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June Issue Coming Out May 20

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From the April Issue:



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Thyme for the Millennium (All about herbs) by Susan Johnson in *Columns*

From the February Issue:



Driven to Distraction by Susan Johnson

Bathing is about the only thing we don't do in our cars these days.



A Valentine for my Mother



Photography

From the January Issue:



Havasupai by Susan Johnson



Hale Chatfield, Poet March 26, 1936 to November 23, 2000 by M. H. Perry

From the December Issue:

Election 2000 by Marien Helz

Natural Born Killers by Susan Johnson

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Letters to the Editor



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Up

About the April issue:

Columns

I enjoyed the article and as webmaster of the BHSC web site will put a link to Word Worth on it so our membership can link to it .

Also thought I would let you know that the joint Thursday night series is not jointly sponsored by BHSC. Probably a type-o that should be the Buffalo Yacht Club (BYC) along with BCC.

....

Jim Tepas

Thanks for letting us know about the misprint. We corrected it as soon as we got your message. Thanks also for the words of appreciation for our site.

Write to the Editor

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Editorials



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Greetings

Letters to the Editor

Parents As Friends

by Marien Helz

When my first child was an infant, I read the statement a celebrity made asserting that he wanted to be a friend to his children. Even then, I thought, *No, that's wrong. My children will have many friends in their lives, but they will have only one mother, one father, and I would not deprive them of that relationship for anything in the world.*

Since that time, I've seen countless parents forfeit their parenthood responsibilities in order, not simply to have a friendly relationship with the children, but to be, in fact, their children's friends. This is characterized by abrogating any decision-making role. These parents get into endless debates with their two to four year olds about what the child is going to wear in the morning. For some strange reason, they seem surprised when the child is sixteen and feels no need to listen to his or her parents. These children have been systematically taught that their opinions and their desires take precedence over whatever the parent would like.



When children become teenagers, their safety depends upon their parents' having established parental authority. Those who have that authority are able to tell their children that they cannot have friends over when the parents are away overnight; they can tell them that they cannot drive the car without permission and be reasonably sure that they won't. At the same time, they maintain their authority by checking occasionally to see that their instructions are followed.

The ironic thing is that many foolish parents hold themselves up to the world as the exemplar of parenthood. I once entered a drug store at the wrong moment when a woman was having a tiff with her approximately eight year old son. He was demanding that she buy a bottle of something which she didn't plan to buy. The boy kept demanding; she kept telling him to put the item back. The boy became increasingly demanding while she became increasingly insistent that he put it back all the while glancing around her proudly as though she were on a tape explaining the right way to handle the situation. I escaped down an aisle looking for the one item which I wanted. It took awhile. Ten minutes later when I had to go to the cash register, the tiff was still going on, stronger than ever. The boy had tears of anger in his eyes and went over and hit his mother on the hand with the bottle. She stuck her jaw out and demanded, "Don't you hit me!"

At this point, the mother was no longer as proud of how she was handling the situation. She looked toward the cashier and me and said antagonistically, "Yeah, I suppose your children never did this!" Not caring whom it was she was addressing, I simply said, "My children never did that."

My reply was a much stronger rebuke than the cashier's or my furtive glances at the accelerating

row had been. At that point, she grabbed the item and put it back on the shelf. The boy's need to save face at that point had gone sky high, and he went into a full fledged screaming, kicking, sitting on the floor tantrum, yelling that he would have put it back himself as she dragged him out of the store saying that she would never come into that store again. I can't imagine that her lack of patronage was missed.

Her problem lay in allowing the situation to get into a contest of wills in the first place. His stake in "winning" became greater and greater as the quarrel progressed. I can only imagine that her motive must have been to have the boy put the item back because she didn't want to "force" the issue. She ended up, however, doing just that while also creating a scene dreadfully humiliating to the boy and ultimately to herself.

A family with whom I had the misfortune of spending a great deal more time when my children were growing up had the same non-directional feeling about parenthood. The first child would habitually go into shrieking fits, screaming at his loudest capacity for up to an hour. He would do this at home, in the airport, wherever the mood came over him. His mother would turn a deaf ear. When her mother-in-law told her that the boy's cousin of the same age didn't do that, she asked how the cousin got her frustrations out. Truth is, her parents didn't frustrate her.

When this family ate dinner, their children would jump up and run around constantly. The father would tell them that they couldn't have anymore to eat after they got up from the table. Before he had even finished his sentence, the mother was feeding them off her plate. They grabbed other children's toys, and punched littler children who touched their toys. The parents never said a word. It was the school's job to civilize these children, and the school succeeded reasonably well. After that, the mother was at a resort where some children were whining and she thought that it was inexcusable for someone else's child to be making a fuss.

