"Six Years Later, Love Prevails"

by Pipestone

Summary

This posting starts a multiple chapter story of Carol and Therese's lives together after six years. They are still living in New York City in their Madison Avenue apartment. As you can tell by this first chapter, our heroines are still very much in love. I envision a number of interesting twists and turns, plus references to history of the LGBT rights movement as this point in time. I have tried to be accurate with publications as well. The ones cited in this chapter are real.

Notes

This is my very first fanfiction ever. Please bear with me as I hope my writing improves over the upcoming chapters. I read Patricia Highsmith's The Price of Salt in early 1971 and reading it had a profound influence on my life. I honestly thought I would never see it made into a major motion picture. The world has changed indeed in the past 45 years.

Chapter Summary

The setting is late February 1959, six years after the movie and book end. Carol and Therese are still living in New York City in their Madison Avenue apartment. Carol still works for a furniture store in Manhattan as a furniture buyer. Therese still works in The New York Times's photography department. Harge, Carol's ex-husband still lives in New Jersey. He still has full custody of their daughter Rindy who is nearly eleven. Harge's attitude toward Carol and Therese has softened a lot lately and Rindy visits them much more often. Therese is now "Aunt Therese" to Rindy. Carol and Therese's relationship has yet to be fully explained to Rindy. Our heroines are still very much in love. I envision a number of interesting twists and turns, plus references to history of the LGBT rights movement at this period in time. I've tried to be accurate with historical details.

This is my very first fanfiction ever. I read Patricia Highsmith's "The Price of Salt" in early 1971. Reading it had a profound influence on my life. I honestly thought I'd never see it made into a major motion picture. The movie "Carol" (2015) moved me deeply. The world has changed indeed in the past 45 years.

Friday February 27, 1959

7:00 AM

With eyes closed Carol Aird stretched as lazily as a cat in the bed she has shared with Therese Belivet for almost six years. She reached out to search for her bed partner but her fingers only found cool sheets. She grasped Therese's pillow and hugged it to her face, inhaling her lover's familiar scent and smiled. Carol savored the delicious memories of last night's lovemaking.

"Umm..." thought Carol as she felt a pleasant soreness between her thighs. She felt a bit of discomfort on her back, too. She arose from their bed, turned on the dresser light, picked up the hand mirror and inspected her upper shoulders and found small, but unmistakable red marks. These scratches would be visible only to the two of them and Carol smilingly remembered during the height of their lovemaking Therese called out, "Carol! Oh, Carol! Please, Carol!" as she approached the moment of her climax and simultaneously pressed her body fiercely to Carol. Afterward, Carol heard Therese tenderly murmuring "Oh my love, my love, I'm yours." Then Therese gave Carol a deep kiss, and broke the kiss long enough to eagerly whisper in Carol's ear, "My turn to love you, you gorgeous woman of mine." This had brought a moan from Carol's lips and a sighed, "Therese darling..." Carol remembered clinging to Therese with all her might, to bring their bodies as close as they could possibly be.

Carol was stirred out of the delicious recollections of their lovemaking by the sound of the bathroom shower running. There was a sliver of light showing from under the bathroom door. Therese had mentioned an early morning meeting of her photography department at The New York Times sometime during their pillow talk. She could envision a shower or romantic bubble bath together sometime during the upcoming weekend. Just the two of them would be at home since Rindy was spending this weekend with Harge.
Carol was working from home on this particular Friday and she had Saturday off as well. Part of her negotiation for her job as a furniture buyer was not having to work many weekends during the year. That left time for Carol and Therese to enjoy Rindy's visits at least every other weekend a month. Carol's boss, Mr. O'Halloran, valued her skill and business contacts so much that he was more than willing to negotiate Carol's schedule. Mr. O'Halloran, was also present at the fateful dinner at the Oak Room nearly six years ago On Friday April 17th, 1953 when Therese returned to Carol for good. A few years ago, Mr. O'Halloran asked Carol for the name of an emergency contact for her personnel records. Carol provided Therese's name and her phone number at The New York Times. He said, "Ok, do you have a home phone for her, too?" "Damn," thought Carol, "how quickly your private life becomes public. It just takes a simple question or two." He put his pencil down and said, "Carol, I'm not here to judge you. You're a fine employee and that is all that matters. Besides, we would have to close up shop if we did not do business with anyone who was....errr...homosexual." He shifted uncomfortably in his seat. Carol breathed an immense sigh of relief. Little did she know that her being open with her boss in the year 1959 was remarkable.

There was more positive news on the home front. Harge and Carol had forged a bit of a truce over Rindy's visits in the past two years. Rindy, now a very wise and delightful girl of almost eleven years, got to spend spring break last year in their Madison Avenue apartment and probably would again this year, both Carol and Therese hoped.

Carol knew that Harge could sense Rindy's happiness at being with her mother and Therese. He was no fool. He did not want to risk losing Rindy's affection as she grew older. He still held some resentment toward Carol and Therese's relationship, but after nearly six years together it was obvious that Therese was not going anywhere and that Rindy adored Therese. There was a time in the not-so-distant-past when Harge still might speak ill of Carol and Therese, but now even he was growing weary of hearing his parents saying terrible things about Therese and Carol. He could see the pain and hurt in Rindy's eyes when his mother and father offered yet another blazing critique during their Sunday lunches at the mansion. Sometimes Harge would reassure Rindy in private that he did not hate her mother and he was rewarded with her grateful hugs and kisses. This, he knew, would ensure that Rindy would not want to sever her relationship with him when she grew older. Besides, it took so much energy to maintain the hate and bitterness that had consumed him the first few years after their divorce. It was actually a relief to exchange smiles and small pleasantries with Carol when he dropped Rindy off at Carol and Therese's apartment. Both Rindy's parents knew this new development meant the world to her.

Since the upcoming weekend was one that Rindy would spend with Harge, Carol was thinking about plans for just herself and Therese. A nap would be nice, Carol thought, because they hadn't had their usual amount of sleep this past week. For some reason their usual goodnight kisses during the past week had turned suddenly deeper and full of desire. "Who would have thought?" Carol mused that after nearly six years together, sex was as good as ever, just usually not as frequent. This entire week had been an exception. Carol shook her head and smiled at that thought. Different sounds were now coming from the bathroom. Carol heard the hair dryer and she knew Therese would emerge soon. She grabbed her robe and headed for the kitchen to ensure coffee was ready as well as some bacon, fruit and toast. The bathroom door opened and her petite lover emerged wrapped in one of their matching large bath towels. The sight of Therese never failed to cause a catch in Carol's throat and her heart to beat faster. While Carol was making breakfast, Therese turned to give Carol a radiant smile with the dimples that she so dearly loved. "Dearest, you absolutely take my breath away," Carol said. "But I think we both may need a trip to the manicurist." "Uh oh," said Therese, "Let me see your back." Carol turned and slowly lowered her robe. "I am so sorry, Carol." Therese looked down at her feet. Carol closed the space between them and took Therese's face in her hands in a sweet caress. "Darling, it doesn't matter a whit to me. You have a matching set of scratches on your back as well. It's just that there are
more sensitive areas that could get scratched, too." Carol paused to smile as did Therese. "Don't you dare hold back in our lovemaking though. I want us to be as uninhibited as we want. You know how much I love your love bites." Therese smiled demurely and Carol chuckled. "Can you imagine other couples having this so-called 'problem' after six years"? Carol's grey gaze met Therese's eyes. Therese blushed shyly and agreed. Besides, a trip to the manicurist together was one of their guilty pleasures. Carol remembered the last time they went she spent much of her time daydreaming of how she would use her fingers that night in the privacy of their bedroom. She would glance over to Therese, seated elsewhere in the salon and give her a wink and a smile and would be rewarded with dimples and a returned wink.

Snapping back to the present, Carol asked Therese she minded if Carol made an appointment for both of them at the salon on Saturday, since Rindy would not be staying over this weekend. Therese stammered a bit, but said "Sure, but could you let me know the time as soon as possible? I must plan for an errand sometime on Saturday." "Anything I should know about?" asked Carol. "It's just work-related." Dannie may join me." Dannie was perhaps Therese's best friend. He worked in the photography department of the New York Times, too. Dannie knew the nature of Carol and Therese's relationship as did his brother Phil. Carol enjoyed socializing with "the boys" as she called them, plus a group of their young bohemian friends. It was a relief to be able to be themselves in that group of friends--holding hands openly and sometimes giving Therese a kiss on the cheek or referring to Therese as her lover. Occasionally Carol's best friend Abby and Abby's girlfriend Mary would join the social group as well.

Carol watched Therese finish her breakfast and she began assembling her notes and lists of business contacts that she needed to telephone today. Just as Therese was ready to walk out the door after a tender kiss and a lingering hug, Carol remembered something. "Dearest, have you seen my Good Housekeeping Furniture Guide?" Therese paused thoughtfully and asked, "Have you used it here at home recently?" "No, said Carol "the furniture store has several copies for us to use during the day, but I have my own copy here for the times I work at home." "Isn't it the same size as a magazine?" asked Therese. Carol nodded. "There's a box of my back issues of Popular Photography and Aperture magazines in the office closet. I might have picked it up last week when I was tidying up for Rindy's last visit. The box is labeled 'photography magazines'." Carol smiled. "Thanks sweetheart. I may need it for my customer calls. I'll look for it in there. I hope your day goes well." Carol hugged and kissed Therese. "See you tonight. I'll try to call you in the afternoon." Therese gave Carol one last kiss and hug and she was out the door.

As soon as Therese left, the apartment felt empty to Carol. "Six years later and I am still like a schoolgirl in love," thought Carol. Not such a bad problem to have.
Chapter Summary

As Carol starts her day working from home, she makes a startling discovery.

Chapter Notes

My apologies to my favorite author, Employee645A, for any similarities to her Chapter 18 published earlier today (3/1/2016), but being a brand new fanfic author, I am a bit slow. I had been at work on my Chapter 2 for a week, so I want to go ahead and publish it. I would never intentionally copy a storyline. I hope readers can accommodate me as well. By the way, Employe645A, you are my favorite author. If there is anyone reading these words who has not read her brilliant multi-chapter Therese/Carol work, "Built for Two", you have a treat in store for you indeed.

Friday February 27, 1959

8:30 AM

At the Aird/Belivet apartment:

Therese had left for work and Carol finished her fruit and toast. Instead of reading of The New York Times as she usually did, Carol decided to linger over a second cup of coffee and listen to music before calling furniture dealers that this workday required. She was still lost in the breathtaking romance of having sex every night this past week. She put on one of her favorite records and listened to a song called, "My Foolish Heart". The song was a bit dated, but it was immensely popular beginning with its publication in 1949. Many artists had recorded it over the years, but Carol still preferred the Margaret Whiting version. Perhaps it was the woman's voice that did it, but Therese and Carol loved listening to it together in bed, cuddled on the couch or best of all, wrapped in piles of blankets in front of their fireplace while making love. Carol's mind drifted to those memories as she listened to the song.

"The night is like a lovely tune

Beware, my foolish heart

How white, the ever constant moon

Take care my foolish heart."

Carol was lost in the song, but tuned back in to hear:

"Your lips are much too close to mine

Beware my foolish heart"
But should our eager lips combine then let the fire start."

Carol loved the song’s final stanza

"For this time it isn’t fascination
Or a dream that will fade and fall apart
It’s love this time it’s love my foolish heart."

(Note: published in 1949, music by Victor Young and lyrics by Ned Washington)

Carol sighed and headed for a quick shower. She chuckled that she probably should have taken a bit of a cold shower to shake off the delicious memories listening to the song she associated with loving Therese. She made a mental note that sometime during the upcoming weekend during one of their intimate moments; she would play the song and tell Therese the lyrics were a message from Carol’s heart to hers.

Toweling off, Carol was brought out of her dreamy thoughts as she examined her body in the mirror. She was acutely aware of the eleven year difference between Therese’s and her ages. She noticed the appearance of grey strands of hair. Carol frowned. She would turn forty this year. At some point she would have to give in to age and let her hair go fully grey, but that would be down the road. She would call for an appointment with her hairdresser sometime soon. On her face were crow’s feet laugh lines. Also her stomach wasn’t as tight as when she and Therese began their relationship and her breasts drooped ever so slightly. None of the changes were dramatic and even Carol had to admit that she look pretty damned good for a woman approaching forty who had given birth to a child. Therese assured Carol over and over that it did not matter a whit, Therese was certainly as sexually attracted to her as ever, and when they talked in the most intimate of ways while in bed, Therese let Carol know unequivocally how much she loved her and desired her.

Carol knew that Therese was nearly 29 years old with a perfect blend of youth and maturity. She had blossomed in her job at The Times, and had three clerks under her supervision, plus the opportunity to be assigned to do photo shoots--mostly special features, such as she had done during their European trip in 1954. There had been several since then as well. Therese was a young woman moving up in her profession and no one was prouder than Carol.

Still, Therese was a gorgeous woman who attracted stares of appreciation from both men and women. She was even the object of some unsolicited flirting when Carol and Therese went out together to one of the women’s clubs or dances that were starting to pop up more and more as the "gay community" increased in visibility in New York City. Carol would have probably been content to just nest in the protective cocoon of their apartment, but Therese was more a member of the next generation who yearned to be more open and not hide their sexual orientation.

That being said, Therese would never jeopardize Carol’s need to be discrete when it came to Rindy, and even though Harge had become much more agreeable in the past two years about Rindy spending more and more time at their apartment, one misstep could possibly change all that.

Time for the furniture business, thought Carol. She had dressed casually for the day, but still she put on makeup and her hair was done perfectly. Even though there was no one to see her, she felt more confident in carrying out her negotiations while looking her best. There were phone calls to make and she began calling with gusto, propelled by several successes in securing several pieces that her boss, Mr. O'Halloran was coveting. After one successful call to a Miami dealer, Carol was so elated that she phoned Mr. O'Halloran to share the good news. "Damn!" He exclaimed,
"You are a wonder, Carol." He was a good boss to have. Mr. O'Halloran didn't care about Carol's admission of her relationship with Therese (as it came out when Carol gave him Therese as her emergency contact). He occasionally thought, "I'm not going to judge her, but I really don't understand why she has a girlfriend and not a husband. Oh hell, though. What's it to me?"

Besides, he had met Therese a couple of times. She was very polite and had a good job at The Times—quite the skilled photographer. She had volunteered to photograph some pieces in his shop that he was trying to market across the country. Therese had never charged for her services, just smiled politely when he praised her skill. He felt fortunate Carol worked for him. He wanted Carol to take on more managerial responsibilities at the store, but Carol was content in her current position, for it gave her the flexibility to spend time with Rindy. Mr. O'Halloran made up for a higher position with more generous commissions. Carol had developed a network of other furniture buyers in various cities across the country. He was not about to lose one of the most skilled furniture buyers in the city.

Carol went to the apartment’s office closet and pulled out the box labeled "photography magazines" that Therese mentioned before she left for work. She probably would need the Good Housekeeping Furniture Guide for the next few calls. Mr. O'Halloran had told Carol to take a nice long lunch break and bring the receipt on Monday to get reimbursed.

Carol was pleased by his praise and wondered if Abby might be available for lunch in a couple of hours. Carol would phone her after one or two more business calls. She was now to the point that she needed her copy of the Good Housekeeping Furniture Guide. Carol lifted the box top off Therese's back issues of photography magazines and started thumbing through, searching for her guide. "Aha", said a pleased Carol, "here it is." As she lifted her guide out of the magazine box, Carol froze. She could not believe her eyes, for the next two magazines in the box were titled Brides, and worst yet, were recent issues. A bit of note paper stuck out from one of the issues. Carol opened the magazine to the page where the note lay. It was a double page of men's wedding bands and the note was in Therese's unmistakable handwriting. It said, "Jonathan loves this ring pattern and I'm so glad, because I love it too." Carol's hand flew involuntarily to cover her mouth in shock.

11:30 AM the same day at The New York Times office

Meanwhile, at The New York Times office, Therese stopped by Dannie's desk and asked if he could grab a quick lunch with her at a diner nearby. They decided to each have soup and share a sandwich as they needed to talk more than eat. "When are you going to tell Carol?" Dannie asked. "Oh Dannie, I know that I must, and soon. I just don't know where to start." "Well," Dannie said, looking directly at his good friend, "the truth might be the best approach. What if she finds out before you tell her?" Therese quickly said, "There is no chance of that, for I was careful to bury the Brides magazines in a box of old issues of photography magazines that I keep in the office closet. Carol never goes in there." Suddenly Therese's face became white as the sweater she was wearing. "What?" Dannie exclaimed. "There, what on earth is wrong?" All Therese could say was, "Oh my god, the box of magazines..." Therese's hand flew involuntarily to cover her mouth in shock.

Carol was not speechless for long. Son of a BITCH! What the FUCK is going on?" Carol’s rich vocabulary of curses that would make a sailor envious surfaced. At first she was shaken to the core, with her relationship threatened. "Goddammit! How can I compete with a man for Therese’s affection?" Feelings of helplessness washed over her and she wanted to cry. Because it was 1959 and homosexual relationships were still condemned by much of society, it was nearly impossible to live and love openly. Fear was pervasive. Relationships could be threatened in so many different ways. Carol was just starting to make progress with Harge and his willingness to let Rindy spend more and more time with Carol and Therese. As much as Carol was trying to cut back on cigarettes, she lit one and took a deep drag.
“Therese,” Carol thought, “I can’t lose you.” She started pacing around the apartment. She passed the balcony and saw the two doves that often lingered on the banister. She remembered how Therese and she would feed them during the most bitter winter weather and the birds rewarded the women by sitting side by side on the railing and gently cooing. Therese called them the lovebirds of the balcony while she referred to Carol and her as the lovebirds of the apartment. With arms encircling each other, they quietly enjoyed watching the cooing birds. Right now, Carol was neither in the mood to see the love birds nor to hear their song. She rapped on the window and shouted, “Oh, stop cooing damn it! Scram!” Carol swore one of the doves turned to give her a haughty look before they took off in a flutter of wings.

Suddenly, Carol stopped and took a deep breath. Why was she panicking? Why was she so quick to doubt Therese’s love and devotion? Had they not had one of the most sexually intimate weeks in months? “I love her with all my being” and I know she loves me,” Carol said aloud. She mused, our relationship has withstood immeasurable odds, and yet we emerge stronger than ever. Of course they had spats and tense words, sometimes with doors slammed and tears, but then they always made up, often holding each other so very close and reminding each other of their love as part of making up.

With confidence in Therese’s love for her intact once more, her mind turned to other questions. Why was this Brides magazine—two issues in fact, in the box with her photography magazines and who the hell was Jonathan and why did Therese care that he liked some man’s wedding band? Carol kept pacing and slapping the magazine into the palm of her hand as was her habit when annoyed. All of a sudden another smaller piece of paper fluttered to the floor. Carol bent to pick it up. A telephone number was on it in Therese’s handwriting and she didn’t have to look twice at the number as it was so familiar. She considered calling Therese, but their conversation needed to happen later in the privacy of their home. Carol did not want to call and upset Therese, for she undoubtedly had no idea Carol had found the magazines.

12:30 PM the same day at their apartment

Carol was so relieved that she quickly finished several more business calls. Then she dialed the number on the piece of paper. After two rings, a familiar voice answered, “Hello”. “Abby, Hello there,” Carol cooed, as smooth as one of the doves. “Carol! What a terrific surprise.” Carol smiled at the word “surprise”, because Abby had no idea what kind of surprise lay ahead. “Abby, I’m working from home today and my boss said to take a long lunch. Are you going to be near my neighborhood by any chance?” Abby said, “I’ll make a point to be. Shall I come soon? Will we go out? What would be the appropriate attire?” Carol wished with all her might that she could see the look on Abby’s face as she answered Abby’s questions. “Oh, I’ll rustle up something here at the apartment to eat, and as far as attire, why don’t you wear a bridal gown?”

The silence lasted so long that Carol wondered if Abby had fainted. She neither heard a thud, nor the sound of a phone dropped, so Abby must still be on the line. “Abby, are you there?” “Ooohhh yesss,” Abby drew out the words. “Shall I bring some rye?” Abby asked. Carol replied, “Excellent idea” as she hung up the telephone with a smile.
Chapter Summary

The continuing adventures of Carol and Therese, more than six years after they met and fell in love and decided to build a life together.

Chapter Notes

Dear readers, I hope you read my Chapter 2 prior to reading this current chapter. I had written this chapter (Chapter 3) at the same time Chapter 2 was written, but I chose to break the two where I did to add a bit of suspense to the end of Chapter 2. Thank you for reading my work and bear with me, for as a brand new fan fiction writer, it takes me a bit longer to generate chapters. This storyline will continue, though, so please check back.

Friday February 27, 1959
2:00 PM

At the Aird/Belivet apartment, Carol waits for Abby to arrive.

Carol hurried to the door of their apartment as she heard a commotion outside the door. She knew it was Abby. After what transpired during their telephone conversation of less than one hour ago, Carol anticipated Abby would hurry over. Abby had knocked, but when Carol did not immediately open the door, Carol heard the sound of Abby’s key in the lock. Carol and Therese had given Abby a key to their apartment in case of any emergency. Carol surmised that Abby had deemed getting into the apartment as soon as possible today was an emergency. She shook her head and almost laughed aloud. Carol called out, “Abby, I’ll be right there, nitwit. Don’t break down the door.”

Carol opened the door to a red-faced Abby. “Why there you are, sweetie!” How lovely and windblown you look,” Carol said. “But couldn’t you at least manage to wear a bridal veil?” “Very funny,” Abby puffed, catching her breath. Carol invited her to sit at the kitchen table while she finished making their lunch sandwiches and fruit, “Carol, listen, there is a perfectly reasonable explanation about the Brides magazine situation.” Carol said, “When did I mention Brides magazine?” Carol arched a blonde eyebrow. Abby thought, “I’m digging myself in deeper by the minute.” She extended the brown sack containing the rye Carol had requested. “Thank you, Carol said, but let’s not open the rye right now. I have a bit of red wine open.” “Everything is fine, Abby. I’m no longer upset, but I would like some answers before I talk to Therese when she comes home from work. I have a feeling that for some reason Therese is reluctant to talk to me about the appearance of recent issues of Brides magazines in her box of old photography magazines. Obviously you know something because your phone number was on a slip of paper inside one of the magazines.”

Abby nodded. “I can shed a lot of light on this, and yes, Therese was reluctant to talk to you, and
when I tell you the background, perhaps you will understand. By the way, Therese did not swear me to secrecy. She even said she might need my help later for intervention, so I feel comfortable talking to you now without asking Therese’s permission.” Carol’s face registered confusion.

Carol handed Abby a glass of wine and her sandwich and fruit. “Abby, please tell me enough of the details so I can speak with Therese later without her becoming upset about my discovering the magazines.” Abby took a generous drink of her wine, bit into her sandwich and chewed, gathering her thoughts. “Okay, you know how you two attend the women’s clubs or dances that the gay community is holding more often. Also, Therese attends meetings of the newly organized lesbian organization, the Daughters of Bilitis by herself, because you don’t want to go.” Carol nodded as she listened attentively.

(Historical Note: In 1955 the first lesbian organization in the U.S. was founded in San Francisco by two lesbians named Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. It was called the Daughters of Bilitis (or DOB). The name came from a fictional lesbian contemporary (i.e., Bilitis) of a real ancient Greek female poet named Sappho who lived in the 7th century AD on a Greek island named Lesbos. She wrote poetry about her love for women. The word, lesbian, is taken from the Greek island where she lived. Only fragments of her poetry remain. The organization’s name, Daughters of Bilitis, was chosen for its anonymity. Martin and Lyon asked a young Philadelphia librarian named Barbara Gittings to organize a New York City DOB chapter, which she did, in 1958. The last DOB chapter ceased to exist in 1995.)

Abby continued, “Therese and some of her friends enjoy attending the DOB meetings and the politics of it all. Also, Therese has been asked to document the organization with photographs. Now photographing the women was tricky because many of the women who attend the DOB meetings or dances do not want to be photographed in a way that shows their full faces because they are fearful of what might happen by way of discrimination. Carol, I don’t need to tell you about discrimination. You are living proof.” Carol nodded sadly. “Members trust Therese’s discretion and they know everyone gets to see photographs before the photos are turned into the DOB archives and if anyone objects to a photograph, it’s destroyed.” Abby continued, “Anyway, Therese told me how many times she gets unwanted flirts from some of the women who attend and much too often she must say, “No thanks, or I am taken or I have a lover.” Therese asked me if I knew any gay jewelers because she wanted a ring to tell the world that she was taken—married really—at least as married as our community can be. Therese is not so naïve to think that no more flirts will come her way if she wears a ring, but the symbol is so important to her. That’s where Jonathan comes in. He’s an acquaintance of mine, but is a nice man and as discrete as they come. He has his own small shop. Therese could shop with him and be perfectly open about what she wanted to buy and why. Also, you could accompany her as well without any raised eyebrows from a nosy salesperson.”

Carol asked, “But why was the Brides magazine page open to men’s wedding bands?” Abby shrugged, “I don’t know for sure, but I think Therese was just looking at patterns. She told me she wants a ring that looks like a wedding band in the worst way, but she is afraid of your reaction.” Carol drew back and frowned, “My reaction?” Abby continued, “Yes, years ago when your divorce was imminent, apparently when you took off your wedding ring from Harge, you said one of your famous ‘That’s that’,” comments. Carol recollected, “I actually remember the moment even though it has been over six years ago. I made quite a ceremony of it, and I may have said ‘No more wedding rings for me’.” Abby nodded, “Yep, Therese remembers it that way as well.”

Carol wondered, “But why would that affect Therese’s reluctance about her getting a ring?” As
soon as those words were out of her mouth, the light bulb went off in Carol’s head and she said to Abby, “Oh god, Abby, she wants us to have matching bands and she wants it so much she is afraid to even broach the subject with me because she believes I’ll say no.” Abby nodded, but reassured Carol, “I suspect this is one of the few times Therese would go to me first with something so personal, but she wanted to gather all the information before presenting it to you.” I know she would have gathered her courage and told you before too long.” Abby continued with a smile, “Besides, she thinks that I practically know every gay person in business in New York City.”

The two best friends had finished their lunch and decided they could even skip the rye for now. Carol offered Abby a cigarette and lit them both. After a comfortable silence, Abby put out her cigarette, looked at her watch and stood. “Carol I’d best go. Therese will be home in an hour or so and I believe you have some thinking to do.” Carol hugged her and they kissed their customary double cheek kiss. “Thank you, Abby. You are such a good friend to us both.” Abby grinned broadly as she retrieved her unopened bottle of rye from Carol’s outstretched hand.

Carol walked back to the apartment office and looked over the furniture business paperwork she had carried out earlier today before she thought her world was crashing in. She decided that she had made enough successful calls for the day. She organized her paperwork to take to work Monday morning. Carol headed for their bedroom to put on a nicer dress and freshen up. Therese would be home from work soon. After they talked, perhaps they might go out to dinner to celebrate.

Carol picked up her favorite photo of Therese that was prominent on her nightstand and looked at it lovingly, saying softly “My angel, my dearest angel.” Carol couldn’t wait to see what Therese might show her in the way of rings they would wear for a lifetime.
Rings for Two

Chapter Summary

This chapter is the latest episode in a continuing storyline of a very important and wonderful decision to be made by Carol and Therese.

Chapter Notes

Important note to readers:

This chapter will be much more meaningful if you have at least read Chapter 3 first. Hopefully you have had the chance to read all these chapters in order. I appreciate your comments and your kudos. They mean a lot to me as this is my first attempt at fan fiction of any kind.

Friday February 27, 1959

4:00 PM

At Therese’s desk in The New York Times building:

Therese Belivet was not having a productive afternoon. She had resorted to clearing her desk of back work and doing necessary filing for several hours. She wanted to do any task that was more rote in nature, for she was still thinking about today’s lunch conversation. During lunch, Therese and Dannie McElroy had been talking about Therese’s reluctance to broach the subject of Therese dearly wanting to have matching wedding rings for herself and Carol. Now Therese was worried that Carol might have discovered the Brides magazines Therese had stashed in a box of old photography magazines. Therese even tried to telephone Abby for some advice, but there was no answer.

Dannie had walked by Therese’s desk several times during the afternoon because Therese seemed so upset since lunch. This time Dannie stopped and said, “Why don’t you just call her?” Therese looked up and sighed, “I just can’t. She must have found the magazines by now and I don’t want to have this conversation with her over the phone. She told me she would call me this afternoon to say hello and she hasn’t called. Why did I have to write that stupid note mentioning Jonathan’s name and leave it sticking out of one of the magazines?” Dannie rolled his eyes and went back to his desk.

The subject had been brewing in Therese’s mind for so long.

The symbolism of matching rings was incredibly important to Therese. She had actually been thinking about it for a couple of years, but more so in the last six months. Frankly she was tired of appearing to be a single woman. For quite some time she had attended more of the gay community’s social and political meetings than Carol. Carol, being a few years older than she, tended to be more conservative in things like this. Therese pictured herself smiling and pointing to
the ring whenever she received unsolicited attention of the flirty kind. Being shy, she was not as adept at deflecting such attention from men or women with witty but unmistakable messages as Carol was.

Carol had come a long way in this regard. Therese remembered their 1954 steamship trip to Europe when she explained to Carol that Carol need not endure unwanted men boldly flirting with her. Carol had taken Therese’s advice and had developed a witty repertoire of come-backs to use in those situations.

Above all, though, Therese longed for them to wear the symbol of love and commitment that she saw other couples wear. She even noticed that some—not many, but some—of the couples she had met in the gay community wore matching rings as well. Therese remembered Carol saying “Well, that’s that,” after removing Harge’s wedding ring. Even though in her heart, Therese knew Carol was only referring to Harge when she had uttered those words, Therese had avoided bringing up the subject of rings. She knew if she asked, Carol would certainly give her one as a gift, but Therese absolutely wanted more. She wanted them both to have rings that matched—as sure as the bond that joined their hearts.

Approximately one month ago Therese had even gone as far as to borrow a couple of issues of Brides magazines from a very puzzled co-worker (who knew about Therese and Carol) to look at the pictures of rings. She had practically giggled when she asked to borrow the magazines thinking that a bride walking down the aisle was the last thing she would ever be, but oh, those beautiful matching wedding bands.

Therese would stop and gaze longingly in shop windows. She felt uncomfortable actually going into the shops alone. She should have asked Dannie to accompany her. That would have been one solution, but before that idea occurred to her, she worked up enough courage to talk to Abby. Abby had become a good friend to Therese even though Abby and Carol already shared almost a lifetime of friendship, plus a brief romance long ago. Therese was convinced that Abby knew every gay person in New York City’s business community.

After a telephone call with Abby, Therese had the name of a jeweler in the city named Jonathan Devon who happened to be gay, extremely nice, very discrete and quite knowledgeable about wedding rings. Abby even went with Therese to his shop the first time to make introductions. Jonathan was a delightful man and definitely “one of us” as Abby put it. He made Therese feel quite comfortable as he handed her a business card. Jonathan said enthusiastically, “Call or come in any time. I have one employee who can take care of any other customers if you and your lover wish to come in together. We can discuss various rings in the privacy of my office. In fact, let me write my home number on my card. I admire you very much for wanting to purchase and wear matching rings. I wish more of ‘us’ would do so.”

After they left, Therese was so overcome with gratitude that she hugged Abby tightly. “I owe you a lot, Abby” said Therese. “Now I just have to take the time to look over his catalogs and stock during the next few weeks. I want to be able to photograph some for Carol to look at.” Therese paused then continued, “That is if Carol is agreeable to the idea.” Therese eyed Abby expectantly and asked, “Do you think you might be able to support my idea with Carol? She very well might ask your opinion.” Abby thought for a moment. “Even though it’s Carol’s decision, I’m supportive. I think it’s an excellent idea.” Therese smiled broadly and said, “I trust whatever you might say to Carol, but I think it’s virtually impossible that Carol would bring the subject up with you before I bring it up with her first. She knows nothing about how badly I want this. I think this is the one secret I’ve ever kept from her.”

Abby chuckled. “I can’t imagine getting some phone call from Carol out of the blue asking about this. But Therese, why are you so reluctant to talk to her? You have been together for six years.
You might be pleasantly surprised at her reaction.”

Therese’s eyes brimmed with tears, “I think it’s just because I want this so much. You know, Abby, this is just one of the many times that life is so much more complicated for us than it is for the heterosexuals. They just fall in love, get engaged, they select their rings in stores with sales people so eager to help them. They get married. They show off their rings and the world smiles on them. I know I may sound somewhat bitter, but I don’t want to put up with the way things are. That’s why I keep going to these gay political meetings. Abby said, “Therese, you’re right, and I’m glad you and other more political gays want change and are starting to organize. Someday soon, we’ll have lunch and you can tell me more about what you’re learning at these meetings. For now, please remember that the love that you and Carol share is as solid and as real as any two people I’ve ever known. As they parted, Abby patted her arm and said “Call me anytime.”

Friday February 27, 1959, 4:45 PM, back at the Aird/Belivet apartment:

Carol was sitting on their bed daydreaming about all the events of this day. She still clutched her favorite photo of Therese to her chest. She anticipated the joy of picking out matching rings that they would wear for the rest of their lives.

All of a sudden Carol bolted up so quickly that she had to grab her photo of Therese before it tumbled off the bed. “Damn!” swore Carol. What am I thinking? Therese knows about the rings, Abby knows about the rings and now I know about the rings, but Therese has no idea I know about the rings. And most important of all, if Therese suspects anything, she is worried that I found the Brides magazines in her box of photography magazines. For all I know, she thinks that I think she’s got some boyfriend named Jonathan and they both love the same wedding ring pictured in that Brides magazine.

Carol tried to replay what she had just thought in her mind but she couldn’t. It was too confusing and complicated. “This is like a bad comedy on television,” Carol said aloud as she ran for the phone to call Therese. She did not want her sweetheart to worry a minute more. Besides, if Therese was upset, she might go for drinks with Dannie after work. Carol wanted Therese at home, in her arms and soon. She wanted to kiss her and hold her and share the ironic events of the day. She wanted to tell her she loved her and she wanted them to anticipate the excitement of selecting matching rings. She wanted to tell her it was a brilliant idea.

It was now 5:00 PM and Therese was probably leaving work. As she dialed the phone, Carol thought to herself, “Therese, please pick up the phone. Please.” The phone rang. There was no answer yet.

5:00 PM, at Therese’s desk in The New York Times building:

Therese had gathered her purse, sweater and coat. She waved across the room to Dannie. As he approached, Therese said, “Dannie, let’s go for just one beer. I just want to think about what I’m going to say to Carol. I want my words to be as perfect as they can be, and right now my mind is going a million miles a minute.” Dannie sighed, “Sure.” He thought to himself, “Women are so much more complicated than we guys are, but maybe that’s okay.”

Therese and Dannie said their goodbyes to their departing co-workers and started to walk away. Suddenly Therese’s phone rang and she nearly jumped out of her skin. “It must be Carol!” Therese whispered hoarsely. Dannie rolled his eyes again. Therese said “Dannie, answer it and say I’ve left and I am going for a beer with some of the girls.” Dannie picked up the phone and answered professionally, “Therese Belivet’s desk, Dannie McElroy speaking. Oh, hi there, Carol.” Therese started waving her hands in a ‘no’ signal. Dannie brightened, “Why yes, Therese is right here. We were just leaving for the day. Glad you caught us. Nice talking to you Carol. Here’s Therese.” He extended the phone to Therese. Dannie folded his arms in a satisfied
way and gave Therese an encouraging smile and backed away to give her privacy. Therese gave
Dannie a frustrated look, but she knew he pushed her into doing what she should have done
herself some time ago.

“Hello,” said Therese tentatively and continued, “I was just leaving. Is everything alright?”
Carol’s voice was so tender, “Yes. Everything is more than alright. Darling, I know you’re at
work and can’t talk privately.” “It’s okay, Carol, everyone in my area has left for the day except
Dannie.” Carol laughed one of her wonderful laughs. Therese could picture her lover’s head
thrown back and her hand tossing her golden hair away from one side of her face.

Carol paused, then said, “Darling, yes, yes, yes.” If you have any more…hmm, how shall I say
‘material’ at the office to show me, please bring it. I can’t wait to see it. Dearest, do you know
what I mean when I say ‘yes’?” Joy surged through Therese’s entire body, and she answered, “I
certainly do.” Carol said, “I love you.” Therese answered, “I love you, too. I’m on my way
home.” They both hung up at the same time. Therese quickly opened a drawer and pulled out a
folder of ring photographs and slipped it in her purse.

Even from across the room, Dannie could see the glow on Therese’s face. Her smile lit up the
entire room. She approached him and said breathlessly, “She said yes.”
Chapter Summary

This is the latest in my continuing storyline of a very important and wonderful decision to be made by Carol and Therese.

Chapter 5 occurs on the same day as Chapter 4, so for maximum enjoyment, read them in order. There are references made in Chapter 5 that depend on knowledge from previous chapters.

Please see Chapter Notes at the end of this chapter. I have some very important information to share.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Friday February 27, 1959

5:30 PM

At the Aird/Belivet apartment:

Carol had hung up the phone from talking to Therese. Carol took a deep breath, but exhaled with a radiant smile on her lips. The day had gone from ordinary to feeling anxious about her finding copies of two Brides magazines that Therese had put in an unobtrusive box. Carol had finally dismissed worries that perhaps her very relationship was somewhat threatened by the fact that the magazines, and the note Therese had placed in the magazine referred to a man named Jonathan. But when Carol discovered via Abby’s phone number in the Brides magazine, she knew there was more to the story than met her eyes. And it was true. Therese had confided in Abby and given Abby permission to talk to Carol about Therese’s fervent hope that Carol would agree to wear matching wedding rings.

Carol thought that she and Therese should sometime soon make a journal entry about this day’s events to remember years from now as they sat together, matching rings on their hands. So many things happened so quickly today. Carol knew Therese would be home very soon, but at this very moment, her heart was so full of love that she wanted to hear her daughter’s voice. Rindy would not be with her and Therese until next Friday. Carol usually refrained from calling on Friday, Saturday and Sunday because this was Harge’s time to spend with Rindy as he was so busy during the week.

As she settled in for the phone call, she felt an immense relief that her relationship with Harge had thawed remarkably during the last two years. She could tell from some of the casual comments that Rindy made that she was absolutely thrilled that her mother and father were pleasant to each other. Harge had been horribly and unnecessarily cruel about their divorce and child custody in late 1952 and early 1953 and there were several years after that Harge would speak ill of Carol and Therese in front of Rindy.

Harge had always been an attentive father. Carol knew that Harge loved Rindy more than life itself, and gradually over the past two years a definite thaw on Harges’s part had started and
grown. Rindy was so happy, and that made Harge happier than he had been for a long time. He had even apologized to Carol. “Almost gives you hope for the human race,” thought Carol with a smile. She was glad to reciprocate for she, too wanted Rindy’s happiness more than anything.

Those were the thoughts in Carol’s mind as she dialed Rindy. Her little girl would probably be getting ready to eat the evening meal. “Hello,” a deep male voice answered. “Harge,” said Carol, “I didn’t expect you to be home from work yet. I just wanted to tell Rindy to have fun this weekend.” Harge said, “Hello, Carol, I’ll bet you’re surprised to hear me answer.” Carol thought to herself, ‘This is the least of my surprises today’, but she just said “Well…” and trailed off, unable to construct a reply.

Harge explained, “Rindy is going to her friend Karen’s house tomorrow morning and have a sleepover. Apparently four of her classmates are going to be there. I wanted to pick her up from school today and drive by Karen’s and ensure Rindy was bringing everything she needed. Actually, I wanted to see the family’s home and meet her mother and find out what the girls would be doing Saturday afternoon and night and when I should pick her up on Sunday, too. Rindy had already given me all that information, but I wanted to hear it from the parent.” Carol silently chuckled.

Harge called out, “Rindy, your mother wants to talk to you.” Carol heard a delighted shout of “Mommy!” in the background and the sound of feet running to the phone. Harge said, “Well, goodbye, Carol. We’ll be at your apartment next Friday at the usual time.” Carol could faintly make out a whispered side conversation between Rindy and Harge. She heard Harge whisper to Rindy, “No, I haven’t forgotten, Rindy. Just give me a moment…” Carol knew Harge did not intend for Carol to hear the interchange between father and daughter. Then Harge said into the phone very precisely to Carol so Rindy could hear each word, “Please give my regards to Therese.” Carol stifled a laugh, for she could picture Rindy, so grown up at nearly eleven years old, staring at Harge expectantly with her arms crossed until she heard him acknowledge and extend a pleasantry to Therese. Carol said “Thank you Harge, I will.”

“Sweet pea, how are you?” Carol asked her precious daughter. Rindy answered, “I’m fine and I am so excited about my sleepover at Karen’s house tomorrow. We are going to play Monopoly, Clue, and Checkers, do a jigsaw puzzle and we are going to have a hula-hoop contest to see who can twirl the longest. Karen’s mother and nanny will help us make cookie cutter cookies in animal shapes, too.” Rindy breathlessly continued, “And the best part, well maybe it’s the best part, is that Daddy said I could take my Brownie Camera with one roll of film.” I tried to get him to let me take two rolls, but, at least I can take 12 pictures.” Carol said, “Well, your father is being very nice to let you take it, now isn’t he?” “Yes”, Rindy giggled merrily, “but he thinks I don’t know how to change the film. You know that Aunt Therese taught me.” “I know, darling,” Carol said happily. Therese had given Rindy an easy-to-use Kodak Brownie camera for her tenth birthday.

“Mommy, I hear Daddy calling that supper is ready so I need to hang up. He said I need to finish my homework tonight, too so I don’t have to do it when I get home on Sunday.” “What a good idea,” Carol said, “Sweet pea, have a wonderful time at your sleepover and be sure to tell us all about it next weekend, okay?” Bring your camera and Aunt Therese will help you develop the film.” “Well, I had already planned to do that”, Rindy announced in a very grown-up way. “I hope it’s okay.” Carol said, “Of course. I love you, my special girl.” Rindy said “I love you, too, Mommy. Can I tell Aunt Therese I love her?” Carol replied, “Oh darling she isn’t home from work yet, but I will tell her, okay sweet pea?” “Okay, Mommy. Bye.” “Bye,” said Carol.

Carol hung up and couldn’t stop smiling. Rindy was growing up so fast. It was commonplace now for Carol to call Rindy once or twice during the week—sometimes every day. Next weekend the three of them were going to a children’s theater near Central Park. Life was good.
Speaking of life being good…Carol looked at the clock as it was nearly six o’clock. She thought frantically, “I’m not even ready for this evening—whatever the evening might be.” Of course the main event of the evening would be looking at the rings that Therese wanted to show her. Perhaps they would go out to celebrate, or just bring home Chinese take-out from a favorite little neighborhood spot. Perhaps they would… Carol’s thoughts were interrupted by the very faint sound of the elevator down the hall stopping on their floor. Carol headed for the door, pausing for a moment to check her appearance in the mirror. She noticed a wondrous glow on her face, and why not? She smoothed her skirt and sweater. She probably should have put on fresh lipstick, but then it would be kissed off in a manner of minutes. Carol imagined red lip marks all over Therese’s lips and face and threw back her head and laughed at the image in her mind. The key sounding in the lock of their apartment door signaled that the love of her life was finally home and would be in her arms momentarily.

The door opened and Therese rushed in with a smile and sparkling eyes. She stopped and just looked at Carol with love radiating from every cell in her body. Therese did not even pause to take off her coat, but rushed into Carol’s outstretched arms. Carol spoke first, “Dearest, you have never failed to be full of surprises have you, hmm”? Therese’s laugh tinkled with merriment. “Well, Carol, I don’t want you to become bored with me after six years together,” Therese teased. Carol broke the hug slightly, tossed her hair in the gesture that Therese loved, and said. “Ha! Darling, that will never be a problem.” Their excitement was electric. Both women started talking at once in a glorious interchange of happiness. It was yet another of the perpetual sunrises Carol promised Therese so long ago. “What do we do now?” Therese’s eyes danced as she shed her coat and put her purse containing photographs of rings in the apartment entryway.

“Well, Carol, I don’t want you to become bored with me after six years together,” Therese teased.

“Call Abby!” They said at the same time, giggling like schoolgirls. Calling Abby right now was a must, due to Abby’s important role in the day’s events. Carol dialed Abby. Therese’s arms were around Carol and both their ears were next to the phone receiver. There was no answer, but Carol arched a blond eyebrow and winked at Therese. Carol remembered that Abby had mentioned earlier in the week that she might have a date Friday night with her girlfriend Mary.

Mary kept a small efficiency apartment in Greenwich Village in lower Manhattan, since her main residence was New Jersey as was Abby’s. Mary’s family was financially well-to-do. They owned a small restaurant in Manhattan in addition to their larger steakhouse outside Paramus New Jersey. Mary had given Carol both her phone numbers in case she was ever searching for Abby. Abby and Mary had dated off and on for as long as Carol and Therese had been together, but decided that living separately was a better arrangement for them. Mary, a gorgeous redhead with a quick wit and laugh—not to mention a knockout figure—made for a delightful foursome when they all had the opportunity to socialize together.

Carol reached Abby at Mary’s place in Manhattan. “Carol!” Mary answered. “It’s wonderful to hear your voice. Abby has been grinning like the cat that swallowed the canary since she arrived a bit ago. All she will say is, ‘I can’t say anything until you two give her permission’”. Mary continued laughingly, “Then Abby gives me a smug look. I am dying to know,” Carol said, “Please put that nitwit on the line, Mary.” As Carol and Therese waited for Abby to get to the phone, Carol asked Therese, “Is it alright if we tell Abby how things worked out?” Therese still had her ear next to Carol’s as she listened in the phone receiver. Therese kissed the tip of Carol’s ear and said, “Yes, of course. Today, the only word I can think of is ‘yes’”. Carol squeezed Therese’s waist and drew her closer.

Abby’s voice boomed over the phone. “Well this is quite a surprise. Mary had the afternoon and evening off and we were just going to the Ceylon India Inn in the Times Square area. You know the one. Mary told me she could not bear to be within miles of a steakhouse since she sees steak
all week. I had thought you two lovebirds would want to be alone this evening given today’s events.” Therese leaned into the phone receiver and said, “I feel like I’m in a movie right now. I could literally dance my way down Madison Avenue.” Carol gave the receiver to Therese as Carol laughed and nodded in agreement. Therese continued into the phone, “We would love to share the story over dinner.” Carol pressed her face back to Therese’s and said into the phone, “Meet us there in thirty minutes, okay? Can you call ahead and see if we can get that booth in the corner we like?” Abby said, “Sure. I’ll call right now. We’re ready to leave. Bye.”

Carol hung up the phone. She and Therese laughed delightedly. “Carol, this is crazy” Therese shook her head, still laughing. “I know,” said Carol. “Well…” said Therese in a practical tone. “Well…?” echoed Carol as she waited for Therese to continue. “I mean, we’re not getting married…actually, and you already wear a ring that I gave you in 1954.” Carol replied, “And I love it and will wear it always, but…” Therese echoed, “But… so many people who are married wear matching rings and today you found out how much I wanted that for us, too.” “And today…” Therese continued with a flourish of her arms, tipping her head back and almost shouting with joy, “Today, you said YES!”

