

Prologue

As Sheffield came through the gate into the front yard, Leah, Jacob, and Hannah, who were playing in the front yard, ran to greet him calling, "Daddy's home. Daddy's home."

He picked up Hannah, the youngest, and gave her a kiss on the cheek. Hannah had her mother's blond hair and blue eyes. Jacob, her brother hugged him as high as he could reach around his left leg, no longer afflicted with the numbness and tingling that had bothered him for half of his life.

He set Hannah down and picked up Leah and gave her a hug and kiss on the cheek as well. She not only had her mother's auburn hair and green eyes, but she bore a striking resemblance to her. He set Leah back down and the three of them resumed their game of whatever it was that they were playing.

As he stepped up onto the front porch of the beautiful mansion house, a gust of wind tussled his wavy black hair as he opened one of the double doors. "I'm home." he called out as he stepped inside.

Ramona was the first to greet him with a hug and kiss. "Hi Babe. How were things in the city?" Ramona was radiant and her countenance glowed. The fact that she was in a motherly way added to the shine. Immortality had given her that which she had been denied in mortality; the ability to have children, the full height of her stature as intended and a more womanly physique. She looked terrific.

Sheffield placed his hand on her protruding round belly and replied. "About the same, bustling as ever. I ran into Tombi at the temple and he told me to tell you hello. I have something for you." he said as he pulled a small box from the breast pocket inside his jacket and presented it to her.

She opened it to find a silver brooch with an emerald gemstone mounted in the center. "Why thank you, Babe. Its lovely." she said as she pinned it to her bodice.

Just then Geannie came in from outside with a bouquet of an assortment of flowers that she had gathered from around the yard. The yellow daffodils made a striking contrast against the red roses and the fragrance of the lilacs permeated throughout the house. "Curly." She exclaimed. "When did you get back?"

"Just a moment ago."

"Look at what he brought me?" Ramona beamed as she proudly showed off the broach.

"Why, its simply beautiful, Ramona."

"Speaking of beautiful." Sheffield said as he took Geannie into his arms. "You my dear, are as lovely as ever." then he kissed her. "I missed you while I was in the city."

"I missed you too, Curly. It's good to have you home. How did your meetings go?"

"They went very well. It was a good conference." He said as he held her body tightly against his. "I have something for you too." he said as he released her and retrieved another box form his pocket.

Geannie bounced up and down on the balls of her feet while she opened it. Inside she found a

sapphire pendant on a gold chain. "Oh Curly." she gasped as she threw her arms around his neck with the necklace clasped in one hand. Then she proceeded to plant her lips on his and kissed him again.

"Put it on." he suggested.

She unhooked the clasp and reached behind her neck and refastened it.

"It looks good on you." he praised. "I saw Hannah out front, but where are the other kids?"

"The baby is down for her nap."

"She's not much of a baby any more, is she."

"I'll say. I hope she wakes up soon, I need to nurse her. The older kids are probably playing down by the stream. At least that was the direction they were headed when Charles Emmet led them out on another one of their adventures. I just hope they don't bring back another rattlesnake. I know they can't hurt anyone, but I just don't want them in my house. I told them not to be long because you'd be back soon."

"Well if they're with Charles Emmett, they're in good hands. He's sure growing into a fine boy."

"I know, I can't believe that he's almost eleven now."

In the meantime, Ramona had gone out on the front porch and was sitting in the swing to watch the children play. Geannie took Sheffield by the hand and led him out to join her. The three of them sat together, with Sheffield between his two wives; an arm around each of them as he pulled them close.

The setting was perfect. The kids were playing in the immaculately manicured yard. There wasn't a weed in sight and the flowers were all in bloom. The birds were singing and the bees were humming, and there were no more mosquitoes or flies. The sun shone in the bright blue sky and gentle breeze kept the temperature just right. On the green hillside a cross the way, a number of deer, two stags and several does, grazed peacefully while their fawns frolicked nearby as three wolves casually strolled among them.

"I can't think of anything better than to be home with my sweethearts. I love you both so much. What's even better is that I know that you both love me and that you love each other.

"Well Curly, how about having the whole family together?" Geannie said. "We were going to surprise you with it latter."

"Yes." Ramona continued. "But now is as good of a time as any to tell you. We're having a special dinner this evening to welcome you home. Craig and Edith, Norma and Janet and their husbands will be here along with all their children"

"And," Geannie concluded. "Sandy and Austin and their families will all be here too."

"Splendid." Sheffield said as he pulled them both in closer. "Now that's what family is all about."

Geannie and Ramona turned to face him and simultaneously began smothering him with kisses.

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