An extreme example, though, unfortunately not an isolated one, occurred when a fifteen year old boy was staying overnight with his friend and a younger brother. The mother was sleeping upstairs, they down, when they decided to take the family car out for a joyride in the middle of the night. A police car spotted the car weaving and tried to pull them over. They tried to race away and wrecked the car. The two older boys took off. The arm of the younger boy was nearly severed. The policeman held the boy who in his delirium called him "Daddy" until the ambulance came. The father showed up drunk at the hospital. The parents tried to sue the officer for giving chase and thereby "causing" the accident.

For this family, the parents' desires to be their children's friends nearly cost the children their lives--children whose lives they were bound, by the laws of nature and human decency, to protect. Unfortunately, they were too busy being "friends" and too oblivious to ask themselves "what's wrong with this picture" leaving the rest of us to try to find anything right in the picture.

Columns



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WEDDING FLOWERS

by Susan Johnson

Four hours before a wedding, you'd think that the floral designer would be spinning like a tornado spewing greenery and discarded rose petals. You'd also expect that same person to be up to their ears in oasis, and wearing a green smock filled with pins and snippers and floral tape.

Instead, Carole Melnik of A Snail's Place in Elma is listening to classical music and calmly wrapping satin-trimmed chiffon ribbon around the green fronds and white callas that will, in a few hours, be carried down the aisle cradled in the crook of a bride's arm. Dressed in a velvet headband to hold back her thick blond hair and a matching velvet floor-length chemise topped by an heirloom amethyst necklace, she looks as though she could be the bride's favorite aunt.

Despite the impending deadline and the fact that we've stopped in unexpectedly, she agreed to talk to us about wedding flowers.

"I always dress up when I'm doing the flowers for a wedding, and I usually wear a hat," she explained. "It's part of the role, and it puts me in the right mood. Furthermore," she said, making a wry face, "doing the flowers for a wedding can involve a certain amount of climbing on ladders and shimmying up pillars. One wants to be sure that one is, shall we say, properly covered?"

Flowers are as indispensable to a wedding as the ring, but while rings haven't changed much over the years, the selections of nuptial nosegays have come to reflect the very individual personalities of the young women choosing them.

"Brides used to be younger," said Ms. Melnik, "and so, years ago, their mothers made all the decisions on the floral arrangements. Some mature brides have seen and experienced more flowers. They know what they want, and they don't want something that looks like a big round ball."

Flower-child brides in the sixties used to pick a few wild daisies to carry as they tiptoed barefoot to a beach where they chanted their vows. Today's bride might also use daisies in her wedding but those same cheery blooms are more apt to be found by the hundreds forming a fat heart-shaped wreath hanging on the church door than in a small bouquet clutched in a young girl's hand.

Not only have the bouquets become more interesting, the use of flowers throughout the entire wedding process has expanded. Swags on pillars and pews join

flower-strewn aisles and extend all the way to budded roses that look as delicious on the wedding cake as the frosting itself. Perhaps no other element of a wedding can create an atmosphere of elegance the way flowers can.

As a rule of thumb, flowers can be expected to consume approximately 10% of the total wedding budget. Choosing flowers that are in season or locally grown can reduce the cost while selecting tulips in November or exotic stems grown overseas quickly raises your tab.

STARRING ROLES

"Think of the flowers for a wedding as playing three main parts," said Ms. Melnik. "First, there are the people who will be wearing flowers. Surprisingly, this is the most inflexible part. If you've got ten people in your wedding party, then you need to provide flowers for all ten of them; plus any others who are playing a role. The second part unfolds at the church or the place where the vows are taken, and the third is at the reception. The biggest change that I've seen in the last twenty-five years is that the second and third places have switched in terms of the importance of the flowers. It used to be the church that was the most heavily decorated. Now, it's where the party is held that has the most flowers, the most elaborate arrangements."

Structures have also become an important part of the floral display in some ceremonies because so many of them occur somewhere other than in a church. Without an altar, it's necessary to create an alternate focal point for the bride and groom. In a garden or a restaurant or wherever the event takes place, it's possible to create a beautiful backdrop by using a flower-wrapped arbor or a series of trellises

Of course, whether your wedding requires a structure or not, there are many other decisions to be made as well. The colors that you want will, to an extent, define the types of flowers used in your wedding. For some brides, roses are mandatory but for others, exotic flowers are a must. At times, the questions seem overwhelming. Will you carry the flowers across your arm or do you want a hand-tied bouquet? Do you prefer tall mirrored table arrangements or do you prefer short ones? In either case, it's important not to block the view of people sitting across from one another. Making all of these once-in-a-lifetime decisions isn't easy which is why some brides begin this part of their planning as much as a year and a half or two years in advance.

