounded in her throat and her palms were wet against Tommy’s smooth skin. She was about to commit an act of pre-meditated murder. But what mother wouldn’t to protect her child?

The buckboard loaded up with Mary’s bag, the baby secured with a rope to a pillow, the sheriff tipped his hat like a dandy and cracked his whip. His Shire clopped away, his heavy hooves whipping up the road dust, creating little dirt devils in its wake.

“When?” he asked Mary as soon as the Winslow Manor was out of sight.

Mary scanned the vicinity. If she was going to split the sheriff’s head open and run

off, she didn't want to be too far off the road, but needed some seclusion.

"Pull over near the cliff." She looked at the sheriff demurely, but she spoke with brashness in her tone of voice. "The crashing of the waves below will muffle your pleasure sounds." Disgusted, she leaned in and flicked her tongue across the sheriff's dirty lips.

"That Indian sure brought out some kind a woman in you, Miss Parker. It ain't natural for a woman to enjoy relations. Your being Indianized and all, must make it hard for you to have gone without for so long."

"Do pull over, sheriff. I'm feeling faint from desire. I never thought it possible to crave a man so. Here you are, willing to help me, a widow and mother—and fallen woman. I don't know if I can ever repay you for your assistance. Perhaps when you think I've done enough for you, you'll book me passage off this island. I'll never look back, I promise. I'll leave with Tommy and after time, the shadow of disgrace I've created will lift."

Pendergaast pulled his Shire's reins to the left, halting the beast at the cliff's edge. "I'll book your passage, Miss Parker—for you and your boy. But not right away. I'm going to need quite a bit of appreciation shown me for lying to a nun and hiding you from the Winslows."

Mary sighed. "I'll do whatever you want, for as long as you want, Sheriff."

Oliver Pendergaast leapt from the wagon and tied off the reins. "Well, Miss, let me help you out of the wagon."

No sooner had he helped her from his buckboard, than he pressed his fetid lips against her throat and his hands ripped at her bodice. The sheriff groped for her breasts, pulling them from the confines of her corset. "Get out of your skirts, Mary Parker," he ordered.

Mary smiled sweetly as she shed skirt and petticoats, letting them drop to the ground. She reached a hand inside her waistcoat, and grasped the heavy glass orb. Her other hand went around the sheriff's neck, pulling him in for a long, wet kiss.

Vile, wretched, foul. There were no words strong enough to describe the taste of Oliver Pendergaast's mouth. She forced herself to continue her self-serving seduction. She had to catch him off-guard just long enough to club him over the head with the paperweight. With enough force behind her blow, it would surely knock him out. *Then I roll him over the cliff and find my own way to Neah Bay before anyone discovers he's missing. I may go to Hell for my sins, but I shall not be forced to endure life in a convent without my son.*

Mary scowled as his dirty fingers made their way about her privates. She tried to focus on her plan. Her ridiculous plan. Desperately ridiculous. But she felt desperate enough to try it, nevertheless.

Pendergaast broke the kiss.

"Are you ready, Sheriff?" she asked coyly. She didn't hear his reply. She was play-acting. The only sound she wished to hear were the soft sounds coming from her son secured in the back of the buckboard. He was fine. Tommy was fine.

She returned her attention to the sheriff, who had busied his hands in his trousers, stroking himself. He freed his partially aroused penis, a purple-veined, crooked thing covered with dark spots. Healed syphilitic sores. Mary nearly gagged. She had heard rumors about the sheriff having the pox—apparently the rumors were true.

"I need to make water before we go any further," Pendergaast said, turning to urinate.

Mary sucked in her breath. *This is my chance!* With force she didn't know she had, Mary deftly removed the fist-sized paperweight from her pocket and struck the sheriff on the back of the head with the heavy glass orb. The loud *crack* told her she'd broken his skull.

Mary stepped back, and stared in disgust at the blood spray on her right hand. Pendergaast swayed to and fro. He touched his injured head. He pulled his hand away in horror. "I'm bleeding! Goddammit! Come here you Indian-loving bitch! I'll teach you a lesson you won't forget!" Oliver Pendergaast lunged for Mary, missing her completely in his half-conscious rage. His chest slammed into the wagon and vomit erupted from his mouth. He then reached for Tommy, still tied to the pillow, and drew his weapon.

*

Pendergaast's eyes stung from the blood trickling from the wound. Though barely able to stand, he managed to point his gun at Tommy's temple. Darkness closed in on him. Angrily, he spat at Mary. "You think a little bump on the head is going to stop me, whore? Tell you what. I'm going to stay right here with my gun to your sweet baby's head. If you do anything but what I tell you, I will shoot him dead."

"No!" Mary cried.