Carol was so happy she didn’t know what to do, except to laugh and say again, “Yes, yes, yes! I most certainly did.” As they stood in the middle of the living room, grinning at each other like brand new lovers, they realized time was flying, “Dinner!” They exclaimed together. They rushed to their bedroom and its en suite bathroom to freshen up. Carol called from the bathroom, “We have just enough time to put on slacks and a sweater or jacket and get a cab.” “The jacket I want to wear is in Rindy’s closet,” answered Therese as she dashed down the hallway to Rindy’s room to get it.

Carol walked back into their bedroom and quickly changed into slacks, a sweater and the tweed jacket Therese loved to see on her. Carol was ready except for a last minute lipstick application, but Therese was nowhere to be seen. Carol went over to the vanity with its makeup lights. What color should she choose? She heard Therese making noise in the kitchen, then the sound of Therese’s feet running back to their bedroom.

Carol turned from the vanity mirror. Carol froze with one arm raised and lipstick in hand to gaze upon Therese, half-dressed in bra, underwear, and garter belt and nylon hose from work. She was carrying her work clothes in one arm and her casual attire in the other. Carol gave a low whistle said, “Dearest, you take my breath away. If we weren’t already going out for dinner…” Carol’s said suggestively. Therese winked her special ‘Oh baby’ wink at Carol. “It’s early. We’re going to have a quick dinner with Abby and Mary, but we’ve something special to look at tonight, that is if you aren’t too tired.” Therese said as she applied her lipstick and brushed her hair.

Carol said, “I couldn’t possibly go to sleep without looking at rings. Did you bring the photos?” “I did,” said Therese, and I’ve already put the folder with the photos in the living room. Did you hear me making a racket in the kitchen? Well, I put a bottle of champagne on ice for later.” “Perfect” Exclaimed Carol as they shared a hug and a kiss, then broke apart, “Later…” Therese promised. Carol smiled, tossed her blonde hair with a single motion of her graceful neck. With affection she tucked an errant lock of Therese’s brown hair behind her ear. They grabbed their coats, headed out the door, into the elevator and onto Madison Avenue. Carol usually flagged the cab, but tonight she let Therese do it. As the cab pulled up, Carol opened the cab door and put her hand on the small of Therese’s back as she usually did as Therese slid into the cab. Carol gave the cabbie the address of the Ceylon India Inn. They settled back for the short ride.

They sat with legs and knees touching and with hands intertwined. Rush hour was still upon them, so the usual trip took a bit longer. They kept their conversation light during the fifteen minute ride. Carol told Therese of her quick call to an excited Rindy, who was going to a Saturday sleepover
with her little friends. Carol squeezed her hand and said, “Of course Rindy sent her love to you.” Therese squeezed back. Carol also related with a bit of mirth that it was Harge who had answered the phone, exchanged pleasantries with Carol and even rang off by saying “Give my regards to Therese.” Therese laughed. “This is getting to be a regular habit. Do you think Rindy was staring at him with her arms crossed until he did?” Therese didn’t wait for an answer, but said, “We are making peace with him. Today I am the luckiest woman in the world. Perhaps I should buy a lottery ticket.” Carol squeezed her hand again and grinned.

Before they knew it, the cab had pulled up at the Ceylon India Inn. Their clientele was from all over New York City because the food was good and the atmosphere comfortable and accepting of all different kinds of people. Abby and Mary were already there and waiting expectantly. Carol and Therese slid into their usual booth—one that afforded them a bit of privacy. The owner greeted all four women personally, as they were good customers and generous tippers. Abby offered a cigarette to both Carol and Therese as neither had lit up yet. Carol said, “Therese has almost quit and I am trying to cut back some.”

Abby said, “I know this is a day of surprises, but…Carol?” Abby almost gave Carol a pleading look, as if her best friend and cigarette buddy was abandoning her. Therese explained. “Not to be a wet blanket, especially tonight, but since I work at Times, I hear a lot that does not yet make it into widespread media.” Therese continued, “There was an article back in 1952 in Reader’s Digest called “Cancer by the Carton” that health researchers have taken seriously. I want Carol by my side for many years to come and she wants to see our grandchildren grow up as well. So we had a heart-to-heart over this about a month ago. Right now it’s just about how much she smokes, not totally quitting.” Carol smiled and shrugged and said rather proudly, “I really have cut back. I might have one after a meal and on social occasions.” She gave Therese a loving look, and said, “But that’s that. Who am I to stand in the way of my longevity?”

Abby looked stunned. Mary stubbed her own cigarette out and gave Abby an affectionate pat on the arm and gently pulled Abby’s cigarette out of her mouth as well and extinguished it. The four sat in silence for a moment, then burst out laughing. Abby said, “Well, are you two giving up drinking as well?” Carol and Therese smilingly shook their heads ‘no’. Abby brightened, “Then let’s get a drink to toast today’s success.” They waived at their waiter and ordered four beers as well as some appetizers. The beers arrived, and Abby made a toast: “To a long and happy life of togetherness.” Abby winked at Mary, then leaned over and whispered a question into Carol’s ear. “Are you two going to take a vow of chastity now too?” Carol smiled and shrugged and said rather proudly, “I really have cut back. I might have one after a meal and on social occasions.” She gave Therese a loving look, and said, “But that’s that. Who am I to stand in the way of my longevity?”

The appetizers arrived and the four quickly ordered their favorite dishes. Mary wanted to hear the entire story. Abby knew much of it, but was happy to hear it again. Abby looked modest yet pleased as Therese gave Abby much of the credit for her support and her recommendation of Jonathan Devon, the jeweler. After their food arrived the four concentrated on eating, but Abby did ask, “What’s next?” Carol turned to Therese and said, “Darling…” to let Therese answer. Therese said, “I had already made an appointment to go to Devon Jewelry tomorrow afternoon at 3:00 PM. But I thought I was going by myself.” Carol turned to Therese, “That’s right. As you left for work this morning you mentioned a Saturday afternoon errand.” Carol added, “Well, looks like I will be going, too. With Therese’s appointment unbeknownst to me, I made an appointment at our nail salon for a manicure for us both at 1:00 PM. We both need one.” Therese blushed while Abby and Mary raised their eyebrows. Instead of a lascivious comment, though, Abby smirked, “A manicure will be useful for trying on rings.”

After dinner and a cigarette for three of the four of them, Carol and Therese stood and excused
themselves while Abby and Mary stayed for an after dinner drink. Carol said, “We’d love to stay, but we still have lots to do tonight.” Therese pulled money out of her purse for their share of the dinner and tip. The four women exchanged double cheek kisses goodbye.

8:45 PM, back at the Aird/Belivet apartment:

Therese asked Carol, “Are you too tired to look at rings tonight?” Carol looked at Therese and said seriously, “Darling, I couldn’t be more awake if I were plugged into an electrical outlet.” “Me too,” admitted Therese happily. Therese picked up the envelope of the many photos she had taken of rings and laid it on the couch in preparation for Carol’s examination. She also grabbed Carol’s reading glasses, the *Brides* magazines as well as one of her own magnifying glasses from the office.

Carol heard Therese’s preparations and smiled to herself and happily hummed a tune. Carol looked through the cabinet for their two best champagne flutes. “Ah, finally, there they are,” Carol murmured to herself. She went to get the champagne from the ice bucket. It was a perfect temperature. She poured the bubbly liquid. Carol also took one more look at herself in the hall mirror. After all, this was a big moment. Tonight they were going to perhaps find the perfect matching rings for a lifetime from the material Therese had brought home.

Meanwhile, Therese was searching for some appropriate music. She lifted a stack of the small 45 RPM records of love songs that were special to them both. Therese spied one record that they hadn’t played in a long time. It was the title song from a movie they had both treasured from the time they first saw it together in 1955. The movie’s storyline featured the forbidden love affair of a Eurasian woman who was a medical doctor in Hong Kong. Her lover was an American reporter covering the Chinese civil war of 1949. The movie was true to life—adapted from an autobiographical novel by the author Han Suyin.

It was an extremely romantic movie with many memorable scenes between the two lovers from different worlds. The lovers in the movie faced prejudice from her family and from Hong Kong society. Carol and Therese had wept in the movie, both from the beauty of it and the fact that they, too, like the movie characters shared a forbidden love. The music never failed to send both Carol and Therese into each other’s arms every time they listened to the recording at home.

They were thrilled as they watched the 1956 Academy Awards on television, for the movie won three Oscars: Best Costume Design, Best Musical Score and Best Original Song. They agreed it should have won all its other nominations, especially for Best Picture and Best Actress. “It still should have won the Oscar for Best Picture,” murmured Therese aloud as she positioned that record to drop first on the 45 RPM adapter on their phonograph. The Original Song from the movie, “Love is a Many Splendored Thing” started to play.

Therese backed away from the phonograph and turned toward the door where she heard Carol’s footsteps approaching. Carol entered the room with two flutes of champagne. Carol started to say something, but she heard the familiar music start to swell. An astonished look crossed her face and her eyes widened. That song! How could Therese have known it was perfect for tonight? Carol slowly walked towards Therese, not taking her eyes off Therese’s. Therese stared at Carol with perhaps the most intense and loving look she had ever given her.

The song’s words swirled around them as the Four Aces sang in beautiful harmony:

> Love is a many splendored thing

> It’s the April rose, that only grows in the early spring

Carol slowly placed the two flutes of champagne on top of the mantle as they approached each
other. Carol asked, “How did you know to play this?” “I know you, Carol.” Therese said softly. “Remember their movie kisses?” Therese continued very deliberately, “I want to kiss you right now—a movie kiss, as authentic a movie kiss as took our breath away when we saw this movie.” Carol nodded speechlessly. Now they had reached each other.

The Four Aces sang as the music continued:

“Once on a high and windy hill, in the morning mist

Two lovers kissed and the world stood still...”

Carol bent her head. Her grey eyes were open until they were too close to Therese’s to focus. Carol’s arms slid around Therese’s waist. Therese’s eyes closed and her arms reached around Carol’s neck, pulling Carol’s lips to her own. Their lips parted only slightly because after all, this was a movie kiss worthy of the 1955 classic movie that mirrored their own life together in many ways. They did not intend this to be a ready-for-sex kiss, and it wasn’t. Theirs was a movie kiss that should make any movie-goer swoon with its beauty.

“Then your fingers touched my silent heart and taught it how to sing

Yes, true love’s a many splendored thing.”

Slowly they broke the kiss and looked at each other breathlessly as the music continued in the background. “It should have won Best Picture.” Therese repeated her often-expressed sentiment. Her eyes smiled into Carol’s. “I agree.” said Carol, “But perhaps someday there will be a movie about us and our kiss.” Carol teased with a soft laugh. “Well in that case,” Therese smiled tenderly, “If this is a kiss for a movie we should have a second take.”

The music swelled in the background with the final stanza. It was an extraordinary moment. Carol’s arms tightened around Therese once more. One of Carol’s arms was around Therese’s waist and the other around her upper back to steady them. At the very same time, one of Therese’s hands gripped Carol’s jacket lapel to pull Carol’s head down even closer while her other hand slid gently into the blond hair. Each could smell the other’s perfume. Carol leaned further into the kiss, holding Therese with all her might as Therese shifted a bit into Carol’s left side to get even closer. Therese relaxed her head into Carol’s sure grip.

Their kiss went unbroken through the final verse:

“Once on a high and windy hill,

In the morning mist two lovers kissed and the world stood still.”

“Then your fingers touched my silent heart and taught it how to sing

Yes, true love’s a many splendored thing.”

Chapter End Notes

And so the movie screen darkens and the credits roll...

But seriously, I have intentionally created this chapter with a nod to the wonderful romance movies of the mid-1950s. I am old enough to remember the 1950s quite well, so the last scene was particularly sweet to write. I guess this is fluff at its height.
I dedicate this Chapter with appreciation to all those who brought the movie, "Carol" into our world. It has enriched my life beyond measure. If I hadn't seen it I certainly would have never written fan fiction. I think there are parallels between the movies "Carol" (2015) and Chapter 5's reference to "Love Is A Many Splendored Thing" (1955). Both movies are of forbidden love. See if you can find another similarity that I made regarding these movies. You owe it to yourself to listen to "Love Is A Many Splendored Thing" by the Four Aces on the Internet music source of your choice. The movie deserves a little research on the Internet as well. However, there is only one line of this beautiful song that I did not include in my lyrics quotes. That line refers to "A golden crown that makes a man a king." I ignored it, as I imagine that Carol and Therese did as well. Just not applicable here (smile).

By the way, credits for the song, "Love Is A Many Splendored Thing" are as follows: Music by Sammy Fain and lyrics by Paul Francis Webster.

The restaurant cited in this chapter really existed in 1959. If you don't know what a 45 RPM record adapter for a phonograph is, Google is at your service. There is also a wonderful 1960 video of Greenwich Village where Abby's girlfriend lives--almost identical time period. That was very interesting for me to view as I wrote.

Finally, thanks again for reading my work. Your kudos and comments are appreciated as well. They inspire me to keep writing more episodes of these wonderful women who have stolen our hearts.

Look for the next chapter in 5-7 days when you finally will get to read the description of those fabulous rings.

Regards, Pipestone
That's the Ring for Us

Chapter Summary

Dear reader, this is a continuing storyline, so for maximum enjoyment, please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this chapter. Chapter 6 continues the events of Friday, February 27, 1959. The setting of this chapter is Carol and Therese’s apartment on Madison Avenue in New York City.

Again, I suggest you read the chapters in order for maximum enjoyment.

In Chapter 6, Carol and Therese will choose a pattern for the matching rings they will wear for the rest of their lives. Carol looks through literally dozens of photos of rings that Therese had already taken, in the hopes that the day would come when Carol would agree to wear matching rings. That day is today and Carol assures Therese that she need not have worried about Carol’s agreement to wear matching rings.

Wearing comfy flannel pajamas and robes, Therese lovingly watches Carol sift through the photos as Therese remembers an event that truly opened the door to greater security for their relationship.

Please be sure to read the End Note for a few interesting historical facts.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Friday February 27, 1959

9:00 PM

At the Aird/Belivet apartment that same night:

Carol and Therese finally broke from their “movie kiss” with the song “Love is a Many Splendored Thing” playing in the background. They still held each other closely and their foreheads touched. They both sighed at the same time.

The flutes of champagne sat temporarily forgotten on the mantle where Carol had placed them. Carol took Therese’s hand and led her to their bedroom. Therese smilingly said “I thought nothing could keep you from looking at matching rings right now. Carol turned to give Therese a mischievous look. “Oh, dearest, nothing is keeping me from those rings except getting into comfy flannel pajamas, robe and slippers.”

Therese answered in mock indignation, “And here I was thinking that my kiss was sweeping you into nakedness, then into bed. Carol continued the loving banter. “Well, as you can see, I’m getting less clothed by the minute.” Carol continued undressing. Therese chuckled, and reached into the drawer for her own pajamas. Carol was completely nude now as was Therese. Having been together for six years, they were completely comfortable seeing each other’s bodies, each woman having touched every inch of the other—inside and out with their hands or mouths. They still slept naked, except when one or the other wasn’t feeling well, when Rindy was in the apartment or during a particularly cold night, when chill nipped at their shoulders.
Carol donned her favorite flannel pajamas and reached into the closet for her robe and Therese’s. As Carol handed Therese her robe, she started laughing, quietly at first, then louder. She tossed her beautiful blonde hair back in the gesture Therese loved so. Carol couldn’t stop laughing. Tears of mirth were now trickling down Carol’s face and she grabbed her sides. Finally she had to sit on their bed to calm down. Carol started pulling on her pajamas while still chuckling.

Therese was in one of those awkward situations where she was laughing too, just because Carol was, but not knowing what was in that beautiful blonde head that a caused such an outburst. Therese stood over Carol who was still seated on the bed, wiping tears of mirth from her eyes. “Carol, what on earth…”? Therese said. Carol answered, “Oh, I just realized that I am so focused on looking at the rings that I was thinking you couldn’t distract me even if you flung your sexy nude body on top of mine and started making wild love to me.” Therese began to chuckle too as Carol continued, “I think I would give you a kiss on the cheek and say, “Later dearest. Where are the ring photographs?” Carol completed the explanation by giggling like a schoolgirl. Therese was actually pleased, for the rings had been her own obsession for so long and now Carol was as excited as she was about the rings.

Therese gently pulled Carol to her feet and said, “Let’s go. The photos are ready. The Brides magazines are ready and I have your reading glasses and a magnifying glass—everything you need.” Carol said, “Lead me to those ring photos. Could we have a toast to success with that champagne that you so thoughtfully prepared?” Therese said, “Your wish is my command, my love. By the way, I’m sorry that this bottle of champagne is not a particularly great one. It’s all we had. I had no idea that tonight would be so momentous.” “Not to worry,” Carol countered. “I’m just going to sip it, for I want to remain mentally sharp to concentrate on this important subject.” Therese gave Carol one of the champagne flutes and kept the other. They gave each other a very loving look as they touched the flutes, producing a melodious sound. “Here’s to our rings,” whispered Carol. “A symbol of our love,” Therese added.

Carol said, “How do you want me to proceed?” Therese pulled the coffee table closer to the couch. “Here’s the envelope with quite a few photos of rings I took at Devon Jewelry. Some are of rings in stock and others are from his catalogs. I’d like you to examine those first. Then there are a few in the Brides magazines, too.” Therese continued, “I want you to hold the photos so that they face away from me. I don’t want to see them as you view them. I don’t want to react in any way that would show my preference. Then, when you find ones that you believe would be a potential favorite, please place them face down in the envelope. Then we’ll look at those together.”

Carol raised a blond eyebrow and smiled at her lover. “You never cease to amaze me. You’re so prepared and organized.” Carol’s mood turned wistful, “I just wish you hadn’t agonized for so long before telling me.” Therese looked thoughtful, “I do, too, but I was just so afraid that you wouldn’t be comfortable wearing matching rings.” Carol took Therese’s hand and looked deeply into her hazel eyes with her own grey ones. “When we were first together I probably wouldn’t have been comfortable. Harge had been a constant threat with his full custody of Rindy hanging over our heads. Now that’s changed. My boss knows about us and is supportive and the same is true of your boss. Our livelihoods aren’t threatened—at least for now. We’ve some friends that know the nature our relationship and support it.” Therese agreed. “In many ways we’re in a more secure place than many people like us.”

Therese wanted to continue this subject. “What will you tell Rindy?” Carol said, “I was thinking about that this afternoon before you came home from work. Did you know that many people wear promise rings or friendship rings? Rindy told me even some of her little girl friends at school wear matching bracelets or some other jewelry to signify their friendship.” “Besides,” Carol added, “Harge and I agree that it’s almost time to have ‘the conversation’ with her.” She’s nearly eleven and she’s been dropping hints of her own.” “That’s true, Therese agreed, “She recently
told us one of her classmates has an ‘Uncle Jack who lives with Uncle Michael’ and she’s told Harge the same.”

Carol asked Therese, “Darling, what are you going to do while I look at the rings? You said you didn’t want to see what I was looking at until I had made my choices.” “That’s easy,” replied Therese. “I’ll sit at the opposite end of the couch and just daydream of you. I’m very happy just to look at you.” “My darling…” Carol sighed. “You are so patient and wise, not to mention beautiful.” Therese blushed slightly as she often did when Carol paid her an exorbitant complement.

Carol asked Therese to shuffle the photos so Therese wouldn’t know which one she was looking at. As Therese did so, Carol reached for her reading glasses with a sigh. “What’s wrong?” asked Therese. Carol sighed again, “Oh, these damned reading glasses just remind me that I’m getting older.” Therese wisely didn’t dismiss Carol’s feelings, but she took Carol’s face in her hands and carefully kissed her on the lips. “There are pros and cons to the glasses, my love,” said Therese affectionately, “First and foremost they help you see the important things in life. Remember that I find them very sexy on you, too.” Carol laughed—the wistfulness dismissed, “True. You’ve even asked me to wear them to bed a few times when you want to make love.” Therese chuckled, “Yep—with you wearing nothing but the reading glasses—oh, baby!” “They don’t stay on your face too long under those circumstances.” Both women laughed.

Without further ado, Therese took her place at the far end of the couch. They were stretched out comfortably length wise, with pillows at their backs sitting up holding each other’s socked feet. As Carol carefully and slowly considered each photo, Therese’s mind wandered to the past that had brought them to this point. Therese had wanted matching rings ever since early December 1954 when she had bought Carol the shiny rose gold ring that Carol still wore on her left ring finger. She had given it to Carol while they were on a skiing trip to Vermont. Therese thought perhaps she might ask Carol to give her a rose gold ring at a later date. However, Therese really wanted them to pick out matching rings at the same time. Besides, Carol had given her the fabulous silver necklace with a circle of rubies at Christmas the same year. Therese loved it and wore it every day.

Another event had occurred, too, that made it more possible to wear matching rings without fear of Harge’s retaliation. Fear of losing Rindy used to be always hanging over their heads. But about two years ago a thaw in Harge’s icy demeanor had begun. Harge, Carol and Therese could all discern from some of the casual comments that Rindy made that Rindy was absolutely thrilled that her mother and father were pleasant to each other. Harge had been horribly and unnecessarily cruel about their divorce and child custody in late 1952 and early 1953.

In October 1958, one particular incident happened that would change everything. The events of Thursday October 9, 1958 were burned in Therese and Carol’s memories forever. That morning at work, Carol received a call from Cy Harrison, Harge’s boss and friend. Harge had suffered extreme chest pains and had been taken by ambulance to Lower Manhattan Hospital. That hospital was near his office in the Financial District and it was a well-known emergency cardiac facility. Cy explained to Carol that Harge’s parents were in Europe and that Harge was asking for Carol. Cy had said, “Carol, I think you should go without delay. As Harge was being carried out on a stretcher he asked me to call his attorney Jerry Rix and tell Jerry to get to the hospital immediately and bring a stenographer who was a notary.” Carol told her boss, Mr. O’Halloran, what had happened. “Go!” he said. “Call me later.”

Back in the present, Therese looked up to see Carol still immersed in the photographs, so Therese went back to her memories.

Carol’s first thoughts were of Rindy as she rode in the cab to the hospital. Rindy adored her
father. Therese remembered Carol’s breathless call to her from the hospital. “I need you here with me right now, Therese.” Therese jumped up and called out to her best friend and co-worker Dannie McElroy. In Therese’s confusion, Dannie took charge with an uncharacteristic maturity. “Go tell the boss you need to leave now.” Meanwhile, Dannie collected money from Therese’s co-workers in case she needed additional cash for taxi fare. Dannie told them to remember what amounts they gave him and he would record it later for Therese. Therese returned from telling her boss that she needed to go. Permission was granted. Dannie grabbed Therese’s arm and escorted her out of the building. He thrust the collected money into her hands and he flagged down a cab and helped her in. Therese asked the cabbie if he knew the location of Lower Manhattan Hospital. He did and Therese was on her way. “What good friends I have,” Therese had thought tearfully.

Meanwhile back at the hospital, Carol had arrived in time to hear Harge instructing his attorney to write something by hand for him to sign immediately giving Carol full custody of Rindy should he die. The woman who worked for Jerry was a notary public and stenographer. She was ensuring all was in order given the state of emergency. Harge waved off a nurse in order to be able to sign the authorization. Only then did Harge allow the nurse access to him. With hands shaking, Carol had signed-signifying her agreement after ensuring there was nothing in the document that addressed in a negative way Carol’s living with Therese. Carol was fighting back tears as she held Harge’s hand. After all, he was the father of her child. Jerry announced they had a legal document that would stand up in court. A more formal one would be produced later and Carol’s attorney, Fred Haymes, would get a copy. Harge visibly relaxed. A peace settled over him. Before Jerry and his employee left, Harge said that wanted to change to joint custody if he lived. Jerry nodded and left.

Therese felt Carol squeeze her foot, and she was transported back to the present. Carol gave Therese a loving look and said, “Darling, you were a million miles away. You didn’t even notice that I put one of the photographs in the envelope.” “Sorry,” Therese said. “I was thinking about our lives together.” Carol said, “You were certainly engrossed. I hope the thoughts were good ones.” “The best.” answered Therese. “I think I’m nearly done,” said Carol as she went back to the photographs.

Therese quickly returned to her memory. Ah, the irony of it all. Harge had told Carol that he couldn’t die without a clear conscience. He tearfully asked her forgiveness and promised that things would change—and that he backed his words with today’s action. He did not want his parents to get custody of Rindy. Their continued hateful comments about Carol were upsetting Rindy more and more. “She needs her mother,” Harge told Carol. “I’ll take care of her, Harge.” Carol promised, “But stop saying you’re going to die. You must live for Rindy.”

Therese had knocked on the hospital door at that point and Carol waved her in. Harge apologized to Therese as well and asked her to help Carol take care of Rindy. Therese nodded, squeezed Carol’s shoulder and said she would be right outside the door. Therese had thought “Harge must really think he’s going to die to say that to me.” Therese’s thoughts turned to Rindy and Carol as she waited.

To make a long story short, Harge’s doctor entered the room about this time with a big smile on his face. Harge hadn’t suffered a heart attack after all, but an angina episode. The symptoms were quite similar. The doctor prescribed nitroglycerin tablets, rest, less stress, less smoking and drinking and a weight loss. Harge stayed in the hospital for two days to ensure all was well. Carol stayed in New Jersey with Rindy until Harge came home from the hospital. Harge was fortunate to have the money to hire a registered nurse to stay at their home for a while in addition to Rindy’s full-time nanny Susan Rankin, who was a licensed practical nurse. Rindy spent every weekend with Carol and Therese for a while so Harge could fully concentrate on his recovery.
It had been nearly five months since this turn of events. Joint custody details were still being worked out, but even now Carol would have full custody if anything happened to Harge. His health was much improved. Harge attributed it to a clearer conscience. All in all, it was if a giant cloud had been lifted from all their lives. Carol and Therese no longer had to constantly worry about losing Rindy. Rindy was perhaps the happiest of all. Harge’s father was even in agreement with the custody change. Everyone was happy except Harge’s mother (a truly detestable human being, Abby once observed).

“Dear God,” thought Therese, as she absently sipped champagne and focused her gaze on the love of her life at the other end of the couch. “I must have done something right in my life, to have all this happiness.” Carol sat upright and held out her champagne flute. “Dearest, could I have just a bit more to toast my selection?” Therese poured; then asked excitedly, “Is there only one?” Carol teased, “If you had been paying more attention to my shuffling of the photos you would have noticed that I even used the magnifying glass on one and only one.”

“I’m sorry, Carol.” I was thinking about us—such wonderful thoughts of our life together.” Carol grinned, “Well, now that I have your full attention, I want to slide the photo of my choice of rings out of the envelope face down. Let’s turn it over together to see if it’s your favorite, too. By the way, darling, how many favorites do you have?” Therese answered, “I would wear a cigar band if it matched yours, but, I have only one favorite from among the photos.” Carol’s voice turned serious, “What if we disagree?” Therese cupped Carol’s face with one hand, “Well, we’ll keep looking until we find a design we both love. After all, we’ll wear these rings for the rest of our lives. We’ll take the time to choose.” Carol leaned down and gave Therese a tender kiss. “That we will,” Carol said.

They were sitting side by side. Therese had one arm around Carol’s shoulders. Carol loved that feeling of security and protectiveness. She slid the photo out face down. “Ready?” asked Carol. “Ready when you are, my love,” Therese said. They flipped the photo over. Therese gasped, “Oh my God, Carol. That’s it!” They stared at the photo, then at each other and then back to the photo. It was a stunning design of three shades of gold: mostly rose and yellow with a tiny rim of white gold on the outer edge. The main body of the ring was rose gold. The rose gold design was art deco in nature with distinct slightly raised curlicues gently swirling all around the ring. The curves were not too intricate; these were broad curves. They were magnificent in and of themselves. But there was even more to this fabulous design. Surrounding the rose gold main design was one row of a beaded decorative accent called milgrain in rose gold that seemed to blend seamlessly into another milgrain circle of yellow gold. Finally, the very outer edge was a very narrow rim of white gold. The white gold was very subtle, but it was present to offer a tri-gold effect.

Neither woman spoke for a full minute. Finally, Carol said, “This is clearly the most exquisite ring I have ever seen.” Therese smiled a glorious smile and agreed. “It is!” Therese was not totally surprised that they had both chosen this ring. “Look at it, Therese!” said Carol, holding the magnifying glass above the ring. They looked it, then at each other with eyes shining. Carol asked, “Is it affordable?” “I wouldn’t have taken a photo if it hadn’t been,” teased Therese. “Is it available?” asked Carol, suddenly anxious to try on the lovely ring. Jonathan Devon has one in stock that is probably your size, but he can arrange for in identical ring in my size to be shipped from the jewelry maker in Los Angeles California. Apparently the person who created this design is very particular about ever duplicating it, but Jonathan has spoken with the creator. This artisan agreed to make rings for two special ladies who are ‘ones of us’.” “Amazing,” breathed Carol. Therese said, “Jonathan can tell us all about it tomorrow. Remember that we have an appointment with him at 3:00 PM.” “I can’t wait,” Carol laughed excitedly.

All of a sudden the photo slipped from Carol’s hand and went under the couch. “I’ll get it,” said Therese. She was down on her knees reaching under the couch. As Therese pulled the photo out,
both women paused. They stopped laughing as the mood turned quiet. Kneeling, Therese laid the photo in Carol’s lap, took Carol’s hands in her own and looked deep onto her eyes. “Carol, with this ring will you promise to marry me?” Carol’s gaze was steady as she answered, “Yes, Therese, I will.” Carol slid smoothly to the floor and patted the couch indicating that she wanted Therese to sit. Therese understood and hopped up and sat. She sat facing Carol, who was now the one on her knees. Carol grasped Therese’s hands in her own and asked the very same question of Therese. “Yes, Carol, I will.” answered Therese.

The women seemed to gaze into each other’s eyes forever. They were interrupted by the phonograph clicking off, ending the wonderful love songs that had been playing in the background for quite some time. “Well,” Carol said “that must be our cue to end this remarkable evening.” “I can’t believe I’m actually sleepy.” Carol said with a hint of disappointment. Therese said, “Don’t worry. It’s been an emotional day. I’m actually sleepy, too. You get the bathroom first and I’ll clean up out here.”

Carol removed her makeup with cold cream and finished getting ready for bed. Therese was still in the other room. Even though Carol knew they were going to sleep as soon as their heads hit their pillows Carol wanted to be skin to skin with Therese, so she took off her robe and pajamas and pulled the covers back on her side of the bed, got in and turned off her bedside lamp. Carol heard the running water and toilet flush in the bathroom. Soon she felt Therese slide into bed. Carol reached for her and encountered flannel. “Darling, I know we’re going right to sleep, but I want to feel your skin next to mine tonight.” Therese planted a kiss on Carol’s forehead and pulled off her pajamas. “Of course.” Therese said. As she disrobed, Therese caught her fingernail on the flannel pajama top. “Damn.” Therese said. “I caught a nail on the flannel. I’ll be glad to get that manicure tomorrow.”

“Goodnight, dearest,” said Carol, pulling Therese toward her. “Sleep tight, my love,” said Therese, settling in on Carol’s shoulder. Soon Carol could hear Therese’s soft breathing indicating she was on the edge of sleep. Carol closed her eyes, waiting for sleep to overtake her as well.

Five minutes later Carol was no longer sleepy. “I can’t believe this.” thought Carol. Carol turned on her side and Therese—now asleep and snoring her characteristic soft snores—turned away from her. Carol cuddled up and put her arm around Therese. Maybe this would be more comfortable and conducive to sleep. Several more minutes passed. Carol was now wide awake and thinking very amorous thoughts about Therese. Carol nudged Therese, “Sweetness, are you asleep?” Therese murmured a reply of “ummhumm,” then silence. “Darling, I can’t sleep.” Carol whispered suggestively in Therese’s ear. (More silence) Then Carol heard Therese say faintly, but more awake with every word, “Do you require my assistance?” A thrill went down Carol’s spine hearing Therese say those words. Before Carol could reply, Therese turned over and flipped Carol over on her back. It was if Therese suddenly had drunk a mug of cup of strong coffee. Therese was wide awake now. Therese slid on top of Carol. “Well…” Therese said, “If you need some assistance getting sleepy, there’s only one person who can assist you, and that’s me.” They kissed deeply and Therese started to move her hands down Carol’s body. “Damn.” swore Therese again. “What?” asked Carol. “My fingernails are a wreck. I nearly tore one on the flannel.” Therese said apologetically.

Carol moved her lips to Therese’s ear and asked, “Have you forgotten that you don’t need your hands?” Therese chuckled, “Guess I was sleepier than I thought. Maybe you need to tell me exactly what I can do about the fingernail situation.” Carol whispered very detailed directions into Therese’s ear. Even though they had been together for years, Carol thought she could feel Therese blush at the explicit suggestion. Therese whispered agreement into Carol’s ear and circled the shell of Carol’s ear with the tip of her tongue. Carol shivered. Therese began to kiss her way down Carol’s body. Carol arched her back and moaned as Therese kept moving downward until
she stopped and concentrated on Carol's favorite spot. Then light exploded from behind Carol’s eyes.

“Think you can sleep now?” said an amused Therese to a very satisfied Carol. “In a minute, darling,” Carol said in the low sexy laugh that Therese still found delicious. “I’ve my own journey to make,” she said as she trailed kisses down Therese’s body. Therese said, “Oh God!” as she reached her climax. “Wake me up anytime for this,” Therese sighed. Carol pulled some covers over them. Therese felt Carol start to move from atop her and said, “I’m still having ‘aftershocks’—I still need you against me.” Carol returned to the place where their bodies fit together perfectly and held Therese tightly. When Carol felt Therese relax, she gently slid off her body. They turned to face each other and fell asleep almost immediately in each other’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

The hospital mentioned in this chapter, Lower Manhattan Hospital, existed under this name in 1959. The treatment for Harge’s condition, angina, that sent him to the hospital was treated the way I stated it in this chapter. Even if Harge had needed coronary artery bypass surgery, the first surgery of this kind was a little over a year away (May 2, 1960). Harge does make a full recovery.

Some of you may wonder about the description of the ring that Carol and Therese agreed upon. Did I ever see one like it? The answer is yes, with just a minor tweak. I love the Internet!

I hope you enjoy this chapter. I love reading your comments and seeing the kudos and watching the hit count increase. It really keeps me going. Thanks so very much.

Stay tuned for the next chapter to be posted in about one week or less. Carol and Therese will go to the jewelry store to see if that ring looks as good in person as in the photo.

Regards, Pipestone
Two Very Manly Men

Chapter Summary

Dear readers,

This is a continuing storyline, so for maximum enjoyment, please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 7 takes place on Saturday February 28, 1959. The setting of this chapter is Carol and Therese's apartment on Madison Avenue in New York City. In Chapter 7, Carol and Therese have big plans for the day, but their appointments are for Saturday afternoon. Instead of being able to sleep late, the phone rings early and it's Carol's ex-husband Harge. Harge and Carol have buried the hatchet for the most part after Harge's terrible treatment of Carol and Therese six years ago during the divorce. Harge and Carol's daughter, Rindy, who is nearly eleven, is having a sleepover at her best friend Karen's house in New Jersey.

Karen has an "Uncle Jack" who lives with "Uncle Michael." She dearly loves both men. The two uncles are at Karen's mother's estate this weekend to help the girls with horseback riding. Harge meets both men and is so astounded that he can't wait to call Carol to tell her about the experience.

Regards, Pipestone

Chapter Notes

Dear readers, as I have said in prior Chapter Notes, please read the chapters in order for maximum enjoyment.

I'm pleased that there are so many hits on this my very first fan fiction, "After Six Years, Love Still Prevails." Seeing readers accessing my creation is very rewarding. I would truly appreciate a comment from you, even if it is brief. I hope you like the storyline I am creating. The hits, kudos and comments help keep me writing.

One of my goals is to present accurate details of the time period of this story (1959). I've carefully researched names and dates, etc. to ensure the historical accuracy. The research details particularly appear in Chapters 5 and 6.

Look for another chapter very, very soon (probably tomorrow).

Regards, Pipestone

Saturday February 28, 1959

9:00 AM

At the Aird/Belivet apartment, Madison Avenue in New York City:
Carol and Therese were still asleep, naked and wrapped in each other’s arms. Yesterday had been extremely emotional for them both. They had stayed up late—Carol looking at photographs of matching wedding rings that Therese had selected. They went to bed exhausted, but Carol, unable to fall asleep, murmured a loving suggestion into the ear of a sleeping Therese. It was a suggestion that Therese couldn’t resist, so after making love late the night before, they were fast asleep at 9:00 AM on a Saturday morning.

Their manicure appointment was not until 1:00 PM and at 3:00 PM they were to have a private meeting in the office of jeweler Jonathan Devon, to see if their favored first choice of rings was as beautiful in person as in the photo that Therese had taken. Rindy was spending the weekend in New Jersey in her father’s care, but she was actually going to a sleepover at her best friend, Karen’s home. Harge was to drop off Rindy early this morning.

Their apartment’s telephone rang and a groggy Carol untangled herself from Therese, who sleepily protested, and groaned, “Let it ring.” Carol responded, “It might be Rindy with a last minute question about sleepover etiquette and I want to be there for her.” “Go,” Therese murmured. The phone continued to ring. Carol made a dash for it, calling out for Therese to find her robe and bring it to her as Carol was totally naked. Therese acknowledged that she would and that she would like to talk to Rindy herself to tell her to have a good time at the sleepover.

As Therese reached the living room, she heard Carol say, “Hello Harge.” Therese rolled her eyes at Harge’s early call. Since Carol and Harge had made peace, Therese wanted to make peace with him as well, but she still held resentment from the time when Harge took full custody of Rindy in April 1953 and even had Carol and Therese followed on their road trip of late 1952 and early 1953. Harge hired a detective to invade their most intimate moments in private with a tape recorder to gather “evidence” of Carol’s being an unfit mother. Therese had never voiced her resentment to Harge and even Carol did not fully understand the depth of Therese’s anger even six years later.

Harge had stopped criticizing Carol and Therese two years ago, and he had become more pleasant and reasonable about Rindy’s visits. In October 1958, Harge had an angina attack. Harge thought he was dying. From his hospital bed he changed the custody legal agreement to give Carol full custody should he die. Also and Harge and Carol were discussing joint custody now. He was a changed man who regretted the pain he had caused all those involved.

Carol wanted to move forward and concentrate on the future, especially for Rindy’s sake. She and Harge spoke pleasantly. Both agreed that they were on better terms now than when they were married. Therese was not in the least bit jealous of Harge; she was just protective of Carol. Therese loved Rindy dearly as well, so it was to Therese’s advantage to improve her relationship with Harge. The three of them were now united in their love for Rindy.

Therese slipped Carol’s robe around her and kissed the top of her head. Therese loosely tied her own robe and walked to the kitchen to boil water for instant coffee. Therese was going to return to their bedroom, but Carol caught her hand as Therese walked by the couch and pulled her down next her. “Slow down, Harge,” said Carol. “What’s the exciting news you want to tell me? Do you have your nitroglycerin tablets handy?” “Very funny,” said Harge, “Yes, they’re always in my vest pocket and I wear a medic alert identification tag around my neck at all times.”

The hot water kettle started whistling on the stove and Therese went to make the coffee. “Oh,” Harge said, hearing the whistle in the background, “I forgot that you two like to sleep in on weekend mornings when Rindy’s with me.” “Did I awaken you?” Carol was tempted to tell him they were sleeping in because they were up late having unbelievably great sex, but she just said, “It’s fine, we have several errands to do and we would have awakened soon.” Therese walked in just as Carol was saying those words and smirked.
Harge said, “I’ll be brief then. I dropped Rindy off at Marjorie Sinclair’s estate. Marjorie is Karen’s mother.” Carol replied, “I thought Karen’s last name was Proctor.” “It is,” Harge explained. “Marjorie is recently divorced and her husband’s last name is Proctor. She changed back to her maiden name.” Harge continued, “The big news is that I met Marjorie’s younger brother, Jack Sinclair.” Jack is two years younger than Marjorie. “He’s is going to be at the estate today help the girls ride horses if the weather is warm enough. Their estate has a stable and equestrian arena. Jack is a very skilled rider—dates on Karen and Karen adores him.”

Carol said, “Harge, I’m pleased Rindy will have a safe environment in which to ride, but you said you had big news.” Therese kissed Carol’s other ear and whispered enticingly, “Big enough news to wake us from a very sound sleep.” Carol turned to give Therese a wink and a big smile. Harge paused dramatically and said, “Jack is ‘Uncle Jack’ as in ‘Uncle Jack’ and ‘Uncle Michael’ that Rindy has been constantly talking about.” Jack is Karen’s real uncle.

Carol and Therese turned their attention away from giving each winks and loving looks to stare at the phone. “You’re right, Harge. That is news!” exclaimed Carol. “You actually met ‘Uncle Jack’?” asked Carol. “Yes,” said Harge, “and I met ‘Uncle Michael’ too.” “Carol I can’t believe it. Both these men are much taller than me. They’re both 6’4” and must each weigh 180 pounds. They’re both very masculine. Michael walked out of the stable while I was talking to Jack and Marjorie. He was carrying a saddle like it was light as a feather. Michael’s last name is Thompson.” Harge kept talking, “I thought umm, men like that were effeminate.”

Carol started to insert a disparaging remark about relying on stereotypes, but Harge was talking too fast. “Jack is the owner of the General Motors dealership in Paramus.” “My Cadillac is serviced there for God’s sake. Jack just assumed the new ownership.” “Michael is a custom painter and furniture restorer.”

Carol asserted herself, “Harge, if I may get a word in edgewise...I’ve heard the name Michael Thompson. He’s well-known to furniture dealers in New York City and has an impeccable reputation for the high quality of his work.” Carol added, “The rumor is that he’s a Korean War hero, too.” Harge replied, “Marjorie wanted me to meet them because Rindy has told Karen that her mother lives with ‘Aunt Therese’ in New York City. The girls think it’s great fun to have this in common. I hope you don’t mind my telling Marjorie.” “Not at all,” said Carol and Therese nodded her silent agreement.

Harge continued, “The men have lived together for five years and both were very supportive of Marjorie during the divorce. She said that’s why she relocated to this area. Her former husband, Douglas Proctor lives in Atlanta.” “We really need to talk, Harge,” said Carol. “We can’t wait any longer to tell Rindy about Therese and me, and provide some general facts.” Harge agreed and offered this plan, “I could send my driver to pick up Rindy after school on Tuesday. Susan, her nanny will be at the house of course. Could the three of us have dinner together in the city? I want Therese to be present and I know you agree.” Quite some time ago, Carol had motioned Therese to press her head against the phone receiver. Therese was already running down the hall to the office to retrieve her datebook. “Just a moment, Harge, I must ask Therese to check her datebook. Please hold the phone.” Carol stepped into the office and whispered to Therese, “I told Harge I’d go find out if you were free Tuesday evening.” Therese grinned and nodded that she was indeed free, and Carol pulled her into a kiss. Carol returned to the phone. “Tuesday is fine Harge. Please just come to the apartment anytime after 6:00 PM and we’ll eat here. We can talk much more freely than at a restaurant.” Harge sighed in relief. “Thank you. I’ll call you as I’m leaving the office for your apartment. Give my regards to Therese. Goodbye, Carol.” Carol said her goodbyes and hung up.

Carol and Therese looked at each other for a long moment then burst out laughing. “Would you have ever imagined?” Carol asked. “Not in a million years,” Therese replied. “I know we need to
have several serious conversations prior to Tuesday, but for now, I just want to savor the irony.” Carol glanced at the clock on the mantle—9:30 AM. Their appointment with the neighborhood manicurist was over three hours away. After the manicure, they would have just enough time to hurry home to change for the jewelers and grab a cab.

Carol started to the kitchen to put her coffee cup in the sink. Therese placed hers in Carol’s extended hand as Carol walked by. Carol returned to the living room. Therese asked, “Do we have time to go back to bed and cuddle and have some pillow talk before we start our day?” “Absolutely,” said Carol. Therese laughed with delight and headed for their bedroom, “I’ll race you.” “Not fair,” called Carol. “You have a head start.” Carol started to chase her sweetheart into the bedroom as Therese shed her robe and dove into their bed.

Carol stood at the foot of the bed after folding her robe and placing it on the vanity chair. Carol glanced at Therese who was busy fluffing their pillows for their weekend wake up ritual. Carol was suddenly overcome with love for Therese. “Do you have any idea how much I love you?” Carol asked. “I think I do.” Therese answered with a radiant smile, “Because I know how much I love you.” Therese pulled back the covers for Carol and patted the space beside her.

Back in each other’s arms, they started talking at the same time. Laughing, Carol said “You go first, darling.” Therese stroked Carol’s blonde hair and said, “It’s so tempting to talk first about the remarkable phone call from Harge.” Carol nodded, “I agree, but we probably need to prioritize. We have all evening to discuss all the implications of that phone call and to start preparing for Tuesday’s meeting with Harge.” “We need to return to today’s big event, our 3:00 PM appointment at Devon Jewelry to look at our choice for matching rings.” Therese said, “Twelve hours ago, I couldn’t imagine anything could interrupt our focus on the rings. Now we have Harge calling us to exclaim his surprise about meeting two manly men who happen to be homosexual.” Carol laughed, “I’ll be damned.” Carol’s laugh died as she became serious, saying “Our life is amazing.”

Carol took Therese’s face in her hands and repeated tenderly, “Our life is amazing—our life.” They kissed a sweet lingering kiss and Therese sighed happily as she settled onto Carol’s shoulder and traced Carol’s collarbone with her finger. A few moments of contended silence followed, and then Carol asked, “What’s the correct pronunciation for the name for the jewelry store? You said Jonathan’s last name, Devon, with the emphasis on the first syllable like ‘Devon, but you’ve called the store ‘Devon Jewelry with the emphasis on the ‘von.” “Is my perception correct?” Carol asked with an air of confusion. Therese chuckled, “You’re exactly right, my love.” His store name’s emphasis is on the last syllable, whereas his last name’s emphasis is on the first syllable. He told me he did this deliberately to give the store’s name a touch of elegance. He likes to say: Devon’s Jewelry is divine!”

Carol laughed the low throaty laugh that Therese loved. “Well,” Carol said, “he is definitely one of ‘us’ is he not?” “Oh yes, he is,” said Therese. He has a wonderful bit of flamboyance, especially when he knows his customers are part of our community. Remember Abby introduced me to him.” “I can’t wait to meet him,” said Carol. “What should we wear? What color should we use for our fingernails?” “I have explicit directions from Jonathan,” said Therese. “We should wear clothes that are the most like our everyday work clothes, since that’s what we wear the most. Our conversations at the store can be totally private. He has one or two other sales people on Saturdays, and all are ‘family’. Carol said, “It’ll be so wonderful to be completely comfortable while shopping.”

Therese said, “His shop is very close to our apartment. We could walk if we wish, but I suspect we’ll take a cab today. It’s a bit chilly.” Carol added, “I’m surprised he isn’t closer to the Diamond District.” Therese replied, “As you know, most of the dealers in the Diamond District are Orthodox Jews and therefore are closed on Saturday. Jonathan isn’t Jewish, but he has many
friends whose shops are located in the Diamond District. There is another cluster of jewelry dealers closer to our neighborhood.”