"Many people who grew up in Western New York have moved away to live but they want to come home for their weddings," said Ms. Melnik. "These are the same people who come back here to see their families for Thanksgiving and Christmas. So, these wind up being the occasions when we all get together to talk. You'd be surprised at how hard some couples work at this. They come in with notebooks filled with ideas and photographs of arrangements that appeal to them."

"Carole and I went through a series of interviews that lasted from April until just before I was married," said Michelle Benczkowski who married her husband, Ron, in October. "She spent a lot of time asking me questions so that she could get a sense of my individual style. Luckily, my mother helped with this - she's very artistic - much more than I am. Ultimately, the final decision was mine but listening to her exchange thoughts and ideas with Carole really helped."

While talking about color may begin the process, it's just as important to choose flowers for their second most notable quality - aroma.

"My sister's wedding and my wedding were at opposite times of the year," said Mrs. Benczkowski. "Lori was married in March and I was married in October and so our flowers were totally different. Lori had more traditional flowers, cascading white gardenias and freesias, but their fragrance was a bit too heady for me. I prefer woody aromas and so my bouquet had a fall feeling that included lots of seeded eucalyptus, annual statice, delphinium, lamb's ear, and hydrangea."

"The colors were unusual too," said Mrs. Benczkowski. "We used ivory and coral roses with periwinkle agapanthus against the girls' navy dresses. My advice to other brides would be to find a florist whose work you admire and then spend time talking to the person. If your personalities clash or they try to rush you, find someone else!"

Spring is still a popular time to marry but with so many couples choosing autumn and winter instead, the range of colors and ingredients in the floral displays has blossomed.

"Recently, we've done weddings with Tuscan and Renaissance themes," said Ms. Melnik. "For their centerpieces, we used antiqued urns filled with pears and persimmons, grapes and plums, and huge showy sunflowers while others had gourds and pumpkins arranged with Autumn Joy sedum, artemesia, twisted willow branches, ornamental grass plumes, and grains."

Exotic tropical flowers were chosen by Missy Pfister Smith of East Aurora. "We never had normal flowers in our house. My mother loved strange and unusually beautiful plants. Even when I was very young, she put flowers in my bedroom. For my wedding, I went with everything I loved, beehive ginger, all the different protea, birds of paradise, and lilies. The only thing I couldn't decide on was my bouquet, and it was getting later and later. Then, I saw a wedding flyer on travel escapes to the tropics. It had anthuriums on the cover and I suddenly knew that was what I wanted. After the wedding, I presented them to my parent's best friends, Phyllis and Herm Keller, who were celebrating their 50th anniversary. Nine children and fifty years together."

A traveling nurse who has lived and worked in many part of the U.S., Mrs. Smith is now married to a chef and living in Boston, Massachusetts. "I'd definitely choose the same flowers over again. The guests loved them. At least, they must have because there wasn't a single one left on the tables. Anyone who's planning their wedding should just go with their instincts. If you don't have an idea of what you want, find someone who'll take the time to help you."

BLOOMING NOW

No matter when the date is for the wedding, as it approaches the designer's floral clock starts ticking faster. Up to a year in advance, shimmering coils of ribbons are ordered, wicker baskets chosen, and vases selected during shows in New York. Then a week ahead, specialty flowers are ordered from California, Canada, and South America. At the same time, Ms. Melnik takes an inventory of her own extensive gardens and looks at what's available from the local wholesalers.

Two days before the event, flowers arrive at the airport or are delivered by the wholesaler. At this point, the work begins in earnest.

"Our most time-consuming job," said Ms. Melnik, "is the preparation for design. Every single piece must be cleaned, trimmed, conditioned, and given a proper drink. Once that's done, we begin working on the pieces that go in water - these are the centerpieces and the church flowers. The next day, we wire the stems of the other flowers. On the day of the wedding, we make all of the bouquets and other items that won't be in water. The final step is when we arrive at the place of the reception and decorate the cake."

At this point, you'd think the work was over but it isn't. Many brides become so fond of their flowers that they have no intention of tossing them into a field of waving hands. Instead, the flowers travel straight back to the design studio where they're dried and then fashioned into a wreath or an arched swag - one more poignant reminder of an unforgettable day.