Pendergaast whispered through his filthy lips, "Don't think I won't do it. Now, get over here. On your knees."

*

Mary recoiled in horror, but somehow managed to move the few paces necessary to kneel at the sheriff's feet. She thought only of her son's life as she inched her face closer to the foul-smelling, pox-ridden crotch of Sheriff Pendergaast. He'd pissed himself. His already atrocious aroma of whiskey and tobacco had been made even more pungent by the addition of blood, urine and vomit.

Mary choked and heaved. "I do this, and you don't hurt Tommy, right?" she asked.

"You do this right and I won't kill you and your son after. You just earned yourself another few weeks flat on your back in my bed, that's all. Now, get on with it. I think I need to head out to Doc's place and get my scalp stitched up. I'd let you do it, but you'd probably poke my eye out with the needle."

Mary couldn't breathe. The visage of the gun to her son's temple sucked all life and breath from her. She began to shake. The only thing that now mattered was getting that gun away from Tommy's head. Everything else vanished, save the horror before her. Forming a plan as she spoke, Mary addressed Oliver Pendergaast.

"Sheriff, maybe I should drive you to the doctor straight away. I seem to have caused you significant injury," she suggested, wiping away a drop of blood from the back of her hand.

"I've had worse—and this is nothing compared to the damage I plan on doing to you. Now, let's get this over with, shall we? And remember, whore, my gun's pointing at your bastard child's head. Don't think I won't pull the trigger if you try anything. One less half-breed in the world is something we can all live with. Except for him, of course.

"No, please. Please don't hurt Tommy," Mary begged.

"I like you this way, Mary Parker. Beg me not to kill him. Beg me not to kill you."

Tears welled in her eyes, blinding her to the nauseating task before her of her. She

choked back sobs of fear for her son and revulsion for the sheriff. She had no choice but to service him. She lowered her face closer to Pendergaast's fetid maleness. "I'll do whatever you want if you let my child live, Oliver."

A long trumpet-like sound broke the horrid stillness of the moment. It literally filled the air. It colored the sky with music, echoing deeply and purely. It penetrated her heart with joy—the joy she felt in Tom's arms.

The Sheriff listened, too. He forgot Tommy. He staggered away from Mary toward the cliff's edge while buttoning his pants. Mary followed behind him, enthralled by the trumpeting off the sea. One rhythmic vibration became two, then three, then four—each with its own depth and pattern and unique tonal quality. Nature's symphony rose from ocean waves to the cliff top drawing them near. Forgetting their individual diabolic plans, Mary and the sheriff approached the edge.

"It's them damn whales!" Pendergaast marveled. "Will you look at that! I've never heard them beasties make a sound like this!"

Mary leaned forward. "It's their blowholes. Males trumpet when they clear their blowholes."

"Indian lore?" the sheriff sneered.

"Fact, Mr. Pendergaast. You're witness to it. Don't be so obtuse," Mary replied.

Fear fled her. She felt a sensual familiarity to shining sea beasts. To the largest of the pod. To the leader. Though it seemed highly unlikely that she had seen that particular whale before—she was fascinated by him. By his size and regal presence in the pod. He was their king. The Orca King.

Mary had never considered herself a spiritual woman. She attended Mass out of obligation and tradition. She enjoyed stories of mysticism and séances relayed to her by the more worldly island girls whose mothers dabbled in the occult, as was the fashion for society women. She had read the reigning popular fiction books in the island library, including "Dracula" and "The Time Machine." She was not a disbeliever in supernatural events—it's just that she had nothing in her young life with which to compare the churning feelings cascading through her body as she felt herself melting into the awesome vision before her.

She was disinclined to continue her battle against the sheriff and his tainted rapaciousness. She wanted to go to the whales. She felt stirred and awakened by their call. Like a moth to a flame, she wanted to join their world, leaving hers far behind.

She could see herself leaping from the precipice in her mind's eye. Tom was waiting for her. Dead or alive, she felt deeply that he was only a few steps away from her—she needed only to reach out to be reunited with him. She feared for Tommy only—that her son would not forgive her for removing him from his new life and casting him into her dream. But the dream is where his father lay, and that is where the song of the Orca King harkened them to dwell.

Mary whispered into the breeze off the sea, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in thy philosophy, Horatio."

"What was that, girl? Who the Hell is Horatio?" Oliver Pendergaast asked.

"It's a quote, sheriff. From a book in Mr. Winslow's study. The Works of William Shakespeare."

"Who's that?" Pendergaast replied.

Mary closed her eyes to the dullard beside her. She allowed herself to be filled and

strengthened by the continuing symphony of air and water. “A great man, who wrote a great many things, Mr. Pendergaast.”

The sheriff grunted his response.