Carol said reluctantly, “Well, I guess we’d best get up and get ready so we can make our manicure appointment on time.” “Do you want to shower while I start breakfast?” Therese said, “Fine, then I’ll clean up the kitchen while you get ready.” After one more loving kiss and hug, they arose to start their day. Carol heard the shower running as she brushed her hair out of her eyes, wrapped her robe around her body and slipped her feet into her cozy slippers.

“Carol,” Therese called from the bathroom, “I’m out of shampoo. Could you get some from the bathroom cabinet and hand it to me?” Carol thought “That’s odd; I thought I opened a new bottle yesterday.” Carol opened the bathroom door and slid back the shower door. “Sweetness, it’s right there in the corner caddy.” Therese squinted, “So it is. Well, since you’re here, how about washing my back?” Carol smiled. Years ago they showered together quite often, but not as much anymore. “Of course,” said Carol, removing her robe and then lathered the washcloth. “Ahhh, purred Therese. “That feels so good. I’ll wash yours, too.” Therese gently turned Carol around to face her after washing Carol’s back and said, “I’m doing such a good job, why don’t I wash your front, too?” Carol said, “I like where you’re heading with this Miss Belivet.” Carol sighed as Therese’s soapy hands caressed Carol’s breasts. Carol lathered her own hands and returned the favor.

Therese laughed a sultry laugh and said, “You realize of course that I knew the shampoo was here in the first place?” Carol leaned in to kiss Therese, and said just before their lips met, “I know all the tricks in that beautiful head of yours, dearest.” They kissed again and held each other tight. Therese rinsed the soap off her body. “Later?” asked Therese. “Of course,” said Carol. “Let me wash my hair quickly.” As Therese was toweling off, she called into the shower, “It’s 11:30 AM. We have at least an hour to fix breakfast and eat. We can scramble some eggs and we have ham leftovers and bagels in the freezer. I’ll start cooking.” “Thanks, darling.” said Carol. “We’ll have time to grab a quick lunch before our 3:00 PM appointment at Devon Jewelry. “Besides,” said Carol, “I want to ask you some questions about the rings over lunch.”

To be continued soon…
Chapter Summary

Dear readers, this is a continuing storyline, so for maximum enjoyment, please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 8 takes place on Saturday February 28, 1959. It is later on the same day as described in Chapter 7.

Most of this chapter takes place in Devon Jewelry, a small jewelry store in New York City that specializes in two and three tone gold wedding bands. The owner, Jonathan Devon, was recommended by Carol's lifelong friend Abby Gerhard. Our heroines have the opportunity to try on the ring that they selected as their favorite in Chapter 6. Will the ring be as beautiful in person as it was in the photograph of this ring that Therese took? The answer is in this chapter.

Carol and Therese must decide whether to wear their matching rings on their right or left hands.

I hope you enjoy this latest chapter.

Regards, Pipestone

Chapter Notes

Thanks in advance for reading my very first fan fiction, "After Six Years, Love Still Prevails." My own life story would have this title: "After 45 Years, Love Still Prevails." Happy anniversary to my own darling.

Your hits, kudos and especially your comments mean so very much to me. I'll answer each and every comment.

Watch for my next chapter in this continuing storyline.

Regards, Pipestone

Saturday February 28, 1959

2:00 PM – At the Aird/Belivet Apartment, Madison Avenue, New York City

Since the nail salon was so close to their apartment, they chose to walk back home after the manicure so they could change into the clothes that they would wear to Devon Jewelry. Instead of eating at a restaurant, Carol and Therese decided to have a sandwich at home. They didn’t want to be late for their most important appointment of the day. Over their sandwiches Carol said, “The most important question I have is: which hand, left or right?” Therese immediately understood Carol’s question. “You already wear the rose gold ring that I gave you years ago on your left hand.” “Yes,” said Carol, “but don’t most married couples wear their matching rings on the third finger of their left hand?”
Therese smiled mysteriously; Jonathan had some very interesting and important ideas on this subject. Therese explained, “I posed the same question to Jonathan. We have a lot of flexibility. I don’t want you to feel pressured to have the ring I gave you in 1954 resized and moved to your right hand unless you want to do so.” Carol looked fondly at her ring, “I do love it exactly where it is, but...I want us both to be happy with where we wear our rings.” Therese said, “Truthfully, I would love to wear our rings on our right hands, and Jonathan can explain so many reasons why this would be ideal.” “Are you sure?” asked Carol. Therese got up from their kitchen table and put her arms around Carol. “My sweetheart, my love, I am deliriously happy because you’ll be wearing the ring from me to you and I’ll be wearing an identical one from you to me.” “That’s all that matters.” Therese kissed Carol gently and said, “Let’s refresh our lipstick and go see Jonathan. Believe me, he’s the expert.” Carol stood and said, “One more kiss for the road, before lipstick gets in the way.” Carol pulled Therese to her and Therese’s arms went around Carol’s neck.

3:00 PM – Devon Jewelry, Fifth Avenue, New York City

The cab stopped on Fifth Avenue. Devon Jewelry was located in an office on the second floor of a building not far from the southwest corner of Central Park. The location was quite unimposing, and customers entered the shop was by pressing a buzzer and speaking into an intercom. Therese announced their arrival. Carol was wondering how this small dealer could have such a highly placed clientele. When they entered the shop, Carol was surprised to see the extent of handsome display cases with vintage wooden frames. A handsome man named Myron, with dark hair, a thin moustache and a brilliant smile greeted them. No one else was in the small showroom.

“Ah, Therese, it’s so good to see you again.” He took Therese’s hand and kissed it, then turned to Carol. “And you must be Carol,” Myron said smoothly. “My name is Myron and I am so pleased to meet you at last. I understand you are a friend of Abby Gerhard.” Carol nodded politely and extended her hand. Instead of shaking it, Myron kissed it as well, and explained, “Abby has recommended a number of clients to us, and they all have proved charming—and we all have something in common, shall we say.” Myron winked conspiratorially and beamed again. Carol was now quite charmed with Myron and warmed up to him by smiling and saying, “Abby and I have been friends for many years.” Myron beamed. “Jonathan is expecting you. As a matter of fact, he is on the telephone with the ring maker in Los Angeles who created the ring that Therese fell in love with.” “You can either be seated in the couch area in the corner or look at our other selections.” They chose to look at a number of stunning selections in the display cases. Carol recognized many of the rings from the photographs Therese had taken and that she had examined last night.

Carol remarked to Therese and Myron, “They’re all so beautiful—the color combinations of gold are breathtaking. I’ve never seen so many rings with two and three color gold combinations in one shop.” Myron explained, “That is our specialty, two and three colors of gold incorporated into our rings. Our ring makers are from all over the United States and Europe. Our artisans can create a custom design, but many of our clients choose an existing design because our artisans only create a very limited number of the same design. For example, were you to choose our dear Therese’s favorite, the chances are that less than ten of this particular pattern exist anywhere in the world.”

The door to the inner office opened and Jonathan Devon emerged. He was about fifty years old, with lovely white hair, but still handsome. He was slight of build and prone to use dramatic hand gestures. “Therese,” he exclaimed, “I was under the impression that only you would be coming today, but what a delightful surprise. This must be Carol!” Therese and Carol both blushed slightly at his effusive greeting, but again they were the shop’s only customers, so they relaxed quickly.

“Would you prefer to go into my office, or stay here in the outer showroom?” Therese looked at
Carol to determine her comfort level. Carol said, “I’m perfectly content to be out here unless you get another customer. Then given the nature of our purchase, I would be more comfortable in your private office.” Therese agreed. “Excellent.” said Jonathan. “Myron will cover the showroom if need be. Saturdays are sometimes slow. Customers are not used to shopping for custom jewelry on Saturdays, he explained. There are so many jewelers closed on Saturday, since many of my colleagues in the Diamond District are Orthodox Jews. I choose to be closed on Sunday and Monday.”

Jonathan tapped his own cheek. “I’m forgetting my manners. Would you care for a cup of tea?” Myron can easily make tea for us. I was going to have some myself.” Carol and Therese nodded in agreement. “Please,” they said. Myron slipped into the small kitchen area and began preparing their tea. Carol was completely enchanted and comfortable with this store and these men. She had not expected such a welcoming atmosphere. It was so wonderful to be relaxed while shopping for such an important and personal purchase with the love of her life by her side. Carol thought, “This is the way life should be for us.” Carol made a mental note to treat Abby to dinner and a bottle of her favorite rye as thanks for recommending Devon Jewelry.

Carol spoke first, “Jonathan, Carol looked at all the photographs and she chose only one and it was the one that I loved so much.” Jonathan literally clapped his hands together with delight. “Ah, a couple who knows each other’s preferences so well; it’s wonderful to encounter that in our community. Actually there are more of us who are couples than anyone can imagine—couples who’ve been together five, ten, twenty, thirty or more years together.” “It’s been so rewarding to me to help them find a suitable symbol of their love.” “Of course I have heterosexual clients as well who are very dear to me, but I find myself rather proud when I meet people like us who are willing to wear matching rings. I hope you know that it does take some courage.”

Carol spoke first, “Jonathan, Therese and I have stayed together through some very difficult times and our love has grown stronger. Wearing matching rings would be a joy and a comfort to me.” Carol spoke carefully, “If we encounter any disparaging remarks for doing this, I suspect that it would only serve to bring us closer. I want to show my love for Therese in a visible and tangible way. I understand the possible risks. The only serious risk would have been from my ex-husband, but that’s no longer the case.” Therese stared incredulously at Carol as she tried to process the eloquence and importance of what Carol just said. Therese had never been more proud to be at Carol’s side. Therese moved closer to Carol and squeezed her hand. In this moment, Carol had made a statement that was as brave as any Therese had ever heard from her political friends associated with the newly-emerging gay movement. Therese’s eyes welled with tears of love.

Jonathan said to Carol, “Your eloquence astounds me. I’m proud to know you, Carol. I want to show the ring to you now. Let’s go into my office in case customers arrive.” Myron was walking toward them with a lovely tea pot, cups and saucers, with milk and sugar on the side. Myron inquired as to their preferences for their tea and proceeded to prepare them accordingly. Meanwhile Jonathan unlocked a desk drawer and pulled out a black velvet box. He asked Myron to bring him a ring finger sizing gauge. This tool looked like a large number of plain metal rings bands on a large circular cable.

Jonathan addressed Carol, “Before you try on the ring, allow me to explain something.” Therese mentioned that she had given you the rose gold band you wear on your left hand several years ago. That lovely ring could be resized if you want to wear your matching bands on your left hand.” “I shared something with Therese previously that she found intriguing about left hand versus right hand.” He turned to Therese as if asking permission. “Shall I continue?” “Please do,” answered Therese. Carol gave Jonathan her undivided attention.

He said, “Many couples in ‘our community’ wear their matching rings on their right hands.” There
are many good reasons: wedding rings on the right hand do not attract as many personal questions from people you might not know and with whom you would not necessarily want to share your commitment to each other. Also, wearing matching rings on the right ring finger is something that is special to people like us. Matching rings on the right hand is instantly recognizable within ‘our community.’ In addition, there are many countries in the world where all couples wear their wedding rings on their right hand, for example, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Greece, Germany, Austria and others in Europe.” Carol said, “I remember! We noticed that very thing when we were in the Netherlands in 1954. Also, my grandparents emigrated from Norway and my grandmother wore her wedding ring on her right hand.” “Actually,” Jonathan continued, “there are many recent immigrants since the end of the war; you’ll see rings on the right hands of couples in many ethnic neighborhoods of New York and other large American cities where there is a concentration of immigrants. Carol listened with amazement. Carol asked, “Isn’t there supposed to be a vein that runs from the heart to the third finger of the left hand, and that’s one of the reasons for the tradition of wearing a wedding ring on the third finger of the left hand?” “Ah,” Jonathan said, “You remember your Latin history.” “That vein is known as the ‘Vena Amoris’ or ‘Vein of Love’ and modern science has shown this to be a myth—lovely story, but not true.”

Therese smiled broadly and turned to Carol. Therese had already heard all of Jonathan’s explanations, but she wanted to tell Carol the reason she thought to be the most important. “Carol here’s my favorite reason. You and I are right-handed, correct?” Carol nodded, still absorbing the fascinating and reassuring information she had just heard. Therese said, “Wearing them on our right hands means we’ll be able to look at them much more often during the day.” Carol threw back her head and laughed the laugh that melted Therese’s heart. “Dearest, I think that’s the best reason of all.” They reached for each other’s hands and squeezed tightly.

“Wouldn’t a ring worn on the right hand suffer more wear?” Carol asked. Jonathan quickly answered, “The gold in this particular ring is 14 karat. That means the gold contains alloys to strengthen the gold and make it more durable. The higher the karat numbers, the purer the gold, which in turn means the softer the gold.” “For example, you could probably scratch a 24 karat gold ring with your fingernail.” “Just looking at your lovely rose gold ring, I suspect it’s 18 karat—still durable, but it’s probably better worn on your left hand where it receives less wear. Any ring can be polished, though. Small scratches will appear over time, but 14 karat gold is sometimes thought to be durable even if you wear it on the hand you use most often. I truly believe this ring will stand up to a lifetime of wear.”

Jonathan continued his explanation, “If your rings become scratched over the years, bring them to me or another fine jeweler to buff them. There is a new cleaning method called ultrasound that restores rings to their original beauty. If the ring is merely soiled, you can clean it yourself by soaking it very warm water with a mild soap for fifteen minutes. I’ll give you a small soft jewelry cleaning brush.” “Be very, very gentle while cleaning it and of course,” Jonathan laughed, “Never clean jewelry over an open drain.” “If a ring falls down the drain, turn off the water immediately and the ring will rest in the bottom of the drainpipe. Call a plumber.” “You wouldn’t believe the number of anguished calls we receive here at the store from new brides!” Therese and Carol chuckled at Jonathan’s dramatic gesture of tilting his head back and putting the back of his hand to his forehead.

He took the velvet box in his hands. “This box contains the ring in the pattern you chose.” He turned to Carol. “Therese believes that this will fit the third finger on your right hand. Shall we see?” Both women held their breath as Jonathan slid the box to Therese for her to open and place it on Carol’s finger. “What a lovely and generous gesture on his part,” thought Carol. Therese opened the box and they both just gazed at the ring, spellbound by its beauty. It was even more beautiful in person than it had been in Therese’s photograph.

It was a stunning design of three shades of gold: mostly rose and yellow with a tiny rim of white
gold on the outer edge. The main body of the ring was rose gold. The rose gold design was art deco in nature with distinct curlicues gently swirling all around the ring. The curves were not too intricate; these were broad curves. They were magnificent in and of themselves. But there was even more to this fabulous design. Surrounding the rose gold main design was one row of a beaded decorative accent called milgrain in rose gold that seemed to blend seamlessly into another milgrain circle of yellow gold. Finally, the very outer edge was a very narrow rim of white gold. The white gold was very subtle, but it was present to offer a tri-gold effect. The inside lining of the ring was white gold—a continuation of the narrow white gold rim.

Carol gasped at its beauty. Therese watched Carol’s reaction while holding her breath. Therese had seen it in person before, but she wanted to be sure that Carol loved it. There was no doubt in her mind after seeing Carol’s face. Would the ring fit Carol’s right hand? Therese lifted the ring out of its slot. She took Carol’s right hand and slid the ring on her third finger. It was a perfect fit—absolutely perfect. Both women admired the ring for an entire minute without a word being exchanged.

Jonathan wisely waited in silence then asked, “This is probably a silly question, but are you sure that you don’t want to look at any other styles?” Carol allowed Therese to speak first. “I’ve spent almost a year looking at hundreds of designs in showrooms and catalogs all over New York and no design even approaches this one in terms of beauty and versatility.” Carol said, “I’ve seen much jewelry in my lifetime, but nothing approaches the beauty of this ring. There’s no need to look further.”

They both looked at the ring on Therese’s hand. It was perfect. Both women’s eyes filled with tears of joy. They looked at the ring and at each other. Carol whispered, “Oh Therese, why did we wait so long to do this? Thank you for wanting matching rings. This is exactly what I want, too.” “Thank you, darling, for spending countless hours researching rings.” Therese fought to keep her emotions in check. She had spent so many hours, days and weeks shopping for something she feared she might never have. Her tears would come later in private. Carol removed the ring from Therese’s hand and placed it back in the black velvet box. Neither woman wanted to close the lid of the box. They wanted to look at it as long as they could. Carol stood and opened the door and asked Jonathan to come back into the office. “We’ve decided, right, darling?” Therese could only nod. Jonathan was thrilled and whipped out the ring sizing tool and tried what he thought would be Therese’s size on her finger. He tried several sizes before he found the perfect size. He carefully recorded it on an order slip.

Jonathan asked the women if they would excuse him to call the ring maker in Los Angeles to check on availability in Therese’s size. Carol and Therese adjourned to the showroom. Therese said, “Carol, you didn’t ask the price.” Carol answered, “You told me last night it was affordable, right?” Therese nodded. “That’s all we need to know,” said Carol with a smile. “We must have those rings. I’ll never want to take mine off.” “Nor will I, my love.” Therese said.

Jonathan opened the door and asked them to come in. He had a big smile on his face, so they knew the call to the ring maker had gone well. He explained, “The news is even better than I thought. He has two rings left and one is in Therese’s size.” Both women exclaimed with joy. “The ring maker said he would ship Therese’s ring immediately via insured airmail. I should receive it by the end of next week or perhaps a few days beyond that.”
Jonathan explained that after the last ring is sold, the artisan will make no more rings like this. "He’ll lock the mold in a safe deposit box and would duplicate the ring if and only if a person who now owns one lost it.” “You wonderful ladies will wear something that will be among only seven in existence.” Jonathan beamed, “Several have been sold in Europe and one matching set is owned by a Canadian couple—two women from Vancouver. The chance of your ever seeing rings like yours are almost nil.”

Both women were effusive in expressing their gratitude to Jonathan. “Shall we pay now?” asked Carol. “That’s not necessary, replied Jonathan. “I’ll lock Carol’s ring in my fireproof safe and I’ll call Therese when hers arrives. Then you can both come back for your rings and pay me at that time. He handed another business card to Carol, as Therese already had one. He even wrote his home phone number on the back. Jonathan beamed, shook both their hands and escorted them from his office into the showroom. “It’s been a pleasure, ladies,” said Jonathan. “Please give my regards to Abby Gerhard for her recommendation.” “We certainly will,” said Therese. Carol was still in a kind of dazed joy. Myron, who was busy with a customer, blew them a kiss and called out “Later, ladies.”

4:30 PM - Outside Devon Jewelry, Fifth Avenue

Carol and Therese stepped out into the chill of the late February afternoon’s growing dusk. They looked at each other with amazed expressions on their faces, and of course, with love. They did not care if anyone noticed the looks they exchanged on the New York sidewalk.

Carol beamed at Therese, “Well, that’s that.” Therese felt weak in the knees with joy at the enormity of what they had just done. Carol said to Therese, “Darling, would you hail a cab? Let’s go home. I feel like celebrating tonight.” Therese stepped to the curb and waved her arm as they watched the cab approach them.
Let's Celebrate at the Plaza's Oak Room

Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 9 takes place in the later hours of Saturday February 28, 1959. It is still the same day as described in Chapter 8.

Most of this chapter takes place in two places: The Oak Room at the Plaza Hotel where Carol and Therese have gone so many times to celebrate and the place where Therese returned to Carol years ago on April 17th 1953. Tonight they're celebrating the fact that today they've chosen the matching rings that they will wear the rest of their lives.

Later, back in their apartment, they receive a surprising call from Harge that will set in motion the events that I will write about in my next chapter. These three characters are now united in Rindy's best interest. This storyline continues with no set end in sight. I envision many adventures ahead for these women we all love.

I hope you enjoy this chapter. Sorry for the delay, for I've been ill the past ten days. I wanted to give you a nice long chapter to savor. I'm still recovering, so stay with me.

Please read the Chapter Notes at the beginning of this chapter. Thanks.

Regards, Pipestone

Chapter Notes

First, I want to congratulate AO3 author Employee645A, whom I admire so much, for posting the concluding chapter in her astounding and wonderful 32 chapter storyline of Carol and Therese's lives, called "Built for Two."

This is the second instance when I have felt a special connection to Employee645A. Twice, totally and completely unbeknownst to each other, we actually have written chapters about the same subject at the same time and posted our respective chapters within a day of each other. The first instance was her Chapter 18 and my Chapter 2. The second was her final (32nd) chapter and, this my Chapter 9.

The second note about this chapter is the description of the difficulty Carol and Therese encountered while trying to open joint savings and checking accounts. My own true love (of almost 45 years) and I encountered the same problem in 1978. The dialog I use here is almost word for word from our experience. Oh yes, over 40 years later we still have that same joint checking account and no one questions it. After all, we are now legally married.

I'll post the next chapter in about a week. I still must completely recover from this illness, but I knew you, dear readers, might have wondered what happened to me.

I appreciate your kudos, hits and comments. Please keep them coming.
Saturday February 28, 1959

8:00 PM – The Oak Room Restaurant, Plaza Hotel, New York City

Carol and Therese decided to celebrate by going to dinner at the Oak Room in the Plaza Hotel. The Oak Room held a very special meaning for them, and they would return there for dinner to celebrate special occasions over the years. The Oak Room was where Therese returned to Carol that fateful night of April 17th 1953. Therese had found Carol at the Oak Room, exactly where Carol said she would be. Therese had turned down Carol’s offer to live with her earlier in the evening. Both women had been emotionally devastated by their earlier meeting. Therese had wanted to say yes to Carol, but she was still so hurt and unsure. Deep in her heart, Therese knew Carol was her one true love and had gone back to the Oak Room in search of Carol. She had gone home with Carol that night. They had spent many hours in bed, talking, making love and talking some more. In the early morning light of Saturday April 18th, Carol had posed the same question again to Therese—‘would you live with me, here, in this apartment’? This time Therese had said ‘yes,’ and they sealed their pledge with countless ‘I love yous’ and kisses that seemed to never end. They considered April 18th as their anniversary—the day that they had agreed to share their lives.

And so the Oak Room was a magnet for them in special times of celebration. Tonight they had managed to get a favorite table in a somewhat secluded corner that was perfect for exchanging loving glances and hands held under the table. They loved the long white tablecloths that allowed them to caress each other’s ankles with a silk stockinged foot until one or the other of them would smile and say ‘we must stop this or leave now.’ Their meal finished, they were enjoying a brandy and more conversation about the exciting event of the day, the selection of matching wedding bands from Devon Jewelry.

“I’m so glad that you and Jonathon Devon explained the advantages of wearing our new rings on our right hands,” said Carol. “I honestly would have never considered it.” Therese gave Carol one of her ‘oh baby’ winks and replied, “I’m thrilled that you agreed.” Carol regarded Therese thoughtfully as she said, “Part of me still wonders why you were so reluctant to bring up the subject of wearing matching rings. But when I think about it further, I do understand. It’s a big step—an outward statement about our status as a couple. In the past, I’ve not been as at ease as you about telling even those people close to us that we’re together.” Carol concluded.

Therese said, “Carol, I was so pleasantly surprised at what you said to Jonathon in his office today; you even said that if we encountered disparaging remarks for wearing matching rings, you wouldn’t be intimidated. I’m so proud of you.” Carol regarded Therese with a particularly loving look and then said, “Sometimes the best things in life are not the easiest. Remember, too, that I said wearing a matching ring would be a joy and a comfort to me. I’m proud of us.” Carol continued, “The only thing that ever concerned me about loving you and living with you was the loss of Rindy.” “Remember what I told I said at the custody hearing?” “Yes,” said Therese, “You said that what happened with me was what you wanted.” Carol nodded as Therese continued, “And you said that you’d be better as a mother for Rindy if you didn’t have to live against your own grain.” “That was as true then and it is now,” said Carol, “plus now Harge has completely turned around his attitude towards us.”

Therese smiled wryly, “That turnaround was probably due to his near-death experience last fall.
But things were starting to get much better even before he thought he had a heart attack.” Carol beamed at Therese, “Do you think we should consider what Jonathon suggested about having a small party to show our friends our new rings?” Therese gently shook her head in mock disbelief, “You are so amazing, my love. It hadn’t occurred to me to have a party to ‘unveil’ our rings, as Jonathan suggested.” “I would love to do so; however, I want to put the ring on your finger for the first time in private. There are things I’d like to say to you when I do so.” “Oh, darling,” said Carol, “I couldn’t agree more. There are things I want to say to you in private as well, but it would be fun to have a few friends see the new rings in a festive setting.”

“What do you know!” exclaimed Therese. “It sounds as though we agree on a small party.” “What shall we call our party when we’re inviting our friends?” Carol answered, “Jonathon gave us the idea of unveiling the rings, so let’s call our party, ‘The Unveiling of the Rings’.” Therese smiled broadly, showing her dimples as she said, “It’s going to be difficult to wait until our party to start wearing our rings.”

Carol chuckled, “Well, your ring won’t arrive from Los Angeles until next week and we still need to get them engraved.” “True,” said Therese. “Why don’t you write down what you want inside mine and place it in a sealed envelope. I will write my inscription for yours and put it in a sealed envelope as well. I can drop the envelopes by Devon Jewelry on Tuesday during my lunch break.” “You’re brilliant, Miss Belivet,” Carol said lovingly. “As soon as your ring arrives and the engraving is complete, we’ll pick them up and pay Jonathon.” Therese’s tone was serious, “Carol, remember that I want to pay for yours out of my personal checking account.” “I know I finally agreed that we should merge our money into joint accounts, but it’s important to me to purchase your ring with money I’ve earned.” “I hope you don’t think I’m being silly or stubborn.”

“I do understand, dearest,” said Carol. “I’m just glad that you’ve been open regarding our sharing expenses in all other ways.” “It’s not ‘your money’ or ‘my money’…” “It’s our money,” Therese finished the sentence. They both laughed. Therese continued, “Remember the look on that bank teller’s face several years ago when we told him that we wanted to open a joint savings and a joint checking account?” “I most certainly do.” Carol said merrily. Therese gave a mock frown but teased, “He turned to you and then pointed to me and asked you if you weren’t afraid I’d run away with all your money.” Therese continued her thoughts, “I don’t know why he asked you that question and not me. Do I look more like a thief?” Carol shook her head laughing, “No, Therese, it’s probably just because I’m older, taller and was wearing my fur coat.”

“Besides,” said Carol, “Remember how I told him that I wasn’t afraid at all and that we had been living together for three years.” I said, “Please let me talk to your supervisor, if you’re not willing to take our funds.” “All of a sudden we were signing forms,” chuckled Therese. “You get to carry the checkbook when needed, Carol, but I still have my own checking account for emergencies.” Carol nodded and with a wink said, “I have the bigger purse.”

Therese continued, “I’m so grateful that you had your attorney do the legal paperwork to enable us to operate as a financial unit back in the summer of 1954, and I appreciate your ensuring I would be taken care of should anything happen to you.” Carol added, “We’re partners in life, Therese. I wish there were a better term to describe what we are to each other. ‘Partners’ sounds so cold, whereas ‘lovers’ is not the totality of what we are to each other, because to other people it infers just a sexual relationship.” At this point Therese was raising her eyebrows suggestively (away from the view of the other diners). “Carol, I wasn’t trying to make a joke of your serious and valid point.” Carol leaned across the table and said in a voice so low that only Therese could hear, “We certainly seemed to fit the term ‘lovers’ just fine this past week.” Therese blushed furiously, remembering that they had made love every night for the past week. Therese signaled the waiter for their check.
As the two waited their turn for a cab in front of the Plaza Hotel, Carol said to Therese. “We’ll have a party, then?” “Yes,” Therese said. “…a small party—with a few close friends.” Therese said quietly, “This year our anniversary, April 18th, falls on a Saturday again. Shall we have the party that night?” “That’d be fine,” replied Carol, “but it’s going to be difficult for me to wait until then to wear our rings. Even by the time your ring arrives and is engraved, it’ll still be over four weeks until the party if we wait until April 18th.” Therese leaned up and whispered in Carol’s ear, “I have an idea. If we can’t wait we can practice wearing our rings at home for short periods.” Carol nodded and smiled. “Well, that way we’ll be able to pay attention to our guests rather than staring at our rings all evening.” They laughed softly together.

10:30 PM that same day, back at the Aird/Belevit apartment

The two women were quiet, holding hands on the cab ride home and were content to give each other loving looks in the elevator within their building. As soon as the apartment door closed behind them, Carol kissed Therese tenderly, and then took Therese’s coat and purse. Therese did the same for Carol. “Tea or bedtime?” asked Carol. Therese answered, “I’m tempted to say bedtime, but some chamomile tea would be pleasant to help us sleep after a long day.” Carol answered, “I’ll put some water on. Go ahead and change into something comfortable.” Carol started the teapot and followed Therese to their bedroom.

Therese had shed her outfit and was pulling on her comfy robe. Carol gave Therese a long look and noticed pleasantly that she had nothing on underneath. Therese smiled sensually, “Even if we only talk, I want to be naked in bed with you.” “Darling,” Carol answered, “I thought that was one of our unwritten rules. It’s nice that we had manicures today, were we to do more than talk.” Therese sighed a satisfying sigh, “That’s for sure. Remember I practically tore my fingernail getting out of my flannel pajamas last night?” Carol was watching Therese approach her while Carol started to remove her bra and panties. ‘Tweet’ screamed the teapot from the kitchen. “Later,” Therese laughed as she ran to silence the teapot and prepare the chamomile tea.

They settled on the couch in their comfy robes, legs stretched out and feet in each other’s laps. Carol brought her cup to her mouth, sipped and then sighed with satisfaction. “Dearest?” “Humm?” answered Therese. “Did you notice at the restaurant there were two separate tables with two different male couples who were wearing matching rings on their right hands?” “I just saw one,” said Therese. “The other two men were sitting where you couldn’t see them.” Carol continued, “Our waiter was wearing a simple yellow gold band on his right hand and he did not look like a recent immigrant from Europe,” laughed Carol. Therese said, “Ah yes, our waiter did look like a ‘member of our church’, as Abby would say.” Carol reminisced, “It must have been the first few months after we were together that were dining at the Plaza and ran into a colleague of mine, Roger Davies, a European antiquities dealer specializing in Baroque knick-knacks who makes the rounds of the various furniture houses in Manhattan.” “I won’t forget him soon, my love.” said Therese. He was very suave, very handsome and very gay.” Carol laughed at her sweetheart’s memory. “At any rate, Roger must have said something quite persuasive to the waiter that night, because he followed Roger as we left the restaurant.” “Remember that we invited Roger and a date—turned out to be that waiter—to come to our apartment soon after we got settled?” Therese nodded. “They were both quite charming.”

Therese became thoughtful, “You know, Carol, we’ve been so absorbed in ‘nesting’ in our apartment and having Rindy here every other weekend that we have not built up beyond a small circle of friends.” Therese continued, “I’m so proud to be with you, that I want to share our love with perhaps a few more friends. This party might be a starting point.” “I agree,” said Carol. “Harge is no longer a threat because of his change of heart, and that makes all the difference in the world. Now look at what is happening in the New Jersey suburbs.” “We just found out earlier today that Rindy’s best friend Karen has two gay uncles.” Therese nodded, “Small world, or as some of the political gays I know might say, ‘We are everywhere’.”
“Well,” said Carol glancing at the clock on the mantle, it’s after 11:00 PM and we really should turn in. Tomorrow is the day we begin to plan for our Tuesday evening conversation with Harge, now that he feels that we must have the talk with Rindy about us and being together.” “I can’t say I blame him for feeling that it’s time.” Therese added, “It’s probably past time, but it’s been difficult to determine when the time is right. We want to protect Rindy, but not telling her at this point is probably a disservice, especially when one of her closest girlfriends has two gay uncles who are very close to Karen and her mother.”

Carol added, “It will be wonderful that Rindy will have a close friend with whom she can share this very important aspect of her life.” Therese said, “We’re all concerned about the girls encountering negative reactions from other children and adults. That’s going to be the most difficult part of the conversation.” Carol regarded Therese thoughtfully, “You know that you are very much a second mother to Rindy.” Therese straightened up and squared her shoulders. “Carol, I feel it in my heart and with every fiber of my being. I’m so glad that Harge has been including me in all these important conversations about Rindy.” “He knows it, too, darling and has said as much to me,” answered Carol.

Carol stood as Therese took their cups to the kitchen to rinse. When Therese returned, Carol had loosened the tie or her robe and had her hand extended. “Take me to our bedroom, darling. Don’t you think we should end the week the way we began this one—seven for seven?” Therese laughed and walked toward Carol, loosening her own robe, teasing with a ‘let’s try out the manicured hands’ challenge to Carol. They had just entered their bedroom, when the telephone rang. “What the hell?” cursed Carol as she walked towards the phone.

Therese’s eyes rolled back in her head and she threw up her hands. “It must be Harge; now what?” Carol gave Therese a worried look as she picked up the receiver. “Harge, what’s wrong.” “Hello Carol,” Harge said, I’ve been trying to call you all evening.” Carol replied, “We’ve been out to dinner. Is everything alright? Obviously not, because you’re calling after 11:00 o’clock at night. Is Rindy alright?” “Yes,” Harge answered, but there was a bit of an accident late this afternoon at Karen’s house. Rindy is fine. It happened while she was riding a horse.” “Oh my god!” exclaimed Carol, “Was she thrown from the horse?” Therese took one look at Carol’s face and heard the one-sided conversation and started sprinting for the office to get on the other line. “Harge, just a moment, Therese is getting on the other line.” “Of course,” agreed Harge. He heard the click and said “Hello, Therese.” Therese answered with a tense, “Tell us quickly. Is she alright?” Harge relaxed. “Yes, Rindy is fine. She has a scrape along one leg, but her denim jeans protected her leg for the most part. Both Jack and Michael were with the girls. She’ll have a bruise, but Michael acted quickly to resolve the situation. He was an army medic in the Korean War and knew just what to do to treat her minor injury.” “Details, Harge,” prompted Carol.

“Alright,” said Harge. “Here’s the short version. Karen was on one horse and Rindy was on the other—a very gentle horse named Daisy. They were in the middle of the riding arena adjacent to the horse barn and all of a sudden Daisy started trotting toward the barn. Rindy thought it was great fun and called out that she was riding Daisy like a real cowgirl. Well, Karen apparently knew what Daisy was up to and called out ‘Daisy, no!’” “It seems Michael had constructed a homemade scratching post against one corner of the barn by nailing several push broom heads together. He trimmed the bristles in half so the horses could rub against them to their heart’s content. Daisy was particularly fond of the scratching post and when she had an itch, nothing could stop her from scratching.”

“At any rate,” Harge continued, “Rindy’s leg got between Daisy and the post and Rindy was screaming from fright and some pain.” “Marjorie was watching the girls ride at the time, said Michael took off like a flash and pulled Daisy’s reins that Rindy had dropped and even put his
body between Daisy and the barn, forcing Daisy to stop scratching herself. He grabbed Rindy off Daisy and took off for the big house with Rindy in his arms. Rindy’s nanny, Susan, heard the commotion when Michael burst in the kitchen and called out for ice cubes to be wrapped in a towel and also for first aid ointment and bandages. Susan eased Rindy’s jeans down so they could look at the injury, and there was a scrape, but not much bleeding at all. Michael cleaned and dressed the scrape and then applied ice.” “Michael told Rindy that she was being so brave that from now on he would call her ‘California Cowgirl’.” “Apparently Michael grew up on a ranch in California. He let Rindy wear his cowboy hat, too. It came down over her ears but she loved it. Her tears were over in minutes. Michael insisted that he and Rindy would ride Daisy together just to be on the safe side.”

“That’s not the only news, though,” said Harge. “Marjorie overheard Karen and Rindy having a private conversation after the Daisy incident. They were giggling and saying how handsome and wonderful ‘Uncle Jack’ and ‘Uncle Michael’ were. (Marjorie had the talk with Karen months ago.) Marjorie said that Karen told Rindy that her uncles don’t like girls ‘that way’ but that they’re in love with each other and have been together for five years. Carol heard Therese on the other line draw in a sharp breath. Carol asked, “And what did Rindy say?” Harge chuckled, “What do you think she said?” Harge continued without waiting for Carol or Therese to answer, “She said proudly, ‘my mother and my Aunt Therese are like your uncles. They live together in their apartment in New York City and they’ve been together for six years and they are in love with each other, too.’ Apparently Rindy was not going to let Karen’s uncles have the couple longevity prize,” Harge concluded. Marjorie told me that the girls giggled and hugged and ran back to the sleepover.

“We waited too late for the talk didn’t we?” Therese muttered. “Oh God,” said Carol. “Correct on both counts,” replied Harge. “Now we need to decide on the next steps.” “Right,” agreed Carol. Harge offered this idea, “Marjorie said the other two girls would be leaving before noon Sunday and that Rindy could stay later to play with Karen. She offered to have all three of us pick up Rindy and meet the uncles and have lunch together. Then we could bring Rindy home and the three of us could have ‘the talk’.” Therese was dumfounded. “She’s inviting us and you are inviting us?” asked Therese. “Of course,” said Harge. “Please arrive here no later than 11:00 AM. We can talk briefly so that we can arrive at the Sinclair estate by noon. Marjorie insisted we dress casually.”

“What about your usual Sunday lunch with your parents?” “I’ve already cancelled it. Dad is agreeable and mother is…well…mother. Need I say more?” “No!” said Carol and Therese in unison. Carol paused and said carefully, “Thank you for involving both of us right away.” Harge quickly said, “Carol, I should thank you and Therese. Frankly I need your support in this matter more than you need me, and Rindy needs to see all three of us united for her.” “We are united,” said Therese firmly. “We’ll be at your house at 11:00 AM tomorrow.” They all hung up in unison.

Carol waited for Therese to return to the living room. “This is happening so fast,” observed Carol. Therese answered, “Remember how we have rehearsed for this for the past year, love,” “Oh, I know, but now it’s upon us.” Tomorrow will come early. “I don’t know how I can sleep a
wink,” said Carol. Both women finished their bedtime preparation after laying out their clothes for tomorrow. Each chose a nice skirt and sweater, even though Marjorie Sinclair had said dress casually. Both Therese and Carol needed to know they looked good for this important day. They would wear stockings, but decided that they could wear their newer moccasins.

They both removed their robes and got into bed without a word. Each woman was lost in her own thoughts. Therese settled on her back and Carol maneuvered in the bed so her head was on Therese’s shoulder. Therese pulled Carol closer with her arm about her shoulders. The gesture was extremely comforting to Carol. Carol stroked Therese’s face gently and said, “What a roller coaster of emotions, today, Therese.” “True,” said Therese, “but there is an underlying theme from the permanence of our rings to the permanence of our love for each other and for Rindy.” “You are so wise my darling, so beautiful and wise.” “Let’s try to get some sleep,” said Therese. They were still for a moment, and then Carol said, “I need so much to be as close to you as I can be, Therese. It’s not about sex tonight, but about comfort. Still, I think I need us to make love.” “Please understand, dearest,” said Carol as she reached for Therese with a desperation that Therese had not felt from Carol in years. “I do understand, my love.” Therese said quietly as she gently held Carol’s face in her hands. Therese quietly stroked Carol’s hair, and leaned over to kiss her lips. Their kiss became deeper, yet remained gentle, tender and loving at the same time. Before Carol surrendered to Therese’s loving touches, she had this fleeting thought, ‘She always knows just how to love me.’
Cowgirls and Cowboys

Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 10 takes place on Sunday March 1, 1959.

Carol and Therese had a call from Harge late the night before with two bits of information: First, Rindy had hurt her leg slightly during a horse riding accident but was fine and second, Rindy knew a lot more about Carol and Therese’s relationship than they previously thought. Marjorie Sinclair, the mother of Rindy’s best friend Karen who was hosting a sleepover, overheard Karen and Rindy delightedly discussing Karen’s ‘Uncle Jack’ who had lived with ‘Uncle Michael’ for five years. Not to be outdone, Rindy told Karen that her mother and her Aunt Therese had lived together for six years. The girls were hugging and giggling at the romance of it all.

Harge asked Carol and Therese to accompany him the next day to pick up Rindy from the sleepover. He proposed that the three of them have ‘the talk’ with Rindy after they brought her home. Carol and Therese agreed.

Chapter Notes

I refer to a new character in this chapter, Michael Thompson, looking like the movie star Tab Hunter. If you've not heard of him, you might want to look him up on the Internet. Hunter was a popular star of movies and television in the 1950s and 1960s. His movie career even lasted longer. In 2006, he published an autobiography in which he came out as gay. Hunter is now 84 years old.

Sorry for the delay in posting this chapter. I've been quite ill for the past three weeks with some kind of bug. It's a slow recovery.

Especially since I've not been feeling well, I would particularly appreciate any comments you might make about my continuing storyline. I hope you are enjoying it.

Regards, Pipestone

Sunday March 1, 1959

7:00 AM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

Therese woke up while it was still dark. She rolled over in bed to cuddle closer to Carol, except that Carol wasn’t in their bed. Therese felt the sheets and they were cool. She pulled Carol’s pillow to her and inhaled deeply, savoring the scent that was Carol, but the pillow was cool, too. Therese rolled onto her back and remembered the previous night’s events.

They had received a late night call from Harge informing them that Rindy knew a lot more about their relationship than they previously thought. Marjorie Sinclair, the mother of Rindy’s best friend
Karen who was hosting a sleepover, overheard Karen and Rindy delightedly discussing Karen’s ‘Uncle Jack’ who had lived with ‘Uncle Michael’ for five years. Not to be outdone, Rindy told Karen that her mother and her Aunt Therese had lived together for six years. The girls were hugging and giggling at the romance of it all.

Harge invited Carol and Therese to his home in Ridgewood New Jersey so that the three of them could have ‘the talk’ with Rindy after bringing her home from the sleepover. Harge and Carol had agreed several weeks ago that the time was coming when they should talk to Rindy, but no one could have foreseen that Rindy’s best friend Karen would have had a gay uncle with his lover and that the girls would have discussed the subject sooner than anyone could have imagined.

Therese was determined to be as supportive as possible for Carol. She wasn’t sure exactly what form the support would take, but she would do whatever she could to make this very important conversation go well. Therese was now happier than ever that she had attended some of the meetings of the New York City chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis, because some of the attendees were mothers themselves and they had shared their stories of telling their children about themselves.

Therese guessed that the most difficult part of the conversation would involve how Rindy should not feel free to share the information with almost anyone about Carol and herself or Uncles Jack and Michael living together and being in love. From what Harge said about Karen’s mother’s account of Karen and Rindy talking about it, both girls thought it was terribly exciting. Therese smiled, remembering that at nearly eleven years old Rindy was currently going through a phase where she loved to read about the handsome and beautiful movie stars. Rindy and her little girlfriends would exchange popular movie magazines such as Photoplay and Modern Screen. Harge discouraged Rindy’s interest in movie magazines, but Carol and Therese would allow Rindy to read the magazines after they had carefully read each magazine before Rindy saw them to ensure nothing of an inappropriate nature were in the articles.

Therese glanced at the clock on her nightstand. It was now 7:30 AM. They needed to leave about 9:30 AM to ensure they arrived at Harge’s by 11:00 AM. Therese decided that she would encourage Carol to have something to eat. Therese got out of bed and pulled on her robe and located her slippers. She recalled how Carol reached for her last night with a desperation that Therese had not felt from Carol in years. Carol had whispered her need for Therese to make love to her. Therese had made very slow and sweet love to Carol; continually asking Carol “is this okay?” or “is this what you need?” Carol had felt so fragile and so needy. Afterwards Therese gently touched Carol’s face and felt a tear roll down her cheek. Therese asked “What is it, my love?” Carol shed a few more tears as she confessed that she needed to be loved, but just couldn’t reciprocate right then. Therese held Carol tight and said, “Oh darling, we don’t keep score now do we? It’s fine, my love—just fine. I love you so much, Carol.” That answer calmed Carol, who fell asleep wrapped as closely around Therese as two people could possibly be. Therese was quite content to fall asleep with her head tucked under Carol’s chin.

Therese found Carol in the office with a Webster’s dictionary and Rindy’s encyclopedia Britannica open on her desk. She was wrapped in her robe, sipping coffee and smoking a cigarette. Carol also had a pack of Wrigley’s Doublemint Gum nearby as she was determined to quit smoking if she possibly could. Therese cleared her throat so not to startle Carol, then slipped her arms around Carol’s shoulders and kissed Carol’s cheek tenderly. Carol swiveled in the chair and pulled Therese onto her lap, saying “Good morning dearest. Thank you for taking care of me last night.” Therese held Carol’s face in her hands and said, “That’s what we’re here for—to take care of each other.”

Carol apologized for smoking the cigarette, but Therese put a finger gently on Carol’s lips. “Don’t give it another thought, Carol,” said Therese. “I know you’re cutting back and I’m so proud of
you for that. Today is an exception.” Carol replied, “Well, Harge was told by his doctor last fall when he had the angina attack to eliminate cigarettes. I thought I could take a couple of packs of gum for all of us.”

Therese told Carol how she had been lying in bed thinking of the best approach to telling Rindy. “You know how I’ve been attending some of the Daughter’s of Bilitis lesbian organization meetings.” Carol nodded. “Well, several of the women have children, even some are about Rindy’s age and they’ve shared what they told their children. I think I can be of help by relating some of what they told the group.” Carol breathed a sigh of relief. “That would be wonderful.” The goddamned dictionary and encyclopedia aren’t much help. Can you explain why homosexual women are called lesbians?” Therese smiled and nodded. Carol relaxed. “Who knows if Rindy is going to ask terminology questions but I want one of us to have an answer. I am embarrassed to say that I don’t know a lot of the terminology myself—I just know who I am, and God knows Harge won’t have any answers.”

Therese suggested that they have a light breakfast since lunch would be served at the Sinclair estate after 12:00 noon. Carol agreed and headed for the bathroom to shower and wash her hair. Therese looked at the clothes she had picked out last night and remembered Marjorie Sinclair’s suggestion that they dress casually. She stuffed her camera into the camera bag.

During breakfast, Therese asked Carol her main concern. Carol said. “I worry the most about how best to tell Rindy that she should not share this news with her friends other than Karen, and of course Harge, Abby and us.” Another of Carol’s concerns was how to explain how people might say mean things and how Rindy could or should react. “Quite frankly, Carol,” said Therese, “Rindy has had a lot of exposure of hearing mean things said about us.” “Think about what Harge may have said the first two or three years after the divorce and what Harge’s mother and father may still be saying about us.” Carol looked at Therese intently and observed, “She certainly has heard more than any child should hear.”

They left their Madison Avenue apartment about 9:30 AM. Therese volunteered to drive, especially since traffic was light. Therese said, “I’ll need you to give me directions once we’re through the Lincoln Tunnel since I’m usually in the passenger seat.” Although they occasionally drove through the Lincoln Tunnel, the trip through the tunnel never failed to bring back memories of the first time they traveled through it together—December 1952. Therese truly believed she fell in love with Carol on that ride. Today was not the day for those reminiscences, though, thought Therese. Carol squeezed Therese’s leg gently and said, “Who would have thought that six years after our first trip though this tunnel we’d be making the trip from our home in Manhattan for the reason we’re going today.” Therese replied, “I would have never thought that Rindy would have figured it out before we told her.” Carol said thoughtfully, “Children are much more perceptive than we adults give them credit.”