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The beginning of Father Heart is available in the Archives page, April 2001

FATHER HEART

by Banwell Goddard

CHAPTER TWO

If Adeline's father thought that his treatment of her would make her re-think her choice of husbands and return home, he underestimated his daughter's love for Seth. In fact, she resolved not to ask them for anything and to hold her head higher than ever when she was in town. This determination and their youth served Seth and Adeline well in the early years of their marriage. They set up housekeeping in a cottage on property near the waterfall. Seth pursued his logging business while Adeline perfected and expanded her weaving skills.

The richness of their love and the pleasure they derived from their shared existence negated the poverty of their material possessions. Before their children were born, Seth taught Adeline many things that her parents had not. She learned to ride astride, to shoot a gun, and to fish. On long walks through the woods, Seth showed her how to identify different trees by the pattern of their bark and the shape of their leaves.

Though she wore no diamond and had none of the furnishings that a Boston man might have provided for her, Seth brought Adeline gifts that meant far more; sprays of fragrant witchhazel blooming late in winter, and early violets nestled like amethysts in a clutch of unfurling ferns. Small baskets of wild raspberries and blueberries appeared in the kitchen on autumn afternoons. And, one Christmas morning, a hand-whittled shuttlecock of burnished cherry, rubbed to a satin finish, found its way between the threads of her loom. These offerings were more precious to her than gems. They told her that Seth loved her and that he was as content as she was.

She found that adapting to Seth's way of life wasn't difficult. It was a change that enriched her life in many more ways than it cost her. As a result, her weaving matured, taking on the sophisticated finish of work done by a seasoned craftsman. When Seth's woodlands were transformed by the time of year, so did Adeline's work change with nature's calendar picking up the soft greens and pale yellows of spring, and the rich sorrel hues of autumn. The forest became a source of inspiration for her and was as much a sanctuary for Adeline as it was for Seth.

In their first six years of marriage, they had three sons, each a small replica of Seth, blond and sturdy. Adeline bore her children easily and the couple welcomed each addition. Seth's parents and brothers and sisters doted on the boys and Adeline's uncles, who didn't approve of her parent's disinheritance, regularly came to visit, bringing gifts for the children who were named Albert, Bradford, and Rhodes. Although Adeline occasionally allowed herself to feel resentment for her parents' cruel behavior, otherwise she felt content, well cared for, and safe.

But one day, when their third son was two, Seth made a simple mistake. A small distraction, a moment of inattention, who knows how these things happen? Instead of cleanly slicing through the thick slab of wood that stood before him, Seth's axe wobbled in his grasp and came down in

the wrong place, chopping wickedly into his shin bone.

Some people would say that Seth was lucky. He didn't bleed to death. He knew how to tie a tourniquet, and his strength was such that he was able to mount his horse for the short ride home.

"Adeline!" he shouted from his horse as he rode into the yard.

"Darling, you're home early," she said coming out onto the porch.

"The rum, get me the rum," he demanded in an urgent tone she'd never heard before.

"The rum?" she said and hurried back to the kitchen, reaching up to the high shelf where it was kept. The crock was heavy and she carried it with both hands out to where her husband still sat on his horse. Seth's teeth were clenched, sweat poured down his face, and his hands fumbled as he tore the cork from the neck of the crock and lifted it to drink.

"Seth. What's happened?" Adeline felt a terrible fear rise within her.

Seth touched the reins to his horse's neck, turning the horse so that Adeline could see the kerchief knotted tightly below his knee, the ripped fabric of his trousers and a glimpse of the blood, bone and torn flesh below. His foot dangled lifelessly.

"Oh my darling," she gasped. She reached her hand out to touch him.

"Don't touch it." Seth took another long drink of the rum.

"Seth, we have to clean that up and put on a proper bandage. You'll lose your leg if infection gets in or if you cut off the blood flow for too long."

Seth did not respond. He sat silently, looking into the distance, consumed by pain. His mind was unwilling yet to accept the wound, not ready to amend his vision of himself as strong and vital. He felt that as long as he stayed on his horse, he was still himself. He could hold the fates in abeyance, find a way to take back a moment's miscalculation.

He took long breaths but felt light-headed as if he was not getting air. Seth took another drink.

"Can you help me get down?" he asked.

"Ride over to the porch. It'll be easier for you to get off there," she said.

Seth sidled his horse up to the wooden steps and put his good foot onto the top step. Adeline helped guide his injured leg across the saddle, trying not to hurt him further. With his arm draped over her shoulder, the couple hobbled and lurched into the kitchen where Seth collapsed into a chair.

"Take a deep breath." Adeline said, gently lifting his leg onto a second chair.

She removed the tourniquet that Seth had fashioned from his kerchief and cut his trousers off at the knee, taking short sideways glances at the wound so that she could adjust to the horror of it gradually. When it was fully exposed to the light, Adeline looked carefully at the fearsome wound with a bravery born of love. What Seth could endure, she would face. She tore apart clean sheets of muslin to use as bandages and carefully covered the mutilated limb.