As she opened her lids, she witnessed a spectral apparition rise up from the mist and spray as the largest Orca trumpeted once again. Mary recognized the image forming in the saline spray. It was her love. The droplets seemed to hover in mid-air, sculpting the muscular physique of her tanned lover. Her husband.

He reached out for her, adding his pure and far reaching voice to that of the whale’s song. *Not you without me or me without you.*

The words caressed her with sweet comfort. “Yes,” she said aloud, in response to the lyrics Pendergaast could not hear, much less understand.

“Yes what?” the sheriff asked.

“I’m sorry I hit you, Sheriff. I had intended to kill you by rolling you off the cliff, but that won’t be necessary now.” Mary moved swiftly to the wagon and reached for Tommy. She quickly unfastened the ropes confining him in the buckboard.

“Now don’t you be thinking of running off. I’m a crack shot. No one will fault me for killing a criminal and her bastard-child.”

“Is it criminal to love, Mr. Pendergaast?” Holding her son, Mary approached the cliff’s edge.

“Get away from the edge, woman. Get back to the wagon, now.”

Mary looked down at the whales.

“Good bye, Mr. Pendergaast.” She stepped over the edge, her son clutched to her chest.

“No!” the sheriff cried, reaching blindly to save Mary as she plummeted downward.

Mary hit the water and was immediately surrounded by the Orca. Still holding fast to Tommy, Mary quickly stopped her downward momentum by kicking her feet. She breached the surface and placed her squalling child on her shoulder.

Uninjured and unafraid, though she could feel the commotion in the water caused by the swimming whales near her, Mary tread water and tried to soothe Tommy.

“Tom! Tom, where are you? I don’t see you!” she cried.

She heard his reply through the breaking waves against the craggy shoreline. “Not you without me or me without you.”

“Yes, Tom! Yes!” Mary called. “Where are you?”

The shadow of the great sea beast fell over her. Mary turned to see the Orca King not more than a few feet from where she continued to tread water. The beast nodded its nose toward the rocky shore.

Mary understood. The whale’s black eyes spoke to her—spoke through her. She swam toward shore, grateful to feel land beneath her feet again as she climbed from the bay, her skirts soaking wet heavily weighting her down. She stripped herself of her dress and petticoats, making a nest for Tommy. He was wet, but didn’t seem cold, and had stopped crying. He was making little bubbles and cooing happily. Tommy was fine.

Mary waded back into the bay, pulling herself toward the Orca King. She could see the shining halo of Big Tom crowning the whale’s huge head.

The Orca opened his huge mouth, revealing a captured salmon.

“Take it. Send it upward,” Big Tom’s spectral image urged. Boldly, Mary reached in to touch the fish. The orca held his jaws open for her. She thought he could have

swallowed her whole had he wished to do so. The smoothness of its flesh was in sharp contrast to the sharpness of the whale's teeth.

She grabbed the salmon by its gills, and pulled it from the whale's mouth. Struggling to stay afloat, she tossed it into the air. Like the whale's song, it sailed upward. Mary watched as it rose higher and higher against the cliff-face riding some magical updraft.

Feeling lightheaded from the blow, blood loss and shocked by Mary's leap into the bay, the sheriff didn't believe his eyes as the salmon sailed upward, nearly landing at his feet. He backed away from the precipice, his mouth agape and saucer-like eyes staring vacantly at the large fish resting on the stony soil.

"Holy Mother of God," he prayed, tripping over his own feet to climb back into his wagon. He shook his head to clear his mind, then whipped his Shire, who responded to the cracking pain by bucking against the poles holding his harness to the buggy. The sheriff urged his horse toward the muddy roadway. "Hold it together, old boy. Don't send us over the cliff, too. Jesus Christ! What is going on here?"

Mary, too, forced her own disbelief into submission as the large male's fluke melted into the bay before her eyes. It was a seamless, awe-inspiring transformation. In place of the gargantuan beastie swam Tom Tyee.

His long black hair plastered to his neck and shoulders, and skin shining as brilliantly as that of the whales' against the glare of the sea and sun, he reached out for her.

Tom pulled Mary to shore.

"Tom..." Mary began, falling into his arms as they rested on a patch of sand not far from where Tommy lay sleeping.

"I know you have questions, beloved. I will answer them all, in time. For this moment, however, let me hold you. I have missed your touch," Tom whispered.

Mary turned her head quickly. "Tommy..."

"Is fine. He is fine. See, my son sleeps."

"He's wet, he'll catch cold," Mary continued.

"He is dry and warm and sound asleep. We'll take him away from here soon. I have other plans for us until that time." Tom ran his hand up Mary's ribcage, stopping at her breasts. "Make love to me, Mary."