Until very recently Therese had so many resentments that she still harbored toward Harge because she knew better than anyone how hurt and devastated Carol had been in the first years following the divorce. It was Therese who had comforted her, consoled her and sometimes watched helplessly when Carol was beyond consolation—worried that she would never see Rindy again.

Sometimes Therese wondered how Carol could ever forgive Harge, even as his attitude began to change over the past two years and especially when he begged her forgiveness last October when he thought he was dying from a heart attack. Therese remembered what Carol had said to her a few months ago. “I forgive him because nothing good can come from continuing to resent him and hate what he did to me, to Rindy and to you.” Carol specifically said, “I must put the past behind me, for Rindy’s sake and for the sake of our future, too, Therese.” Carol continued, “Harge has the most difficult burden—living with what he did to the three of us. I can see the pain in his eyes. He knows he was wrong and he must live with it the rest of his life.”
Therese silently recalled those words of Carol’s spoken only a few months ago. Therese vowed that today was the day that she, too, would adopt Carol’s attitude. She silently relaxed. It truly was easier not to hate what was done in the past. Today was all about Rindy and how Carol, Harge and she could work together to make today’s explanation to Rindy go well. Therese’s eyes shifted to Carol and she felt a sudden outpouring of love. Carol noticed this and said “What are you thinking?” Therese answered honestly, “I’m thinking how much I love you.” Carol smiled.

Carol looked carefully at the large expensive homes in the area where she used to live with Harge. This brought back so many memories, but except for being able to live in the same house as Rindy, the memories weren’t good ones. Therese watched Carol carefully worried that Carol would wish she could go back to that time. Carol sensed that Therese might be having those thoughts and reassured her that would never be the case. “Therese, you have no idea how miserable I was then compared to my life now. Now I have the freedom to live with you, the love of my life. With you I feel loved for the first time in my life. Not only that, Rindy is in our lives more than ever, and after today’s talk, we can feel more at ease in her presence.” Therese relaxed and said, “I wish I could kiss you right now.” Carol laughed and tossed her hair and kissed her own fingertips and placed them on Therese’s mouth. “Considered yourself kissed,” said Carol affectionately.

11:30 AM - The Aird Home near Ridgewood New Jersey

Although it was smaller than the previous mansion, the house was still large. Therese had not seen Harge since he was in hospital last October because she was always still at work when Harge drove Rindy in on Fridays. He was definitely thinner, but actually looked healthier. He greeted them with a relieved smile. They had some tea and biscuits, since they’d had little for breakfast. Harge explained that the house staff all had the day off and Rindy’s nanny had gone home on Saturday afternoon after helping with some of the sleepover events at the Sinclair estate.

The three of them talked about what they should tell Rindy. Harge informed them that Marjorie had called again early that morning and said they could have some of the conversation while at the Sinclair home, especially the part of the talk about the necessity for Karen and Rindy to be discreet. Carol and Therese nodded their agreement.

As the chauffeur had the day off, Harge drove them in his Cadillac. The Sinclair estate was about ten minutes away. Both Carol and Therese were amazed at how large the estates were the closer they came to their destination. Harge pulled into a long driveway leading to a home that was even larger than Carol and Harge’s former home. There was a barn with a fenced riding area behind the home. The barn was huge, and Carol asked Harge how many horses they had. “Four,” answered Harge, “but Jack and Michael have a small apartment at one end of the barn.” Harge explained that the two men could stay in the apartment when Marjorie had guests over. Otherwise, the men lived in one wing of the very large home. Harge had a tour when he stopped by Friday evening.

12 Noon – At the Sinclair estate outside Ridgewood New Jersey

They knocked on the door and were greeted by a very attractive dark-haired woman (in her late thirties, Carol guessed). She was about five feet six inches tall—taller than Therese but shorter than Carol. Marjorie Sinclair had a wonderfully kind smile and gracious manner about her that put Carol and Therese at ease instantly. “So you are Rindy’s mothers,” she said gesturing for them to come in. “I’m delighted to meet you.

Carol and Therese were stunned at the words with which Marjorie greeted them. Here was a perfect stranger referring to the two of them as Rindy’s mothers. Obviously this woman was quite at ease with same sex couples. A male voice just around the corner boomed, “Ah, our guests have arrived—welcome, welcome.” A tall, dark and very handsome man dressed in a starched white
shirt, blue jeans and cowboy boots approached them with his right hand extended. Marjorie said laughingly, “This is my ‘little’ brother Jack Sinclair.” Carol and Therese shook hands with Jack. Harge hadn’t been wrong in his description of Jack. He was at least 6 foot 3 inches and weighed about 180 pounds. His hair was black, except for some very attractive premature grey streaks at the temples. Jack was a solid man, very fit and ramrod straight in stature. His voice had that ‘radio announcer’ quality. Carol could imagine him being an extremely successful businessman. Therese certainly had to look up at Jack who was almost a foot taller than she was. Therese liked him immediately as did Carol. Jack turned to Harge and said warmly, “Welcome back Harge, good to see you again.” The men shook hands. Carol watched Harge carefully and could sense that Harge was quite positively impressed with Jack and was at ease with him. Jack certainly shattered any effeminate stereotype that Harge might have had of gay men.

Harge asked Jack where Michael was. “Ah,” said Jack with ease, “My man is in the barn with Karen and Rindy showing them the different saddles we have for the horses.” Therese noticed that Harge’s eyebrows shot up a bit when Jack used the words ‘my man’ referring to Michael, but that was the extent of Harge’s reaction. Therese thought, “This is going better than I expected.” Marjorie broke the silence with an invitation to walk to the barn to greet the girls. “I haven’t told Rindy that you and Therese are coming, Marjorie said to Carol. I thought it might be a wonderful surprise.” Carol beamed. Jack offered to take Therese’s camera bag. Therese grabbed her camera so she could take some photos of the occasion. “Do you mind if I take some photographs?” asked Therese. “Jack flashed a smile and said, “We’d be honored. We hear from Rindy that you are a photographer for The New York Times.” Therese nodded and blushed slightly.

Marjorie chatted easily with Carol on the way to the barn and Jack and Harge talked about Jack’s assuming the General Motors dealership in nearby Paramus New Jersey. Therese was content to soak up the atmosphere of this remarkable day and take photographs. It was warmer than usual for March 1st, so everyone could unbutton their coats. Jack wore a fleece lined jean jacket. As they neared the barn, Jack called out “Hey, you cowboy and cowgirls, we have visitors.” Karen and Rindy appeared at the barn door first and when Rindy saw her mother and Therese she could hardly contain her joy.

“Mommy!” Rindy shouted as she ran as fast as she could into Carol’s outstretched arms. “My special girl,” said Carol, covering Rindy’s face and hair with kisses as she hugged Rindy as tight as she could. Therese looked at Harge to see his reaction to Rindy and Carol’s emotional greeting. Harge was grinning broadly. After hugging Carol for the longest time, Rindy shouted “Aunt Therese” and threw herself into Therese’s arms. Therese said to Rindy, “I hear that you are now a real California cowgirl.” Rindy looked up at Therese with shining eyes and said, “Yes, I am. Uncle Michael told me so and he is a real California cowboy, so he would know.” Everyone laughed.

Carol and Therese were introduced to Karen, a lovely young girl of Rindy’s age who looked like a smaller version of her mother. Karen seemed positively enchanted to meet Carol and Therese. She politely shook each woman’s hand. Karen greeted Harge as well. After shaking Therese’s hand, Karen said to Rindy, “You’re right, she really does look like Audrey Hepburn.” Therese blushed furiously, and Marjorie eased the awkwardness by saying how much the girls enjoyed reading the movie magazines and deciding who they knew that looked like a movie star.

Just then, a very tall, slim blond man with broad shoulders wearing jeans, a western shirt and fleece lined jean jacket, and a cowboy hat appeared in the barn door. Speaking of movie stars, Uncle Michael looked like a twin of the movie star Tab Hunter complete with a crew cut. Removing his hat, he walked quickly to meet Carol and Therese and both women were charmed by him. Michael politely shook Harge’s hand and said warmly, “Good to see you again, Harge.” Harge replied by saying, “Thank you for taking such good care of Rindy yesterday when her leg
was caught between the horse and the barn door.” Carol and Therese added their thanks as well. Rindy announced that her leg didn’t even hurt today. Michael said, “That’s the miracle of ice in treating deep bruises. We used it whenever we could in Korea. It reduces the swelling dramatically. The key is to get the ice on the injured area as soon as possible.” Carol said, “We’re so grateful to you, Michael.” “Of course,” said Michael modestly. “Rindy was very brave.”

Rindy excitedly said, “Uncle Michael said I was so brave that I got to wear his cowboy hat.” Karen added giggling, “Yes, but we had to put his bandana inside the hat so it would fit better.” Rindy replied, “Karen, remember how I asked you to take a picture of me wearing the hat while Uncle Michael and I rode Daisy?” Karen said, “I sure did. I hope it comes out as good as it looked.” Rindy glanced at Therese and proudly said, Aunt Therese is a photographer for The New York Times and even has her own darkroom in their apartment. We’re going to develop the roll of film from the sleepover when I spend next weekend with them.” Karen literally clapped her hands with glee and asked, “Could I have a copy of the best photos?” “Of course you can,” replied Therese.

Karen asked, “Do we have time to ride BusyBee to show Mrs. Aird and Aunt Therese how well Rindy rides? BusyBee still has her saddle on.” Marjorie said, “Of course,” I’ll go tell the cook that we’ll be in for lunch in thirty minutes. Rindy was jumping up and down for joy at the thought of riding in front of her mother, Aunt Therese and her father. She was so happy to see the three of them together and everyone getting along fine. The girls, Michael and Jack returned to the barn. Therese readied her camera while Carol and Harge chatted about how happy Rindy seemed to be.

Soon Rindy appeared at the barn door astride BusyBee, the Sinclair’s other extremely gentle horse. Rindy was wearing Michael’s cowboy hat and looked absolutely precious. Therese began to snap pictures as fast as she could. Much to Carol’s delight, Rindy rode BusyBee with confidence. Carol waved to Rindy and blew kiss after kiss to her. Harge called out praise as well. Therese snapped more photographs. Michael held BusyBee’s reins while Jack put Karen behind Rindy in the saddle and both girls took the horse around the riding area. Jack called out, “Time to head for the barn, cowgirls.” Jack requested that Harge, Carol and Therese return to the house and that they would bring the girls along soon.

Carol said to Harge, “You have no idea how thrilled I am to see her ride.” The three adults entered the back door and called out to Marjorie. Carol expressed her appreciation to Marjorie for the opportunity to see Rindy ride. “Is this the first time?” asked Marjorie. Carol nodded and Therese noticed that Harge looked extremely guilty. “Well,” Marjorie said decisively, “It won’t be the last. You must come back soon and perhaps you may even want to ride, too.” “You and Harge are fortunate to get along so well after your divorce. I can’t say the same about my ex-husband, Douglas.” Therese bit her tongue and Carol smiled slightly.

Marjorie said, “I propose if the subject comes up during lunch about Karen and Rindy needing to be discrete about Jack and Michael, Carol and Therese, I think we should deal with it right away, but if they don’t we can have a talk with Karen and you folks can have your talk with Rindy after you leave. The three of us had a talk with Karen a couple of months ago, but I’m not sure if Karen remembered how important it was to be discrete with the information.” “I hope you don’t mind if we address any comments the girls might make during lunch. Does that sound appropriate to you?” Carol, Therese and Harge nodded. Marjorie smiled and added, “We’re so glad Karen has a friend, especially her best friend, with whom she can talk freely.” Carol said, “We’re so glad as well. It’s quite a relief.”

Marjorie pointed out two first floor bathrooms where her guests could freshen up before lunch. She also pointed out the dining room and said that everyone could reconvene there. Michael, Jack and the two girls came in through the back door—laughing and talking about the horses. Jack told the girls to wash up for lunch as Michael dashed upstairs to put on a clean shirt.
Everyone sat down at the dining table together and began to eat the lunch prepared by the Sinclair’s cook. Marjorie seated Rindy, Carol and Therese on one side of the table with Karen, Jack and Michael on the other. Marjorie sat at the head of the table, and Harge at the other end. The meal was punctuated with very pleasant conversation and complements on the delicious meal. The adults talked about their occupations. When Carol said she was a buyer for O’Halloran’s furniture store, Michael exclaimed, “I knew your name was familiar. In my work of furniture restoration and custom painting, I know most of the owners of the furniture stores in the New York City area. You have a reputation as one of the most skilled buyers in all of New York City.” Carol smiled modestly, “Speaking of reputations, I’ve heard widespread praise for your work as well. Let’s exchange business cards before we leave.” All the adults nodded, but Marjorie added, “Well, as a full-time mom, I don’t have a business card, but I do want you to have my address and phone number.”

When the main meal was completed, dessert consisting of a small glass of lemon sherbet was served. Marjorie remarked how wonderful it was to have guests in their home. “Karen and I have just been here since September. Jack had previously picked out the house and he and Michael were so helpful in relocating us from Atlanta.” It’s huge, but we love it here. Jack and Michael have one wing and Karen and I live in the other. The fellows have a small kitchenette, but we prefer to take our meals together.” Jack added, “Michael and I love being around Marjorie and Karen. Marjorie and I were always very close growing up.”

Karen turned to her guests and cheerfully volunteered, “Uncle Jack met Uncle Michael in California while Uncle Michael was recovering after the Korean War.” Karen continued happily, “Uncle Michael said it was love at first sight—isn’t that romantic?” The room was so silent that the tick-tock of the grandfather clock in the hall sounded like a cannon. Carol was first to shake herself out of the silence, “I agree, Karen, that sounds extremely romantic.”

Karen and Rindy were off to the races, so to speak. Rindy said excitedly, “I told Karen that you and Aunt Therese were in love, too, and guess what? You’ve been together a year longer than Uncle Jack and Uncle Michael.” None of the adults could think of anything to say, so the girls kept right on going. Karen turned to Carol and said, “I was so happy to hear Rindy tell me about you and Aunt Therese after I told her about my two uncles. Finally I had someone to share the happy news with.” Karen added wistfully, “Mother said I can’t tell anyone else because people might say mean things about my uncles. I told Rindy because she talked about spending a weekend in the city with her mother and Aunt Therese, and I wondered if Rindy’s Aunt Therese was like my Uncle Michael.” Marjorie gently said, “Girls, we are so sorry that you must keep the news to yourselves. Hopefully, it won’t always be like this but meanwhile, it’s so nice that you have each other to talk with, isn’t it?” The girls nodded vigorously.

Rindy added, “Even though Karen and I are eleven years old—well, not quite—you would be surprised at the things we notice.” Harge loosened his tie and contemplated reaching for a nitroglycerin pill if Rindy started to get specific. Carol thought to herself, ‘Say something, Carol, say something.’ Carol said, “Rindy, your father and Aunt Therese and I should have had the conversation that Marjorie and Karen’s uncles had with her several months ago. We all apologize for that and when we get back to the house today we can talk and answer any questions you might have. “Really?” Rindy said happily. “Absolutely,” said Harge. Carol pressed Therese’s knee under the table.

An awkward silence followed. Harge finally said that they should be going soon. Harge also thanked Marjorie, Jack and Michael for their hospitality. Carol and Therese added their thanks as well. Rindy thanked her hosts for the sleepover and said how much fun she had. Rindy and Karen beamed at each other. Harge said, “Rindy, could you and Karen go gather your things from the sleepover?” The two girls ran upstairs to complete the errand.
The six adults looked at each other not knowing exactly what to say. Jack spoke first, “I think that went rather well.” Everyone agreed. Therese said, “Ironically the girls were really best at getting the conversation going.” Carol noted, “That’s because they’re innocent about two men and two women being together. The prejudice has not set in yet. We adults could learn a lot from the acceptance that children have.” Everyone agreed. Jack put his arm around Michael’s shoulder and patted it. Carol and Therese noticed that Jack did not remove his arm when the girls returned and the girls were totally oblivious to the affectionate gesture. The adults exchanged business cards and Marjorie gave her address and phone number to Carol. Marjorie turned to Harge and said, “You already have it, right?” “I sure do,” said Harge with a big smile.

On the way home Harge and Therese were in the front seat with Carol and Rindy in back. Carol had her arms around Rindy, sprinkling the top of her head with kisses. Rindy said, “This is the best car ride ever. I can’t believe that Daddy, Mommy and Aunt Therese are all in one car with me and that everyone is happy.” Harge said, “We’re happy that you are happy, Rindy. All of us love you so much.”

Rindy sighed, “I was wondering when you were ever going to talk to me.” Carol replied, “Well, sweet pea, we just wanted to be sure you were ready. We’re sorry we took so long.” Carol noticed Harge’s eyes in the rear view mirror. His expression said ‘I’m so glad I don’t have to do this by myself.’

Carol thought, ‘I’m literally dying for a cigarette’ and reached into her purse for the Wrigley’s Doublemint Gum. Just then, Rindy announced brightly, “I have lots of questions.” Carol said, “Gum anyone?” as she fumbled with the wrapper and popped the gum into her mouth. Rindy declined, but Harge and Therese put their arms over the back seat with palms outstretched and said “Please!” in unison with a hint of urgency. Carol dispensed their gum as Rindy crossed her arms and smiled.
'The Talk' with Rindy

Chapter Summary

Summary:

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 11 takes place on Sunday March 1, 1959 at the home of Harge and Rindy Aird in New Jersey. Carol and Therese had a call from Harge late the night before with important information: Rindy knew a lot more about Carol and Therese’s relationship than they previously thought. Marjorie Sinclair, mother of Rindy’s best friend Karen who was hosting a sleepover, overheard Karen and Rindy delightedly discussing Karen’s ‘Uncle Jack’ who had lived with ‘Uncle Michael’ for 5 years. Rindy told Karen that her mother and her Aunt Therese had lived together for 6 years. Harge asked Carol and Therese to accompany him the next day to pick up Rindy from the sleepover.

Harge proposed that the 3 of them have ‘the talk’ with Rindy after they brought her home. Carol and Therese agreed. This chapter details the conversation that Rindy, Harge, Carol and Therese have. The adults are united in wanting to give Rindy the most honest and accurate information they can give her.

Chapter Notes

First, I want to thank my favorite author, Employee645A for her graciousness regarding my use of a delightful reference from her brilliant 32-Chapter saga of Carol and Therese called "Built for Two." In Chapter 5 from that work Therese gives Rindy a teddy bear and also in Chapter 5 Therese tells Rindy she has a teddy bear to cuddle, too. (We the readers know that it's Carol, but Therese does not say so to five-year-old Rindy.) That image touched my heart so deeply that I could not resist referring to the teddy bear in this, my Chapter 11 when Carol and Therese were talking to Rindy about cuddling. So, dear readers, this teddy bear image didn't originate with me, but with the author Employee645A. She was gracious and generous about my using it, for which I am very grateful.

I would certainly appreciate your comments about this chapter. Although neither my wife nor I have children or grandchildren, we have been active in the LGBT rights movement for 45 years and therefore have a lot of background information that might be useful to young people. Also, I'm a year older than Rindy so I know first hand what it's like to be 10 going on 11 years old in the late 1950s.

Again, I look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me some comments, I would be most grateful. Look for the next chapter in this continuing storyline in about a week.

Regards, Pipestone
Sunday March 1, 1959

3:30 PM – Harge Aird’s Home near Ridgewood New Jersey

Harge, Carol, Therese and Rindy were nearly back to Harge’s home from their afternoon at the Sinclair estate. It had been quite an eventful time. Rindy had attended a sleepover at her best friend Karen’s home. A conversation between Karen and Rindy that Karen’s mother had overheard had led to a phone call to Harge. From what Marjorie could discern, the girls knew much more about the relationship of Karen’s Uncle Jack and ‘Uncle Michael’ and that of Carol and Therese than the adults realized. Marjorie Sinclair had called Harge telling him that something probably should be said and soon. Harge agreed, and had called Carol late Saturday night to request that she and Therese come to New Jersey accompany him when he picked Rindy up from the sleepover so that the three of them could talk to Rindy. In addition, Marjorie invited everyone for lunch. During lunch, Karen and Rindy were absolutely bubbling with enthusiasm about the romance of it all—having same sex couples in the family. The two families agreed that the girls should not tell other people about the nature of the relationships between Uncles Jack and Michael and Carol and Therese.

During the short ride home, Rindy was beside herself with happiness that her father and mother and Aunt Therese were all getting along so well and were all focused on her happiness. More importantly, Rindy was thrilled that she would be able to ask the questions that she had wondered about for so long.

As they turned in to the driveway, Rindy was bouncing on the rear seat of her father’s Cadillac. “Oh Mommy, oh Aunt Therese, you haven’t seen my room for almost a year. Daddy let me choose a new color for it and I have lots more framed photographs on the wall.” The last time Carol and Therese had been to Harge’s (other than earlier today) was for Rindy’s tenth birthday party the last week in April, 1958. That occasion had been rather tense, thanks to the attitude of Harge’s mother and sister. Even Harge’s father was beginning to be more civil.

Carol hugged Rindy and said, “Well, sweet pea, you must show Aunt Therese and me your room.” “Tell you what, sweetheart, why don’t you take us up one at a time so that while you show Aunt Therese, I can talk to Daddy and then do the same for me while Aunt Therese and Daddy talk. We want to have a few minutes for grown up talk before we sit down with you and answer your questions.”

“Oh, that’s fine Mommy. I understand,” she said with a knowing giggle. “I want to say something right now, though.” The three adults held their breath and Carol wished that she had taken two sticks of gum instead of one. Rindy continued, “This is the very first time that I have heard you call Daddy ‘Daddy’ instead of calling him ‘your father.’ Does that mean that you are not mad at each other anymore?” Carol hugged and kissed Rindy and said, “You are so very wise, my special girl and you are right, Daddy and I are not mad at each other anymore.”

Harge did not wait to be asked, but volunteered, “Rindy, Mommy and I are not mad at each other even if we are no longer married. You needn’t worry about that.” Rindy turned to Therese and asked, “Are you still mad at Daddy?” Therese replied, “No, Rindy, I’m not.” Harge said, “And I’m not mad at Aunt Therese either. We’ve all decided that it is more important than anything to get along with each other for your sake.” Carol added, “You don’t have to worry anymore about that, okay sweet pea?” Rindy bounced up and down on the car seat, clapped her hands and said, “This is the happiest day in my whole life. No one is mad at each other anymore. I love all of you more than anything.” Harge, Carol and Therese were doing their best to fight back tears when Rindy changed the mood by opening the car door and heading for the front door and calling...
out, “Hurry up Daddy, let’s go in the house.” Before the adults left the car, Harge said to Carol and Therese, “Rindy’s right, this is the best day ever.” Carol and Therese answered “yes” at the same time while wiping tears from their eyes. Carol said, “No matter how well we do answering her questions, we’ve succeeded.” Therese squeezed her hand. Harge said, “I’m ready for anything—I think.” he said with a chuckle, as he got out of the car. Carol and Therese followed, with Therese’s arm linked through Carol’s.

Rindy turned to Therese and said “Let’s go upstairs to see my room, Aunt Therese.” Therese gave Rindy a big smile and said “I’m ready!” Harge called out after them, “We’ll let you know when we are ready.” Rindy laughed and said, “Okay, Daddy, but I’m having a hard time waiting to ask my questions.” Carol and Harge exchanged a knowing look as soon as Rindy and Therese were out of earshot, Carol spoke first. “Harge, we’re beyond Wrigley’s Doublemint Gum. Do you have some bourbon?” “God yes,” said Harge “I’m dying for some, too, but I can’t have much because I still must be careful of my heart condition.” Carol suggested, “What about one finger’s worth?” “Sure.” Harge said as he poured their drinks. They downed them in one tip of their glasses. “Perfect.” said Carol. “I really want to be sharp for this talk, but that was nice.” Carol continued, “I think the most important point is to emphasize how Rindy must be discreet, but not ashamed of Therese and me living together. The difficult part for Rindy to understand is the consequence if the wrong people find out. She can’t tell anyone without checking with one of the three of us first. It’s almost too much responsibility for an eleven year old to bear, but I see no alternative.” “I agree,” said Harge. “You told me that your boss and Therese’s boss and many of each of your co-workers know, but imagine what would happen to Jack Sinclair’s or Michael Thompson’s business should word get around.” Carol face flashed anger, “It’s so unfair, but it’s how it is at this point in time.” Harge patted Carol’s arm and said, “I’m so sorry.”

Harge thoughtfully added, “Unfortunately Rindy has had a lot of experience with observing prejudice against homosexuals, Carol.” Harge’s eyes filled with tears as he said in a voice choking with emotion, “Just look at what I did to keep you and Rindy apart in the first years after the divorce.” “My God, look at the humiliation that I brought on you and Therese.” “Frankly I don’t deserve your forgiveness. I’m so ashamed of myself.” Harge was becoming so emotional he could no longer go on. Carol reached out and laid a hand on his arm. “I don’t want to use your actions as an example, Harge, even if it’s a legitimate one.” Rindy is so happy with how the three of us are getting along right now. We cannot spoil that for her.” “Rindy, Therese and I have forgiven you. You must forgive yourself and move on.” Harge wiped his eyes with the back of his hands and said, “You’re right, Carol. I want to be the very best father I can be for Rindy. Also, I want you and Therese to know that I will defend your relationship.” “I’m almost physically ill anymore when I hear my mother criticize you, whether or not Rindy is in the room.” “Dad has almost stopped doing so, though.” “I need to be a man for once and let my mother know that I’ll no longer tolerate her comments.” He squared his shoulders and sat up straight. Carol was astounded and speechless.

Harge said, “Well, if we need to remind Rindy how negative other people can be, why not use my mother as a negative example?” Harge continued, “All Rindy has to say is something about what fun she had taking pictures with Aunt Therese during her last visit, and Mother goes off like a Roman candle.” Carol tapped her chin with her index finger and said, “That’ll work. We’ll say there are many other people who may have that same reaction as her grandmother.” “However, we should also say that there are nice people like Marjorie Sinclair who have positive reactions.” “Then, we can say that it’s impossible for Rindy to know ahead of time what people’s reaction will be, therefore she should not to say anything until she has talked to one of the three of us.” Harge nodded.

Carol continued, “I don’t want our daughter to be paranoid, though. I don’t want her to think that Therese and I are ashamed of loving each other. In fact, I want to tell her that Therese and I have told a number of people that we work with including our bosses that we are a couple just like any
other couple that loves each other. However, I believe that we have to emphasize that the three of us are older and more able to know whether it’s alright or not to tell someone. We need to let her know that we are here to help her decide whom to tell and whom not to tell, but we must emphasize that she can’t make that decision on her own.”

Harge said, “That makes so much good sense, Carol.” “I must ask you, though; do you and Therese trust me to make that determination of whom to tell and whom not to tell?” Carol smiled, “Well, I certainly do, Harge, but you should ask Therese the same question in a few minutes when I go upstairs to Rindy’s room.” “Frankly I believe that you would be far less likely to tell anyone about Therese and me than we would ourselves.” Harge nodded in agreement.

Carol said, “Well, I think we’ve decided on the approach to the most difficult question. If she asks questions that are too specific about sex, and I doubt she will, we can just say that we’ll have the ‘facts of life’ conversation a little bit later.” Harge sighed with relief and said, “I think I’ll leave the ‘facts of life’ talk to you and Therese until I get a little more courage.” “Maybe there are some books I can read about how parents should talk to their daughters about sex.” Carol nodded and said, “I will keep an eye out for some books and will ask Therese to do the same.” “Also, tell her nanny, Susan Rankin, to look for books, too.” Carol added. “That reminds me, we’ll need to explain to Susan about this talk we’re having today.” Harge interrupted Carol’s train of thought. “That won’t be necessary, Carol. I already have—or actually Susan brought it up with me.” Carol arched a blond eyebrow and waited for Harge to continue. “Susan came to me late last year when I was recovering from my heart condition. She could tell that things were so much better between you and me. Susan said she has a dear cousin who is a ‘woman like my ex-wife’.” “She wanted to assure me that she would never say anything negative about you and Therese. Also, her cousin had some candid talks with Susan, and now Susan is somewhat knowledgeable.”

Harge said, “Before you trade places with Therese, could we agree on something?” Harge continued before Carol could speak. “Let’s keep any mention of Abby out of this. It won’t help the conversation and I fear it might confuse Rindy.” Carol said, “I wholeheartedly agree, Harge.” She rose and walked up the stairs. Soon Therese appeared in the living room. “Carol said you two had an excellent strategy talk and that you would share it with me.” Harge proceeded to tell Therese exactly what Carol and he had discussed. Harge also added once more how he sorry he was for the grief he had caused Carol, Rindy and her. Therese looked at Harge with a direct gaze and said, “It was only on the drive to New Jersey today that I finally decided to forgive you completely, Harge.” Therese continued, “And the only reason I could do so is because Carol had already forgiven you.” “It became obvious to me that I had to forgive you to be a better person for both Carol and Rindy.” “I realized that Carol, you and I had to forge a bond for Rindy’s sake. I love Carol with all my heart and soul and I love Rindy as though she were my own child and their happiness is the most important thing in my life.”

Harge said, “For the longest time I blamed Abby and you for ending my marriage, or at least for preventing me from somehow being able to mend the break in my relationship with Carol.” “Starting several years ago I began to realize that Carol and I could never have a full marriage because Carol was just acting on what she had always known—that she preferred women, not men. Nothing I could do could change that and it wasn’t my fault either.” Harge continued, “I prefer women, but unfortunately for me, my ex-wife does too.” Therese could not hide a small smile. “At any rate, I started looking at the whole situation.” “Carol was ecstatically happy, and you were the reason for that happiness.” “Rindy adores you, Therese—absolutely adores you and you make both of them so happy. I truly owe you a great debt.” Therese was stunned. She didn’t know what to say, so she just stammered, “Thank you Harge.”

Harge relaxed as did Therese. Harge said, “Well, down to today’s business.” “Carol said a few minutes ago that I should ask you if you trusted a decision I might make about telling a person I
thought was appropriate about you and Carol.” Therese asked what Carol said and Harge told her. Therese said, "I would just add that you should be very, very prudent because telling the wrong person could have enormous negative consequences for Carol and me. I assume you mean telling someone like Marjorie Sinclair or Jack or Michael.” Harge nodded. "Of course," said Therese, "but if there is any doubt, please ask Carol or me.” Harge said, "I absolutely would.” Harge summarized the agreement he and Carol had made about telling Rindy that she cannot tell anyone about you and Carol or Jack and Michael. We are going to explain the consequences. Therese drew a breath sharply and said, “That is a very difficult concept for a youngster.” Harge said, “Yes, but it’s a very serious consequence and Rindy needs to know.” “I think she is a very wise and thoughtful girl and that she will understand.” “I agree,” said Therese, “but we will have to constantly surround her with supportive love.” Harge smiled, “That’s the easy part.” Therese nodded.

“Therese,” said Harge, “Carol tells me that you have been involved with some of the homosexual political organizations in New York City.” “True,” said Therese carefully, “but I am not really in any kind of leadership position. Mostly I am their photographer and I attend some of the meetings and I understand some of the issues of interest.” Therese was concerned about Harge’s reaction, but to her surprise he said, “Excellent!” “Carol and I may take advantage of your knowledge in answering some of Rindy’s questions.” Therese thought, ‘Pinch me…I’m dreaming.’ However, she just said “Gladly.”

Harge slapped his knees with his hands and stood up. “I think we are ready to be interrogated by our daughter. Thank God we three are united. Please go upstairs and get Rindy and Carol. I’ll bring some lemonade and cookies for us.” Therese walked upstairs. When she opened the door to Rindy’s room, Rindy said with a smile, “Finally. May I ask my questions, now?” Carol said, “Rindy, there are no big secrets here. The three of us just want to make sure we give you the best answers.” “You are a very bright girl and we know you’ll have some excellent questions.” “We just had some grown up talk first to ensure we have worthy answers.” As they were walking downstairs to meet Harge, Rindy asked Carol, “Mommy, do you have your chewing gum ready for Daddy and Aunt Therese?” Rindy didn’t wait for an answer, but laughed a delightful teasing laugh that Therese thought sounded just like Carol.

Rindy eyed the lemonade and cookies that Harge brought, took a sip of lemonade and posed the first question to Carol. “Mommy, did you always like girls better than boys ‘that way’?” Carol replied “Yes, from the time that I was a little older than you—maybe thirteen or fourteen.” Rindy said, “Then why did you marry Daddy?” Carol replied, “Because I thought that girls were supposed to grow up and marry boys. I thought that was the only way the world worked. I didn’t think I could have a life any other way. At first I thought I was the only girl that liked girls the way I did.” Then Rindy asked a very perceptive question that was far wiser than her years. “So you made a choice to like boys instead?” Carol took a deep breath and put her hands gently on Rindy’s shoulders. Harge practically held his breath as he heard Carol speak. “No sweetheart. I didn’t make a choice to like boys better, because the world expected me to do so. I thought I would get into trouble if I didn’t pretend and that no one would like me if they knew my secret.” Carol exhaled and said, “Rindy that’s a very difficult question for me to answer in words that would allow you to understand.” Rindy said brightly, “Oh I understand. You thought you would get into trouble if anyone knew you liked girls better than boys, so you just pretended.” Harge exhaled slowly, stunned at the perception of his daughter.

Rindy turned to Harge and asked, “Did you know Mommy liked girls better than boys when you met her?” Harge answered, “No, Rindy, but after I fell in love with Mommy and asked her to marry me I started to wonder if it might be true that she liked girls better. I didn’t want to believe that could be true, so I pretended not to notice.” “How did you know, Daddy?” “Well,” Harge said carefully, “When two grownups are in love, they like to kiss and hug and cuddle. Your
mother would do these things with me, but there was something way back in the corner of my mind that told me that Mommy wasn’t as happy kissing and hugging and cuddling with me as I was with her.” Carol listened intensely to what Harge was saying. Even though they were each talking to their daughter, they were having perhaps the most intimately truthful conversation with each other that they’d ever had. Therese was watching both Harge and Carol hardly daring to breathe.

Rindy looked at Carol and said, “If you didn’t want to kiss and hug and cuddle with Daddy as much as he did with you why did you marry him?” Carol said honestly, “Because I liked your Daddy very much and I thought perhaps the romantic hugging and loving and kissing would get better as time went on. We had a lot in common. We had some of the same friends and we both loved to ride horses and we loved to dance and go to parties.” “I knew Daddy loved me very much and I thought I loved him.” “After we were married, your Daddy was drafted and had to go overseas to fight in the war. I missed him very much. When he came home from the war, I was so glad to see him. We decided that we wanted to have a baby together. We hoped that we would have a baby girl and that is when you were born.”

Rindy again asked very perceptively, “Did you ever stop liking girls better than boys?” Carol said, “No darling, I didn’t, and it became very hard not to let Daddy know.” Rindy said, “But you couldn’t help it, could you?” “No, sweet pea. I couldn’t help how I felt,” said Carol. “Daddy was very upset when he found out I hadn’t changed.” Carol continued, “I didn’t blame him. He felt helpless. He couldn’t change me. I still liked girls better.”

Rindy hugged Harge, “I’m sorry Daddy, Rindy said, “but Mommy couldn’t help what she felt in her heart of hearts.” Harge hugged her back and said, “I know, Rindy, but I wasn’t a very nice man about this. I wanted to be married to someone who loved me how I needed to be loved and your Mommy just couldn’t love me like that.” Rindy asked, “Is that when Mommy met Aunt Therese?” “No,” said Carol, “Daddy and I had already decided to divorce before I met Aunt Therese.” Carol continued, “But soon after Daddy and I agreed on the divorce, Aunt Therese and I met.” “I knew that Aunt Therese was the person that I loved and wanted to be with for the rest of my life. It felt so comfortable for me to hug and cuddle and kiss her like grownups do who are in love.” Therese said, “I felt the same thing about your Mother, Rindy.”

Rindy turned to Therese, “Were you ever married to a man?” “No, Rindy,” said Therese, “But I had a boyfriend named Richard in New York City who wanted to marry me right about the time I met your mother.” Therese continued, “I felt the same way as your mother. I did not like to kiss and hug Richard like he did with me.” “Was he mad about that?” asked Rindy. “Yes, sweetheart, he was very mad and he did not like it when I wanted to be with your Mommy instead of him.” “I didn’t do a very good job of explaining to Richard why I felt the way I did.” “Why?” asked Rindy, “Both you and Mommy explained it to me just now and I understood and I’m just ten years old—well practically eleven. Both of you liked to kiss and hug girls in a romantic way and you really didn’t feel the same about boys.” Carol and Therese were speechless, but Carol finally managed to say, “Sweet pea,” you are just very easy to talk to, and remember, both Daddy and Richard were hoping that Aunt Therese and I liked them the best, so it was harder for them to accept the truth.” Harge jumped in at this point. “Rindy, your mother’s explanation is a very good one and I should have paid more attention to it.” “Okay Daddy,” said Rindy.

Rindy said, “Daddy, I don’t remember much about that time years ago when you were mad at Mommy, but I do remember that you and especially grandmother and grandfather said very mean things about Mommy and Aunt Therese and all of you didn’t want me to stay with them in their apartment very often. I remember something about getting lawyers involved.” Harge patted his lap, and Rindy crawled up into it. “Rindy,” said Harge, “This is very important that you understand. What I did keeping you from spending time with Mommy and Aunt Therese was the biggest mistake I’ve ever made in my whole life and I’m still very sad that I tried to keep you apart
from them.” “I hope you will forgive me.” Rindy said, “Well, that was a very long time ago, and I remember how you changed your mind and we all started having more fun and being together just about whenever we wanted.” “Have you told Mommy and Aunt Therese you’re sorry?” asked Rindy. Carol jumped in, “Rindy, Daddy has told us and we both know that he is so sorry and that it will never happen again. We have forgiven him.” Carol concluded by saying, “You must forgive Daddy too.”

Rindy hugged Harge tighter and said “Daddy, my teachers tell me that everyone makes mistakes.” Rindy added, “We’re all happy together now aren’t we?” “We certainly are,” said Carol. “Yes!” said Harge and Therese at the same time. “Mommy, what is your favorite saying about something like this?” Carol asked, “Do you mean ‘That’s that’?” “Yes,” said Rindy, laughing, “That’s that.”

Carol breathed a sigh of relief as did Harge and Therese. “Rindy, I’m so glad that we were able to answer all your questions.” “Wait.” Rindy said, “I have just a few more questions.” The three adults stared incredulously at Rindy, who was fresh as a daisy, while they were emotionally wrung out. Carol slipped some chewing gum to Harge and Therese and stuffed a stick in her own mouth.

Rindy asked, “Girls who like girls ‘that way’ and boys who like boys ‘that way’ are called homosexuals, right?” Therese answered, “That is correct, but there are some other names you may hear. Men who are homosexual are called “gay” and women who are homosexual are called “lesbians.” Therese continued, “There are other rather mean names, but we can talk about that next weekend. If you ever hear someone you think is calling us a mean name, we can talk about it, but let’s talk about that later, okay.”

“Okay,” said Rindy, “but can you tell me now why ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ are the right words to use?” asked Rindy. Therese explained that there were many homosexual men who liked get together and meet and talk about issues. One issue is what name they like to be called. Therese said, “I’ve attended meetings where this very thing has been discussed.” “The men I have talked to felt like ‘homosexual’ sounded cold and clinical and that they liked the word ‘gay’.” Rindy asked what homosexual women were called. Therese explained that homosexual women were called ‘lesbians’ and that name came from an island in Greece named ‘Lesbos’ where many women lived in ancient times and most of these women loved each other instead of boys. Therese added, “One of the women was a poet who wrote very beautiful love poems for the women.” Rindy asked if Therese would show her that island on a map next weekend when she came to stay at their apartment. Therese hugged Rindy and said she certainly would.

“How many more questions may I ask?” said Rindy. Carol answered, “Well, sweet pea, it’s getting late and Aunt Therese and I must be starting home soon and you and Daddy need to eat supper.”

“Could I ask two more questions?” asked Rindy. “Sure,” said Harge. Therese was digging in Carol’s purse for more gum after her latest answers. “Okay,” Rindy said. “This one is for Mommy and Aunt Therese.” “The two of you really didn’t mind when I took over Aunt Therese’s room when I came to stay on weekends, did you?” Carol answered, “Rindy, darling, we never, ever, said we minded and even Aunt Therese said she was glad to give you the bed and the room and that it would be your room.” Rindy said, “But the truth was that you and Aunt Therese always slept together in the big bed in your room.” “Isn’t that true?” Carol said, “Rindy, you are right, we slept in the same bed in my room always.” “We probably should have told you that we wanted to sleep in the same bed, but we thought maybe you were too young for us to say something like that.” Carol added, “I’m so sorry.” Therese said, “I’m so sorry, too, Rindy, if you felt we weren’t totally honest, especially if you felt guilty about taking over what you thought was ‘my room’.” “We should have said that grownups who love each other like to cuddle and kiss and
hold each other at night so they will feel safe and loved.” “We should have made it clear to you long ago.” “Remember when I told you when you were little that I had a teddy bear that I cuddled at night?” “I remember,” said Rindy. “Well, I think you knew I meant your Mommy was my teddy bear, didn’t you?” “Oh yes I did,” said Rindy.

Rindy stood up and stretched and yawned. “The last question is for Daddy.” Carol and Therese offered a silent prayer of thanks. “Could you ask grandfather and especially grandmother to stop saying mean things about Mommy and Aunt Therese?” I love Mommy and Aunt Therese so much and now that you are friends again with them, too, I think especially grandmother should stop saying mean things—please Daddy?” Harge encircled Rindy with his arms and lifted her up and kissed her tenderly on the cheek. “I promise, Rindy.” “I’m not sure if I can stop it totally right away, but I will do my best.”

Rindy said, “I think I am very lucky to have parents like the three of you.” Carol swept Rindy into her arms and bestowed kisses all over her face. Therese hugged her, too. As this loving scene played out, Harge produced their coats and Therese’s camera bag. The three of them said their goodbyes, Rindy said, “Remember that this was the best day ever.” Everyone smiled.

Carol said, “Rindy, you are a very smart and perceptive girl and we want to always be honest with you.” “I think this weekend we have started a brand new chapter in our lives together.” “Remember that you must be very careful whom you tell.” Carol said, “We will see you next Friday night at our apartment. Perhaps we will talk about getting some twin beds for your room so both you and Karen can spend some weekends with us.” Rindy clapped her hands. Harge asked Rindy, “Aren’t you glad you did your homework on Friday night?” “Yes!” exclaimed Rindy. She hugged Carol and Therese as tight as she could, and Harge patted Carol and Therese affectionately on their shoulders.

Carol slipped into the driver’s seat. Therese said, “Are you alright to drive, darling?” “Oh yes,” said Carol. “I feel a relief unlike I have felt in many years.” As they drove down the driveway, waving to Harge and Rindy, Carol said, “Could you pull out a cigarette pack I stashed in the glove box and light one for me?” Therese laughed, “Only if there is one for me in there, too.” Therese put two cigarettes in her mouth and lit them both. She gently placed one between Carol’s lips and kept the other between hers. They both inhaled deeply. “This is an exception,” said Carol. “Of course, my love, you’ll receive no argument from me,” answered Therese. Carol stopped the car in a poorly lighted street before they entered the highway and pulled Therese to her. “I adore you, Therese Belivet.” said Carol. “Carol, I love you more than life itself,” answered Therese. Carol pulled Therese’s mouth to hers in a passionate kiss as Therese ran her fingers through Carol’s blond hair. Their kiss broke. Carol spoke first, “Home?” Therese replied, “Let’s go home, darling.”
A Burden is Lifted

Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 12 takes place later in the day, Sunday March 1, 1959 at the home of Harge and Rindy Aird in New Jersey. Carol, Therese and Harge had promised Rindy that they would answer all the questions she had about Carol and Therese's relationship and how Harge feels about Carol and Therese now. The three adults are understandably nervous about how best to answer the questions of the very bright almost-eleven-year-old Rindy. Rindy is cool as a cucumber and is thrilled to be given the answers she has long awaited. She is also thrilled that Carol, Harge and Therese are all getting along. They've reassured her they no longer hold anger towards each other.

Chapter Notes

One historical note. The Colonial Diner mentioned in this chapter where Carol and Therese eat on the way back to New York City still operates in Lyndhurst New Jersey. It opened in 1950.

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

I will post the next chapter in this continuing storyline as soon as I can. Remember, Carol and Therese still must have their party to show off their matching rings.

Regards, Pipestone

Sunday March 1, 1959

6:30 PM – Enroute from Harge Aird’s Home, Ridgewood New Jersey to New York City

Carol and Therese were returning to their New York City apartment after an eventful day in New Jersey. Their first stop had been the Sinclair estate for lunch and to pick up Rindy from a sleepover at her best friend Karen’s home. Rindy and Karen had realized an important thing they had in common: loved ones in a same-sex relationship. Karen’s Uncle Jack had been with ‘Uncle Michael’ for five years and Rindy’s mother had been with ‘Aunt Therese’ for six years. During a luncheon discussion, the six adults explained the importance that the girls exercise a great amount of discretion in talking about the subject outside of those present. When Harge, Carol and Therese took Rindy home, they agreed to let Rindy ask all the questions that she had wondered about over the years. Before talking with Rindy, the three adults talked with each other.

As they answered Rindy’s questions, Carol and Harge experienced the most honest and truthful conversation with each other that they’d ever had. The honesty came about through each of their
answers to Rindy’s questions. As they left, they could see Rindy and Harge waving goodbye under the light of the front porch. Carol asked Therese for a cigarette from the pack that she had hidden in the car’s glove box. Therese gladly lit one for Carol and even had one herself. It was only Carol’s second cigarette of the day as she had vowed to quit smoking, but the nerve-wracking nature of answering Rindy’s stream of questions had resulted in all three adults consuming three packets of chewing gum.

Carol stopped the car in a darkened lane out of sight of Harge’s home, and pulled Therese into a tender embrace and kiss. The relief each woman felt at the events of the day was almost indescribable.

Carol glanced over at Therese who had a dazzling smile on her face. “Are you as hungry as I am, dearest?” asked Carol. “Famished!” declared Therese as she patted Carol’s leg. “Oh Carol, could we stop at one of my very favorite diners? It’s not much out of the way.” Carol didn’t need to be told. “Need I ask?” said Carol. Therese giggled. “Probably not.” said Therese. The Colonial Diner in Lyndhurst New Jersey was off State Highway 17, their usual route towards the Lincoln Tunnel. They went about two miles beyond their turnoff to the Lincoln Tunnel on New Jersey State Highway 3 to Lyndhurst.

The Colonial Diner, established in 1950, was a classic New Jersey diner. Therese loved it, both for its classic diner appearance and especially for the delicious milkshakes. Although Carol wasn’t a particular fan of diners, she did enjoy the food served there. The small diner was one they had frequented before on the infrequent trips to Harge’s home to pick up or drop off Rindy. Fortunately it was a Sunday evening and there were very few customers. Therese took her camera bag out of the car and before they went into the diner, she shot a few photographs of the colorful neon signs. Smiling, they settled into a booth.

As they ate, they talked of the remarkable day, but were careful not to use anyone’s names from today’s outing except in a very quiet voice. Lyndhurst was certainly within the service area of Jack Sinclair’s General Motors dealership in Paramus.