"Seth, I'm going to get Doctor Jewett. I'll be back as fast as I can," she said trying to keep her voice steady and firm.

Adeline's hands shook as she mounted Seth's horse. She would have preferred her own pony but didn't want to take the time to saddle her. Taking a short cut through the woods, she ducked as branches loomed across the path. As fast as she dared to push the horse, she rode to Dr. Jewett's,

a friend of her parents. Breathlessly, she described Seth's injury and as he listened, the doctor saddled his own horse. Together, they galloped back to the house.

Dr. Jewett strode into the kitchen and nodded to Seth.

"Adeline tells me you've cut your leg," he said.

"Sorry to get you out Doctor," Seth said slowly. The rum, having numbed his pain was now affecting his speech.

Jewett removed the muslin wrapping.

"This will require a few stitches, I see," he said. "Adeline, let's get to work, but first, we'll give this young man a little morphine to ease the pain."

When he'd finished sewing the layers of flesh back together, he fashioned a splint for the leg and re-banded Seth's leg. Together, he and Adeline helped Seth into their bedroom where they undressed him and got him into bed. Exhausted from pain and sedated by the morphine, Seth fell asleep before Adeline had finished pulling quilts up under his chin.

She walked slowly back to the kitchen porch to talk to the doctor who sat waiting for her.

"What do you think, Dr. Jewett?" she asked.

"Seth's leg is broken and the front tendon is severed," he answered. "He's a strong man, any other man would have bled to death or died from the ride home. It's a serious injury. He'll need morphine for several days to bear the pain of it. Here are five vials - if you need more, let me know. He must not walk for at least eight weeks. I'll come and take the stitches out in a few weeks. I can look at it again then but send for me if you think the wound's becoming infected."

"What do I owe you, Doctor?" she asked.

Doctor Jewett grasped her hand, saying, "Nothing, my dear. Nothing." He'd heard of her estrangement from her parents, and he wondered how the young family would ever manage with this crippling injury.

Though no wound had ever had more tender care, it didn't mend properly. Seth could walk only by throwing his good leg out then dragging the other one forward.

While the physical injury was ghastly, the harm to Seth's spirit was worse. He could no longer do the logging or chop firewood. His livelihood and what small stature he'd felt were gone. It's one thing for a man to change his vocation voluntarily - perhaps because he no longer enjoys it or realizes that he's too old to pursue a young man's work - it's another to have it wrenched away unwillingly.

Seth was not a vain man, but he felt that the only trait that made him different was his physical strength and the easy rhythms he found for doing repetitive chores. He feared inactivity, the tic and twitch of unused muscles, more than most men feared the grave.

When he was able, he took up stone building, a trade that was not dependent on his legs. As a perfectionist, he soon became good at it, but he wasn't happy outside the woods, working at a job that he found tedious. This unhappiness and the day to day reality of being handicapped changed Seth into a man that Adeline no longer recognized. Anger took hold of him.

For months, he didn't approach her in their bed. The injury to his self-esteem was leading him farther and farther away from his wife. A small part of him longed to step back into the circle of her love, but a stubborn mire of self-pity held him back.

Adeline recognized that Seth's pride was what was coming between them. She constantly praised

his stone work and often drove her pony and cart to where he was working to deliver his lunch. When visitors came to their home, she recited jobs that Seth had recently done, soliciting compliments to salve his hurt. Seth resented these efforts, finding them demeaning. He took to leaving the house when callers appeared.

The embers of their love grew colder. Terrified that Seth wouldn't recover emotionally, Adeline conjured ragged schemes to restore his good nature. In an effort to please him, she worked even harder to become a better cook, seamstress, and gardener. She found a ready market in town for the woven fabrics that she designed, and she spent hours at her loom. But Seth did not smile upon these efforts. His injured psyche suffered fresh wounds as Adeline's expertise expanded.

At night, Adeline lay silently, barely breathing as she waited for a sign from Seth. He came to their room only after she had blown out the kerosene lamp, limping in silence to their bed, and then falling asleep with his back to her. Though she hugged her body to his, he gave no sign of interest. Months of this behavior turned into years.

One summer day when Adeline was in the village, she passed a young couple out walking a pram. They looked so happy that Adeline stopped to admire the child being wheeled along. Pleased and proud to show off their baby, the young father plucked his daughter from her carriage and held her out to Adeline. Dressed in pink ruffles and white bonnet, the child smiled broadly.