Unashamedly, Mary moved to Tom's lap. Facing him, she unlaced her undergarments, stripping herself of her wet clothing.

She straddled Big Tom. He filled her, body and soul. "Give me a daughter, Tom. Give me a daughter," she begged as she thrust against his hips, urging him to climax.

Tom shook as he exploded within her. On the bay, the males of his pod cleared their spouts in time to Tom's surging orgasm. Mary tossed back her head and cried out as she too, achieved orgasm.

* * * *

Only a few hours after Mary's desperate leap and presumed death by drowning, Mrs. Winslow rode out to the roadside cliff where Mary had jumped meaning to decorate the spot with flowers. She loved Shakespeare's romantic tragedies. The sheriff had mentioned Mary's quoting of Shakespeare before plummeting to her death. Mary's was a forbidden love marked by suicide. Poor Mrs. Winslow, who had never known pleasure at the rough hands of her husband, and who had spent a lifetime living vicariously through passionate sonnets and risqué novels thought Mary's fate most romantic.

Mrs. Winslow placed the flowers on a spot where the soil had been disturbed. Not two feet away was the largest salmon she'd ever seen. How it got to the cliff top was beyond her. But she didn't care. Mary had loved salmon. She was going to take it home and cook it in honor of the young girls' tragic life—and death.

Sister Ruth and the Winslows never knew they were participating in an anniversary feast, celebrating the reunion of Mary Parker and her mate, the Orca King.

* * * *

Marian sat upright. "Mary didn't commit suicide? She didn't murder her son?"

Chief nodded. "They lived long, happy lives. Mary Parker finally came to understand who I am—and who her son would become. We loved deeply. When she died, it was in my arms—here—at our rock."

Marian shook her head, her eyes downcast. "And I am she."

"Marian, you are the reincarnation of Mary's spirit, but you are not Mary Parker. Mary Parker lived a hundred years ago. Our children strengthened the pod and still live today. You and I shall write another legend with our love. And when it comes time for you to leave this lifetime, I will find you, again, in the next. I have waited so long to hold you. I am made whole by your love."

"Chief, I don't want to turn into a whale and swim into the sunset."

"You won't have to."

"I don't want you to swim off into the sunset leaving me with a fatherless child, either."

Chief reached out and touched Marian's stomach. "I will not leave my children."

Marian touched his hand. "Children?"

"If you'll have me. If you'll trust me, we will have many children and grandchildren."

"Where will we live, Chief? Here, in the woods? Mr. and Mrs. Shape Shifter? Or in the bay, as Ghost Father and mate?"

"Where do you want to live, Marian?"

"Bellingham is fine with me."

"Bellingham is a nice place. A good place to raise a family."

"So, how are we going to work this out, Chief?" Marian asked.

"Do you recall the part of the Ghost Father legend that states he raised this very rock from the water so that he could live and rule on land?"

"Yes."

Chief picked up a pebble no larger than a baby sweet pea. "As long as you have this, I can stay with you—as a man."

"This little rock?"

"That little rock."

Marian sighed. "Hmmm."

"What is it?" Chief asked.

Marian smiled, gazing into Chief's dark eyes. "I wonder how this would look mounted between two diamonds."

Chief returned her smile. "Like the world caught between the sky and the sea. Our world."

Marian clutched the pebble, holding it to her chest. "I love you, Tamanass Tyee."

“And I have always loved you, Marian.” He began to hum. Marian recognized the tune. It was, literally, their song.

No barrier shall keep me from my love
No sea shall come between us. No land shall divide us
Not you without me or me without you
We are made whole
No barrier shall prevent our passage
Land and sky and waves shall be our marriage bed
Forever joined
We are whole

The End

About the Author:

Darragha Foster is also the author of “Love's Second Sight,” a passionate Viking-Age romance published by Atlantic Bridge, Liquid Silver's parent company. The award-winning novel is the culmination of over twenty years' research, travel to Iceland and the Hebrides, and wild, mystical experiences involving Norsemen and Scotsmen.

Though this tale didn't entail twenty-plus years of research, the birth of *The Orca King* did involve travel and a rather up-close and personal, thoroughly awe-inspiring encounter with an orca whale. Darragha came eye-to-eye with a spy-hopping orca while on a whale-watching cruise in the San Juan Islands, Washington State. That night in her dreams, she met the Orca King. The next morning, she wrote his story.

Darragha lives in the Pacific Northwest with her husband and daughter in a one-hundred-sixteen year old house continually under renovation. The house is haunted by the spirit of a Union Civil War-era soldier who seems to enjoy watching the construction every now and then. Someday, he may turn up as a character in one of Darragha's stories.

You can learn more about Darragha's writings by visiting www.darraghafoster.com.

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