Carol shook her head several times and expressed her astonishment about the change in Harge’s attitude. “You know, Therese, I could sense it coming since his health crisis last fall.” Carol continued, “He truly thought his days were numbered and I couldn’t believe how quickly he sent for his attorney and a notary public to ensure that I would have full custody of Rindy should he die.” “Yes,” answered Therese. “He has been a man of his word, too.” “The final legal documents were drawn up and you will have full custody should he unexpectedly die.” “What I didn’t expect,” said Carol, “is how he is exploring how to ensure you would get custody of Rindy should something happen to us both.” Therese said, “I can’t imagine how that would hold up in court should the grandparents challenge it, but at least he is trying his best.”

Therese said, “I want to talk to you more in the car about today, though, and I don’t feel as comfortable talking here.” “Agreed,” answered Carol. After they paid the bill and Therese departed with a portion of her milkshake, they turned back toward highway 3 and the route through the Lincoln Tunnel.

Carol said, “Harge has always been totally devoted to Rindy, even when our own relationship had irrevocably fractured. I always admired him as a father, until he tried everything he could to keep me from Rindy. I’m not sure I will ever understand how Harge used such detestable actions. Perhaps one day I can have that conversation with him.” Therese answered, “That’s why it was impossible for me to forgive him until today when I knew that I must let go of the anger for Rindy’s sake. Nothing good was ever going to come of my anger toward him.” Therese continued, “I just remember those days and nights holding you and feeling helpless that there was anything I could do to comfort you.” Carol turned her grey gaze toward Therese with great
affection. “You have no idea what a comfort you were to me, my darling. I could never have endured the pain without your love.”

Carol explained to Therese that one of Harge’s worst personality traits had been always wanting to win in life, whether it were his business or personal life. Carol also expressed that she felt he was unduly influenced by his parents who never liked Carol and felt she was beneath him, even though Carol’s family did have money and Carol graduated from the prominent Wellesley College. Carol said she thought Harge would have been unduly influenced by society’s attitude toward homosexuality. Also Carol said Harge had been furious about her affair with Abby. She said there was a part of him that wanted to be punitive towards those who he felt wronged him. Harge hated to lose, and to lose his wife to another woman again just sent him over the edge.

Carol emphasized over and over that she was definitely not defending his actions—just explaining them. “Therese,” said Carol, “After being married for ten years to Harge I can tell when he was being truthful and when he wasn’t and I am absolutely sure he is sincere when he said he would no longer oppose our relationship.” Therese listened intensely, for she loved Carol and wanted to understand. However, Therese thought to herself ‘I’ll still remain watchful to protect the woman I love.’

On the other hand, Carol said that deep down under Harge’s layers of male dominance there was a tender streak in him and that was why she married him in the first place. She thought her own love for women instead of men might change. Also, when Rindy was born, Harge’s joy was palatable and he was beside himself with love for his daughter. Carol thought she could live with him even though she knew he could not satisfy her need to be loved. “Finally,” said Carol “the façade was too much.” “And then,” Carol concluded, “I met the love of my life, you.”

Carol quickly turned to Therese with a blinding smile and said, “Dearest, do you know what has happened today?” Therese smiled back at Carol and said, “Of course I do, my love. A great burden has been lifted from our lives.” Carol swallowed tears of joy. “My brilliant, beautiful Therese—indeed it has.” Therese stated frankly, “I can hardly imagine it.” Carol replied, “Nor can I, but I believe it’s true. We no longer have to conceal our relationship from our daughter.” Therese observed, “We have been more open as time has passed, but now there’s nothing to hide.” Carol laughed as she said “Now she knows that we sleep together by choice—no more silly excuses.” Therese cautioned, “Eventually she’ll have more questions, but for now she’s content to realize that we sleep together so that we can cuddle and hug each other at night.” Carol laughed merrily, “Well, that is part of it, and the ‘facts of life’ conversation will come when she is a little older.” “God, I hope so,” said Therese, “I don’t think I can face another pack of Wrigley’s Doublemint Gum anytime soon.”

As they drew nearer to their apartment, the conversation turned to Rindy’s questions. Frankly, some of Rindy’s questions surprised them. She was so very perceptive for a girl of nearly eleven. Carol noted, “Rindy has had Karen to talk with unbeknownst to us.” Karen’s two uncles undoubtedly accelerated the conversation. Carol and Therese agreed that it was amazing how much young people know and recognize. Therese asked, “Would you have known to ask the questions Rindy asked at her age?” Carol threw back her head and laughed, “Oh hell, no—never in a million years!”

Carol noted that Jack and Michael have certainly smashed Harge’s stereotypes about gay men. “I just wish I could have seen Harge’s face when Michael came out of the horse barn carrying a saddle as though it weighed nothing.” Therese giggled, “They are terribly masculine and handsome, aren’t they?” Therese asked if Carol noticed their matching wedding bands that they wore on the ring finger of their right hands. “I certainly did,” said Carol, “The rings were stunning with a low profile diamond in the center surrounded by a square of white gold. The sides of the rings were yellow gold with three vertical lines of white gold milgrain. The yellow
gold sides had a brushed finish.” Therese laughed, “Well, I didn’t know you noticed the rings that much. I wouldn’t be surprised if they bought them at Devon Jewelry.” Carol answered, “I’d like to invite Jack and Michael to dinner soon.” Therese agreed.

Carol said, “I like Marjorie Sinclair very much.” “Can you believe she referred to us as ‘Rindy’s mothers?’” Therese replied. “It would be very nice to have Karen spend some weekends with Rindy at our apartment.” Carol agreed. “I’ll talk to Marjorie soon to ensure Marjorie is comfortable with that and Karen wants to come.” “It’s so important that the girls have each other to talk to about us and the uncles, since they know they can’t share the information with anyone else.”

They arrived home about 9:00 PM and had a small nightcap. They decided to shower that night to save time for the Monday morning workday preparations. They picked out their clothes for the next day. Carol gave Therese a sly look, “We could save some time by showering together.” “Oh you!” said Therese with affection. By this time they had undressed. Carol held her hand to a nude Therese who was turning down their bed and fluffing their pillows and turning on the light on Carol’s side of the bed.

After a shower where there was far more lathering than necessary, they dried each other and exchanged a kiss. As they crawled into bed, Carol said to Therese, “Come over here, dearest, I want to tell you one more thing that Rindy told me during the time she spent upstairs with me while you were downstairs talking with Harge.” Carol lay on her back. Therese cuddled up to Carol, with one leg over Carol and Therese’s head on Carol’s shoulder. Carol continued as Therese gently traced Carol’s collarbone. “Rindy said she was so happy that I kept my married name so that it is the same as hers.” “Rindy said that Karen is somewhat sad that she has a different last name than her mother, since Marjorie changed back to her maiden name.” Therese said, “I’ve never questioned your keeping your married name because I knew that Rindy must be the reason.” “You are very wise, sweetness,” said Carol.

Therese leaned over Carol to turn off her nightlight because she could sense Carol becoming sleepy. Carol gently put her hand around Therese’s wrist to stop her from turning off the light. Therese looked at Carol questioningly. “Dearest, I want to see your face when I confess something to you.” Therese looked confused but listened intently. “I will keep Aird as my last name as long as Rindy wants me to, but I do not ever want to go back to my maiden name of Ross.” Carol continued, “If I do ever change my name I would prefer to change it to Belivet, if you would agree to it.” Carol locked her gaze with the astonished look on Therese’s face.

“Oh my God—Carol!” said Therese. “Nothing would make me happier.” Carol smiled, “Now do you understand why I wanted to leave the light on? I had to see your face. I love you, my darling Therese.” Therese sighed, “Oh Carol, I love you so.” They snuggled as close as two bodies could possibly be and fell into a contended sleep.
"Moving Right Along"

Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 13 takes place at the start of the day, Monday March 2, 1959 at the apartment of Carol and Therese in New York City and later in the day in their respective workplaces. Carol is looking for a bed that would be suitable for Rindy's room in their apartment to start having friends for sleepovers. Her best friend Karen will probably be her first guest.

Chapter Notes

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

I will post the next chapter in this continuing storyline as soon as I can. Remember, Carol and Therese still must have their party to show off their matching rings. Oh, but first there's the traditional Easter Parade in New York City on Sunday March 29, 1959.

Regards, Pipestone

Monday March 2, 1959

6:30 AM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

The alarm clock had not yet gone off in Carol and Therese’s bedroom, but Carol sensed eyes on her. Her golden eyelashes fluttered several times as Carol slowly opened her eyes. To her surprise, Therese was watching her sleep with a most loving smile on her face. Usually Therese slept a bit longer than Carol, begging her to reset the alarm clock for ‘just ten more minutes.’ “Now look who’s the sleepyhead,” whispered Therese. Carol reached her hand from under the cover and gently ran her finger over Therese’s lips. “Good morning Miss Belivet,” said Carol. “Good morning to you Mrs. Belivet,” answered Therese, remembering the last conversation they had before falling asleep last night. Carol sighed and gave Therese a dazzling smile as she replied, “Mrs. Belivet does have a very nice ring to it, doesn’t it?” “It certainly does,” replied Therese who matched Carol’s smile.

“Can you believe I woke up first?” queried Therese. “Barely,” answered Carol stretching, and teasingly extending her legs across Therese’s lower body. Therese said, “We have about twenty minutes before the alarm goes off, especially since we showered last night and prepared for work. “Do we have time for some pillow talk?” asked Therese. “Of course,” said Carol as she scooted closer to Therese and stroked her cheek. “Speaking of rings,” said Therese, “Remember that you need to write down the words you want engraved inside my ring. My ring probably will not arrive at Devon Jewelry until Friday at the earliest since it’s coming from California. There is no rush for you but since your ring is already at Devon Jewelry I’m going to drop off my engraving
instructions tomorrow. The store is closed on Monday.” Carol said, “His shop is quite near the furniture store where I work, so I could drop both of the engraving instructions off any day this week. I certainly won’t forget, my darling and I promise not to peek at what you wrote for me. Just put it in a sealed triple wrapped envelope.” Therese chuckled at Carol’s admission of curiosity. Carol said, “I am so excited about our party to show off our new rings.” “I can hardly wait,” said Therese, moving even closer to Carol. “The freedom we’ll have to wear the rings will be even greater, given yesterday’s conversation with Rindy and Harge.” stated Carol.

“Carol, what other big plans do you have today?” “Well,” said Carol, “I am going to do some preliminary looking for a different bedroom arrangement for Rindy now that she may be having Karen sleepover on some weekends. I’m going to call Karen’s mother first to be sure that she would approve.” Therese smiled, “She did refer to us as ‘Rindy’s mothers,’ in the plural form when we visited yesterday, and Karen adores her gay uncles, so I doubt it would be a problem.” “Oh dearest,” said Carol, “I wasn’t thinking of her having issues of Karen sleeping in a ‘homosexual household’—is that what your political friends would call us?” Therese grinned widely and said “Probably they’d say ‘lesbian household’, but you are picking up the terms quite well Carol.” Therese placed a quick kiss on Carol’s nose. Carol explained, “Marjorie may not want Karen to stay overnight in the big city.” Therese said, “Now that Rindy and Karen share what they believe to be a delicious romantic secret within their families, they will probably become even closer.” Carol smiled and nodded.

Therese said, “Dannie is on vacation this week and I have to watch two of the interns that report to him. They won’t know what hit them,” chuckled Therese. “I keep my small staff hopping, but they rarely complain. They learn a lot and tend to be among the first to get promotions. I believe in being strict, but fair, with some fun thrown in. Also, they all know about ‘us’ and no one cares. Somehow word just gets around. After attending some of the Daughters of Bilitis meetings I have learned that people can find out about your sexuality by the little things you say, like what you did on the weekend and with whom. Either you must decide to be so careful that you never talk about your life in any way whatsoever or you simply can be yourself and let the chips fall where they may.” Therese continued, “Remember two years ago when things were getting much better with Harge and then last fall’s heart attack scare when he decided to change to joint custody of Rindy?” Carol nodded. “And recall that I said back then that I wanted to be less ‘hidden’.” Our big fear was losing Rindy, and now that is no longer an issue. I know that many people worry about losing their jobs should someone find out, but the photography department of The New York Times has many different kinds of people.” Carol added, “My boss, Mr. O’Halloran, cares not one bit, either. He knows I bring in quite a large clientele of ‘gentlemen with exquisite taste in furniture’.” “Sometimes he makes me laugh when he says ‘Carol, one of the members of your church stopped by looking for a Queen Anne chair’ or whatever else they sought to purchase.” Carol noted, “He even refers to you as ‘Carol’s girlfriend, The Times photographer’ when talking to one of the other employees.” Therese started to ask a question, but Carol anticipated it and said, “He asked me long ago if it was alright with me for him to tell the small staff and I said yes, if the occasion were appropriate.” Carol began to laugh from a remembered incident at the store. Therese pressed her to share the story, so Carol related, “Soon after you moved in with me in April 1953, one of my colleagues, Norah, noticed how happy I was—I was ecstatic to say the least, and she pressed me to tell her who the lucky man was. I passed it off with some remark about being mysterious, but later when Norah heard that I was living with a woman whom I loved, she came around one quiet day and asked me if all that happiness was due to being ‘with a woman’?” “What did you say?” asked Therese eagerly. “Well,” said Carol, “I just winked and gave her a dazzling smile and it that indeed it was true.” “Norah’s face went blank, and then she said ‘I am so happy for you, Carol.’”
Buzz! The alarm on Carol’s nightstand signaled the end of their pillow talk. The workday preparation has officially begun, but not before Carol and Therese exchanged a long hug and kiss, hopped from their bed and quickly wrapped their nude bodies in their robes and grabbed their slippers.

Carol headed for the kitchen as Therese took her turn in the bathroom. Therese loved their everyday routines. They truly were just like any other modern couple. The only difference was that they were two women. Therese made a mental note to talk to Carol about a couple of people from the political organizations that she would like to invite to their ‘Unveiling of the Rings’ party next month.

After agreeing that dinner that night would be a pizza from one of the many pizzerias in the neighborhood, plus a salad that they would make together, they shared a tender kiss and a long hug, applied their lipstick and were out the door.

2:00 PM that same day, O’Halloran’s Furniture Store on Fourth Avenue, New York City

Carol was taking a short break from a busy day at work. She was so busy that she had to settle for a package of peanut butter filled cheese crackers plus an apple for lunch. She dialed Marjorie Sinclair’s number in New Jersey. “Hello,” said a pleasant voice that Carol knew was Marjorie’s. “Hello, Marjorie. This is Carol Aird, Rindy’s mother.” “Carol! I’m so pleased that you called. I was wondering how last evening’s talk went with Rindy.” “Oh, Marjorie, it was successful beyond my wildest expectations.” Marjorie said, “I know you’re at work, so we can talk details later if there’s anything that you want to share. I certainly don’t want to pry.” Carol said, “Our whole family is grateful to yours for getting us started on the road that we needed to travel. We should have talked to Rindy months ago, but we had a very open and honest conversation last night. All four of us are thrilled with the result.” Marjorie said, “Oh! I’m so happy for you. I only wish I had as positive a relationship with my ex-husband as you have with Harge.” Carol didn’t elaborate, but did say, “Harge wants only the best for Rindy and now honesty and openness is part of that, too.” Carol decided to change the subject to the purpose of her call. “Marjorie, since Karen and Rindy are even closer friends now that they both must keep ‘family secrets’ it would seem appropriate for Therese and I to invite Karen to spend a Friday and Saturday night occasionally here at our apartment. If you were agreeable, I wanted to start right away to buy another bed or a roll-away or a trundle bed.”

Marjorie replied sincerely, “I can’t think of any two people I would trust more with Karen than you and Therese.” Carol knew Marjorie wouldn’t object, but she was momentarily stunned by the warmth and sincerity of Marjorie’s answer. Carol replied, “Well, That’s that. Thank you, Marjorie.” Carol added, “We can decide on a date soon. Rindy will be with us this weekend and we should be able to secure the furniture. Perhaps a sleepover could be scheduled two weeks after that on the 20th and 21st of March. Marjorie said, “Hmm. Spring break starts at their school on Friday the 20th. Is Rindy going to spend the entire week’s break with you and Therese?” Carol brought her hand to her forehead as she remembered the schedule. “Marjorie, I am going to have to talk with Harge.” We had her here the entire last spring break, so actually it’s his turn to
have her for spring break, but Harge and I are much more flexible now in working the vacation times. We also want to take into consideration what Rindy wants. I know this year is supposed to be her first time to attend the Easter Parade in New York City,” explained Carol. “Oh,” said Marjorie. Karen has been talking non-stop about it too. Since we’ve not yet lived in this area for a year, we’ve not had a chance to take part in the traditions.”

Carol and Marjorie agreed to talk later about the Easter Parade and the girls’ participation. After hanging up, Carol checked to see if any customers needed her assistance. Seeing none, she strolled over to look at beds. Her eyes lit up when she saw a mid-century modern trundle bed with light brown posts. The price was right (especially with her employee discount) but Therese and Rindy needed to see it. Carol spoke quietly to Mr. O’Halloran about letting her put a hold on it until the weekend. He nodded his approval and Carol created an “On Hold – see senior furniture buyer” and placed it prominently on the bed. Carol looked at the bed with a smile growing on her face as she thought of all the fun Rindy would have entertaining her little friends in their home. She made a mental note to take a photograph of the bed using the simple camera Therese had given her.

3:30 PM that same day, O’Halloran’s Furniture Store on Fourth Avenue, New York City

Mr. O’Halloran answered the phone. “Ah, hello Therese it’s nice to hear from you.” Now I’m sure you’d like to speak with Carol, but perhaps I could have a quick word with you first. “Oh, of course, Mr. O’Halloran,” said Therese, “What can I do for you?” He said, “You’ve probably already guessed it has to do with furniture.” Therese smiled to herself. “There are several pieces that I am negotiating with a customer in Denver and I would like to have some top-notch photos of these pieces.” Therese answered, “I would be happy to stop by any afternoon this week, although Saturday would be more convenient for me. I am doing double duty during the day supervising one of my colleagues’ interns. However, if time is of the essence, I will somehow manage for you, sir.” Mr. O’Halloran said, “Saturday would be fine. Carol tells me that you may be buying a new bed for your daughter’s room and that the three of you might be shopping here on Saturday. Just bring your camera then.” Therese was slightly startled, and quite pleased, by Mr. O’Halloran’s reference to Rindy as “your daughter.” Therese asked if any time during the day was appropriate. “Late morning would be best,” he said.

“May I have a quick word with Carol, if she is available?” Therese asked politely. “Oh sure,” he said, “Carol.” Soon Carol was on the line. “Darling, is everything alright?” “Well…” Therese started. “I am really having an issue with one of Dannie’s male interns. Wouldn’t you know, I just have to watch three of them this week and already one is being obnoxious to one of Dannie’s other female interns and he’s also flirting with me.” “Can’t you just march him down to human resources and let them straighten him out?” asked Carol. Therese answered, “It’s more complicated. The new female intern doesn’t want to make a fuss, because I suspect she’s a woman like us, Carol.” (“My God, thought Carol. Have the homosexuals overtaken the metropolis?”) Carol said, “Well, darling, handle his indiscretions towards you and perhaps that will give the other woman more courage for the future.” “Do I have your permission to acknowledge my sexuality?” Therese asked Carol. “Dearest, I trust your instinct. I love you.” Therese said, “I love you, too.” and hung up the phone.
Fortunately with Therese’s latest promotions, she had a small office, but without a door. There was no ceiling, but the walls did provide a modicum of privacy. Therese asked Dannie’s interns, Dennis and Dorene, to join her in her office. Therese asked them to take a seat. Dorene did so, but Dennis remained standing, crossed his arms with a defiant expression. Therese asked Dorene to explain her complaint against Dennis. “Well, he said I had a nice set of boobs for a dyke.” “I see.” answered Therese. “Dennis, are those the words you said to Dorene?” Dennis answered curtly, “Yep.” Therese asked Dennis, “Do you wish to apologize for your inappropriate remarks?” Dennis said, “Nope.” Therese said, well, this is rather clearly in violation of our personnel policy, so I think the two of you need to follow me to human resources right now.” Dennis said, “Now wait just a damn minute, Miss Belivet.” Therese whirled on him and stepped forward until there was less than a foot between their faces. “Be very careful, Dennis,” said Therese. “You are skating on very thin ice here.” “Oh really?” asked Dennis. “From what I hear, you’re an even bigger dyke than Dorene.” “Well,” Therese said, “her voice almost trembling, I’m not sure what you mean by ‘bigger dyke’ when you refer to me, but I’ll have you know that I am held in the high esteem by this department and The New York Times. I think the personnel department will be most interested in your conflicting opinion of me. Let’s. All. Go. Now.

Dennis was visibly sweating. Therese turned to another intern, “John, could you gather up some empty moving boxes and stack them on Dennis’s desk? Thank you.”

Dennis was gone before the end of the day. Therese was comforting Dorene. “You don’t have to put up with slurs, Dorene.” Dorene answered, when my new boss, Dannie returns, will he stand up for me like you did?” Therese smiled. “Dannie is a very fair person. I know he will stand up for you, particularly with regards to slurs having to do with your sexuality. Just do the very best work you can do and look for members of the staff who will go-to-bat for you as I just did.” Dorene quietly whispered to Therese, “is it true…about you, I mean?” Therese nodded. Dorene said, “I looked for a wedding band on your right ring finger but didn’t see anything.” “Well, said Therese with a big smile, “my lover and I are going to take care of that omission next month.” “Wow” said Dorene. I admire you so much and I want to learn all I can while in the photography department with you.” “Get ready for some hard work,” said Therese, “but Dannie and I are very fair and I think you can learn a lot.”
Not Just Any Monday Pizza Night

Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 14 takes place at the end of the day, Monday March 2, 1959 at the New York Times and at the apartment of Carol and Therese in New York City. Therese has been offered a job promotion while Carol has an amusing telephone call from Harge.

Monday is their usual pizza night where Therese picks up a pizza on the way home and Carol makes a salad. Tonight Carol decides to depart from the usual pizza night by including an appetizer.

Chapter Notes

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Regards, Pipestone

Monday March 2, 1959

6:00 PM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

Carol kept a close eye on the clock on the living room mantle. She wasn’t surprised that Therese had not arrived home from work yet, given the personnel crisis that had occurred that afternoon at The New York Times. Therese briefly told Carol what was happening. Therese was in charge of Dannie’s interns while he was on vacation and an ugly incident took place between two of Dannie’s interns. One, named Dennis had insulted another of Dannie’s interns named Dorene by telling her that ‘she had a nice set of boobs for a dyke.’ Dennis had not counted on the fact that Dorene would go to Therese, the acting supervisor. Dennis thought Dorene would be too afraid to have a supervisor find out she had been called a ‘dyke.’ Although Dorene had no idea of Therese’s sexuality, Dorene was not going to be insulted without putting up a fight. Dennis made his final mistake, not only by refusing to apologize when Therese asked him to do so, but said Therese was even a ‘bigger dyke.’ Moments later, Therese was leading Dennis and Dorene to the personnel department, and at the same time calling out to a co-worker to gather moving boxes for Dennis.

6:30 PM – The New York Times’ personnel office

After Dennis had been moved out with lightning speed and Therese had settled the department
down and got everyone refocused on their work, the head of personnel, Mr. James Callahan, had called Therese to his office for a debrief. He interviewed her with a stenographer present so that Therese would have a minimum of paperwork to fill out. Therese related all the conversations accurately, including the part where Dennis accused Therese of being a ‘bigger dyke’ than Dorene. “Well,” answered Therese. “Within my department and certainly within personnel, it’s fairly well-known that I live with another woman in a long-term loving relationship.” Therese continued, “The photography department insisted on knowing if there were any reasons that could cause me to be blackmailed, because that would affect the veracity of my work.” “That question was asked of me years ago, and I consulted with my significant other, and we agreed that my life here at work would be open.” “By the way, Therese continued, I believe with all my heart that the openness with which I conduct myself allows me to be a better employee.”

Mr. Callahan pushed back from his desk slightly and thoughtfully regarded Therese. “You’re an extremely talented and highly-regarded employee, Miss Belivet. Many people in both the photography department and the personnel department share that opinion. I would like you to carefully consider which career line you would like to pursue, photography or personnel or a combination of the two. We can make some accommodations for a special employee like you. Take a few weeks to consider it and discuss it with your companion. We’ll meet again. Congratulations on handling a difficult situation so adeptly today. By the way, tomorrow I’ll need you to review the stenographer’s typed up notes of our conversation and sign them once you’re satisfied with their accuracy. I don’t want to take you away from your valuable time in the photography department to write up this unpleasant incident. Congratulations again on how you handled yourself. You may go now.” Mr. Callahan stood up and shook Therese’s hand. He was pleased with her firm handshake. Therese replied, “Thank you, sir.” She left his office semi-dazed by how well it went, especially considering that she had been open about her sexual orientation.

6:30 PM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

Carol ran towards the ringing telephone thinking it was Therese, but instead she heard a familiar manly voice. “Hello, Carol.” “Hello, Harge.” Carol said pleasantly. “It appears you have survived the first half-day since ‘The Talk’ with Rindy.” Harge chuckled. “Well, Carol, before you and Therese become too smug about my being the only one here to answer her follow-up questions, I’ll have you know I presented her with her very own small leather notebook so she can write questions for you and Therese as they come to mind. Oh, I’ll take my share of questions, but if I am not sure of the answer, I’ll say ‘write that down to ask Mommy and Aunt Therese.’” Carol threw back her head and laughed. “Well, Harge, fair is fair.” I’ll see if Therese can pick out a small notebook we can keep here at the apartment and label it ‘Questions for Daddy’.” “You wouldn’t!” said Harge in mock dismay. Carol just laughed delightedly. There was a pause in the conversation, then Harge said, “Isn’t it so much better to laugh than fight with each other? Carol, I am so, so sorry for the horrible things I did to you, Rindy and Therese. I will never, forgive myself.” “Harge, stop it!” Carol said firmly. You have apologized to us all. You have tormented yourself over this. You may go now.” Mr. Callahan stood up and shook Therese’s hand. He was pleased with her firm handshake. Therese replied, “Thank you, sir.” She left his office semi-dazed by how well it went, especially considering that she had been open about her sexual orientation.

Harge was so quiet that Carol had to ask if he were still on the line. “Oh, yes.” said Harge, “but there is an entirely different subject I need to talk to you about. Rindy is driving me out of my mind talking about Easter bonnets and the Easter Parade in New York City on the 29th. She and Karen are on the phone constantly talking about it, too. My God! How much energy can be put
“Into a hat?” Carol laughed and laughed. “Harge, you’re a man, and you just don’t understand these feminine things.” Harge offered this suggestion, “Let’s talk again before the end of the week when she’s getting ready for the weekend with you and Therese. Perhaps she could bring a couple of your old hats that you left here. Maybe one of them could be fancied up for her for her first Easter Parade.” Carol replied, “Good idea. And when the ‘hat talk’ starts to drive you crazy, then just tell Rindy to save those thoughts for Mommy and Aunt Therese. I’ll talk to Rindy by phone tomorrow, too.” “Thank you.” sighed Harge. “Goodbye Carol. Give my regards to Therese.”

6:45 PM – The New York Times, Therese Belivet’s office

Carol was still chuckling when the phone rang again. Before Carol could say hello, Therese said “Darling, sorry I’m still at the office.” Carol was quick to reply. “Don’t worry dearest. Are you alright?” “Oh yes,” said Therese. “I’m just fine. “Why don’t you call for a pizza at our favorite place around the corner and make a salad for us? I’ll pick up the pizza and be home in about forty minutes.” “Perfect.” said Carol. “See you soon sweetheart.” Carol couldn’t stop smiling at the sound of her beloved’s voice on the phone. She laughed even more at the thought of Rindy making Harge model an Easter bonnet. He loved her so much he probably would indulge her.

7:30 PM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

Therese drug herself wearily in the front door carrying an aromatic cardboard box of pizza. She glanced in the kitchen. There was no sign of Carol, but there was a note on the kitchen counter on top of a cookie sheet which read: ‘Oven is on warm. Please put the pizza on the cookie sheet and into the oven. Salad is in the refrigerator. Red wine in the glass is for you. Please knock on the bedroom door. We’re having appetizers in there. By the way, you are wearing entirely too many clothes right now.’ Therese started giggling and shaking her head.

Therese took a hearty drink of the red wine. She took off her work suit and slip and carefully laid them across the couch. Clad in only in her bra, panties, nylons, garter belt and high heeled shoes, she checked herself in the mirror, and determined that she looked sexy enough for whatever awaited her inside their bedroom. Smiling, Therese knocked lightly on the door. “Do come in, darling,” said Carol suggestively. Therese slowly opened the door to find Carol in bed wearing her sexiest, sheer ivory nightgown with one strap slipping off her shoulder. Carol wore her reading glasses and was reading the Brides magazine Therese had borrowed from a co-worker. Therese was rooted to where she stood, gaping at the gorgeous woman who would soon be her real-life bride. Therese took another hefty swig of the wine, opened her mouth, but only a hoarse squeak came out. Carol smiled a very sexy smile, tossed the Brides magazine onto the nightstand, and while still wearing her reading glasses, smiled and said, “Miss Belivet, I presume.” Therese finally gained her wits and stammered, “I don’t see the appetizers anywhere?” “Really.” answered Carol, slipping to the edge of the bed and standing up inches from Therese. Carol’s nightgown strap slipped even further off her shoulder “Would you like to borrow my reading glasses to help you find the appetizers?” Therese nodded slowly, hypnotized by the sight of her lover. Carol placed the glasses on Therese, and immediately the world went blurry for Therese, but she didn’t care. Carol hummed as she unhooked Therese’s garters and rolled down her nylons. Carol stroked Therese’s legs and lifted each leg out of her shoes.

“You’re very quiet, dearest.” said Carol. “Do you wish to share a thought?” Therese said dazedly, “Is this our regular Monday pizza night?” Carol laughed delightedly and tossed her hair. “Well, no, darling. Frankly I was getting a little bored with our regular Monday pizza night and thought I might spice it up a bit.” “How am I doing so far, Therese?” Carol removed the reading glasses so Carol came back into focus again. Therese said, “Well, I’m getting quite an appetite, my love.” Carol laughed as she hooked her red lacquered nails in the elastic band of Therese’s panties and started a slow tug downward. Carol’s thumb caressed between Therese’s thighs, noticed the wetness and she said, “My, my, I think we should move right along, don’t
you?” In one swift move, Therese managed to unhook her own bra and fling it...somewhere, step out of her panties and kick them who knows where. Carol started to slip off her gown, but Therese stopped her and said “Allow me Mrs. Belivet. Goodbye nightgown!” They shared a delighted laugh and rolled into bed kissing and laughing and frantically touching each other. Their bodies pressed as close as was possible, and with some minor adjustments and touching, they cried out simultaneously as ecstasy shuddered through them both.

Therese rolled onto her back but kept her hand tangled in Carol’s hair. “Oh my gosh!” Therese leaned over and kissed Carol tenderly and said, “That, my love was quite an appetizer.” Carol nuzzled Therese’s cheek and said, “Dearest, all the surprises are not over in the first six years together.” Therese said, “You are my woman and I love you so much. You never fail to surprise me. Now how about I set up the pizza and salad? I’m famished. I think it was the appetizer that did it.” Carol laughed as she handed Therese her robe and donned her own, “Isn’t the definition of an appetizer a small portion of food or drink that stimulates the desire to eat?” Therese said, “Yes, but I don’t feel as though I just had a small portion—quick one perhaps, but certainly not small.”

8:15 PM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

Carol and Therese chatted throughout the meal. They decided they had enough to have leftovers the next night. Therese told Carol the details about the personnel department matter and the promotion offer. They agreed to mull it over for a few days. Therese wanted to ensure that she would never be cut off from the opportunity to photograph, but the personnel aspect of the job intrigued her as well. “Think of all the good I could do, Carol. I might help eliminate discrimination against homosexuals at The Times. I agree, darling, but I know how much your photography means to you. I hope you would not have to sacrifice it.” Therese said, “Mr. Callahan said something could be worked out to give me both. I certainly want to explore it.” Carol put down her fork and looked at Therese lovingly. “I am so very proud of you, Therese.” Therese blushed, blew a kiss to Carol and said, “Oh my love. I can’t wait to wear your ring.” Carol said, “And I can’t wait to wear yours, sweetheart.”

Carol said, “I’ll clean up here. You go ahead and get ready for bed. Let’s make it an early night. I’ll tell you a funny nighttime story about Harge and the Easter bonnets. I spoke to him on the phone while I was waiting for you to come home.” Therese laughed merrily. “This should be very amusing pillow talk.”
Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 15 takes place at the end of the day, Monday March 2, 1959 at Aird/Belivet apartment. Carol and Therese are enjoying pillow talk of some of the day's events. Carol and Therese also discuss the newly-approved joint custody agreement of Rindy. The next part of the chapter takes place Tuesday morning March 3 at O'Halloran's Furniture where Carol telephones Harge to discuss Easter plans and the new joint custody agreement. It's a happy conversation.

Chapter Notes

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

I will post the next chapter in this continuing storyline as soon as I can. Sorry I am posting more slowly. I will try to pick up the pace of my writing. Remember, Carol and Therese still must have their party to show off their matching rings. Oh, but first there's the traditional Easter Parade in New York City on Sunday March 29, 1959.

Regards, Pipestone

Monday March 2, 1959

9:00 PM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

Carol and Therese were taking part in “pillow talk” —their second most enjoyable activity in bed. Carol had just finished amusing Therese with the details of Harge’s phone call to her earlier in the day. Therese chuckled, “I can’t believe Harge gave Rindy her own little leather notebook to record questions for us that she might have forgotten to ask you me during yesterday’s talk the three of our had with her yesterday. A leather notebook is so “Wall Street”—perfect thing for Harge to get her.” Carol laughed, too, as she told Therese how Harge pretended to be dismayed when Carol said she and Therese would be providing Rindy with a “Questions for Daddy” notebook so that she could remember questions for him while she was having her weekend at their apartment. Therese said, “I think I will put a photo of Rindy and Harge on the cover of the notebook. Also, there’s a colleague of mine who is skilled in calligraphy. She can make the “Questions for Daddy” lettering look quite elegant. Carol and Therese giggled like schoolgirls at the thought of it.

In a more serious tone, Carol said, “It really is so wonderful to have established a better relationship with Harge. I can’t remember the last time I laughed with him on the phone.” “Oh,” Carol continued, “he said to give you his regards without Rindy being there to prompt him to say it.” “This is truly a welcome and amazing turn of events. I can hardly imagine life with no more worries about custody or repercussions.” mused Therese. “Speaking of custody,” said Carol, “my
lawyer, Fred Haymes, called later today to tell me that Rindy’s joint custody agreement had been finalized and that he had a copy for us. “Carol!” exclaimed Therese. “That is the most exciting news of the day. Why didn’t you tell me sooner?” “Well,” said Carol with a mischievous wink, you and I were somewhat involved in our special pizza night, and besides, I told you last week that Fred had said it would just be a few more days.” “True,” said Therese. “Everything is the way Harge, you and I wanted.” Carol explained, “Now the agreement just reads joint custody without spelling out specific weekends or weeks of the year. It just says that the time Rindy spends with each parent will meet the agreement of both parents. If an insurmountable conflict about the details occurs, the court will become involved again, however, it does state that both Harge and I must be satisfied with the amount of time we are spending with Rindy.” Carol continued, “Harge and I are determined to make this work, and we are going to ensure that Rindy is a participant in decisions whenever we can accommodate her wishes.” Carol continued, “Harge told me he is determined to be fair and I want to be, too.” Therese exhaled loudly, “Amazing, plus what Harge said yesterday—that he will be supportive of our relationship.” “My God, Carol…” Therese couldn’t finish her sentence for the tears of joy welling up in her chest. Carol pulled Therese close and kissed the corners of her eyes. Neither woman spoke for a few minutes. Carol said softly, “I think Harge has wanted to make amends for the past years of unspeakable pain he caused me and you as well.”

Carol said, “The first challenge about agreeing to Rindy’s time will be the upcoming spring break vacation. She has time off from school starting Friday, March 20th until Tuesday March 31st,” Last year we had her the entire time, but I am hoping all four of us can agree that she can spend part of that time here at our apartment and part in New Jersey.” Therese said, “You know she wants to take part in her first New York City Easter Parade on Sunday the 29th.” “Oh yes.” Carol started laughing and Therese had to kiss her to get her to stop. “What on earth is so funny, silly woman of mine?” said Therese with affection. “Is this what you were referring to earlier when you said Harge mentioned Easter bonnets?” “Yes!” Carol managed to choke out between laughs. Here is the consummate Wall Street financial wizard brought to his knees by his ten-year-old daughter constantly talking about her Easter bonnet—try to picture it, Therese.” Therese paused and spluttered with laughter, “I can imagine Rindy at the dinner table chattering on and on about the details she was planning for her bonnet while Harge’s eyes glaze over.” Carol explained that she promised Harge she would call Rindy tomorrow to ensure that she spare Daddy the details and just get on the phone to us anytime if she wants to talk bonnets. Therese, you should have heard the relief in his voice.” Apparently Rindy and Karen talk on the phone each night about bonnets as well and Rindy announced to Harge that Karen’s Uncle Jack and Uncle Michael were excited about the bonnets as well and wanted Karen to share all the details them.” “That is absolutely hilarious, Carol” laughed Therese. “I am almost too keyed up to go to sleep now.” “How about a nice back rub and cuddles and kisses?” asked Carol. “Perfect, my love” said Therese, “but I want to reciprocate.” Carol replied, “Then you should rub my legs and feet, dearest for I’ve been on them all day, except for our delightful pizza appetizer tonight.” “With pleasure.” said Therese. After each woman gave the other a loving massage and many kisses and endearments, they curled up like two spoons and fell into a happy sleep.

Tuesday March 3, 1959

7:30 AM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

Before Carol and Therese left their apartment for the workday, Carol ensured that Therese would be in agreement with anything Carol and Harge might work out regarding Rindy’s schedule. “Carol, I may be called in to work part of Easter Sunday to photograph some of the festivities of the Easter Parade, but I will discuss with my boss the possibility of doing my photography in the vicinity of our apartment, where Rindy and Karen are likely to be. I have a photo idea in my mind’s eye, in fact.” Carol placed her hands on Therese’s cheeks with affection. “Care to share
dearest?” asked Carol. “Well, explained Therese, I suspect that Karen and Rindy will be riding on the shoulders of Uncle Jack and Uncle Michael. Both men are 6 foot 4 inches and very photogenic and Rindy and Karen are precious. If they have nice bonnets, a photo like that would surely make it into print.” “My brilliant Therese.” said Carol. “Wouldn’t that be great!” Therese said, “I’ll pitch it to my boss along with all the other random photos I would need to take. I’m liking this idea more and more.”

Tuesday March 3, 1959

10:00 AM – O’Halloran’s Furniture – New York City.

Before the day got started, Carol called Harge’s office to see if they could talk about Rindy’s spring break when Harge dropped Rindy off on Friday. Carol heard his phone ringing, then he answered saying “Hargess Aird.” “Hello, Harge, it’s Carol.” “What a nice surprise, Carol. Have you and Therese designed Rindy’s notebook saying “Questions for Daddy?” He chuckled. “Actually Therese is working on it as we speak and I know Rindy will enjoy filling it with questions.” Carol teased. Harge offered a fake groan, followed by a laugh. “We’ll make this work, Carol.” He said sincerely. “Of course we will,” said Carol.

“Harge, the reason I called during the day is to have a bit of privacy. Now that our joint custody agreement gives us more flexibility, I wanted to ask you what plans you had for Rindy during her spring break time off or what Rindy had said to you that she wanted to do. Therese and I had her the entire ten-day period last year. “Well, Harge offered, in past times I would have said that you and Therese had her all of last year’s spring break, so now it’s my turn to have her the entire time.” Carol listened carefully, for she suspected that Harge was going to surprise her in a pleasant way. “Carol, I don’t want to keep doing things the old way, especially now that you, Therese and I have had “The Talk” with Rindy. Let’s be more flexible and try to accommodate plans each household might have and Rindy’s wants as well.” Carol could picture Harge’s smiling face and Carol was smiling, too. “Actually,” Harge said, “the new way of doing things may prove to be a bit more complicated than the old way where Rindy was just like a precious person shuttled between our houses. She is getting older and has her own plans that we need to accommodate.” Carol replied, “I couldn’t agree more. This may prove to be a bit more complicated, but it will be done in a happy way.”

Harge asked, “Isn’t she due for the upcoming weekend, March 6th through March 8th at your apartment?” “Yes,” said Carol and I really want to stick to that schedule, for I want Rindy to look at some other potential arrangements for her bedroom that could accommodate a guest. I have a feeling that Karen may become a frequent visitor, and I have already spoken to Marjorie Sinclair, Karen’s mother, who agrees that Karen can come. I found a nice trundle bed here at the store that might work well and I want to make sure Rindy likes it.”

Harge perked up at the mention of Marjorie Sinclair’s name. “As a matter of fact, I have been invited to the Sinclair home this Saturday night,” said Harge. Jack Sinclair called me last night. His business partner at the car dealership, Tom Diamond, is coming over for poker with Michael and they want me to join them. Tom’s wife, Gladys will keep Marjorie company and they will hopefully keep us fed with snacks. I am really looking forward to it.” Carol could definitely sense the excitement in his voice. “I hope you have a wonderful time and don’t worry, Therese and I will spend a lot of time doing Easter bonnet talk so that you are spared.” Harge whistled. “I owe both of you a debt. I’ll try to ensure Rindy brings everything she needs for the upcoming weekend, including some of the old hats you left when you moved.”

“Harge, please bring a calendar when you come on Friday to drop Rindy off. Ask her to think
about any plans she has in New Jersey during part of the spring break. I feel sure that both Rindy and Karen and perhaps Marge might want to be our guests Friday night the 27th and Saturday night the 28th. Therese and I have been discussing having them plus the two uncles plus Daddy of course, for an Easter meal. We would eat at whatever is an appropriate time given the Easter Parade, but with Marge’s help I think Therese and I can pull it off.” Harge couldn’t believe his ears, so he asked, “Did you say I was invited, too?” Carol said, “I tried to put myself in your place—knowing you would want to see Rindy in her first Easter Parade.” “So yes, Harge, when I said ‘Daddy’ I meant you. Would you join us?” Harge was silent for so long Carol had to ask him if he was alright. Harge said in a choked voice, “Just give me a minute.” Carol said, “Do you have your nitroglycerin pills handy?” Harge, said, “Yes, but I’m alright now. Carol, your capacity for forgiveness exceeds more than I am entitled to—same for Therese. I will spend the rest of my life trying to make right the wrongs I forced on you.”

“Well,” said Carol, trying to lighten the mood a bit, “You could try to memorize your mother’s face when you break the news that you’ll be spending Easter with Rindy, Therese and me at our apartment.” Harge gave a hearty laugh. “I know just what to say to her. I’ll start by saying Mother, you’ll probably want to buy a smaller ham this year.” Carol threw back her head and laughed merrily. “I guess it would be too much to take a photograph at the exact moment your words sink in, but oh, that picture would be worth a thousand words.” Harge agreed and added that his father would back him up. “Dad is getting so weary of her shrill quasi-sermons on moral degradation.” Carol added, “Meaning Therese and me?” “Oh, sure.” said Harge. Remember that I promised Rindy that I would stand up to her grandmother each and every time she speaks ill of either you or Therese.” “This is a promise I’ll be happy to keep.”

Carol said, “Well, Harge, I must let you get back to work and I should be doing so, too, but thanks for spending time planning a happy spring break for our daughter.” Harge answered, “I wish you could have seen Rindy’s face the past two days. She is happier than I have ever seen her.” Carol said, “This means the world to me. Now I’d better hang up before my mascara is completely destroyed.” “Harge, I’ll call Rindy tonight for Easter bonnet talk and I will see you Friday afternoon.” Harge laughed, “I’ll bring a calendar and of course her little leather notebook.”

They wished each other a good week and hung up. Carol immediately called Therese. She needed to hear her beloved’s voice. When she heard Therese say “Hello,” Carol said, “I had the most civil and pleasant conversation with Harge about Rindy’s schedule. I just wanted to hear your voice, dearest. I love you so.” “Tell me all about it tonight, my love,” answered Therese. “I love you, too.” They hung up.

Carol heard a customer enter the store. She checked the mirror to ensure she looked her best, smoothed her skirt and approached the customer with a sincere smile. “Welcome to O’Halloran’s Furniture. My name is Carol. May I help you?”
More Happiness Than We Ever Dreamed Of

Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 16 takes place at the end of the day, Wednesday March 4, 1959 at Aird/Belivet apartment. Carol is on the phone to Harge and Rindy telling them what to bring to create the Easter bonnet during the upcoming weekend visit. Harge, Carol, and Therese continue to bask in the happiness of the joint custody agreement for Rindy.

Chapter Notes

I will post the next chapter in this continuing storyline as soon as I can. It may seem that time is crawling with my storyline, but have patience, the Easter bonnet creation and Parade are coming soon.

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

Regards,

Wednesday March 4, 1959

7:30 PM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

Carol had spent several long conversations with Rindy on the telephone talking about the Easter bonnet she was going to make and also about her best friend, Karen’s Easter bonnet. “Mommy,” Rindy asked thoughtfully, “Karen’s Uncle Jack and Uncle Michael are both very interested in Karen’s bonnet. Why do you think Daddy gets such a funny look when I talk about mine?”

“Well, sweet pea,” said Carol, “Some men are more interested in fashion than others, and Karen is lucky her uncles want to talk to her about the details of her Easter bonnet.” Carol continued, “Your Daddy is very happy that you are excited about your first Easter Parade and he wants Aunt Therese and me to have the pleasure of being involved in your hat.” “Daddy is so excited that he wants to see you at the Easter Parade, too. Aunt Therese and I have invited him to come to the apartment and be a part of the event.”

“Really!” exclaimed Rindy, “Daddy must have wanted to make it a surprise. I am so glad he’s coming, too.” Carol smiled at the image of her daughter’s excitement of having all three parents attending her first Easter Parade.

Mother and daughter spent a good bit of time listing the materials and supplies that Rindy should bring for her weekend with Carol and Therese. Carol said, “I’ve helped your Daddy make a list for you. Be sure you bring everything. On Saturday, we’ll go to Woolworth’s to get some additional fabric and ribbons and artificial flowers.” “Aunt Therese is going to help you, too.
We’ll have a lot of fun.” “Remember that we need to go to the furniture store where I work to look at the trundle bed that we might get for your room.”

“Will Aunt Therese come with us to see the trundle bed?” asked Rindy.

“Yes, darling,” replied Carol. “In fact, she is going to take some photographs of some furniture pieces at the store that my boss wants to sell to another store across the country.”

“Yay!” exclaimed Rindy, who was always pleased to have Therese accompany them on their adventures. “Oh by the way, Mommy, did you know Daddy bought me my very own little leather notebook so I can write down questions for you and Aunt Therese? It’s so pretty.”

“Oh yes, sweet pea, your Daddy was so excited about your little notebook that he made a special point to call me and tell me you had it.” Carol smirked at the memory of Harge jovially teasing Carol about the notebook.