"What's her name?" Adeline asked, cradling the sweet-smelling child in her arms. "Aurora," said the young man. "The light of my life." He took the child back and swung her over his head, laughing as he made the child giggle.

A sudden thought presented itself to Adeline. What she and Seth needed to restore their love was a baby girl, a beautiful girl with sparkling eyes, chubby legs, a smile that would rekindle the love in Seth's heart.

For days afterward, Adeline's daydreams convinced her that the ice in Seth's heart would melt at the sight of this child, and the love he felt for the baby would convey itself to her mother, with whom he would re-unite.

Finding a way to become pregnant became an obsession for her. She twisted the idea this way and that in her mind and finally realized there was someone else who might help her. Not far from Adeline's childhood home was the cottage of an Englishwoman who grew flowers, herbs, and medicinal plants for the town's pharmacy. Her yard had a low white fence around it and flowering vines rambled over its pickets and onto the path in front of it.

Inside the fence, Joy could be seen in all kinds of weather, collecting flowers, planting new varieties of herbs, or visiting with townspeople who came to her for help. Golden red hair framed her freckled face, and glinted in the sun, as salty breezes from the sea made it dance in shimmering waves. She and her garden seemed alive with motion, as hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies joined her in their own pursuits.

Some townspeople said Joy could cure illnesses better than any doctor. Women went to her for private problems or when they wanted to get pregnant and also, some people said, when they wanted to end a pregnancy.

Inside her white-washed cottage, fragrant dried herbs and flowers filled the upper reaches, hanging from hand-hewn beams. Glass jars filled with damp clay, and others filled with leaves and roots lined the shelves. Fine vinegars and pastel dyes made from beets, cranberries, blueberries, and blackberries glittered like liquid jewels.

Adeline had visited Joy many times before, purchasing dyes to use on her fabrics. On some of those occasions, Adeline overheard other customers talking in low voices to Joy. The intimacy of their conversations intrigued Adeline for she had no close female friend and was unaccustomed to confiding in anyone. Adeline admired the way Joy responded to these people with understanding

and nods of encouragement. It was this quality that emanated from Joy that made Adeline decide to go to her for help.

"How lovely to see you," said Joy. "You've come at a perfect time. I've two new colors to show you."

"You spoil me. I think I must be the only weaver in all of Massachusetts who has such a selection of dyes," said Adeline. "I've brought something for you, a little gift."

"You mustn't have, really," said Joy untying the string from the package and pulling the paper from around a small evening handbag woven from silk.

"It's elegant," she murmured.

"Yes. Like you. My designs would not be so well-received if it weren't for the dyes that you brew for me. But, also, in truth, I've come to ask for a different sort of help today," she said, hesitating.

"Of course, Adeline, what can I do for you?" Joy asked.

"Well, I've heard that people come to you when they are having," she hesitated, ".....difficulties. Seth and I, since his accident, have not been the same. It's as if he's angry with me for what happened. He hasn't touched me since."

"You mean he no longer makes love to you?" Joy asked.

"Not since the accident," said Adeline.

"Does he kiss you?" she asked.

"I kiss him, but he turns his face away so that I only touch his cheek."

"It sounds as if his pride suffered a greater blow than his leg. It's tragic for a man to lose the use of his leg. Time is the only thing that will heal him."

"I understand that and I've waited what seems like forever. The other day though, I had an idea. As you know, we have three sons. And, they're good boys, but it occurred to me that if we had a beautiful little girl who loved him that he would see that his injury doesn't matter. I was hoping that you might have something to give him so that he would have the desire to make love to me."

"How can you be certain that you would have a girl?" asked Joy. "There's no guarantee."

"I've thought about that and the odds are in our favor. We've had three boys in a row. Surely, the fourth would be a girl."

"Are you certain that even if you did have a girl, that having another child will be a solution?" asked Joy.

"It's the only thing that will soften his heart. I can think of nothing else that might help, other than having his leg miraculously repaired," said Adeline.

It was Joy's turn to hesitate. She wanted to help Adeline but didn't share her opinion that another child would help. Childless herself, Joy was able to recognize what others missed - that children could provide great satisfaction to their parents but they could also, by the constancy of their demands and the length of their childhood, place terrible burdens on people who were emotionally strained.

"Please do this for me," pleaded Adeline. "Otherwise I shall have to go to someone else who may not be as kind as you are."

"Very well," she sighed. "How can I not help you?"

She rearranged some of the jars on the kitchen counter, then opened and closed a few tin boxes, stalling for time.

"Does Seth drink liquor?" she finally asked.

"Usually not. Not in many years that I can recall," answered Adeline.

"That's good. It will make the effects of a sleeping tonic stronger," said Joy. "There is an herb that you can use to give him a deep sleep so that he'll dream vividly. You'll have to keep yourself awake and wait at least an hour before you begin touching him. Here's a jar of aromatic lotion to keep next to your bed. When you retire, massage it into your hands so that they will be particularly soft. Touch him with just the tips of your fingers with no more pressure than the feather of a wren. Start with the back of his neck and shoulders and then, slowly, travel down to the small of his back."

"Begin again at his neck, this time with your lips, still as gently as you can, as if you were the wind making love to his soul. Then reach over and begin touching him on his chest. This should make him roll over. Again, first with your fingertips and then with your lips. You must take great care not to make any abrupt motion. His dreams will incorporate your actions and his body will tell you when he is ready. You can then make love to him while he sleeps."

"Is there anything else I need to know?" asked Adeline.

"Yes, there is a special blue moon coming."

"A blue moon?" asked Adeline.

"Do you know what it means?" Joy asked.

"No. No, I don't."

"A blue moon is the second full moon that falls within a month. This year, there are two blue moons within the same year. It's a rare occurrence so this is an especially auspicious night and it will be here in a few weeks. Coincidentally, the first night of that blue moon is aligned with your days of fertility," she said. "You must make love to Seth that night. On that day, bake a small cake using this powder. Do not have any of the cake yourself and for God's sake, keep the children away from it. After Seth's asleep, you'll be able to do what you want."

Adeline hugged her and said, "You'll see. This will make things right."

Joy smiled at her sadly, "I beg you to think again about this. You have three healthy boys. Can't you find it in your heart to be content with that? It's more than many people have."

"To think that I will never again feel Seth's lips on mine, never again see love in his eyes, is more than I can bear," Adeline answered. "You can't imagine how I've suffered from this."

"My own husband died after we'd been married only five years," Joy said gently.

"I'm sorry," said Adeline looking away. "I didn't know."

"Of course not. Most people don't," Joy replied.

"Still, I feel I must try this."

"I will pray for you," Joy said, "and for Seth. Promise me that you'll think again about going through it. It's not without the most serious consequences."

"Thank you." said Adeline. "I will."

From time to time, in the intervening weeks, Adeline opened the tin that Joy had given her. The powder was odorless and gave her no clue as to the secret of its power. At night, her mind embraced a rehearsal of the blue moon seduction. So pleasurable was this vicarious love-making that night's approaching darkness made her eyes shine with anticipation.

When finally the day came, angry black-bordered thunderheads roiled across the sky, assembling silently then rending apart with cracks of thunder. Adeline silently cursed the fates, sure that the moon would be obscured and her husband's sleep disturbed by the storms. But, as Joy had instructed, she baked a sweet cake, using the mysterious sleeping powder. By evening, southwest winds had blown the darkest of the clouds out to sea. The moon came up brilliantly white, tearing its way through leftover black auras, chilling the air, and drawing thunderous tides to the shoreline of the coast.

Adeline went to bed early, watching the moon's ascent from her window, every sense in her body alert. Her husband soon followed her, falling within moments into a drugged slumber.

Seth's night was dream-stricken by vapors; as one phantasm gathered and dissipated another took its place in a surreal procession. In one dream, Seth's accident hadn't happened. His leg was whole. He was chopping wood like he used to. It felt good to swing his axe.

He dreamed that he was at the county fair and all the men were entering a strongman contest. Seth couldn't find the right place. He ran down the aisles but there was no ringer. He asked people in the crowd where it was and they pointed but he couldn't see it. Then, he thought he saw it at the end of an aisle but someone let lambs out of the pens and he couldn't push past them to get there in time.

As the lambs milled about his knees, foundering him, his dream shifted and he and Adeline were in her bedroom at her parents' house. In a remote, nearly inaccessible section of his consciousness, he knew they shouldn't make love but the thought was too fleeting, too elusive to hold onto. Adeline hovered over him, kissing him, and touching him in places that made him groan with pleasure. She held her finger to her lips shushing him so her father wouldn't hear. He swelled with desire for her, feeling himself swept helplessly into slow waves of passion.

While Seth was possessed of this erotic dream, Adeline followed Joy's instructions, climbing upon her husband. Despite days spent in anticipation, she had forgotten the intense pleasure of having Seth inside of her. She inhaled sharply but forced herself to resist her ravening for fulfillment. Moving slowly, rocking back and forth, she felt delirious from the desire to satisfy her own needs.

Moonlight slanted in through the window, illuminating Seth and casting Adeline's shadow on the wall beyond. Asleep and unguarded, Seth's face looked like a boy's. Adeline found herself unable to resist the urge to lean forward and whisper, "I love you, darling. I will always love you."