“Well, I already have a couple of questions written in the notebook,” said Rindy. Carol’s hand went into her purse in search of a stick of Doublemint gum, but she told Rindy she and Aunt Therese would do their best to answer her questions. “I’m so glad that I know more about your relationship, Mommy. It makes me feel like a grown up. I’ve not said anything to anyone, except Karen of course.”

“You are our very special girl, Rindy Aird,” said Carol. “Now if you have any more bonnet questions, be sure to call me.”

“Mommy, Daddy is waving to me—meaning that he wants to talk to you.” said Rindy.

“Hello, Carol,” said Harge. Carol could detect the merriment in his voice.

“Hello to you, Harge.” said Carol, laughing. “Now tell me, what pleases you the most; Rindy’s conversation with me about her Easter bonnet or hearing how she loves her little leather notebook for her follow-up questions from ‘The Talk’?”

“Frankly, it’s a tie,” laughed Harge. “Seriously, though, I really owe you and Therese for taking over the Easter bonnet conversations.”

“Actually we enjoy being involved in her first Easter bonnet,” said Carol. “I just love it when Rindy tells of Karen’s gay uncles’ interest in her Easter bonnet, whereas you are practically frightened by the conversation.”

Harge asked, “Can you explain why many homosexual men are so interested in fashion?”

Carol paused, “Honestly, I don’t exactly know, but since you will be going to the Sinclair’s house for poker Saturday night with Jack, Michael and Jack’s business partner, Tom Diamond, why don’t you ask?”

“Oh sure!” laughed Harge. “I’ll ask right in front of Tom, who is not a homosexual.” “Of course Tom knows about Jack and Michael’s relationship and is the best of friends with them both, I doubt anyone would want Easter bonnets to intrude on the serious business of our poker game.”

Carol teased, “If you want to impress Marge Sinclair, you could ask how Karen’s Easter bonnet is coming along. I’ve detected how you perk up when her name is mentioned.”

“Well, I plan to, as a matter of fact, but I will do so out of earshot of Karen because I don’t want Rindy to think I’m interested in Karen’s bonnet, but not my own daughter’s.” “Jesus!” exclaimed Harge. This bonnet thing has taken on a life of its own. The best part, though, is the kind
invitation you and Therese have extended to me to join you for Rindy’s first Easter Parade.”

Carol changed the subject. “Therese and I had a long talk Tuesday night about the finalization of joint custody of Rindy. She is over the moon with happiness, as I am.”

“We all are, Carol,” and I should have been a better person to make it happen years ago.” Harge paused, and Carol could tell he was starting to get emotional about it again. She could hear him clear his throat and choke up with tears.

“Harge! I’ll say it again. The past is behind us and a wonderful future for all four of us lies ahead. I know you would change the past if you could, but no one can do that. I am getting a little annoyed at you for dwelling on the past and beating yourself up. I’m afraid of the negative effects your emotions might have on your health, especially your heart. Please think of the future and how we all need you to be alive and healthy as Rindy’s father. Harge, I’m no longer giving in to bitterness over the past. You should not give in to regret to the extent it makes you ill.”

“Okay” said Harge as he cleared his throat. “Thank you Carol. Rindy and I will be at your apartment about 5:30 PM on Friday. Remember that we’ll go over the calendar given our new joint custody arrangement. Perhaps we can plan a month or so ahead. I will ensure that Rindy looks at the calendar and expresses her wishes for some of the days of her spring break. Finally, Sunday I am going to tell my mother about Rindy and I spending Easter with you and Therese in the city. I am actually looking forward to it after listening to her rants about abomination all these years. She has become the abomination.” “Don’t worry, Rindy has gone up to her room. I wouldn’t talk like this in front of Rindy if I can help it.”

“Ah, to be a fly on the wall for that conversation.” chuckled Carol. “Goodbye Harge. Give Rindy a goodnight kiss from both Therese and me.”

“Consider it done.” “Goodbye Carol. Please give Therese my best regards.”

After Carol hung up, she stared into space with a dazed look of pure happiness on her face. Therese entered the room.

“Did you have a nice phone conversation with Rindy and Harge? asked Therese. It certainly sounded like it from the bits and pieces I heard.”

“Oh darling,” said Carol, pulling Therese into an embrace. “It’s better than I imagined. Harge sends you his best regards—not just regards.”

“The next time Harge extends regards to me, please reciprocate for me, if you would Carol.” offered Therese with a big smile. “We have come a long way together. This is yet another of your perpetual sunrises, is it not?”

“It is indeed” said Carol before her lips met Therese’s. “Now let’s clean up the kitchen and get ready for bed. I have some more pillow talk in mind.”

Therese winked as she rushed to the kitchen to start the cleanup. I’ll take care of the kitchen, my love. You just get ready for bed. I have more than pillow talk in mind. We can have the pillow talk after, but…” Therese felt no need to finish the sentence.

Even after six years together, a promise of lovemaking from Therese still sent a thrill up and down Carol’s spine. Carol called out “You’ll not believe how fast I can get ready.”

Therese chuckled as she began to wash the dishes—quickly.

Wednesday March 4, 1959
9:00 PM – The Aird/Belivet Apartment, New York City

Carol and Therese had finished their showers and were turning down the covers of their bed. Therese had brought in a favorite scented candle and lit it. They settled into bed and each turned off their nightlights in favor of the softer, more romantic candle glow.

Therese drew Carol into her arms. “Oh my love, you feel so good to me.” “The only downside to a shower before bed is that it washes away what I love to taste.” said Therese.

“We can enjoy each other with morning sex on the weekends Rindy stays with Harge.” said Carol. “And there’s always sex after work. Even though we don’t make love right after work as often as we once did, that is always a possibility.”

Therese began to trace patterns gently on Carol’s face neck and breasts. She said thoughtfully, “Making love less frequently does not change the intensity. In fact, I think it’s better than ever.” Therese’s fingers began to trail lower on Carol’s abdomen and between her legs and Carol opened her legs to give her lover better access.

“I agree. In fact…” Carol gasped at the sensations and could not continue speaking. Carol lay back and basked in the feelings Therese’s hands, fingers and tongue were creating. Therese seemed to be everywhere Carol needed her to be. Carol moaned, arched her back and began saying “Please, darling. You know the place. I need you there now.” At the moment Therese reached that familiar place, Carol cried out Therese’s name, and then said “Please come up here, dearest, I need to hold you.”

Therese pressed her body as close as possible to Carol’s and crooned loving words softly in Carol’s ear. After a few minutes of contented silence, Carol gently reached her hand between Therese’s legs and said “Hmm, I thought so.”

Therese smiled into Carol’s eyes and answered, “Woman, you must know by now what you do to me.” “Of course I am wet—just for you, Carol, my love, always just for you.”

Carol flipped Therese onto her back and gave her a searing kiss. Their tongues danced together in a familiar rhythm that long-time lovers have. All of a sudden Carol was everywhere and Therese’s moans became their love song. Carol kissed her way down Therese’s body and it didn’t take long before Therese was crying out—calling Carol’s name. They lay together quietly for a while--each with her own thoughts.

Therese momentarily untangled from Carol to blow out the candle. They both adored the scent of the extinguished candle in their bedroom after they had made love. Therese turned back into Carol’s arms.

“Did you want to have some pillow talk tonight, Carol?” asked Therese.

“It’s nothing that can’t wait, angel.” answered Carol. “Let’s drift off to sleep and dream of each other.”

“My happiest dream—goodnight Mrs. Belivet,” said Therese.

“That’s who I am.” said Carol as she turned on her side. Therese’s arm rested on Carol’s hip, and Therese snuggled up to Carol’s back. “Goodnight my darling.” said Carol. But the only answer was Therese’s very soft snores. It was music to Carol’s ears as she drifted into her own happy dreams with a smile on her face.
Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 17 takes place Thursday March 5, 1959 at various locations in New York City.

I realized that my last two chapters were rather short, so I tried my best to give you more story, plus some surprises.

Chapter Notes

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

Regards,

Pipestone

1. Thursday March 5, 1959

11:30 AM – The New York Times Building

Therese had received an exciting call from their jeweler, Jonathan Devon informing Therese that her wedding band had arrived from Los Angeles this morning--one day earlier than expected. Even Jonathan could hardly hide his excitement when he called Therese. “I usually don’t make it a practice to call my clients during their workday, but I knew you and Carol were anxiously awaiting the arrival of your ring. Carol’s ring has been securely waiting for its mate in my fireproof safe.”

Therese was momentarily speechless with excitement about the news of the ring’s arrival. “Jonathan, how do they look together?” Therese could imagine the jeweler bringing his hand to his forehead in a dramatic gesture. “My darling lady, words fail me.” “They are absolutely stunning side-by-side.”

Therese struggled to find her voice. She said, “I simply cannot wait to see them, but I want Carol with me.”

Jonathan replied, “Therese, I understand that your lover works very close to my shop. Do you think you could each take a long lunch and stop by today? Remember that I must transport them via an armored car to my colleague’s store near the Diamond District. He’s the best engraver in New York City. All our shops have pooled our money to lease one armored car to shuttle precious stones back and forth. I have both your engraving instructions. I want to ensure that the lovely and touching sentiments that you have written are recorded perfectly. He has a bit of a backlog but has promised that he will complete your order by the end of the first week in April.”

“Jonathan, we cannot thank you enough for this personal attention to our order.” said Therese.
“Let me call Carol and see if we can come over today.”

First Therese needed to ask her own boss, Lee Barnes, to see if he would allow her to go. Even if Carol couldn’t get away, she needed to try on the ring to assure that it fits correctly. She knocked on Mr. Barnes’ door.

“Come in Therese,” said Lee, “and close the door behind you and have a seat.” Therese hoped they would not get into a long conversation about a work related matter at the present time, but out of respect for her boss, she did as she was asked. “I hear that Callahan from Personnel is trying to steal one of my best junior photo editors.” Therese gulped, for she knew she had not shared the conversation between Mr. Callahan and her on Monday March 2, while Mr. Barnes was out of town. Without waiting for a reply from Therese, Mr. Barnes laughed. “Not that I blame him. I heard how you handled the situation with yours and McElroy’s interns while McElroy was out of town. “So our former employee Dennis called you a ‘big dyke’ and you didn’t flinch—just marched him and other woman he had insulted right down to Personnel. Excellent work, Therese. No wonder Callahan is trying to steal you from us.”

“Thank you, sir.” replied Therese in a very professional tone. She sat up quite straight and alert. “I have no intention of hiding my sexuality, nor do I try to make it an issue.”

“Perfectly handled…perfect.” replied Mr. Barnes. “There is no reason for you to hide here. Listen, I know you and your companion are mulling over Callahan’s offer. By the way, what is her name?”

“Carol Aird,” said Therese, ”and we have been together nearly six years.”

Mr. Barnes gave a low whistle, “Commitment. Well congratulations to you both. No wonder you are so committed to your job. That is the way you approach both life and employment.”

Therese let out a breath, unsure whether or not she had gone too far, but she knew that her conversation was the way that the world would be changed (according to her political friends at the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society).

Mr. Barnes listened intently, leaning forward with his arms crossed on top of the desk. “You are brave, Therese, and you are a risk-taker.” “This is the kind of employee I want to promote. Here is what I am going to offer. Right now your job grade is Junior Photo Editor in our Metro section. The next step up is Junior Photo Editor 2. It comes with a raise, new business cards and nameplate and more importantly, those who attain the rank of Junior Photo Editor 2 are the first in line for a promotion to Senior Photo Editor. The promotion timetable is usually three to five years. During the interim years you will be mentored by a Senior Photo Editor who will ensure the success of your career. Also, you will be given no less than two photo shoots annually to be published prominently in The Times. We need our photo editors to keep up their own photo skills and have the possibility to have their work published the The Times, too. Because of your openness of your sexuality, I will find a Senior Photo Editor who will see that openness as an advantage to The Times, because I believe it is. I understand that you are somewhat involved with the city’s homophile organizations. You need not cease that activity, but you must never insinuate that your presence is in any way speaking for The Times. You work here. Period.”

Therese replied, “Yes sir, I completely understand and will gladly comply.” Therese was absolutely stunned at the turn of events. She just wanted a longer lunch and now she was being offered a promotion and a raise.

Mr. Barnes continued, “Do you want to discuss this with your companion before you accept my offer?”
Therese answered, “No sir.” “I accept with joy and gratitude.” “When Mr. Callahan first made the offer of my going into the Personnel department, I spoke with Carol and she had reservations about my straying from my passion—photography.”

“Ah, a wise woman, your Carol!” “Now listen, Therese, Callahan has already thrown a fit when I told him that I was going to make an offer to you that you probably wouldn’t refuse. He still wants to keep you plugged in to Personnel. His boss and my boss have agreed that Personnel will create a committee of a number of the high-profile departments here at The Times and this committee will be populated, not by people in Personnel, but by representatives of the larger departments, like Photography. This committee will meet quarterly in an all-day meeting to bring issues to the attention of Personnel and help Personnel keep in touch with people who work in the larger departments—their needs and care-abouts. This is not intended in any way to usurp the purpose and work of our unions. That will be made clear when the committee is announced. Callahan wants you on that committee and I do, too. All it takes is your agreement. There is no raise involved, but you will get an office with a door and a ceiling for privacy. There will be a big announcement by May first of the creation of this committee. Remember, you will not be doing the work of Personnel, but your responsibility will be to keep your ear to the ground in the hopes of what is working effectively for the good of our employees, as well as areas we can improve. All employees will be informed about this committee and the membership and what the members of the committee can and can’t do.”

Lee Barnes took a deep breath and looked intensely at Therese. “Do you accept?” Therese stood up, squared her shoulders and said, “Mr. Barnes, I’m ready for the challenge. Please extend my appreciation to Mr. Callahan as well.” Mr. Barnes said, “Therese, call me ‘Lee’ when we are behind closed doors in a meeting between the two of us.” “I am preparing you for Senior Photo Editor. I know a star when I see one. My best regards to your Carol. Now what was it that you wanted to see me about when you knocked on my door?”

Therese blushed and said, that it was not important in light of all that just transpired. Lee Barnes pushed her to tell. “Well, Mr. Barnes…”

Lee Barnes interrupted, “Therese, the door is closed!” Therese blushed even more, but continued, “Well, Lee, I had originally come to your office to ask for a long lunch to run an important errand. You see, Carol and I are purchasing matching custom wedding bands and mine has arrived from Los Angeles, where it was made. Hers is already here. I wanted to ensure mine fits so that we could send both rings to be engraved before the date we celebrate as our anniversary.”

“Well, that’s pretty damned important. Be on your way, Therese, and take a long lunch. Hopefully Carol can join you and hear the good news about your promotion. All I ask is for you to only tell Carol and that the two of you keep your promotion under wraps until my letter to the department comes out. Let’s see…today is Thursday. I’ll try to get it out by noon tomorrow before the craziness of the weekend edition starts. There are no guarantees, but I’ll try. Since you and I talked through it just now, I think it’ll be easy to write.”

Lee Barnes said, “I don’t want to see you back until 3:00 PM. By the way, did I mention that the raise and promotion includes a weekday schedule unless we have an emergency. Does that fit well with your Carol’s schedule?”

Therese said in a daze, “It does. Thank you for everything, Lee, but most of all thank you for your confidence in me. I will not let you down.”

Barnes smiled, “I know that, Therese. There are a lot of higher-ups who are aware of your reputation and want you to succeed. Thank you for staying in our Metro Photography department.”
Thursday March 5, 1959

12:30 PM – Therese Belivet’s office The New York Times Building

Therese’s fingers were shaking as she dialed the phone number of O’Halloran’s Furniture store. Carol actually answered. “O’Halloran’s Furniture store, Carol Aird, Senior Buyer. May I help you?”

“Oh I hope so, Carol Aird!” exclaimed Therese.

Carol put on her most professional voice, “And what kind of large, comfortable bed were you looking for, Miss..?”

Therese laughed merrily.

Carol lowered her voice, “Well I know I can help you, but what particularly do you need right now dearest?” Carol chuckled.

Therese said, “Can you get away for a few minutes to meet me at Devon Jewelers?” My ring is in and Jonathan wants me to try it on and if it fits he will send both our rings right away to his favorite engraver in the Diamond District.”

“Well, we are both in luck, Therese, because I worked through lunch and Mr. O’Halloran said he would chase me out of the store if I missed another lunch this week. I think I can be gone for two hours. That way we can go to Devon Jewelers and catch a quick bite somewhere near the furniture store. Can you grab a cab right away and meet me at Devon Jewelers?”

“I am on my way, my love.” replied Therese.

As Carol hung up the phone, she detected an incredible amount of excitement in Therese’s voice. ‘That angel of mine’ thought Carol, ‘She is so excited about our rings.’

Therese hung up and quickly called Jonathan Devon to tell him they were on their way. Jonathan promised to have the rings set up in his office.

Thursday March 5, 1959

1:00 PM – Devon Jewelers

Both women’s cabs arrived at almost the same time. They hurried inside, greeted Jonathan’s employee Myron, who escorted them directly into Jonathan’s office. “Carol, Therese, I am so glad to see you again, and on such a happy occasion.” Carol and Therese held hands as they sat in the chairs offered by Myron. Myron exited and closed the door. Two dark velvet ring boxes were on the desk. Carol and Therese’s eyes were glued to them and they could hardly breathe. The moment had arrived when both their rings would be together. They would get to see how they looked on their hands—where they would be for the rest of their lives. Jonathan entered the office. “How are my two favorite customers?” “No need to answer, I can see it on your faces.”

Jonathan slipped the box containing Carol’s ring to Therese. He said, “Now we’ve already seen
how beautiful this ring looks on Carol’s right hand.” “Therese would you like to place it on her finger once more?”

Therese looked questioningly at Carol, who smiled and nodded ascent, while tears brimmed in her eyes. Therese opened the box and they both took a deep breath. The ring was even more beautiful than they had remembered. Therese lifted the ring from the groove in the box and placed it on Carol’s right hand’s ring finger. As Therese slid the ring into place, the women whispered simultaneously “Perfect.”

Now Jonathan handed the box containing Therese’s ring to Carol. Carol slowly opened the box with reverence. They both gasped as they saw a perfectly matching ring inside. Jonathan said quietly, “Would you like me to give you privacy?” Both women shook their heads in a negative motion.

Therese spoke first, “Jonathan, we would not be having this moment right now without your kind service. Please stay.” Jonathan nodded, but stood back against the door of his office, recognizing the importance of this moment because he, too, was part of the community that shared a forbidden love.

Carol lifted Therese’s ring from the groove in its box and held it up so that both women could tell that it was identical to Carol’s. Therese extended her right hand to Carol and Carol placed the ring on Therese’s ring finger. The ring slid on perfectly. Neither woman’s ring was too tight nor too loose. Both were absolutely perfect. The rings would rest comfortably on their fingers for a lifetime. Jonathan let out a breath of relief. He had measured well.

“Have you ever…?” Carol started to say.

“No, my love,” said Therese. “These are the most beautiful rings I have ever seen and they are ours.” Tears slid down their cheeks and Jonathan wisely exited the office. Carol took Therese’s face in her hands and kissed her gently. Then both women stared at their rings—*their* rings.

Jonathan knocked softly at the door. “Please come back in, Jonathan,” said Therese.

Jonathan said, “Now here is the most difficult part of the day. I need to send the rings to the very best engraver in New York City. He is one of us and will engrave your lovely sentiments to perfection. He promised me to have the engraving done no later than the end of the first week in April.”

“We understand,” said Therese. Both women returned their rings to their proper box. “Our journey is not quite done.” We intend to give them to each other on our sixth anniversary, which is the morning of April 18th.”

Jonathan said, “The messages that will be engraved in each of your rings will be precious.” “Will the words be a surprise?” Both women nodded yes. Now it was Jonathan’s turn to have tears in his eyes. He realized only he knew their words of love for the time being. “Ladies, you have proved to me once again why I know I am in the right profession.”

As Carol and Therese walked back toward O’Halloran’s Furniture, they teased that they spent their lunchtime crying.

“Oh, but for a good reason,” said Therese.

“Agreed,” said Carol. “How about a cup of noodle soup from the Chinese place two doors down from O’Halloran’s?” said Carol “After we order, I’ll pop in to O’Halloran’s and tell them I’ll return in twenty minutes.”
As Therese ordered for them both, she realized that there was no time to tell Carol the news of her wonderful promotion. When Carol returned, Therese had an idea. They had already agreed to eat Greek takeout tonight so they could focus on getting the apartment ready for Rindy’s visit that would start tomorrow.

Carol breezed back into the restaurant, and as always, Therese did a double-take at the beauty of the woman she loved. “Carol,” Therese began, “Do you mind if I choose the pillow talk topic for tonight?”

“Of course, dearest,” said Carol. “Would you give me any hints?”

Therese smiled and winked at Carol. “Not a single one, Mrs. Belivet. Not a single one.”
Chapter Summary

Summary:

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 18 takes place Thursday March 5, 1959 at various locations in New York City. Therese decides to share with Carol the exciting news that she learned in the last chapter.

Chapter Notes

I want to acknowledge one of my most admired authors, Employee645A, for the idea that I put into words in the closing paragraphs of this chapter. Her Chapter 7 in her masterful 32-chapter work provided me with the idea.

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

Thursday March 5, 1959

2:00 PM

Chinese Restaurant near O’Halloran’s Furniture Store

Therese and Carol were finishing a quick lunch at a Chinese place two doors down from O’Halloran’s. Both women were headed back to work. All of a sudden Therese had a thought. “Carol,” she said. “I want to go into the restaurant and use their phone to call Jonathon Devon.” He may be sending our rings to the engraver’s this very afternoon and I want to catch him before he does. Trust me, love, I’ll be right back to explain.”

“Make the call, dearest, I trust you.” said Carol.

Therese returned a few minutes later with a smile on her face. She pulled her chair close to Carol’s. “Saturday we will have Rindy here at O’Halloran’s to look at a trundle bed and for me to photograph the items Mr. O’Halloran wants me to photograph, right?”

“Yes, darling, but…” Carol said with a curious look on her face.

Therese continued excitedly. “We’ve talked about having a party for the “Unveiling of the Rings” and we said that it would need to be an adults-only party. Rindy would not be among the first to see the rings, and…” Therese was cut off by Carol squeezing her hand excitedly.

Carol said, “My brilliant Therese! We could take Rindy by Devon Jewelers on Saturday and show
her the rings before they are engraved, since we will not want to look at the engraving prior to giving them to each other the morning of April 18th.” Carol asked, “Will this delay the engraving?”

“No,” said Therese, “Jonathon said their armored shuttle only makes rounds on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays and we had already missed today’s pickup. The engraver’s date for delivery back to Jonathon is no later than Thursday, April 2nd. It may be back before, but the 2nd is the latest date.” A glorious smile was forming on Carol’s face. “Carol,” said Therese with great affection, “I want our daughter to be involved in this important milestone.”

Carol said, “I’ll let Harge know, too, for I don’t want him to hear it from Rindy first.” I can call him Sunday before he comes to pick her up. Besides, I’m dying to know how the poker game with Uncles Jack and Michael and Jack’s business partner went.”

“Good idea,” said Therese. “Harge is certainly jumping in feet first with the ‘homosexual thing.’”

“What a change.”

“Dearest, I must go buy or sell more furniture, although nothing would make me happier than to spend the afternoon with you.” Carol gave Therese a very loving look and a sexy wink.

“I’ll see you tonight, my love,” said Therese. “Do you want your ‘usual’ from the Greek take out place?”

“Mind reader,” teased Carol. “Are you sure you don’t want to give me just a little hint about that ‘pillow talk’ topic for tonight that you mentioned earlier?”

Therese decided that she would go ahead and blow Carol’s mind—right here—right now. She didn’t have to get back until 3:00 PM and The Times office was only minutes away by cab, and O’Halloran’s was only two doors away.

“Well, actually Carol, I will give you a tiny little hint. Stop me now if you don’t have time.” Carol nodded for Therese to continue.

Therese said quietly, “Now listen carefully, for you cannot say anything to anyone until I let you know it’s appropriate.” “Do I have your word?” Carol nodded, with a curious, but somewhat anxious look on her face. Therese said, “Do you want to guess?”

“Jesus Christ, Therese. You’re torturing me. Carol decided to tease back. “Are you pregnant?”

Now it was Therese’s turn to be astounded. “Well Carol, if I am, then the two of us have pulled off an historic new chapter in modern medicine.” Therese doubled-over laughing at her own joke. Carol grinned, thinking of the mechanics of what Therese meant.

Therese decided to end Carol’s impatience. “Carol, darling, I got a promotion today and a raise. With my new job, I’m on track to become a Senior Photo Editor at The New York Times within three to five years. My boss, Lee Barnes, told me just before I left to meet you. He said I could tell you and only you for the time being. He said the higher ups at The Times have been watching my work and admire my courage and risk taking in being open about my sexuality. Also, they believe I have the talent and the skills to move up. There are quite a few perks that come with the promotion and I will have an office with a door and a ceiling. Oh, and I told him how you and I discussed that job offer I recently received from Personnel and I told him how you advised me to stay with my passion—photography. That’s why I saw no need to discuss this with you first.”

Carol stared open-mouthed at Therese and managed to say, “Correct, dearest, we discussed how you should stay in the Photography department. Oh my God, Therese. Think what this means.
You have a promotion and you are not hiding who you are.”

Therese added, “And whom I love. I already told Mr. Barnes your name.”

“Fantastic!” said Carol. “I’ll look forward to meeting him someday.” “Oh, Therese…” a tear of happiness made its way down Carol’s cheek. Therese gently wiped it away with her thumb. “My angel,” said Carol. I am so proud of you I could burst with joy.” “When will the official announcement take place? I know mum’s the word until then.”

Therese replied, “Mr. Barnes, well ‘Lee’ as he insists I call him when the two of us are alone in his office, said he would try to get the letter out tomorrow, but I suspect it’ll be early next week.” “Carol, I have one question, then I know we both must go back to work.” When Mr. Barnes insisted I call him ‘Lee’ when just the two of us are in his office, I was, and still am a bit uncomfortable with that.” “Carol, you are more experienced in the ways of business than I am.” “Should I be concerned that this is not appropriate?”

“Oh darling, no need for concern. That is very common in the workplace between a boss and the person who is the next-highest report, so to say. I don’t think I’ve ever mentioned it, but Mr. O’Halloran insists that when the two of us are alone, usually in his office, he wants me to call him by his first name, ‘Eamon.’ That’s certainly Irish enough isn’t it?” Therese smiled. “Any other time I call him ‘Mr. O’Halloran.’ At any rate, what Mr. Barnes has suggested is certainly appropriate business-wise. It shows his respect for you and his confidence that someday you will be a peer of his.”

“Oh, Carol. Thank you for putting my concern to rest. Remember that we can’t say anything until it’s officially announced.” Therese hugged Carol and kissed her on the cheek.

“Therese, I cannot possibly put into words how proud I am of you and how happy I am for you. You’ve worked so hard for this.” “Do you have any other surprises for me?” asked Carol with a smile beaming from ear to ear.

Therese grinned. “Actually just one more.” “I am now on a Monday through Friday schedule just like you. Mr. Barnes even asked me if I thought that would ‘please my Carol’—he called you ‘my Carol’. Of course I said yes.”

Carol just shook her head in happy disbelief at the wonderful news her sweetheart had just shared. “This is what you were going to tell me tonight for ‘pillow talk,’ wasn’t it?” Therese nodded. Carol asked, “Well, what on earth can we do with our ‘pillow talk’ time, then?”

Therese motioned for Carol to lean in closely as she whispered very softly in Carol’s ear. Carol even blushed furiously, which was quite unlike Carol in these occasions—usually Therese was the one to blush. Carol managed to shakily say “I agree completely sweetheart. I agree completely.”

Thursday March 5, 1959

11:00 PM at the Aird/Belivet apartment on Madison Avenue

Carol and Therese lay on their backs with one hand tangled in each other’s hair. Both women were panting with the aftermath of the passion they just shared. Carol was the first to speak.

“I’m glad that I planned to wear my grey dress with the higher collar and my red scarf tomorrow. That should manage to hide the dozen or more ‘love nips’ that you left for me—not that I am complaining one bit, dearest.”
Therese chuckled. “Well, if you didn’t want me to give them to you I certainly wouldn’t, my love.”

“Don’t you dare ever think of stopping.” Carol said, looking deeply into Therese’s eyes. They had left one soft nightlight on, as was their custom when making love at night. “Sweetheart, come lie on me. I want to feel every inch of you,” said Carol. Therese complied, and one of her legs slipped in between Carol’s. Each could feel the wetness that their lovemaking had created. “Ahh” they sighed in unison at the sensual sensation.

Carol said, “Therese, I have a rather intimate question to ask you.” Carol could feel Therese’s smile against her neck.

“Well,” said Therese “I can’t think of a more appropriate time to ask an intimate question. What is it, my love?”

Carol hesitated. “I’m not sure exactly how to ask this, so please bear with me. I’ll try to make myself clear.”

Therese raised her head to gaze into the gray eyes she so loved. “Carol, ask me anything. There is nothing that we can’t ask each other.”

Carol spoke slowly. “Usually the night before Rindy comes to stay with us, if we happen to make love, I notice that you touch and kiss my lower abdomen differently than most other times we make love. You trace kisses across my stretch marks from when I had Rindy. Remember how years ago I was so hesitant to let you do that because I thought the marks were not exactly my most beautiful feature, but then we talked and you encouraged me to let you touch and kiss them. Of course, I love the marks because they continue to remind me of Rindy.”

“Umhm.” replied Therese, “My love, you know that I feel exactly the same about your marks. I adore seeing them always, but on nights like tonight when we are ready and excited for Rindy’s next visit tomorrow, I want you to know how much I love you for carrying our daughter. Those marks are a tangible reminder. I love them and I love Rindy and I love you, my dearest darling Carol.”

Carol was speechless. She nudged Therese so that Therese lay by Carol’s side now. Carol took Therese’s hand kissed it and placed both their hands on Carol’s lower abdomen.

In that very position they drifted into a contented sleep dreaming of their daughter, Rindy, who would be with them tomorrow.
An Eye-Opening Meeting

Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 19 takes place Friday March 6, 1959 at various locations in New York City. The main part of the chapter involves a very important meeting that Therese has at The New York Times.

Chapter Notes

The conversation between Therese and Mr. Goldman, head of Metro for The New York Times is almost identical to the words I spoke in a presentation that I made to my Fortune 500 Company in 2001 at a company-wide diversity conference. All the company leaders were in attendance. The retired CEO and many others within my company (I have since retired) credit my speech/presentation that was less than five minutes long, with the company's implementation of domestic partner benefits. I will always be grateful to my company for allowing me to be on a panel and giving me five minutes to make an important point that could potentially change hearts and minds. I knew an opportunity like that only comes once in a lifetime. The words were my original thoughts, but they have been used many times over that past fifteen years in the LGBT workplace equality movement and have appeared in several books.

An explanation of the early organizations: Daughters of Bilitis and Mattachine Society are found within the text of my Chapter 3.

This chapter was longer, and quite frankly really exhausted me physically and mentally in the single day I wrote it. I probably won't post again for 10 days, but stay tuned, for in the next chapter Rindy gets to see Carol and Therese's matching rings, and they work on her Easter bonnet and they buy Rindy a trundle bed for her future sleepover guests. Also, Therese shares with Carol her exciting conversation with Jerry Goldman, head of Metro at The Times. Thanks for your patience in awaiting Chapter 20. I appreciate your following my storyline so much.

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

Regards,
Pipestone

Friday March 6, 1959
6:30 AM
The Aird/Belivet apartment on Madison Avenue
Rrriiinnng! The alarm clock went off in the bedroom of Therese Belivet and Carol Aird. The two lovers were locked in a sleepy embrace and not at all in the mood to be awakened. Therese stretched her naked body across Carol’s and hit the alarm’s stop button. She fumbled with the clock and reset it to give them another precious fifteen minutes of sleep. Carol snuggled from behind her and pulled her close.

“You brilliant woman,” mumbled Carol. “How much time did you give us?”

“Fifteen, love.” Therese said softly. “We’ll hurry after that.”

“Mmmmm.” Carol stretched and pulled Therese even closer.

After their delightful snooze, both women responded to the insistent ring of the alarm at 6:45 AM. Therese flipped over to look at Carol, whose blond locks were partially obscuring her face. Therese loved her very first view of her beloved Carol’s face each morning. It was like having the sun rise as Carol’s gray eyes opened and a loving smile broke across her face. Therese thought, ‘How lucky am I—how absolutely lucky am I.’ Therese gently pushed Carol’s hair back from her face so that she could give her a proper kiss.

“Good morning, my love.” said Therese.

Carol repeated the motion by tucking some brunette locks behind Therese’s ear. “Good morning, dearest. It’s going to a marvelous day.” Carol turned her attention to their getting ready tasks. “Are you in favor of conserving water today and showering together?”

“Oh, my yes,” said Therese. “Carol, your clothes are all laid out. I’ll make the bed while you heat up the bathroom and get our soaps and shampoos ready.” “I know what I’m going to wear and it’s pressed and ready, I just need to get it out of the closet. Therese added, “Could you hand me my robe, honey? I’ll go start the coffee and be right back for our shower.”

After six years together, the women had their routines down pat. They had a routine for getting ready in a hurry (which they were using today), and a leisurely getting ready routine (for weekends when Rindy was with Harge) and a Rindy getting ready routine that they would use during the upcoming weekend.

Therese popped back into their bathroom just in time to see Carol disappear into the shower. They hummed a favorite love tune together as they soaped their washcloths. Carol turned toward the shower head and soaked her head for shampoo while Therese washed her back. They changed places the roles reversed. The next part was best. They gently scrubbed and soaped each other’s breasts and upper body. Then the person nearest the shower shampooed while the other washed her more intimate parts and lower legs. They changed position and repeated the action. As Carol turned off the water Therese peeked out at the clock and said “Five minutes flat—that’s one kind of quickie.”

Carol chuckled and leaned into Therese and said, “I’ll need the extra time to cover up those love bites of yours that I dearly love.” Therese smiled proudly—knowing that she could satisfy her lover.

Therese was out of the door first, having downed a cup of coffee and prepared sandwich and a piece of fruit. Carol had an additional hour before she needed to be a work. She kissed Therese on the cheek as she headed for the vanity table to cover up the love bites.

Therese took at final look in the hall mirror to ensure her makeup and lipstick were in place. She called out, “See you tonight, my love.”
“Have a wonderful day, dearest,” replied Carol. Carol heard the front door close and she had mixed emotions: pleasure at having 30 or so minutes to herself, but an empty feeling when Therese left their apartment. ‘I love her more every day.’ thought Carol. ‘How is that possible’? Carol heard the sound of Therese’s Vespa on the street on her way to work and smiled—hoping the day would go quickly and both would return safely to their apartment, including Rindy and Harge, who were due at 5:30 PM. Therese had said she might not arrive until nearly 6:00 PM, but that would give Harge, Rindy and Carol a chance to get started on the March calendar of visitations, especially the days around Rindy’s spring break. Carol had asked for and received the entire spring break week off, but Rindy might not be with them the entire time. Carol was not terribly upset. She and Therese had Rindy the entire spring break last year and Harge already said he would be glad to share this year’s time off, especially to accommodate any plans Rindy might have.

10:30 AM – The New York Times Building

Therese was at her desk absorbed in her work when her boss, Senior Editor Lee Barnes knocked on the doorjamb of her office. (She did not yet have the promised door.) Therese could tell that her boss was quite excited just by the look on his face. “Therese, my boss, Jerry Goldman, the head of Metro, wants to meet you. He knows of your impending promotion and he wants to talk to both of us in his office.”

Therese smiled, but asked “Is this common? Her smile faded. “Should I be concerned, Mr. Barnes?”

“He is head of the entire Metro Division. So no, this is not common at all for him to ask to talk to an employee being promoted from Junior Photo Editor to Junior Photo Editor 2. I think he wants to ask you some questions, especially regarding what kind of political work you’ve done with the two homophile organizations, the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society.”

Therese said, “I’m happy to meet with him and to clarify what kind of activities I’ve taken part in. But, Mr. Barnes, I am a bit nervous, just meeting with someone of his rank at The Times.”

Barnes smiled, “Don’t be nervous. Actually consider it an opportunity. I’ll be right there with you, too.”

Therese visibly relaxed. She asked, “When does he want to meet with us?”

“Right now,” said Barnes.

Therese stood and prepared to follow Barnes. She wished she could have asked for a moment to apply fresh lipstick and check her hair, but she knew a male counterpart wouldn’t ask for that kind of delay.

As they walked through the maze of hallways toward the Metro Department head offices, Barnes told Therese that Jerry Goldman had a very dry sense of humor and tended to be very forthright when asking questions. As they reached their destination, Therese was amazed at the large offices. She had never been in this part of the building. An immaculately dressed and coiffed secretary whose desk name plate read ‘Margaret Gardner’ sat next to an office whose closed door read, ‘Jerry Goldman, Metro Division.’

She smiled nodded politely to them both. Therese and Barnes returned the gesture. “Miss Belivet, Mr. Barnes, please go right in. Mr. Goldman is expecting you.”
Therese closed her eyes briefly. This was perhaps the biggest, most important moment in her career. She called up a mental image of Carol, smiling lovingly at her to steady her.

Lee Barnes stepped in front of Therese to open the door. Just before he opened the door, he smiled at her as if to say, ‘Relax, you’ll be fine.’

Jerry Goldman was ending a phone call. His back was to the door, but he waved the two of them in as soon as he heard the door close. Therese knew what he looked like from a photograph posted in their work area of the Metro leadership. His hair was a little grayer and as he turned slightly she saw wire-rimmed glasses on his face. The two waited beside two padded chairs that were pulled up to his desk opposite him.

Lee had said for Therese not to be nervous, but that was easier said than done. She smoothed her skirt and silently was grateful that she had worn a suit that gave her confidence as a professional. She overheard Mr. Goldman apologize to whomever was on the phone with him, but that he had to attend to an ‘important meeting.’ Lee and Therese exchanged a glance when Mr. Goldman said ‘important meeting.’ Mr. Goldman punched the phone button for his secretary and said, “Margaret, please hold all calls for the next ten minutes.”

Therese took a deep breath. She was going to be in a meeting with the head of Metro for ten minutes!

Mr. Goldman stood up and shook hands with Lee Barnes and said “Hello, Lee. I see you have brought your rising star among the Metro junior photo editors.” Therese tried with all her might to suppress a blush by smiling. Goldman extended his hand to Therese and said, “I am pleased to meet you Miss Belivet. I’ve heard such outstanding reports of your work.”

Therese smiled and met his extended hand with her own and exchanged a firm, professional handshake. “Thank you. The pleasure is mine, Mr. Goldman.”

“Please be seated,” Goldman said as the three took their seats. He continued, “It’s actually unusual for me meet to meet a staff member who is being promoted from Junior Photo Editor to Junior Photo Editor 2, but I hear from Mr. Barnes that you are not our ‘usual’ employee. Let me say first that your work has been noticed for months and the Senior Photo Editors in Metro have decided it’s time to fill the promotional pipeline with their most outstanding Junior Photo Editor—you. That is the opinion not only of Mr. Barnes but a consensus of all the ‘seniors’—as we sometimes affectionately call them.

“I am honored and delighted with the promotion and will do my best to merit the confidence that has been placed in me.” said Therese.

“I have no doubt that you will, Miss Belivet,” said Mr. Goldman. “Do you have any idea why you might be here in my office today, when others of your next job grade would not?” asked Goldman earnestly. He crossed his arms on his desk and leaned slightly towards Therese.

“I believe so, Mr. Goldman. It is probably because I do not hide my homosexuality from my boss and some of my co-workers.” Therese looked directly at Mr. Goldman and Lee Barnes held his breath. Therese continued, “I certainly do not tell everyone, but some co-workers know and I do not deny it when asked by anyone. I wanted Mr. Barnes to know when he asked me for my emergency contact information and I gave him the name of my companion.”

Mr. Goldman sat up a bit and tilted his head. He spoke. “I have known a few homosexuals, but never knowingly had one on my staff. He continued, “And certainly never had an open homosexual staff member who was involved in the city’s homophile organizations.”
Therese was slightly nervous, but felt confident she could handle all his questions. She began, “I do occasionally attend meetings of two organizations: Daughters of Bilitis, a predominately lesbian organization and also the Mattachine Society, a male homosexual organization. In the case of the latter, I only have been asked to photograph some of their leaders at their meetings. I do so on my own time and with my own camera and develop the images in my home darkroom.”

Lee Barnes spoke, “Therese and I have already had the conversation that she makes clear with those associations that she is representing herself and not The Times.

Mr. Goldman asked, “What if someone asked you where you worked?”

Therese replied, I am always proud to tell anyone where I work. I love my association with The New York Times. But in the same breath, I am careful to say that I am not in attendance at the request of The Times and that I only speak for myself.”

Mr. Goldman, smiled. “That is all we at The Times would ever ask of you. Miss Belivet, it is a pleasure to have you as an employee and we will look forward to a long association with you. The letter announcing your promotion will be out by next Tuesday. Before you leave though, I must ask, what led you to be open about your sexuality?”

Therese took a deep breath and decided to throw caution to the winds in answering his question. “Well, Mr. Goldman, my reasons are probably no different than anyone else who is open about their sexuality.” “Take you, for example. I can certainly tell you are open about your sexuality.”

The room was silent. You could have heard a pin drop. Mr. Goldman’s eyebrows merged with his hairline. Lee Barnes squeezed his eyes tight and feared that Therese’s promotion was going up in smoke. Lee made an effort to say, “Ah, I see our ten minutes are up. Thank you for your time, Mr. Goldman.”

Mr. Goldman flashed a look at Barnes that said, ‘Be quiet, Lee.’ He deliberately smiled at Therese, who smiled back, then he picked up his phone and called his secretary into the office. She immediately appeared, ready to carry out any request. “Margaret, please cancel all my appointments for the next half hour. Rearrange them for this afternoon. I have a large block of time open then.” He turned to Lee and asked, “Do you need Margaret to call down to your office and do the same for your appointments? I’d really like to have you stay and hear what Miss Belivet has to say. I don’t know if you are interested, but I sure as hell am.”

“I’m fine staying right here.” said Barnes with a shaky smile.

Therese sat focused, sitting very straight in her chair waiting for Mr. Goldman to address her again. He said, “Please elaborate, Miss Belivet. You have my undivided attention.”

Therese began, “Well, sir, I certainly meant no impertinence or insult when I said that I could tell you were open about your sexuality, but what I am saying is that there are objects in this office and actually on your person that tell me that you are a heterosexual.”

“Well, of course I am a heterosexual!” Goldman said emphatically. He paused. No one said a word until he spoke again. “But then you are not a heterosexual, are you, Miss Belivet?”

“No sir.” said Therese. “Not everyone is a heterosexual, but everyone is assumed to be.

“OK. I’ll agree with that statement,” said Goldman “but what in God’s name leads you to think that I am open about my sexuality—my heterosexuality?”

Therese said carefully, “Well, you have a number of very nice photos on your desk of your wife, children and grandchildren and there’s a beautiful professional photo of you getting ready to walk
your daughter down the aisle at her wedding.”

Goldman looked at all the photos and his face softened. “My family. Of course. I am beginning to see your point. Please continue.”

Therese said, “What if I asked you to put all those photos face down?”

Goldman paused, then proceeded to do as Therese asked. Lee Barnes’s eyes widened with understanding.

“There’s one more thing,” said Therese. “You are wearing a wedding ring.” Goldman stared incredulously at the gold band on his left hand. “I wouldn’t ask you to take that off, sir, but I think you see my point.”

Goldman looked around at the face-down photos and said, “No I want to get the full feeling of what you are saying, Therese.” (Therese noticed he called her by her first name.) He slipped off his wedding band and put it in his top drawer, got up and walked around to the other side of his desk next to Lee and Therese and stared at the changed landscape of his personal office space.

Goldman spoke to Therese, but kept looking at his desk and his left hand, now empty of his wedding band. “Am I open about my sexuality now, Therese?”

“No sir. You are not.” answered Therese softly.

“No,” said Goldman. “I am not.”

Goldman turned to Therese. “This is a terrible feeling, not being able to have the photos of my loved ones and the symbol of being married—my ring. Is this what you go through each day, Miss Belivet?”

“To some extent, yes it is.” I do not have photos of my companion of six years and our daughter on my desk because I fear potential retaliation from co-workers who do not know my sexuality or I’m concerned that they would respect me less. That is why I wanted to tell my boss as soon as I could. I am so fortunate to have a boss like Mr. Barnes who values me for the employee that I am rather than base his opinion of me on the person I love.”

Goldman said, as he circled his desk and restored his photos to their original position and slipped his ring on, “You do not wear a ring?”

Therese smiled broadly, “That is something my companion, Carol and I are going to remedy next month. We’ve selected lovely matching bands and are waiting for them to be engraved. It’s very exciting.”

“I’m happy for you, Miss Belivet, and I do see that it takes some courage for you and your companion to wear matching bands and have photos of each other on your desk, but I want you to know that I think you should put photos of your companion and your daughter up on your desk right away. If you receive any criticism, Mr. Barnes and I will get involved. Your right to do so will be defended totally and completely.”

“Thank you, sir.” said Therese, successfully keeping the tears from spilling down her cheeks.

“Oh, by the way,” said Mr. Goldman, “What does your companion do for a living?”

Therese answered proudly, “Carol is a senior furniture buyer here in Manhattan. But of course she sells furniture as well…”
Goldman’s eyes nearly popped out of his head. “What! Carol… Are you talking about Carol Aird of O’Halloran’s Furniture?”

Therese felt her knees grow weak. She involuntarily sat down. “Yes, yes, but how do you know…”

Goldman cut her off and laughed merrily, “Well, your Carol is my wife Grace’s favorite salesperson in the entire USA.” In fact, I may go into bankruptcy because of it. Wait, wait, I even have her business card. He fumbled in his desk and found Carol’s business card and slid it for Therese to see. There it was: ‘Carol Aird, Senior Furniture Buyer, O’Halloran’s Furniture.’

Therese picked up the card and held it to her forehead and laughed. “I don’t know what to say, sir. Carol is a fine salesperson, but I am sorry if she is…”

Goldman cut her off as he reclaimed Carol’s business card. “Oh, I was just exaggerating, but I do get an anxious feeling each time my Gracie says ‘Oh, Carol Aird called and has a piece that she thinks would be perfect for…whatever it is.” Grace even dragged me furniture shopping once.”

“You met Carol?” exclaimed Therese excitedly.

“I certainly did,” replied Mr. Goldman, “and I should add that you are a very fortunate woman. Your Carol is lovely, poised and as smart a saleswoman as I’ve seen in a while.”

“Thank you, sir.” said Therese. “I am the luckiest woman alive and I love her with all my heart.”

“I’m going to tell Grace about this remarkable conversation and I am sure that she will want to have the two of you over for dinner soon. We have a small apartment on Madison Avenue, in addition to our home outside the city.” Goldman turned to Lee Barnes who was staring open-mouthed at the entire conversation. “You and Rebecca will be invited, too, Lee, but let me warn you, do not let your wife start talking furniture with Therese’s Carol. You’ll be wanting a raise to cover the cost of that conversation.”

The two men started guffawing as only men could, and Therese added a laugh herself.

Mr. Goldman turned to Lee, “I want to be kept informed of Miss Belivet’s progress in her new position. Do you have excellent mentors set up for her?”