As if he could hear her, Seth's hands reached languidly towards her breasts. She held them to her, kissing the tips of each of his fingers. Though she throbbed painfully with an appetite born of years of neglect, she kept her measured pace. It was a small sacrifice, she told herself, that would ultimately reward her. When she knew her plan had succeeded, she quietly withdrew.

In the morning, Adeline woke to feelings of joy. Things would become right now that she had this baby growing within her. She said nothing to Seth but was astonished that he acted as if nothing had happened the night before. He was as cold to her as ever. It's of no matter, she told herself. In a few months, their lives would be restored.

Her secret sustained her. She hummed little songs at her work, feeling the euphoria that came to her with pregnancy. When she was four months along, feeling more bountiful and confident by the day, she stood in front of Seth late in the evening. The light of the fire played off of her unpinned hair, and her cheeks were ruddy from the heat of its logs.

"Do you notice anything about me Seth?" she asked.

Seth considered the question silently. It had been a long time since they had had any conversation in the evenings.

"No," he said without expression.

"Do you think I've gained weight? I feel a bit fat," she said turning sideways in front of Seth.

"I wouldn't brag about that if I were you," he replied.

"Well I guess that depends on why I'm getting fat," she teased, certain in her knowledge that his coldness would fall away when he knew the truth.

"And why is that?" he asked.

"Because we're going to have a baby," she said coyly as though it were their first.

"That is impossible Adeline," he responded.

"All things are possible on the night of a blue moon, my darling," she persisted.

"It takes two to make a baby, Adeline. You cannot have conceived it alone."

"Oh but I didn't conceive it alone, my dear. You were right there all the time."

"You must be mistaking me for someone else. I have done nothing in our bed since the accident. Surely you remember my accident," Seth said with such cold finality that Adeline began to worry.

"And surely you remember a night this winter when you were possessed of a powerful dream." Adeline said softly.

Seth's memory of the dream returned to him with a force that left him weak. Adeline had betrayed him. His eyes narrowed as he fully recognized the shameless deceit he'd suffered.

Adeline saw his fury, grasping his knees as she knelt down upon the floor before him. "Seth, I love you. We're going to have a daughter, perfect in every way. A child that will change things back to the way they were."

"There is nothing that will change my leg, Adeline. "

"I don't mean your leg. I mean you. You'll see how much this child loves you and by seeing her love you'll know that I love you and always have. I don't care about your leg."

"You don't care about my leg? How do you think I feel? A cripple, unable to walk like a man. Unable to work at my trade. How could you think another child would help?"

"It will. It will. You'll see. A beautiful baby girl conceived on the night of a blue moon. She'll be what we need to start over again."

"You've lost your mind, Adeline. It will only make things worse."

Adeline ran to her room and wept. But she soon dried her eyes, forcing herself to believe that the baby would heal their marriage. She refused to harbor unpleasant thoughts that might affect the unborn child.

Months passed. Seth took jobs farther and farther from home. Some nights, he simply camped where he was rather than make the journey home. Once this pattern started, it grew. Nights away grew into weeks away. Adeline bided her time. When she was eight and a half month's pregnant, she made arrangements with a midwife for the birthing.

Finally, the day came when she was ready to deliver. The birth of their fourth child was as easy as the first three. The midwife had little to do but to clean the baby and wrap it in the pink silk receiving blankets that Adeline had woven for this special child.

"May I see her please? How does she look? Is she perfect?" asked Adeline stretching her arms out to receive her baby.

"The baby is perfect, Mrs. Clark. Ten fingers and ten toes. I counted them myself," the woman answered. "Thick blonde hair just like the others and eyes the color of a robin's egg,"

"Please let me hold her," begged Adeline.

"Here you are, my dear. Except she's not a she. You have a handsome new son."

"Son?" Adeline cried, her arms recoiling. "No, it can't be. I have three sons. This was to be a girl baby. Are you quite sure?"

"There's no mistaking it; I'm sure, Mrs. Clark. He's a big strong boy."

Adeline cried bitter tears. "Oh God, what will happen to us?"

"Now ma'am, some families try all their lives to have a healthy boy like this. You should be ashamed of yourself," said the midwife.

Adeline turned her back to the woman. "I'm tired. Please take the baby away."

Seth came home that weekend. He gazed into the crib at his new son and then turned to Adeline.

"I won't be coming back much," he said. "I have work in Vermont. I'll send you what I can."

And so, I was born. Philip Hathaway Clark, the last of four sons. A child born to parents whose love and spirit were irreversibly maimed by the blade of an axe.