Lee said, “I plan to be her mentor in my position as Senior Photo Editor. I am still looking for a photographer mentor.”

“Well, make it a good one,” said Goldman, “And set up quarterly hourly meetings between Miss Belivet and me. I want in on this mentoring myself. I must honestly say that I have been both moved and mentally stimulated more in the past 45 minutes than I have in recent memory.”

Goldman continued, “Miss Belivet, your remarks to me were so important that I would like your permission to share them both within and outside The Times. I would not use your name and would not use Carol’s name. However, what you just said to me could provide to be an eye-opener to employers who have no idea the difficulties that their homosexual employees face. I am a newsman and I know that the time is coming when the vast majority of homosexual employees may not be in hiding. We in management need to know how to deal with difficulties that all our employees face.”

Therese replied, “Of course you have my permission. And thank you again for your time and your interest in my career.” This time Mr. Goldman beamed at Therese.

“Thank you, sir.” Lee said. They both shook hands with Mr. Goldman, and all of a sudden
Therese and Lee were walking back to their work area.

Lee turned to Therese and asked, “How are you feeling? What are you feeling?”


Lee said simply, “Me too. Take a long lunch and get your head together to wrap up your week’s work. I am very proud of you, too.”

“Thank you for being a great boss, Mr. Barnes,” said Therese.

Therese was in a happy daze the rest of the day. She couldn’t wait to tell Carol the amazing events. This would no doubt be the pillow talk topic tonight.

Before she left for the day, Therese stopped by the desk of her friend, Trudy Johnson, who did the calligraphy work on the pretty pink spiral notebook Therese had purchased. Therese had mounted a very nice photo of Rindy and Harge on the cover and Trudy’s beautiful text reads ‘Questions for Daddy.’ Therese was thrilled with the work and thanked Trudy profusely.

6:00 PM – The Aird/Belivet apartment

Therese arrived back at their apartment to the sound of Carol, Rindy and Harge laughing in the kitchen. Therese couldn’t see them, but could hear their laughter and excited chatter. For just a moment, the sound of the three Airds laughing together in their apartment was so unusual, Therese found herself almost jealous—like the three Airds had reformed a family and there might not be room for Therese anymore.

That feeling quickly passed with Rindy shouting “She’s home.” Rindy made a bee-line for Therese and wrapped her arms tightly around Therese’s waist. Therese hugged Rindy tightly and kissed the top of her head. Rindy looked up at Therese so adoringly that Therese’s heart melted.

Carol was next—walking quickly toward Therese, heels tapping, with a radiant smile on her face. Carol said “Dearest, thank goodness you’re home!” Carol said, and gave her a big hug and a quick kiss on the lips (a first for being in the presence of Rindy and Harge) and stood next to Therese with her arm around her waist.

Harge walked into the entryway saying, “Glad you’re home, second mom, or perhaps I should say ‘other mom.’ Now we can finalize the March calendar.” He smiled at Therese and patted her shoulder.

All the odd feelings Therese had upon stepping into the front door were immediately gone like a puff of smoke. Rindy grabbed Therese’s hand and pulled her toward the kitchen table where calendars are laid out. There were three. One for Harge, one for Rindy and one for Carol and Therese. Rindy proudly said she made them.

Rindy said to Therese, “Look at the pretty leather notebook Daddy gave me to write questions for you two.”

Therese said to Rindy, “It’s beautiful, sweetheart.” Then she turned to Harge and smiled, “Nicely done, Harge.” Harge winked and smirked a bit good-naturedly.

Therese extended her hand to Rindy. In her hand was a tissue-wrapped package.

Rindy asked, “For me?”
Therese said, “Actually for you and Daddy.”

Rindy said excitedly, “Daddy, help me open it.”

Harge said, “Okay, pumpkin!”

As the two of them opened the package, Therese slipped over next to Carol and put her arm around Carol’s waist and winked. Carol put her arm around Therese’s shoulders and winked back. They watched Rindy and Harge open the package.

All of a sudden Rindy shouted “Yay!” My own ‘Questions for Daddy’ notebook. It’s beautiful Aunt Therese. Thank you.”

“Yeah,” said Harge. “Thanks a million, Therese.” Then Harge threw back his head and laughed and winked at Therese. “Nice picture, I must say.”

Carol pushed a bowl filled with Wrigley’s Doublemint gum to the center of the table as she said “I think this gum goes with the books.” She hugged Therese’s shoulders.

All four members of the combined Aird-Belivet family started laughing and laughing, as Therese wondered, ‘Why did I doubt for a minute that I was part of this family?’
Chapter Summary

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one. Chapter 20 takes place Friday March 6, 1959 in the Aird-Belivet apartment in New York City. The main part of the chapter involves the entire Aird-Belivet family cooperating and coordinating Rindy's visitation schedule for March including her spring break. This is the first time such cooperation has happened and everything goes well.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for your patience as you await Chapter 21. Rindy will get to see Carol and Therese's matching rings and Harge has an enlightening poker night with Uncle Jack and Uncle Michael.

I appreciate your following my storyline so very much.

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

Regards,
Pipestone

Friday, March 6, 1959

6:15 PM – The Aird-Belivet apartment in New York City

Carol, Therese, Harge and Rindy huddled around the kitchen table all looking at their copies of the March and April calendars that Rindy had made for everyone. They spent most of the time on Rindy’s spring break. It would start on Friday March 20th and Rindy would return to school on Tuesday March 31st. Everyone agreed that her spring break time would be split between New York City and New Jersey. Last year Rindy spent the entire break with Carol and Therese, but Harge insisted that they share the vacation time this year.

Rindy was thrilled that her wishes were considered and that the visitation no longer was locked into an every-other-week arrangement, even though everyone found that schedule very convenient for the most part. Rindy said with barely controlled excitement, “Karen and her mother want to invite me to spend Sunday and Monday of the start of spring break for two overnights. If the weather is warm enough we are going to ride horses. Uncle Michael said he could work at his home workshop so he can help us with the horses.” “And,” Rindy paused dramatically, “Mrs. Sinclair said she wants to invite Mommy and Aunt Therese to come too. She thinks it’s a shame that Mommy has never been horseback riding with me.”

Carol and Therese looked at each other incredulously. Harge grinned like someone who was in on
Carol spoke first, “Well, darling, I had asked Mr. O’Halloran for the entire spring break days off, so I am sure I can come. Therese nodded and smiled as well, saying, “I’ll have to work some of the days that week, but I am sure that I can have the Monday off and then Friday off for sure.” Harge offered to give Therese a ride into Manhattan and deliver her to The New York Times building Tuesday morning. “That would be great, Harge,” said Therese. “That way I can spend Monday night at the Sinclair’s, too.”

Carol smiled delightedly at this prospect. Carol said she could take the train back to New York City later on Tuesday. Carol said, “I will probably go into work on Wednesday and part of Thursday.”

Harge explained that he and Marjorie planned to take the two girls to the Thomas Edison Home National Historic Site in nearby West Orange New Jersey. Rindy explained, “One of our school assignments is to write about something we did over spring break. Karen and I thought we’d write about the Easter Parade in New York City, but Daddy suggested we make another trip just in case the Easter parade is rained out. We should probably go on that trip on Wednesday so Karen and I can work on our Easter bonnets on Thursday and Friday get ready to come to Mommy and Aunt Therese’s apartment early Saturday.”

Carol clarified, “We are going to invite Marjorie and Karen to spend the night with us on Friday and Saturday. We will finalize the bonnets and dye some Easter eggs and create some Easter baskets. Then we will have Easter luncheon here at the apartment on Sunday. Harge, you know you’re invited, plus I will invite Karen’s uncles as well. I hope the uncles can come early on Sunday to enjoy the Easter Parade.”

Carol continued, “Harge, do you mind mentioning it to Jack and Michael when you see them for poker night tomorrow? I’ll follow up with them with details.”

“Gladly.” said Harge.

“Aunt Therese,” said Rindy patiently, “Could you tell Daddy that I know how to put a new roll of film in my Brownie camera that you gave me?”

Therese smiled at Rindy, then Harge. “Rindy is quite efficient at changing film. I have never known her to ruin photos by opening the camera until the film is rolled onto the spool. I would certainly trust her to take two rolls of film with her on an outing.”

Harge smiled proudly at Rindy. “Well, I think I have been told by a very knowledgeable source, a photographer for The New York Times. I’m convinced, pumpkin. Take several rolls of film on your outings.”

“Yay!” exclaimed Rindy.

Harge stood up. He said, “Our spring break calendar is complete. I must go soon for I have a dinner engagement with some clients.”

Rindy looked disappointed that her time with all her parents was coming to an end.

Carol noticed this and turned to Therese. “Darling, could you take Rindy to the bakery on this block and get some rolls for dinner?” Therese’s raised her eyebrows, but she understood that Carol wanted to have a word with Harge without Rindy hearing.

“Come on Rindy,” said Therese. “We might be able to buy some cupcakes for desert, too.”
Harge hugged Rindy. “I promise I won’t leave until you come back, Rindy.” Mommy and I want
to talk for a few minutes.”

“Is it a good talk?” asked Rindy with a concerned tone.

“It’s a very good talk, sweet pea.” reassured Carol.

As the door closed behind Therese and Rindy, Carol turned to Harge. They looked at each other
for a moment, and Harge said, “I think we are thinking the same thing, but please go ahead,
Carol.”

Carol began, “Now that the three of us are getting along and are providing a happy environment
for Rindy, it’s going to be difficult for her to understand why we can’t spend more time together
as a family.”

“I agree.” sighed Harge. “I wouldn’t want to go back to the old way of getting along for anything
in the world.”

“Nor would Therese or I.” said Carol. “We just have to find a way to make Rindy understand that
even though we are all getting along quite well, I’m still with Therese and we won’t be reforming
our former family.” “Don’t get me wrong, Harge, I am so glad you and I have buried the hatchet
and that you are supportive of my relationship with Therese. That means the world to Therese and
me.”

“You know, Carol,” began Harge, “We might be able to provide Rindy with some sense of family
that she is craving by occasionally doing things together—the four of us. I hope Therese would
agree.”

“I know she would, Harge.” said Carol. “She would do anything to make Rindy happy. Let’s
remind Rindy that you are going to spend Easter with us. Perhaps we can plan to spend her
birthday together, too. Remember that she wants to go with some friends on the famous ‘Circle
Line Tour of Manhattan.’ Couldn’t we do that together? Also we could occasionally have you
stay for dinner when you drop her off on Friday nights. That way she could tell us all what is
going on in her life.”

“Great idea, Carol.” said Harge. “The Circle Line Tour would be the Saturday after her birthday,
so it would be Saturday May 2nd.” We can ask Rindy if she wants all three of her parents with her
on that outing. Could you do that this weekend?”

“Of course,” said Carol. “There is one more important thing I must tell you. Carol’s expression
caused Harge to listen carefully. “It’s very good news. Therese and I have decided to purchase
and wear matching wedding bands. (Harge’s face registered surprise.) Actually, we have found
the rings and they are now set to be engraved. We’re going to exchange them on our sixth
anniversary, April 18th.”

Carol noticed emotion on Harge’s face, but she wasn’t sure what kind of emotion he was
expressing. It seemed to be a cross between happiness and wistfulness.

Carol explained that they were planning a small gathering at the apartment the night of the 18th
when they share their rings with friends. “Harge, some of those attending are homosexual and
might be concerned about a young person being present. The concern would be if they were
hiding their true identity and might think a young person wouldn’t understand the importance of
discretion. Remember the long talk with Rindy and Karen that we all had at the Sinclair’s a week
ago?”
Harge said, “I understand. We spent a great deal of time talking with Rindy and Karen about not telling anyone about you and Therese and the uncles. It’s just too much responsibility with which to burden Rindy at her age.” Harge smiled and chuckled, “I also understand that as the ex-husband I wouldn’t be invited. It just would not be appropriate.”

Carol nodded with a bit of sadness. “We have recently created a rather remarkable truce because of the shared love of our child. I can only hope more divorced couples can do so.”

Harge asked, “Are you going to have a ceremony?”

Carol replied, “We are going to say some personal words to each other the morning of April 18th. It’ll only between the two of us.”

“Carol,” said Harge, “Is it too personal for me to ask the significance of the date?”

Carol replied that it wasn’t too personal a question, but that Therese and Rindy would return any minute, so the explanation would have to wait.

“That’s fine,” said Harge. “I don’t mean to pry. I just wish there were some legal means of recognizing your relationship. I have yet to see a more committed couple than you and Therese. Also I wish you could have a honeymoon, since ours was interrupted by my having to leave for Europe to fight in the war.”

Carol said, “I am very sad that Therese and I can’t be legally married, and that once again, we’ll have no honeymoon—even though a honeymoon is kind of ‘after the fact’ since we have been together so long.” Carol continued, “It’s so hard, Harge, being ostracized by society and being forced to hide the love you have for the person you love most.”

“I can’t imagine it, Carol.” said Harge forlornly. “I, too added to the hell you and Therese went through. If I had just known more. If I had just been a more compassionate man. I did know from the moment we met that you weren’t totally in love with me and I ignored the reasons. I was thinking of my own happiness. Oh, Carol, please forgive me!”

Carol placed a hand on Harge’s arm and said, “Harge, you must get beyond your grievous mistakes of the past for Rindy’s sake. I have forgiven you—you know that.”

“I do know that, Carol.” Harge replied, “But I can’t seem to stop vocalizing my remorse. Does Abby know you, Therese and I have come to an understanding?”

Carol said, “She does, but she can’t believe it’s true. I think if Abby took one look at Rindy and saw the positive change in her happiness, she would think differently. I think that I am going to let Rindy tell Abby how much happier she is. That should do the trick.”

“Agreed,” replied Harge. “Abby does love her god daughter very much.”

Carol and Harge heard the front door of the apartment open and Rindy called out, “We’re back—and with cupcakes, too.”

Harge was first to stride out of the kitchen and sweep Rindy into his arms. “Listen, pumpkin, have a wonderful time with Mommy and Aunt Therese this weekend and enjoy making that Easter bonnet. Are you sure you brought all the materials?”

Rindy replied, “Yes, Daddy, they’re already in my room, and Mommy and Aunt Therese and I will work on it. Are you sure you don’t want me to leave some of the final details for me to finish after I return to New Jersey?” Rindy eyes sparkled with merriment as she teased her father.
“Oh, no, Rindy, Mommy and Aunt Therese have been looking forward to working with you and I wouldn’t dream of interfering. Besides, Mommy told me that the Easter bonnet was a ‘feminine thing’ that men like me don’t understand.”

Therese said, “Why don’t the three of you get together for a picture before Harge leaves? I want to finish a roll of film that has three exposures left.” She ran for the camera while the three Airds arranged themselves for a photo shoot.

“There!” exclaimed Therese after shooting two photos. “I have one more exposure.”

Carol jumped forward. “Fix the camera settings, Therese, and you and I will switch places. Therese took Carol’s place and Therese and Harge jointly held Rindy in front of them with their arms around Rindy’s shoulders and Rindy hugging both Harge and Therese. Carol snapped the final photo. “These are going to be some good photos.”

As Carol was speaking to Rindy and putting the camera down, Therese whispered in Harge’s ear, “I’ll frame one for Rindy and one for you to show your mother, since she won’t believe it.” Harge laughed and nodded.

“See you Sunday about 4:30 PM,” said Harge. “Will that give you enough time to get back from the play in the park?”

“Absolutely,” said Carol.

Harge hugged Rindy very tightly and said, “I love you always, pumpkin.” Harge also gave Carol a kiss on each cheek and shook hands with Therese and squeezed her shoulder with his free hand.

As Harge reached the door, Carol called out, “Please give our greetings to the Sinclairs and tell Marge I’ll be talking to her on the phone about spring break. Also enjoy your poker game tomorrow night.”

“Will do.” said Harge with a brighter than usual smile. Harge was out the door.

As Carol, Therese and Rindy were eating supper, Carol asked Rindy if she wanted to share either of the two questions that were in the new leather notebook Harge bought her. “Maybe one.” said Rindy.

Carol chuckled, “Can you give us a hint? For example, is it a one stick or two stick of gum question?”

Rindy laughed and rolled her eyes, “Probably a two-sticker.” Carol and Therese eyed each other but kept on eating.

Carol said, “Tell us about the Easter bonnet and how far along you are with its construction and what you want to get for it at the Woolworth store tomorrow.”

Rindy began to tell them a complete status of the bonnet and what she hoped to accomplish with their help this weekend. By the end of Rindy’s lengthy details of her progress, even Therese was having sympathy for Harge’s pain of hearing about the bonnet every night for weeks. Even so, Carol and Therese were delighted that they were finally going to be involved.

After supper, all three helped with the dishes and made short work of them. They retreated to the living room to hear Rindy’s question for them from her leather notebook.

Both Carol and Therese were having an after dinner brandy while Rindy had her cupcake and some hot chocolate.
Rindy began. “Karen said that Uncle Jack and Uncle Michael keep a little cowbell on a small stand outside their bedroom. If their bedroom door is closed, Karen is supposed to ring the bell to bring one of the uncles to the door, and if it is alright, she can come in. Sometimes, Karen said that one or the other uncles opens the door with his pajama bottoms on and a t-shirt or maybe even without the t-shirt and just the pajama bottom. If no one comes to the door, Karen said that is a sign that they are too busy to talk.

“Mommy, Aunt Therese, do you want to put a bell outside your bedroom for me to ring?” Rindy asked.

Carol took a sip of brandy, while Therese took a larger swig. ‘God this is better than Wrigley’s Doublemint gum,’ they both thought.

Carol began, “Well, sweet pea, now that you are nearly eleven, we can probably explain some things to you about closed bedroom doors. (Therese thought, ‘I’m glad I’m not explaining this.’) Sometimes adults are busy in their bedrooms. We have our bathroom in our bedroom. That kind of bathroom is called an ensuite bathroom. We may not be dressed right after our baths or showers and we would need to have time to put clothes or pajamas on. This concept of being presentable is called ‘decorum.’ It’s a good word to remember.”

Rindy asked, “If both of you are in the bedroom and bathroom after taking showers and you left your robe in the other room, does one of you need to hide your eyes while the other walks by without clothes on? That is what Karen does if her mother needs to walk by.”

Therese thought, ‘Oh brother, is it my turn to take it from here? Please, God, let Carol finish this.’

Instead, Carol put down her brandy and patted her lap for Rindy to join her on the couch. “Rindy, Aunt Therese and I know each other well enough to see each other without our clothes on. Grownups who love each other very much feel comfortable seeing each other’s bodies without clothes. Most of the time it’s only in the bedroom that we do that. We put on robes when we leave the bedroom, because the doorbell might ring and we would need to have something on.”

Carol said, “Rindy, if you would like to get a little bell, we can put it on a pretty ribbon outside the door for you to ring if you find our bedroom door closed. You can even choose the color of the ribbon and we’ll choose the bell together. That way if we did not happen to be dressed we would appreciate it if you would knock first so we can get our robes on.”

Rindy hugged her mother. “Thank you for explaining the question I asked so I could understand. I like being able to ask you questions now that I know you are in love with each other.”

Carol hugged her daughter and kissed her head. Therese scooted over and gave Rindy a hug and kiss, too.

Therese said, “Speaking of bedtime…”

Before Therese could finish, Rindy said, “I know I need to go to bed, Aunt Therese. We have a lot of things to do tomorrow.”

Carol nodded, “We all do. We need to be at the furniture store at 10:00 AM sharp. Aunt Therese is taking some photographs of furniture for my boss, and you and I, my darling, are going to look at that new trundle bed for your room. Then we have another stop to make. We’ll have lunch, then go to Woolworth for materials for your Easter bonnet.”

Therese added, “Rindy, we need to develop the film from last weekend of your horseback riding and sleepover at Karen’s.”
Rindy said, “That is a lot of things to do. I’m going to bed right now. I will knock on your door if it is closed.”

Therese kissed Rindy as did Carol. “Thank you, snowflake.”

Everyone said goodnight.

9:30 PM – The Aird-Belivet apartment

With Rindy fast asleep, Carol and Therese retreated to their bedroom.

Therese spoke first “You did a marvelous job with Rindy’s question, my love.”

Carol collapsed on their bed and stretched wearily. “I don’t think I will wear pajamas tonight—I think I will go to sleep right now fully clothed. I could have told her more, but my rule of thumb is to answer what she asks. If Rindy had wanted more details, she would have asked for them, and I have no doubt she will someday—perhaps someday soon.”

Therese sighed. “It’s not easy having the facts of life conversation, is it, my love?”

“Definitely not, dearest.” said Carol. “Do you mind helping me off with my clothes? I meant it when I said I was so beat I could sleep in them.”

After closing the bedroom door, Therese helped Carol take off her clothes. Then she removed her own and pulled on her pajamas. Therese brought Carol her nightgown out of the drawer. Each took their turns in the bathroom. Carol was already in bed, and as Therese leaned over Carol to turn off the nightlight, Carol said, “Sweetness, do you have any pleasant pillow talk you could share tonight? I need a diversion after wondering if I answered our daughter’s question correctly.”

Therese cuddled up to Carol and put her head on Carol shoulder. “First and foremost, love, you were so good with Rindy.” Carol let out a slow breath. “Second, I do have some pleasant pillow talk to go to sleep by. I will give you the short version. If you go to sleep while I’m talking to you it’s fine, I will just tell you again tomorrow.”

Carol said, “Mmmm, I love you so, Therese.”

Therese recounted her visit with the head of Metro and how she talked to Mr. Goldman about how it felt to have to hide your sexuality. She also told Carol that she was going to be able to put pictures of her and Rindy on her desk without fear of retaliation. Therese paused for the best part —how Mr. Goldman’s wife knew Carol and was a good customer of Carol’s. Therese asked Carol what she thought of all that, but with a soft chuckle she realized Carol was fast asleep.

Therese spoke softly to Carol as if she were awake, “My dearest darling, I love you so much and I will be happy to tell my story to you again tomorrow. You are my world, Carol, and I cannot wait to wear your ring. Goodnight my love.”

Therese turned on her side away from Carol, and even in her sleep, Carol felt the keeper of her heart leave her side, so she turned and wrapped her arm around Therese and pulled Therese tightly against her.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 21 takes place Friday March 7, 1959 in the Aird-Belivet apartment in New York City and in their neighborhood. The main part of the chapter involves Carol, Therese and Rindy shopping for a new bed for Rindy, giving Rindy a preview of their matching rings and Therese answering Rindy’s important question about marriage.

Chapter Notes

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one.

For more information about the tradition of Jumping the Broom see the Internet.

The term "Negro" was still regularly used until the late 1960s.

I appreciate your following my storyline so very much.

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

Regards,
Pipestone

Saturday, March 7, 1959

7:00 AM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in New York City

Carol and Therese awakened before Rindy. They can’t believe Rindy is still asleep. Therese said, “Good morning, my love. What if she’s writing more questions for us in the leather notebook?”

Carol kissed her and said “Good morning, dearest. Maybe she is so worn out she is still asleep or better still she is writing in her new ‘Questions for Daddy’ notebook.”

The women shared a laugh and Therese gently pushed Carol on her back for a good morning kiss and full body hug.

“You know that you fell asleep during my pillow talk story, dear heart?” teased Therese.

Carol stroked Therese’s face tenderly, “Sorry, darling. I was so beat after answering Rindy’s question about our state of undress around each other while in the bedroom.”
Therese ran her hands through Carol’s blonde hair and tucked strands behind her ears. “Heavens, Carol. Don’t apologize. I was only kidding. The entire time that you were explaining to Rindy, I was thanking God that it was you instead of me doing the explaining.”

Carol smiled mischievously at Therese. “Oh, don’t worry dearest. You’ll have plenty of opportunities to answer her questions.” Therese feigned a gulp. “By the way,” Carol continued, “I did go to sleep during your pillow talk but seems like I came to momentarily and heard you say the name, ‘Grace Goldman.’ She is my best customer and a lovely person. Did I hear you correctly?”

“You did.” Therese smiled.

“Well then, don’t keep me wondering, darling.” Carol said. “How do you know Grace?”

“Actually I don’t.” Therese said excitedly, “But her husband is the head of the entire Metro division at The New York Times. “I report up the chain and I do mean way up the chain to Jerry Goldman.”

Carol’s face registered excitement. “Oh, this is making sense.” Carol said. “I recall that Grace referred to her husband as Jerry and… (suddenly Carol remembered) he actually came into O’Halloran’s with her once. He was pleasant enough. He even asked for my business card, but as is the case with many husbands, he didn’t seem interested in the least in furniture shopping. Now you need to connect the dots for me, Therese. I’m a bit confused.”

Therese quickly related some of the entire pillow talk conversation, including her visit to Jerry Goldman’s office and his remembering Carol when Therese mentioned Carol’s profession.

“You really must have made quite the positive impression on him during the one visit he made to O’Halloran’s, Carol.” said Therese.

“Well this is a small world.” Carol said. “I can’t wait until the next time I talk to Grace.”

Therese said, “It may be sooner than you think. Mr. Goldman said he suspected that Grace will probably want to invite us for dinner. Imagine…as a couple, Carol! My boss, Lee Barnes and his wife will probably come, too, and remember that Lee is anxious to meet you.”

Carol kissed her softly. “This is the wonderful result of your being so brave about being open and unafraid of being your true self at work. I’m so very proud of you.” Carol beamed at Therese.

“Well, Carol, I can’t say that I wasn’t afraid or at least anxious, but this is the result of my attending some of the gay meetings. I’ve learned that sometimes we need to take a chance of not hiding.”

Carol held Therese’s face in her hands. “My brave darling. I mean it Therese. You are simply amazing. I’m so lucky that you are mine.”

Therese smiled back at Carol. “I most certainly am yours, and I would probably argue about who is the luckiest, but that wouldn’t be the best use of our time. Remind me to tell you some of the additional details of my conversation with Jerry Goldman. Right now we probably should see what our daughter is up to.”

“Agreed.” Said Carol. “We need to be at O’Halloran’s a little after 10:00 AM. Could you call Jonathan Devon to ensure it’s alright to bring Rindy by to see our rings?”

“With pleasure.” exclaimed Therese. “But I should call him right after we arrive at O’Halloran’s, for he doesn’t open until 10:00 AM either.
As soon as the words were out of Therese’s mouth, a knock was heard at their bedroom door.

Therese called out, “Come in if your name is Rindy Aird.”

The door opened and Rindy’s adorable smiling face appeared. “Join us, sweet pea.” Carol said patting the space between them in bed.

Rindy giggled and joyously jumped into their bed and hugged and kissed Carol and Therese. “Good morning, Mommy; good morning Aunt Therese!”

Rindy sat up between her two moms and announced that she had another question for them. Therese asked, “Is this like a Doublemint gum question?” Rindy laughed and held out two sticks of Doublemint gum. Therese laughed, as did Carol, but it was Therese who took the gum from Rindy and said, “I think it’s my turn to answer one of your questions.” Carol smiled and rolled her eyes—relaxing a bit.

Rindy said, “Okay Aunt Therese. Uncles Jack and Michael wear beautiful matching rings on their hands, but you and Mommy don’t wear matching rings. Why not? You’ve been together longer than they have.”

Therese smiled at her easy question, especially compared to the difficult question Carol had answered last night. Carol gave a sly smile to Therese to convey the message ‘I know you have an easy question, but one of these times you’ll get a difficult one.’

“Well, Rindy,” explained Therese with a big smile, “We are going to wear matching rings very soon.”

Rindy’s mouth opened wide with surprise and excitement, “Really!” Rindy exclaimed as she looked to her mother for confirmation.

Therese and Carol nodded as they matched Rindy’s smile. Therese explained, “We have already selected the rings and now they just need to be engraved with some special words that we want on the inside of each other’s rings.”

“Do you have a picture of the rings?” asked Rindy.

Therese laughingly said, “We do and we will show you the picture very soon. Also, we have something special planned for today after we are done at the furniture store. We are going to the jewelry store so that you can be the very first person to see our rings.”

Rindy clapped her hands and bounced a bit on the bed. Therese said, “Rindy, if you look in the office on my desk, you will see a large brown envelope that says ‘ring photos.’ Why don’t you go get it and we’ll show you the picture?”

Carol added, “Sweet pea, why don’t you bring the envelope to the kitchen table and we can look at the picture there? Aunt Therese and I need some coffee and I’ll bet you would like some hot chocolate. If you’re chilly, put your robe on. We’re going to do the same.” Carol started to get up as did Therese. Therese headed for the bathroom. Carol said, “Darling, would you hand my robe to me?”

Rindy said, “I’ll see you in the kitchen.”

As Carol was preparing their morning beverages, Therese walked into the kitchen and planted a kiss on the back of Carol’s neck. “I like the question that I was asked.”
Carol chuckled as she took Therese’s hand and put it around her waist. “It’s probably not good to gloat my dear. The next question you may have to answer could be a real heart-stopper.” Therese gulped as the truth of Carol’s words sunk in.

Just then Rindy came running into the kitchen. Carol and Therese no longer felt the need to avoid showing affection such as Therese’s arm around Carol’s waist now that Rindy knew they loved each other. In fact, Rindy glanced over and beamed at the sight of Therese with her arm around Carol.

“Aunt Therese,” said Rindy, “could you show me the photo of your rings?”

“Let’s do this, Rindy. Our drinks will be ready in just a few minutes. Let’s go ahead and look at the pictures before we have liquid on the table. We wouldn’t want to spill any on the photos. We could make a little game if you wish. I could put six photos on the table. One of them would be the ring we chose. If you don’t want to guess, I’ll just show you our choice. Would you like to guess?”

“Oh, I want to try to guess!” said Rindy.

Therese said, “Alright, but remember that it’s okay if you don’t guess the one we chose. Don’t feel bad about that.”

Rindy said excitedly, “I won’t feel bad, but I want to guess.”

Carol turned away from the drink preparation to watch their daughter attempt to choose their ring from among six ring photos.

Therese said to Rindy, “Close your eyes while I put the six ring photos on the table. Remember, the location of the photo on the table has nothing to do with our choice.”

“Ohay,” said Rindy as she put her hands over her eyes. Carol smiled proudly at Rindy.

Therese put their ring in the middle of the second row of the six photos and said, “Ready.”

Rindy studied the ring photos for only a moment and then looked from Carol to Therese with a smile that sparkled. “They’re all beautiful, but I believe that you would choose this one. It’s so special.” Rindy pointed to the very ring that Carol and Therese chose. Both women clapped and hugged Rindy. Rindy grinned and said mischievously, “Does this mean I chose the right one?”

Carol enveloped Rindy with a hug and showered her head with kisses. “Yes, my special girl, you certainly did.”

Therese told Rindy the story of how Carol had chosen that ring from among many photos and that it was Therese’s favorite as well.

Rindy said, “Well, our family has good taste don’t we?”

Everyone laughed as Carol served their breakfast beverages and began to make bacon and pancakes.

10:00 AM the same day – O’Halloran’s Furniture in Manhattan.

The three women of the Aird/Belivet family arrived at the appointed time. Carol greeted her coworkers and introduced them to Rindy again. They had not seen her in some time and several co-
workers exclaimed at how much Rindy had grown. Carol smiled proudly. Therese had already excused herself to call Jonathan Devon to see if they could drop by the jewelers in about an hour or so to show the rings to their daughter. The arrangements were made. Therese was greeted by Mr. O’Halloran who expressed his appreciation for her taking photos of the pieces he wanted to market across the country. Therese smiled shyly and told him it was her pleasure.

Since the photos would be in color, Therese reminded Mr. O’Halloran that the film must be sent to a color lab in Manhattan for development as Therese did not have the facilities in her darkroom to develop color film. Mr. O’Halloran remembered the business card of the lab that Therese had given him and said that he or Carol would take care of that chore on Monday.

As Mr. O’Halloran began to show Therese the pieces to photograph, Carol and Rindy went to look at the trundle bed that Carol had put a hold on earlier in the week. It would be perfect for sleepovers. Rindy loved the bed and had fun lying down on both halves of the trundle bed. It would take up no more room than the twin bed she currently had in her room, but would allow for a sleepover guest—probably Karen most of the time.

Carol went to get ‘sold’ sign. She let Rindy put it on the bed—much to Rindy’s delight. Then the two of them went to find Therese. Therese was still immersed in taking photos so Carol took that opportunity to pay for the bed and arrange for delivery.

While Rindy and Carol were waiting for Therese to finish taking photos of the items in the store, Carol heard her name called out by one of her co-workers saying she had a phone call. Carol was quite surprised at getting a store call on a Saturday since she rarely worked on the weekends.

“Carol Aird speaking. How may I help you?” said Carol quite professionally.

“Carol!” said a familiar voice. “I took a chance on your being in the store on Saturday.” Carol realized the voice at the end of the line was Grace Goldman. Grace continued, “How are you, Carol? I haven’t been in for a while. Jerry threw a fit over that antique desk I bought for our big house in the country. I calmed him down, though and now he loves it.”

Carol answered, “Grace, the desk was a real find. I just knew you would love it.”

“I certainly do, and I know how to manage Jerry.” chuckled Grace. Grace said, “But furniture is not the reason I called. I hope your companion, Miss Belivet, has related her visit to Jerry’s office and his telling her that we would love to have the two of you for dinner soon.”

Carol replied, “Yes. Therese was very excited about the prospect and appreciative of the time your husband spent with her and the confidence he expressed in her.”

Grace lowered her voice a bit and said, “Jerry rarely has had an employee in whom he has taken such a personal career interest. He sees her as a standout talent at The Times.” “He told me ‘That young lady made me think more than anyone has done in a long time.’ We hope you can join us for dinner Wednesday night this week at our apartment on Madison Avenue. We’re inviting Therese’s immediate boss Lee Barnes and his wife Rebecca as well.”

Carol said, “I am sure that there is no problem. What time should we arrive?”

Grace said, “7:00 PM and we won’t make it a late night. Some of you have to work the next day. Call me later today if you have a problem with making it, after confirming with Therese. Otherwise I will expect you at 7:00 PM Wednesday. Do you still have my address and phone number in the store’s records?”

Carol confirmed that she had the Goldman’s address and phone number and wished Grace a
pleasant day and thanked her for the invitation.

Carol hung up the phone and stood stunned with the importance of the invitation. She was also thrilled that she and Therese would be socializing as a couple with two heterosexual couples who accepted them for the people they were. A broad smile lit up Carol’s face as Therese rounded the corner to tell her that her photography duties were done for the day.

“Dearest,” began Carol. “You will not believe what just happened.”

Carol related the call from Grace Goldman and Therese was overjoyed, but nervous. “I think I will have to consult our Emily Post book before we go to dinner,” said Therese, “but this is quite an opportunity.”

They rounded up Rindy and hailed a cab and proceeded to Devon Jewelry. Rindy became very excited about the prospect of seeing their rings as they pulled up the curb in front of the store. Therese paid the driver, and the three proceeded to ring the bell to gain entrance.

11:00 AM – the same day, Devon Jewelry, Manhattan

Jonathan Devon and Myron greeted Rindy profusely, calling her ‘Miss Aird,’ much to Rindy’s delight. Jonathan explained the uniqueness of the rings as he ushered the three into his office. He opened his safe and carefully brought out the two black velvet boxes. Even though Carol and Therese had seen him do this several times before, they literally held their breath. Rindy looked from Carol to Therese to Jonathan (whom she called Mr. Devon) with a look of anticipation on her face.

When Jonathan opened the boxes one after another, Rindy clapped her hands once then held both hands to her cheeks in joy and amazement. Carol and Therese were overcome with Rindy’s reaction. Finally, Carol was able to say, “We hope you love them as much as we do, Rindy.”

Rindy kept her eyes on the rings and asked, “Could I see you wearing the rings now?”

“Of course, Rindy,” said Therese. Each lifted the ring of the other out of the box. First, Therese slipped Carol’s ring onto her right hand’s ring finger and then Carol did the same for Therese. They both admired the rings for a moment and without saying a word, extended their hands to Rindy.

Finally, Therese said, “Rindy, dear, you are the first to see us wearing the rings, except for Mr. Devon.”

“Oh!” Rindy exclaimed. “Oh, Mommy. Oh, Aunt Therese. These are the most beautiful rings I have ever seen. I can’t believe I am the first to see.”

Mr. Devon had retreated to a corner of his office to give the family a bit of privacy. He cleared his throat and said, “Rindy,” I think your mother and your aunt have selected one of the most beautiful ring patterns I have ever seen—and I see a lot of rings.”

“Yes, you do, Mr. Devon!” laughed Rindy.

Mr. Devon explained that the next step was for the rings to go to an engraver in another part of the city to have special words engraved inside the rings.

Reluctantly, the women slipped the rings off their fingers and returned them to Mr. Devon. He carefully put them in the proper box and ensured the engraving instructions were matched with the
proper ring.

“Thank you for allowing Rindy to see our rings.” said Therese.

“Of course,” said Jonathon. “They will go to the engraver next week and will be back in my shop no later than the end of the first week in April. I will call Therese and let her know the exact amount owed and you can pay me when you are satisfied with the final engraved product. I understand that you each want to pay separately for each other’s ring.”

“Correct.” said Therese smiling. “Thank you again for all your help Mr. Devon.”

“The pleasure is mine.” said Jonathan. “I wish a had a hundred customers just like you two.”

They went to a diner that was a favorite of Rindy’s for lunch.

Carol and Rindy went to Woolworth’s to shop for Easter bonnet supplies while Therese returned to the apartment to start developing Rindy’s and her photographs from the previous weekend at the Sinclair estate.

5:00 PM – the same day, back at the Aird/Belivet apartment

Carol and Rindy worked on the Easter bonnet while Therese is in the darkroom developing photos from Rindy’s sleepover and their visit to the Sinclair mansion.

Several hours later Carol and Rindy showed Rindy’s bonnet’s progress to Therese. They took a break to install the little bell and ribbon outside their bedroom door for Rindy to ‘knock’. Everyone was quite satisfied with the progress made that day.

Later, while Carol and Therese were warming up leftovers for supper, Rindy was on the phone with Karen talking about each other’s progress with their respective Easter bonnets.

After supper, while Carol and Therese were having an after dinner brandy, Rindy asked if they are going to get married and have a honeymoon.

Carol and Therese had Rindy sit between and they linked arms around her. As painful as it was for the two women, they had to gently explain to Rindy that two women and two men could not be legally married at the current time.

“But why?” Rindy asked tearfully. “You love each other as much as any other parents. It’s not fair! It’s just not fair! You have beautiful matching rings. Do they not mean you are married?”

Rindy looked to Carol and Therese, who were feeling shocked and helpless and momentarily unable to say anything.”

Rindy bolted from the living room and ran into her bedroom and closed the door.

“Jesus Christ, Therese.” Carol swore. “Now what do we tell her?” Tears slid down Carol’s cheeks as well.

Therese buried her face in her hands, took a deep breath, then stood up straight with resolve. She held out her hand to Carol and looked at her with love. “Carol, do you trust me?”

“With my life, Therese.” Therese kissed Carol, and said, “Then come with me and promise to pour me a stiff drink when I am done.” Carol nodded, but with a puzzled look.
One of Therese’s hands was firmly in Carol’s grasp. With her other hand, she knocked on Rindy’s
door. “Wipe your tears, my love,” whispered Therese to Carol. “This will turn out alright.”

Rindy offered a muffled “Come in.” Her little face was buried in her pillow.

Therese sat on the edge of Rindy’s bed and began to rub her upper back gently. Carol stood by
Therese and waited for what Therese was going to say.

Therese kept rubbing Rindy’s back as she spoke. “Sweetheart, we are disappointed, too—just as
much as you are—maybe more.” There are other ways of being married though, without walking
down the aisle in a church and signing a legal document from the government.”

Rindy’s face was still in the pillow and Therese could tell she was still crying, but Rindy did pause
to say, “Really?” Carol was thinking the same thoughts as Rindy and was terribly anxious to hear
what Therese had to say.

Therese asked Rindy to turn over. She did and Carol was ready with tissues for Rindy to wipe her
eyes and blow her nose.

Therese said, “We have asked you to keep some secrets lately haven’t we Rindy—secrets about
our relationship?” Rindy nodded and said, “Yes and I will never tell.”

Therese smiled and said, “Here is one more important secret that you must promise to keep from
everyone except your mother and me right now. Soon you can tell Daddy and perhaps Karen and
her mother and uncles, but right now it’s just for the people in this room. Do you agree?”

Rindy sat up with some importance now that she had a promise to keep. “I promise, Aunt Therese
and Mommy.”

Therese took a deep breath and said, “Carol, please sit next to Rindy so I can look at you both as I
tell you.”

Carol took her place and wrapped her arms around Rindy. Carol was as in the dark as much as
Rindy about what Therese might say.

Therese said, “Rindy, your Mommy knows that I sometimes go to meetings here in New York
City that are attended by many people just like your mother and me—women who love other
women and men who love other men.”

Rindy offered, “Like Uncle Jack and Uncle Michael?”

“Exactly right.” said Therese.

“You told me a little bit about these organizations when you had the talk a week ago with me at
Daddy’s house.” said Rindy.

“Well, yes, but there is more to that story.” said Therese.

Rindy and Carol leaned forward listening as attentively as two people could possibly listen.

Therese continued, “These organizations hope to change the way the world looks upon women
who love other women and men who love other men. Rindy, I am going to use the word
‘homosexual’ meaning these people like us. Is that alright?”

Rindy nodded.
Therese said, “Too much is in secret right now. What has to happen is for some brave homosexual people to be a little less secretive about their lives. In this way, people who are not homosexual can get to know people who are homosexual and find out that they are very nice people who can be their friends. However, it is the adults who must lead the way of being open about who they love. That’s why we have asked you not to tell.”

Rindy said, “Because I am just not old enough to talk to people about you and Mommy, right?”

Carol squeezed Rindy with pride. “Right sweet pea.” Carol said. Therese nodded, too.

Therese said, “Now about that wedding. There have been other times in our country’s history when a large group of people were not allowed to be married just because of who they were.”

“What!” exclaimed Rindy. “We didn’t learn that in school.”

“Well, perhaps you will learn it in high school, but it’s my guess that no one will ever mention it.”

“Tell me Aunt Therese. Who wasn’t allow to get married and what did they do about it?”

Therese said, “Certain groups that were disenfranchised, meaning that they did not have their full rights as citizens. One of those groups was the Negro slaves that were brought to America against their will by cruel slave traders. It was awful, Rindy, and what is worse is that right now your history books do not tell enough about what happened to the slaves and how they coped with life with so few freedoms. Slaves were not allowed to get married, but they devised their own ceremony called ‘Jumping the Broom.’ The couple would hold hands and jump over a broom together and say some very nice words to each other, pledging their lives to each other.”

Therese added. “Rindy, this is very important for you to understand. Your mother and I have never, ever had to endure hardships such as were endured by Negro slaves. But in this case, we are, like they were, not allowed to get legally married. That is the one similarity. Do you understand?”

Rindy said, “Yes, Aunt Therese.”

Therese continued, “There is a man I met in one of the political organizations. His name is Don-el. We refer to him as “The Prophet” because he seems to have an ability to foresee things in the future that eventually happen. Anyway, Don-el is convinced that homosexuals will someday be able to be legally married and it may come soon enough that your mother and I will be able to be legally married.”

Rindy clapped her hands, but asked, “When does Don-el think you and mommy might be able to be married legally?”

Therese said, “He thinks it will be a long time, but your mommy and I are going to live healthy lives. Mommy has almost quit smoking and I have quit. We will cut back on any drinking and exercise and keep our bodies in good shape. That way we can set a goal of living long enough to be married legally.”

Rindy asked, “Could you two ‘Jump the Broom’ for now?”

Therese answered, “Yes, we could and I will talk with Mommy about it. You see, Rindy dear, we have many things to be thankful for. Now you know we love each other. The people each of us works with know, too and they don’t mind a bit. Your Daddy is happy with us and will support us, too.”

Therese concluded by saying, “I think it’s time for you to get ready for bed, Rindy. Don’t you
“think you can dream happier dreams now?”

Rindy jumped into Therese’s arms and kissed her and hugged her. “Thank you so much, Aunt Therese. Now I know that someday you may be able to get legally married and until then you will have your beautiful rings and you can ‘Jump the Broom’ for now.”

Therese hugged Rindy back and kissed her head. “I love you Rindy.”

“I love you, Aunt Therese.” said Rindy.

Carol hugged Rindy and said, “Time for sweet dreams, my darling Rindy.”

Carol and Therese left Rindy’s room hand in hand.

After they closed Rindy’s bedroom door, Carol turned to Therese and asked, “Do you need that stiff drink now?”

Therese looked at Carol lovingly and said “No, just some kisses and hugs from the woman I’m going to marry.”

Securely in their bedroom, as they were undressing and donning their pajamas, Carol asked Therese, “There really is a Don-el, isn’t there?”

“Yes, indeed, my love,” answered Therese. “I hoped to invite him to our ring party.”

Carol said, “Please do. I’m dying to meet him. By the way, did Don-el predict an approximate date when we’ll be allowed to legally marry?”

Therese put her arms around Carol, then cupped her face, and looked directly into her eyes. “He did, and I am counting on both of us to live healthy lives that will enable us to reach that year.”

Carol said, “Which is…”

Therese answered, “The end of this century or a couple of years into the next century.” Therese stopped Carol’s gasp with a kiss. “My love, you would just be 81 at the end of this century. People do live that long, you know.”

Carol kissed Therese back and replied, “I pledge to you that I will do everything in my power to live until we have the right to legally marry. Please tell me you will do the same, Therese.”

“Of course I will, Carol, dear heart, but until then, let’s ‘Jump the Broom’ with our fabulous rings.”

Therese ran her fingers through Carol’s hair and pulled her into a deep, romantic kiss. “Tell me, did you and Rindy hang that bell outside the bedroom?”

“Yes,” replied Carol breathlessly. “Shall we temporarily shed these pajamas and practice for our wedding night?”

“Umm-hum.” said Therese.
Chapter Summary

Summary:
Chapter 22 takes place Saturday evening March 7, 1959 in the Sinclair mansion in New Jersey. Harge is enjoying a poker night with Jack Sinclair and his lover Michael Thompson and Tom Diamond, an Army buddy who served in Korea with Michael. After an enjoyable evening, Harge takes a chance on asking a huge favor of Jack and Michael and is surprised at the reception. Meanwhile back in Carol and Therese's apartment in New York City, Rindy is fast asleep after asking a pointed question of Carol and Therese about why they can't marry. Rindy was satisfied with the answer, but later, in the middle of the night, Therese needed to comfort a very upset Carol.

Saturday, March 7th, 1959 - Earlier in the evening

7:00 PM – Sinclair Mansion, New Jersey

Harge arrived with a bottle of wine and a nice scotch and some flowers for Marjorie.

Marjorie greeted him and told him that Tom and Gladys Diamond haven’t arrived yet. Karen was in her room. Marge said how she really enjoyed their dinner date on Wednesday night. Harge agreed.

Jack entered the room and boomed out: “Harge, welcome,” and connected with a firm handshake. Both men grinned. Jack said, “I hope you brought at least $25 for me to change into quarters. That's how we’ll start out. My man is in our wing of the house setting up. Do you want to go there now or stay and visit with Marge for a few minutes? If you want to stay I'll warn you I will be right here to chaperone.” Harge’s face fell. “Just kidding,” said Jack with a hearty laugh, “I’m going up to see if Michael needs any last minute help.”

Harge and Marge start to chat but were interrupted by the arrival of Tom and Gladys Diamond. Marge introduced Harge. The four exchanged pleasantries.

Tom and Harge headed for Jack and Michael’s wing of the mansion. Harge had met Tom Diamond before as he was formerly associated with the Paramus New Jersey Ford Dealership prior to his partnership with Jack. “Glad you know your way, Tom.” said Harge. They opened the door to Jack and Michael’s living room and strolled into the small kitchenette to find Michael reaching up in a cabinet. Jack was rubbing the back of Michael’s neck affectionately.

“Hey there you two.” chuckled Tom. “No hanky-panky before poker.” Harge was a bit shocked at Tom’s nonchalance about the show of affection between the two men, but after being around Carol and Therese lately it was becoming less of an oddity to see two adults of the same sex show affection to each other.

Michael laughed as Jack stepped back. “Well, Tom. You didn’t seem to mind a little man to man contact when I had your body draped all over me as I was carrying you down that god-damned hill in Korea while I was being shot.” Michael stopped what he was doing and walked over to Tom and hugged his former Army buddy with sincere affection.
“Well that’s a fact.” said Tom, returning the hug. “I wouldn’t be here playing poker tonight and probably losing my entire $25 if you hadn’t saved my ass.”

Harge stood back amazed. All of the men noticed his expression and Jack started to explain.

“Michael and Tom served together in the Army in Korea. They were troopers in the 8th Calvary. The 8th Calvary suffered heavily in several battles deep into North Korea in late 1950 and January 1951.”

Michael interrupted, “We’ll tell you the story later, Harge, if you want to know some details. For years I didn’t want to talk about it, but now, especially with Tom being so close to Jack and me, I feel more comfortable.”

Harge said, “I understand, Michael. I saw action in France during the war and really didn’t want to talk about it, except to my Army buddies. Even Carol knows very little about the details.”

Harge looked at one of the walls and saw it was covered with old photos and in the center was a framed Bronze Star, Purple Heart and Korean War Service Medal. Tom noticed Harge’s attention focused on the Bronze Star.

Tom said, “He was put in for a Silver Star, but our bastard of a lieutenant made sure Michael only got the Bronze Star. Hell, Michael should have received at least the Silver Star for what he did to save so many lives.”

Michael put a hand on Tom’s shoulder. “Later, Tom, okay? Let’s lighten the mood. I intend to whip your ass so much at poker tonight that you won’t want to pay any compliments to me.” All four men laughed to break the awkwardness.

Harge followed the group to the card table that Jack had set up, but he was deep in thought about the honors Michael had earned. Harge’s stereotype of an effeminate homosexual man was permanently shattered. Carol and Therese had already dispelled his misconception of mannish lesbians. For a brief moment, he heard in his head the voice of his mother ranting on and on about the sick, abominable homosexuals that should be banished to some far-away island. He thought for a moment that he might be physically sick.

“Guys,” Harge asked, “Where is your bathroom?” Jack directed him and Harge closed the door behind him and splashed water on his face and looked in the mirror. ‘God forgive me for ever agreeing with my mother.’ He thought.

His thoughts were interrupted by Jack’s voice, “Hey in there, drinks are being served and I think Marge and Gladys are on their way with some snacks for us.”

The cloud of Harge’s thoughts lifted at the mention of Marge’s name. He returned to the room just as Marge and Gladys entered with sandwiches. The men thanked them profusely. “By the way, Marge,” Harge said, “Where is that delightful daughter of yours tonight?”

Marge laughed, “She’s hidden away in her room working hard on her Easter bonnet. It’s almost an obsession. Is it the same with Rindy?”

Harge was pleased to be able to have a short conversation with Marge. “Well, lucky for me, Carol and Therese have agreed to take over the bonnet coordination, including the endless conversations and decisions. Carol loves doing it, for which I am eternally grateful.”

As Marge was leaving, she said “Let’s talk later tonight or tomorrow about an idea I have about inviting Carol and Therese to come out for a couple of days to ride horses with the girls and me during spring break.”
“Great!” enthused Harge.

“Hey there, Harge.” called Jack. “I need your $25 so I can provide you with quarters which you may soon lose.” The three men at the table laughed.

Harge said, “I may be having the last laugh, for remember, I can’t drink much more than a couple of glasses of wine because of my heart condition. I am going to be so mentally sharp that I may take you guys to the cleaners.”

Everyone laughed as the poker game began. Several hours later, Tom’s wife Gladys entered the room and announced that they needed to be going because the babysitter needed to be taken home. Tom gloated that Gladys had perfect timing since he was far ahead in poker winnings. The three other men groaned, but cheerfully said that they would ensure that Tom would not win the next time. Jack suggested that they bring Tom Jr. with them and they could put him down in one of the spare rooms. Michael said Karen would love to play with a younger child, too.

All the men shook hands and promised that they would repeat the evening soon. Jack, Michael and Harge followed the Diamonds to the front door to join Marge in saying their goodbyes.

The Sinclairs insisted that Harge stay a little longer and visit with them. “You haven’t been able to visit with me all evening.” said Marge.

“Yes,” said Harge, “and I am happy to do so.”

“Shall we leave?” asked Michael. “Oh no, said Harge. I would enjoy visiting with all three of you.”

Harge’s eyes scanned the den and rested on a large model of a beautiful yacht on a side table. “Ah,” said Harge. “What a beautiful model. Is it a model of a yacht you have sailed on?”

“Actually,” Jack explained proudly, “This is the Sinclair and it’s owned by Sinclair Motors. The executives of the company have the privilege of scheduling time to use the yacht which is harbored in Key West, Florida. It’s Michael’s and my turn to use it for twelve days starting April 19th.” “We are really looking forward to it.”

Harge’s head was spinning with an idea that might be so out of line, but he was determined to mention it. Carol and Therese’s ring exchange was to take place on Saturday April 18th as was small gathering to help them celebrate their sixth anniversary as a couple. Harge had already mentioned to Carol that it was a shame that she again would not be able to have a proper honeymoon. Could this be it? Might Jack and Michael be so gracious to share their time with Carol and Therese given the hardships the women had gone through—mostly at Harge’s hand.

Harge decided to plunge ahead. “Could we sit down? I have an idea that may sound inappropriate and if it is, I want you to tell me right away. I will drop it and never speak of it again.”

The three Sinclairs had extremely puzzled looks on their faces. Marge excused herself to check on Karen—as it was getting past her bedtime. “Do I need to be in on the beginning of the conversation?”

“I’d like for you to be.” said Harge.

“Give me ten minutes.” said Marge.

Jack decided to fill the time by telling Harge about the yacht. It was a 1958 model and was 60 feet long. It had an inboard motor, but also had sails if they wished to use them. There were two
bedrooms, each with a double bed, plus a third bedroom that had two bunks stacked with two beds. The yacht could comfortably accommodate eight people. Each of the bedrooms had a very small head (i.e., toilet) with a shower. The shower was tiny in one of the two bedrooms and slightly larger in the other. Also, there was common bathroom for those using the bunkbeds and an outdoor freshwater shower on deck. The boat had a simple but ample kitchen complete with two burner stove, small oven and refrigerator.

While Jack was trying to show Harge the details using the yacht model, Michael brought out some photographs. Harge’s mind was spinning with possibilities, but he realized he barely knew the Sinclairs. The connections were that the daughters were best friends and that Jack and Michael and Carol and Therese were committed homosexual couples. Harge hoped that would be enough for a successful request.

Marge returned and all three Sinclairs were eagerly awaiting what Harge was thinking about the yacht.

Harge began, “If this request sounds inappropriate, I want you to stop me right away. I realize that this is totally out of the blue and I do not expect you to agree or disagree tonight, but I must tell you what is on my heart.”

Harge had the complete attention of all three Sinclairs. “Within the next few days, Carol will be inviting you to an event.” Harge said.

“Yes,” said Marge, “She has already invited the three of us for Easter dinner and perhaps a sleepover for Karen and me to prepare the Easter bonnets. Also, Carol told me to save the date for Saturday April 18th for an important event at their apartment. The uncles are invited, too. Carol said she and Therese were going to share something important with people they felt close to. I was honored they would include the three of us.”

“Well,” said Harge somewhat dramatically, “Saturday evening, April 18th is their sixth anniversary of when they committed to spend their lives together. The three Sinclairs drew in a breath at the same time. This one is special, for they are going to exchange matching wedding bands in front of a small group of people that are very special to them. Of course that includes you three. Now, I realize as the ex-husband I am certainly not the person who should be issuing such an important invitation, but please hear me out.”

The Sinclairs were hanging on every one of Harge’s words.

“Carol and I never had a honeymoon. The day after we were married I was called up by the Army and shipped to Europe.”

“Jack and Michael know this more than anyone. As a homosexual couple, Carol and Therese never had a gathering to celebrate their decision to be together. In fact, they faced many difficulties, and most of them came from me, I am ashamed to say. Recently, I have become a firm supporter of their relationship and want to do everything in my power to ensure that they are protected from the cruel world in general. I want our daughter to love and value them as her mothers and to know that I do the same.

Marjorie was brushing away tears at these last words. Jack and Michael were astounded and were holding each other’s hands.

Harge took a deep breath. “I want to give them a honeymoon they will never forget. Jack, Michael, could you find it in your hearts to include them on this trip for just a portion of the days you planned to be gone? I will pay any price, and I do mean any price to fly all of you to Key West and take care of whatever expenses you incur.” Harge looked from person to person to
Jack and Michael looked at each other and they both looked at Marge. All three were wiping away tears. Jack said carefully, looking directly at Harge, “It would be our honor and our delight for Carrol and Therese to join us for a part or all our time on the yacht. Michael was so overcome with emotion that he took a few steps away from the group. Marjorie walked over to rub his arm to comfort him.

Jack explained Michael’s emotion to Harge. “When the two of us go to Florida and sail on the Sinclair and stop in various ports either to get supplies or go out to eat, occasionally we get cat-calls or limp hand gestures thrown our way. It usually comes from the working class white men. Of course either of us, but especially Michael could beat any of them to a pulp, but that’s not the point. It’s humiliating and usually puts us in a sour mood for a while. We have often said that if only we had two women friends, especially a lesbian couple with us, then we would eliminate all that. Do you see what I mean?”

Michael and Marge had heard all that Jack said to Harge, and had rejoined the group—all smiles now.

Harge embraced all three Sinclairs in turn. Jack continued, “Since it’s late, why don’t you talk to me on the phone on Monday. We need to decide which of the two ladies to bring in on this plot. My guess is Therese. What do you think, Harge?”

Harge said, “I agree. One of the two will have to help coordinate getting the days off from work and I think Therese can work with Carol’s employer more easily than vice versa.”

Marge said, “Harge, you are a wonderful man and if only every woman had an ex-husband like you.”

Harge replied, “Marge, I don’t deserve all the credit you give me. In the beginning, I was not the man I should have been—even worse than that. Someday I will tell you if you wish.”

Marge replied, “I’m not sure I want to go back to the past, but I did hear what you said. If Carol and Therese have forgiven you, then who am I to judge?”

Jack and Michael shook hands and clapped Harge on the shoulder while Marge gave him a quick hug.

Harge left whistling into the night, excited to share the joy soon with Therese.

11:00 PM – The same night at the Aird/Belivet apartment in New York City

Carol and Therese were putting on their pajamas again after an unexpected love-making session. Rindy was fast asleep in her bedroom. Therese had made an exhausting attempt to explain why Carol and Therese couldn’t get legally married to a heartbroken Rindy.

Reclining in the bed, Carol tenderely stroked Therese’s cheek in the dark of their room. Usually they left the light on when making love, but they were more cautious when Rindy was with them.

Carol said, “Darling, you were absolutely brilliant tonight. And here I thought I had the most difficult question to date about our state of undress while in our bedroom. Then you jumped right in and took on the question about marriage.” said Carol.

“My love,” said Therese, “I just happened to have the knowledge to answer that question. It was
more fortunate than anything else. Carol, darling, we make a very good team. I had no idea how many and how often the questions would come now that Rindy knows. However, I’d never go back to having her not know of our love for each other.”

“Agreed.” said Carol.

Therese asked, “Have you really been thinking about people to invite to our party, ‘The Unveiling of the Rings’ on Saturday night April 18th.”

“I have,” said Carol. There are some people that I am sure we would agree on. For example, Abby and her date.”

Therese said “I imagine it would be Mary, but Abby has been seeing several other women lately.”

Carol added, “I hope it’s Mary, for we go back such a long way with her—but it’s Abigail’s choice.”

Carol said, “I must confess, I had the occasion to talk to Marge Sinclair earlier in the week and I asked her to save the date for her and the Uncles.”

Therese replied, “That’s perfect. I had considered them a must-invite, so I’m glad you’ve already taken care of it.”

Carol asked, “What about your co-workers, Therese?”

Therese answered, “Dannie is a must as is his date, Louise and Phil, his brother and his date as well. They’ve seen me through some tough times.”

“Agreed.” Said Carol. I would also like to invite my boss Mr. O’Halloran and his wife, but I doubt he will come. I would like to invite one of my old friends from New Jersey, Jeanette Harrison.” Therese nodded, “But not Cy, her husband?” Therese asked.

Carol said, “I’ll tell Jeanette Cy is invited, but I doubt he’ll come. He is very close to Harge and he will know Harge wouldn’t be invited, and will probably want to keep Harge company that night.”

Therese said, “What about Jonathan Devon and a date?”

“Of course,” said Carol. We are getting close to the limits of who can fit in our apartment.” Don’t you have a couple of friends from your political organizations you would like to invite?”

“Yes, said Therese. I would like to invite Don-el, “The Prophet” and one other woman from the Daughters of Billitis named Virginia. Finally, I would like to invite my boss, Lee Barnes and his wife Rebecca and the woman who lent me her copies of the Brides magazine. Her name is Carmen and she is also knowledgeable about the ceremony of the ‘Jumping the Broom.’” “Well,” said Carol, “That should be the upper limit.”

Therese said, “I’ve jotted names down so we won’t forget. I’m going to put them in my night stand drawer.”

Carol said, “We need to start getting word to these folks to save the night of April 18th for our celebration. With Carol and Therese dressed in their softest pajamas, they bid each other a loving good-night, put their arms around each other. Therese fell into a deep sleep, and Carol could hear her soft snores in her ear. Shortly afterward Carol fell into a dreamless sleep.
Therese awakened to a sound she couldn’t identify. She was lying on her side away from Carol. She was motionless so as not to disturb Carol. There it was—that sound, and it was coming from Carol’s side of the bed. Therese reached back with her free arm to touch behind her, expecting to find Carol close by, but she only felt cool sheets. Therese slowly turned over and could tell that Carol was on the far edge of the bed. Carol’s body was shaking. Now Therese was becoming concerned. She gently scooted closer to Carol and put her hand on Carol’s shoulder.

“Don’t” came a muffled reply from Carol. “Please let me be.”

Therese was not going to let that happen at least without some indication of what was wrong. Therese tentatively extended her hand and encountered Carol’s pillow. It was wet with her tears.

“My darling,” whispered Therese. “Please tell me what’s wrong.”

“I can’t.” said Carol as she tightened her body further away from Therese.

Now Therese was frightened. Was Carol ill and had not told her? She doubted anything was wrong with Rindy or Harge. Everything seemed to be working out fine on that end. The rings? Was Carol having second thoughts about so public a display of their newly purchased rings? True, they were being more out front than most homosexual couples. Perhaps Carol was afraid of a backlash. Therese thought, ‘We can cancel the party. Only Marge and Harge knew about it and they would be quite understanding if it were cancelled. Well, Rindy knew a little bit, but that could be explained too.’

Right now, Therese needed to find out why Carol was crying and keeping it to herself. This was so uncharacteristic. Therese decided on a bolder approach. She got out of bed and walked around to Carol’s side of the bed. Carol was lying on her edge of the bed so there was no room for Therese to sit, so Therese knelt on the floor and began to gently rub Carol’s arm while murmuring comforting words in a whispered tone. Therese leaned forward and kissed Carol’s forehead and stroked the spot that she kissed.

“There now, sweetheart,” said Therese “there now. Cry if you need to, but could I hold you? I won’t ask you to talk. Just let me hold you. Would you put your head on my shoulder?”

Therese felt Carol nod. “Thank you darling,” said Therese. “I’m going to get back in bed and then please turn toward me and put your head on my shoulder. I have some tissues for you, too.”

Carol reluctantly turned as Therese held her arms open and gathered Carol to her. Carol took the tissues Therese offered and settled her head on Therese’s shoulder. Therese stroked Carol hair so very gently and from time to time kissed Carol’s forehead. Therese was still completely mystified as to the reason for Carol’s tears, but she wanted Carol to have time to compose herself.

Finally, Carol’s tears stopped and she blew her nose gently. She snuggled closer to Therese. Therese took a chance. “Do you want to talk, my love? I promise just to listen.”

Carol sighed and took a deep breath. “Therese, I want to marry you more than anything in the world and I can’t. It breaks my heart that we have to live such a hidden life and we probably always will have to hide our love.”

A single tear trickled down Therese’s face as she listened. Therese took Carol’s hand and led Carol to feel her own tear, too. “I know, my love. I know.” Therese tightened her arms around
“Carol,” Therese began. “I want to marry you, too. So let’s do it.”

“But…” Carol spluttered quietly. “How can we?”

Therese turned on her side so that she was facing Carol. A stream of moonlight illuminated their bedroom so that she could see Carol’s shape. “Well, darling, remember what I said to Rindy tonight about ‘Jumping the Broom’ and we even said we might do just that?” Carol nodded.

Therese continued, “I am going to talk to my friend Carmen at work. Remember I told you earlier this evening that she is very knowledgeable and proud of her Negro heritage. I know that there must be a real ceremony involved in Jumping the Broom, and somehow I don’t think the broom is your regular household broom.” Therese felt Carol chuckle a bit which caused Therese’s spirits to soar.

“I think I can find out what is involved in the entire ceremony. I can go to the public library and do research.” said Therese. We could have Carmen explain to our guests the significance of Jumping the Broom.”

“Carol, we could have a true ceremony where we say some very loving and appropriate words to each other and then in front of our friends, put the rings on each other’s finger. Then hand in hand we can jump over the broom and perhaps have a favorite song play and we could have the first dance. I get goosebumps thinking about it.” said Therese.

Carol was very quiet, but Therese was going to let her take all the time she needed to reply.

“Oh dearest,” said Carol “it would be very much like being married.”

“Yes,” said Therese. “Then and only then we’ll show off our rings to our guests.”

“Oh,” said Carol. “I can imagine toasts with champagne, and friends admiring our rings. Dannie could take pictures.”

“And, said Therese, “We will have a honeymoon. Ask for a week off and I will, too. I’ll surprise you with a location, but it’ll be somewhere we can be ourselves.” (Therese thought to herself ‘Somehow I will do this.’)

Carol sat up and blew her nose vigorously. Then she snuggled back into Therese’s arms. “Therese, I love you so. I am so happy. I’m going to marry you.”

Therese cradled Carol and kissed her cheek. “I am the luckiest woman in the world because you want to marry me. Everything will be alright, my love. Everything will be alright.” Therese was going to kiss Carol’s cheek once more, but she noticed that Carol was already asleep. Smiling to herself, Therese joined her in dreamland.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 23 takes place Sunday March 8, 1959 in the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan and at the home of Harge's parents, John and Jennifer Aird in New Jersey. Harge gathers his courage to confront his mother for years of disparaging behavior towards Carol and Therese in the presence of Rindy. While Rindy enjoys her weekend in Manhattan, Harge keeps his promise to his daughter to discuss her grandmother's shameful behavior towards Carol and Therese.

Chapter Notes

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one.

I use the descriptive term for Harge's mother's voice "as grating as fingernails on a chalkboard." For those of you who weren't in school at the time of chalkboards (either black boards in the 1950s and 1960s or green boards in the 1970s), you are missing the treat of having a teacher rake their fingernails across the chalkboard to get a class's attention. I must admit, in my brief college teaching career in the early 1970's I used the technique on occasion to wake up a listless early morning class. Believe me, I had to peel students off the ceiling, the sound was so grating. They woke up, though. [smile]

I appreciate your following my storyline so very much.

Again, I always look forward to your hits and kudos, but if you have time to give me a comment, I would be most grateful.

Regards,
Pipestone

Sunday, March 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1959

7:00 AM – the Aird/Belivet apartment, Manhattan

Carol opened her eyes after a sound sleep. She was in her pajamas, wrapped around Therese. She blinked her eyes several times to produce tears to help soothe the burning from her crying during the early morning hours. Her face felt puffy, but she knew that the application of a warm washcloth would help immensely.

Carol gently disentangled herself from Therese hoping that she would not wake her. Success. She quietly slid out of bed. Therese murmured and reached for Carol, but she was still asleep, so she
settled for turning to face Carol’s slide of the bed and pulled Carol’s warm pillow to her body. With a sigh, Therese fell back into a deeper sleep.

Carol smiled tenderly at the sight of the woman she loved gaining comfort from her pillow—her own scent. Carol had done the same thing herself many times when Therese left their bed first.

Carol didn’t hear sounds from Rindy’s room either. Usually Rindy was awake by now, but Carol suspected the emotion of the night before about their inability to marry and Therese’s gentle explanation had probably caused Rindy to have a restless sleep. Carol wondered if Rindy might want to skip the children’s theatre that they planned to attend this afternoon and spend the remainder of the time they had together, just the three of them. She made a note to offer that to Rindy as an option. The production was a first-come, first seated affair, so no tickets had been purchased in advance.

Carol slipped quietly into the bathroom and closed the door. She looked in the mirror and sure enough, she needed to repair her face from her crying in the night. While the water heated, she thought of how gently Therese had comforted her. She washed her face, brushed her teeth and pressed the warm washcloth to her face. It felt so soothing. After finishing in the bathroom, she returned to their bedroom, and was relieved that the toilet flush had not awakened Therese.

As Carol pulled her robe on, she kept her eyes on Therese’s sleeping form. She thought of all the nights they had spent together in the past nearly six years. She decided to take a few minutes to sit and watch her beloved sleep.

‘How brave you are, my darling’ thought Carol. Therese had told not only her immediate boss about her sexuality, but also the big boss in Metro at *The New York Times*. Carol knew that she would not have been so brave. ‘Where does your strength come from?’ Carol silently asked Therese. What a positive difference Therese’s openness was going to make in their lives as a couple. Carol was less afraid now of letting people “know” just because she was inspired by Therese. Carol knew, though, that sometime in the future they would face difficulties and perhaps a crisis of some kind. It was still 1959 and it might be decades and decades before they could live openly as a couple. However, because of Therese they were taking small steps and each of those steps was bringing more happiness.

Carol smiled as she watched Therese turn onto her back. Her arm was around Carol’s pillow. Her mouth opened slightly and Therese began to snore her usual soft snores. Some nights the snores were loud enough to wake Carol and she would nudge Therese until she turned onto her side. ‘Oh how I love you, my darling Therese,’ thought Carol. Carol looked at her own right hand and thought to herself that in a few short weeks she would be wearing a ring that matched Therese’s. They would exchange the rings in front of friends—friends who would share in their happiness.

Carol’s memories turned to Harge and the day they married. Carol knew even then that something was missing, but she had just followed society’s norms. ‘Isn’t it ironic,’ Carol thought, ‘Harge and I seem closer now than when we were married.’ Carol knew the reason: Harge respected Carol for the person she was and he understood that their relationship could never be a complete marriage. Carol sexually desired women—not men, and now Harge both knew and understood that Carol did not make a choice any more than Harge chose to desire women.

‘I’m glad that I was able to forgive him for his horrible actions prior to and after the divorce,’ thought Carol. Perhaps Carol was better able to do so because now Rindy was fully back in her life. Rindy was so happy now, except for the fact that Carol and Therese had to hide their love. However, Rindy now knew of their love for each other and Rindy could see that she and Therese were able to have a pleasant relationship with her father. Laughter had returned to their lives—the four of them.
Carol decided to call Harge this morning before he left for his weekly Sunday lunch with his parents. Today Harge would tell his mother that he would be spending Easter in Manhattan with Carol, Therese and Rindy. Carol wanted to give Harge encouragement and to remind him to keep his nitroglycerin tablets close by should his mother make a scene. ‘That’s almost a given,’ thought Carol, remembering her own experiences at her former in-laws’ house. Harge had told Carol in a phone call this past week that he had already talked to his father about the Easter invitation. Harge’s father was supportive of his being with Rindy in Manhattan and promised to back up his decision when Harge told his mother.

Carol heard a soft murmur from their bed and saw Therese’s beautiful hazel eyes looking at her. “Good morning, sweetheart,” said Therese. “Have you been up long?”

“Just a little while, dearest” answered Carol. “I was just sitting here watching you sleep and thinking how much I love and adore you.”

Therese’s smile lit the room. “Come here, my love.” Therese pulled back the covers after depositing Carol’s pillow in its proper spot in the bed. “I guess you noticed that I was hugging your pillow in your absence,” Therese chuckled.

“I do the same thing, sweetness.” said Carol, returning Therese’s smile as she removed her robe and slipped back into bed.

“Is Rindy still asleep?” Therese asked. Carol nodded. Therese said, “It’s probably the result of the emotional conversation last night. Speaking of emotion, how are you feeling this morning, Carol?”

“Loved and reassured, thanks to you, darling. Thank you for taking care of me in the night.”

“I’m glad,” said Therese, stroking Carol’s cheek. “Everything will be alright. We’re going to have a wonderful ceremony.”

“I believe it with all my heart, Therese.” said Carol with a tender smile.

Just then the bell outside their door rang and Carol and Therese said together, “Come in, Rindy.”

The door opened and Rindy walked sheepishly into their bedroom. Carol sat up and held her arms out for Rindy. “Well, hello, sleepyhead.”

Rindy yawned as Carol and Therese made a space between them for their daughter. Rindy happily crawled under the covers saying, “It’s so nice and warm in here.”

“Having you here makes it even nicer.” said Therese. “Did you sleep well?”

Rindy answered “Yes.” She then hugged Carol and Therese one after the other. “I love you both. Is it alright if we spend the day together here and skip the play this afternoon?”

Carol answered “I was thinking the very same thing, Rindy.”

Therese nodded and added, “We still have some work to do on the photographs from last weekend. Say, Rindy, why don’t you and I get dressed in some comfortable clothes and walk to the deli and get some fresh bagels and orange juice.”

“Good,” said Rindy. The bagels here in the city are so much better than those in New Jersey near Daddy’s house.”

Therese said, “Well, let’s get an extra four bagels for you to take home for you and your Daddy.
Remind him that they can go in the freezer to stay fresher.”

“Yay!” Exclaimed Rindy, jumping up and heading for her room to get dressed.

Carol watched her daughter leave with love and pride in her eyes. She turned to Therese. “You certainly said the magic word…bagels.”

Therese said, “Also, I was thinking that you might want to call Harge to wish him luck with his mother today. Will you tell him that my thoughts are with him as well?”

Carol kissed Therese’s lips. “Thank you darling, I certainly will. I did want to call him and I would prefer to do so in private.”

Therese quickly changed into jeans and a sweater and finished her toilette. She was lacing her sneakers when Rindy popped back into the room. Carol was already in the kitchen preparing to cook bacon and starting the coffee.

Therese and Rindy pulled on their coats. Therese said, “Rindy, would you get my billfold out of my purse? It’s on my desk in the office.”

Rindy dashed to complete the errand. Therese walked over to Carol and stroked her cheek and kissed her lightly on the lips. Just then Rindy appeared in the kitchen, witnessing the loving exchange. Rindy laughed, “You two sure kiss a lot.”

Carol smiled and corrected Rindy’s grammar. “Sweet pea, it’s ‘surely’ instead of ‘sure.’”

Rindy sighed, “Well, you two surely kiss a lot.”

Therese put her arm around Rindy. “That’s true. When two people love each other as much as your mother and I love each other, we do kiss each other frequently. Someday you will find the person you love the most in the whole world and you will want to kiss them hello and goodbye.”

Rindy shrugged, “I guess so, but I do like to know that you love Mommy and that she loves you.”

Carol quickly walked over to Rindy and hugged her and kissed the top of her head. “I love you so much, snowflake. Remember to get some hot bagels if there are any available.”

“We will.” said Therese and Rindy in unison. Then they were gone.

Carol felt a warmth of love envelop her entire body. Even though Rindy knowing of their love for each other produced questions, some of them difficult and awkward to answer, Carol remained thrilled that Rindy knew of Carol’s love for Therese and vice versa.

As soon as Therese and Rindy left, Carol went to the office phone and closed the door. She dialed Harge’s number. He picked up on the second ring. “Hello.”

“Harge, it’s Carol.”

“Good morning, Carol. How are you?” asked Harge.

“I’m well.” Carol said. “More importantly, how are you? I wanted to check on you prior to your leaving for lunch at your parents. Is this the day you have a talk with your mother?”

“It certainly is. She knows neither Rindy nor I are coming for Easter and she is quite unhappy about that, however, she does not yet know that I am spending Easter at yours and Therese’s apartment.” Harge explained. “That should provide some fireworks. Also, my sister Millie and her
husband Roy are coming for today’s lunch.”

“Maybe that will cause her to be more civil.” Carol offered.

“I doubt it.” said Harge. “Millie is cut from the same cloth as Mother. Fortunately, Dad is on my side, no matter what Mother does and Roy will probably sit there like a lump of coal.”

Carol chuckled at Harge’s description and added, “Don’t make yourself sick, Harge, and take your nitroglycerin tablets. Therese sends her best to you as well. We’ll be at the apartment any time after 4:30 PM so that you may pick up Rindy.”

They both said good bye. As Carol hung up she heard Rindy and Therese open the front door. Carol quickly walked to the kitchen to greet them and finish getting breakfast ready.

12:00 noon – at the mansion of John and Jennifer Aird, New Jersey.

Harge pulled into his parents’ driveway in his Cadillac. He took a deep breath as he switched off the engine and pulled the keys from the ignition. He thought of Rindy’s smiling face to give him strength to say the right words in reply to his mother’s probable verbal onslaught. He also had a mental image of Carol and Therese, happy, with their arms around each other’s waists joining Rindy and him in laughter about the “questions” notebooks. They were good and decent people whose only difference was that they loved each other rather than someone of the opposite sex. Carol was the mother of his child and his child adored both women as her mothers. He was no longer going to stand by and have them disparaged in any way whatsoever, as long as he was in earshot.

Harge had promised Rindy that he would stand up to his mother and, by God, he was going to keep that promise. Harge squared his shoulders and knocked on the door.

Harge’s father opened the door and shook hands with his son. Harge heard another car in the driveway, and turned to see his sister Millicent and husband Roy exit their Lincoln car.

Millie rushed the door as was her usual entry and started talking immediately. John Aird, made a sweeping hand motion for her to enter and she did not acknowledge either her father or her brother, but called out, “Mother, it’s Millie.”

John Aird rolled his eyes at his son and waited for Roy to approach the door like Millie’s faithful lap dog.

Harge kept patting his coat pocket containing his nitroglycerin tablets. His father eyed him with concern.

Everyone sat down at the dining table, ready to be served their lunch. It didn’t take long for Harge’s mother to ask why on earth Harge and Rindy would not be present for Easter lunch. The pitch of Jennifer Aird’s voice was grating—the sound somewhere between fingernails raking across a chalkboard and the points of a fork scraping across a china plate.

She began, “Hargess, I just want to know what’s more important than having you and Rindy right here for Easter. You know how she loves the Easter egg hunts. I was thinking about hiring a high school boy to wear a large Bunny costume to hide the eggs.”

“What a lovely idea…” began Millie, but she was cut off by Jennifer’s raised hand, signaling silence to allow Harge to answer.
“Mother,” began Harge “I know that you are trying to be thoughtful, but Rindy is spending Easter weekend with Carol in Manhattan. She is making her first Easter bonnet and wants to go to the Easter Parade.”

“Well,” said Jennifer Aird, as haughty as possible, "As I recall, last year she spent the entire spring break with her [pause] mother and that scandalous woman. This year was to be your turn for the entire Easter break wasn’t it?”

Harge looked his mother straight in the eye and said, “Yes, that was the ‘old’ way of dividing Rindy’s time.”

Harge’s mother cleared her throat, making a rasping sound. “And what, pray tell is the ‘new way’ Hargess?”

Harge didn’t blink an eye as he answered his mother. “The new way is called joint custody and our joint custody agreement takes into consideration agreement between the two parties, Carol and me, and the wishes of our daughter.”

Jennifer Aird spoke again, leaning forward, her pearl necklace dragging through the mashed potatoes and gravy, with Millie frantically trying to rescue it. “Then, Hargess, where will you be, if Rindy is with her…mother?”

“Well,” Harge offered cheerily, “I’ll be enjoying the holiday with my daughter. Carol and Therese have graciously invited me for Easter lunch at their apartment following Rindy’s first Easter Parade.”

“Do not say her name in this house.” hissed Jennifer.

“Whose name?” asked Harge with a not-quite-convincing puzzled look on his face.

Millie jumped in, shouting, “Therese!”

Harge looked at Millie and asked, “Does that mean I can shout ‘Therese’ but not say ‘Therese’ in a normal tone of voice?”

John Aird was looking down at his plate trying to concentrate on some food item that would keep him from laughing outright.

Harge stood and looked from person to person in the room. “I have an announcement to make. Carol and I have set aside our differences for the happiness of our daughter. More specifically, I have begged and received Carol’s gracious forgiveness for the horrible, despicable behavior I exhibited immediately before, during and after the divorce. I let the influence from this household, mostly you, Mother, guide my actions in addition to my own god-awful behavior. The result was my confused and heartbroken daughter who could not understand why she could not see her mother for the longest time. Shame on me. Shame on all of us.”

Harge did not let up. “Moreover, I treated someone I once loved, the mother of my child, in a way that was unspeakably cruel. All this because my ego was wounded because Carol followed the compass of her heart and fell in love with a woman, Therese. A woman who happens to love both Carol and Rindy very much, and would give her life for their happiness. I see time and time again the total love and adoration Rindy has for both Carol and Therese.”

Jennifer Aird tried to say something as did Millie, but Harge held up his hand and continued. “Our daughter just wanted parents who were civil and pleasant to each other. When I had my angina attack last October and thought it was a heart attack, I realized that I might die and I would have to answer for my actions in my life. That is when Carol and I started our pleasuries. Rindy noticed
our new behavior and we noticed how happy Rindy was becoming. I will not, repeat, will not, go back to that former self that I now find reprehensible.”

Harge said, “There’s more. Rindy begged me to talk to you, Mother, and ask that you not say disparaging remarks about either Carol or Therese while in Rindy’s presence. That is my request of you. Please consider it. If you cannot find it in your heart to honor that small request from your loving granddaughter, I will have to consider my next steps as her father.”

Harge’s knees started to buckle and he sat down. John Aird said, “Son, your pills.” Harge grabbed the small bottle of nitroglycerin pills from his jacket and put one under his tongue.

“Dad, I don’t feel well.” said Harge, “Could you sit with me while I lie on the couch in the study? I will be alright in a while.”

“No. I will sit with you.” said John.

John Aird rose and helped Harge to his feet. Together they walked into the study and closed the door.

3:00 PM – the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan.

The telephone rang. Carol and Rindy looked up from the kitchen table where they were working on Rindy’s Easter bonnet. It was really taking shape. Therese was in her darkroom.

“Carol, it’s Harge.”

“Harge, what is it? You don’t sound well. Talk to me.” Rindy craned her neck to hear.

“Well, I said my piece to Mother and I got chest pains.” said Harge.

“Oh Harge! Where are you?” exclaimed Carol.

“At my home. Dad is going to spend the night with me here. Could you and Therese bring Rindy home tonight and feed her on the way?”

“Yes. Don’t worry about a thing.” said Carol.

Harge replied, “And you three shouldn’t worry about me. I am much better now that I am home. Susan, Rindy’s nanny will be here tomorrow morning and she’s a licensed practical nurse, you know. I may take tomorrow off, or I may feel so much better after seeing the three of you that I will go to work.”

Harge added quietly, “I clarified things for Mother to say the least. Dad said I was a hell of a man.”

“And he is right.” said Carol. “See you soon.”

Carol hung up. Rindy looked at Carol with concern in her eyes.

Rindy asked, “Is Daddy alright?”

Carol said, “Yes, sweetheart, he’s fine. We are going to take you home.”
Rindy relaxed and smiled at her mother. Carol returned the smile as she rose to find Therese.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 24 takes place later in the day on Sunday March 8, 1959 in the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan and at the home Harge Aird in New Jersey. After Harge suffers an angina attack during Sunday lunch after telling his mother to stop her hateful words toward Carol and Therese in front of Rindy, Harge's father takes him home.

Carol and Therese drive Rindy home and spend some time with Harge and his father. Very interesting conversations ensue.

Harge has quite a surprise for Therese and Harge's father has an even more surprising revelation.

Chapter Notes

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one.

I really need some comments from you, my readers. There's no substitute for a comment, even though hits and kudos are appreciated.

Comments are the lifeblood of writers--at least this writer--and I can't tell you how very much I would appreciate a brief comment.

Regards,
Pipestone

Sunday, March 8th, 1959

3:30 PM – the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan.

Carol, Therese and Rindy were gathering Rindy’s things to prepare for an unexpected drive to New Jersey to take Rindy home after their weekend together. Half an hour ago, Harge had called to request that Carol and Therese drive Rindy home since he had suffered a small angina attack while telling his mother that she must cease negative conversation about Carol and Therese around Rindy.

Fortunately, the angina episode had lasted less than five minutes and Harge had quickly put a nitroglycerin pill under his tongue right away. Harge’s father had driven him home and would stay all night with him, but Harge was much improved after leaving his parents’ house, especially after getting away from his mother and sister who were by far the most critical.
Carol had told Harge on the phone how proud she was of him standing up to his mother and what a difference it could make to Rindy. Harge had replied that the best medicine right now was to see Rindy, Carol and Therese.

During the drive, Carol reassured Rindy that Harge was going to be fine and that her grandfather would be spending the night. In the morning, Rindy’s nanny would be on duty and she was a licensed practical nurse.

On the way, they stopped at one of Rindy’s favorite diners, much to both Rindy and Therese’s delight. Rindy explained that she had a little school homework to finish when she returned home and Carol encouraged her to get to it right away after visiting with her daddy for a short time. Both Carol and Therese would stay to ensure Harge and John Aird had something to eat before Carol and Therese returned to Manhattan.

“I had a wonderful weekend visit,” said Rindy. She was sitting in the front seat between Carol and Therese. Rindy continued, “My Easter bonnet is nearly done, I helped select a new trundle bed for my room and best of all, I was the first to see your beautiful new matching rings.” Therese smiled and pulled Rindy close and kissed the top of her head.

“You know, Rindy,” said Therese, “you were very grown up in the way you asked us questions from the white leather notebook that your daddy bought for you. Today during lunch at your grandparents’ house, your daddy kept his promise to you to ask your grandmother to stop saying mean things about your mother and me in your presence. That is why he needed to go home to rest. He did a very good job. Your grandfather said you would have been very proud of your daddy.”

Rindy said, “I have the best Mommy and Daddy in the whole world and I am even luckier because I have you, too, Aunt Therese. Thank you for developing my photos of my sleepover at Karen’s while I was working on my Easter bonnet with Mommy.”

Therese smiled and said, “You’re very welcome, sweetie. There are duplicates photos of the best shots so that Karen can have a set.” Rindy grinned and looked adoringly at Therese. Carol gave Therese and smile and a wink.

6:30 PM – the Aird home in New Jersey

Soon they were pulling into Harge’s driveway at his residence Ridgewood, New Jersey. Rindy ran for the front door, while Carol and Therese brought Rindy’s suitcase and bonnet supply bag.

By the time Harge’s father, John Aird answered the door, Carol and Therese were also on the front porch with Rindy. Rindy hugged her grandfather and quickly asked, “Where’s Daddy?”

“I’m right here, pumpkin.” Harge called out from the den. He was seated in his big leather chair with his feet on the matching ottoman. Rindy ran to him and skidded to a stop.

“Daddy, it is all right if I get on your lap?” asked a concerned Rindy.

Harge replied, “That’s the most wonderful thing I can imagine. How about a big hug and kiss, too?”

Rindy’s face broke out in a smile that lit up the room and she carefully climbed into the big chair with her father. “I love you so much, Daddy.” said Rindy.

Carol and Therese were watching this heartwarming scene—both with smiles of happiness and
relief. Carol was first to walk to Harge. Putting her arm around Rindy’s shoulders, she kissed Harge on the cheek and patted his shoulder with affection.

“How are you, Harge?” asked Therese as she walked to the side of his chair and patted his other shoulder. Rindy was overcome with happiness to see her parents interacting with such caring.

John Aird watched this entire scene of family togetherness and caring with an open mouth. Harge had told him that he and Carol and Therese had buried the hatchet, but he had no idea that the forgiveness had translated into true caring. It was immediately clear to John Aird what a difference the new way Carol, Therese and Harge were interacting made to Rindy. Rindy’s demeanor was totally changed. Even John felt the difference in a positive way. John couldn’t imagine, though, his wife being moved at all by this obvious new way Harge’s family related.

Carol said to Harge. “You’re our hero, I hope you know how very proud we are of you.”

Harge replied, “I kept my promise to Rindy and I don’t think her grandmother will speak ill of either you or Therese in Rindy’s presence again.”

“She had better not.” emphasized John. “She will have to deal with me, too.” Rindy ran to her grandfather and hugged him tight. Harge smiled at the thought of another firm ally.

Harge asked Rindy if she needed to finish her homework as it was approaching 7:00 PM. Rindy nodded in the affirmative, sighed and asked Carol if she would help get her settled. John Aird offered to carry Rindy’s suitcase to her room.

Therese stayed with Harge. As the three others made their way upstairs, Harge asked Therese to come closer. Therese sat on the ottoman near Harge’s feet and leaned in to hear him as he was whispering.

“Therese, I must tell you something wonderful, but I don’t have much time tonight.” said Harge. Therese had a puzzled look on her face, but was riveted to Harge’s every word. “Michael Thompson is going to contact you this week regarding an opportunity for you and Carol to join Jack and Michael on their yacht in the Florida Keys for a real honeymoon for the two of you.”

Therese had a stunned expression on her face. Harge asked, “Therese, did you understand what I said?”

“Harge, are you serious?” asked an astonished Therese.

Harge replied, “I most certainly am. I must be quick right now for I would like you to surprise Carol with it, but Michael and Jack know that you are having a ring ceremony on April 18th. They are planning to fly to Florida the next day, but you could join them on Monday and stay a week if you wish.”

Therese started to cry, as she was overcome with happiness. Harge said, “Therese, you can’t cry now. I hear Carol and my dad returning from upstairs. Quick. Make up a story of why you are crying and remember Michael will call you at work sometime this week with details.” Therese squeezed Harge’s arm with affection.

Carol walked into the room and saw Therese crying. Harge quickly grabbed Therese’s hand and was patting it. “Dearest, what’s wrong?” said Carol with concern. She went to Therese and put her arm around Therese’s shoulder.

“Oh, I’m all right now,” said Therese. “I was just so proud of Harge standing up to his mother and thinking what it would mean to Rindy that I was temporarily overcome with emotion.” Harge
sighed with relief as he noticed Therese give a subtle wink to him.

Carol said, “Let’s adjourn to the kitchen and see what Therese and I can rustle up for you men to eat.” Harge and his father grinned at each other.

As Carol fixed bacon and eggs, Therese readied toast and Harge’s father set the table for two. As he worked, John Aird said to Therese, “Miss Belivet, I haven’t had the opportunity to offer my personal apologies for my own actions during and immediately after the divorce. Even though you and Carol have seen a change in me over the past few years, I owe you a formal apology. If there were a way for me to change my past behavior, I certainly would do so. You two have been exemplary mothers to my granddaughter and have given her so much happiness even though my side of the family has made it difficult for you to say the least. In fact, saying the words ‘made it difficult for you’ does not begin to touch the severity of our despicable actions. Please forgive me.”

Therese spoke first. “Mr. Aird, I love Carol with all my heart and I love Rindy as much as if she were my own child. I would do anything for their happiness. I’ve given my life to Carol and I will stand by her through good times and bad. Also, I have forgiven Harge for the past and want to move forward together in Rindy’s best interest.”

Carol smiled lovingly at Therese. Harge grinned and John Aird clasped Therese’s hand in both of his. “Welcome to the family my dear,” he said. “You and Carol will have my unwavering support from now on.”

Harge chuckled ruefully. “Well, that leaves Mother and Millie out in the cold.”

“So be it.” said John with resolve.

Carol and Therese kept the men company while they were eating. As Therese was washing the dishes, and John was drying them, Carol went up to check on Rindy and tell her she and Therese would be leaving soon.

Harge excused himself to join Carol in Rindy’s room and get ready for bed himself. He hugged Therese and gave her a quick kiss on the cheek. With just John and Therese in the kitchen, John said to Therese, “I must warn you about something potentially serious regarding an action my wife might take.”

Therese had just finished the kitchen duties and sat down at the table. John joined her. He addressed Therese. “My dear, Jennifer, my wife, is determined to break up your relationship with Carol. She blames you for the divorce.”

Therese sighed. “Mr. Aird, all I can do is to continue to love Carol as I have these past six years. There is absolutely nothing that can come between us.”

“Well,” he said, ”she is planning to use devious and underhanded means to harm your career.”

“What!” exclaimed Therese sitting up straight in her chair. “What could she do? I work in the photography department for The New York Times and in fact I have just earned a promotion. I have an impeccable reputation at my workplace.”

John explained, “Jennifer knows someone at our country club who knows the head of the Metro department at The Times. The man’s name is Jerry Goldman and he is very powerful and influential. Jennifer plans to somehow get word to Mr. Goldman that you work in the photography department under him and that you are err, umm, a homosexual. Jennifer believes it would most certainly destroy your career and I cannot stand by and let it happen.”
Therese was speechless. She wanted to burst out laughing, but she knew she shouldn’t. At that very moment Carol walked back into the kitchen and saw the two of them, both with very strange expressions on their faces.

Carol said, “If I weren’t driving, I would have a stiff drink right now, but I’ll settle for a glass of water. What on earth is causing you two to look as though a flock of geese were parading through the house?”

Therese gritted her teeth to keep from bursting out laughing and explained to Carol, “Mr. Aird was good enough to warn me that Mrs. Aird is planning on ruining my career at The Times by telling Jerry Goldman that he has a homosexual on his staff and that homosexual is me.”

Unfortunately, Carol had a mouthful of water and was looking directly at Therese. Therese was quickly losing her battle to keep a straight face. John Aird was watching them both in disbelief.

All of a sudden it was over. Therese burst out laughing, grabbed her stomach and bent over, laughing until tears fell from her eyes. The water formerly in Carol’s mouth was sprayed all over the kitchen counter after Carol’s valiant effort to make it to the sink on time failed. Both women grabbed each other to muffle their laughter lest Rindy and Harge were disturbed.

“Well, I didn’t expect this reaction.” said John. “Could you explain why this is funny? I thought it was terribly serious with a potentially tragic outcome.”

Therese spoke first. “Mr. Aird, please forgive the outburst on both our parts. We certainly were not laughing at you and we appreciate your having the courage and consideration to warn me of this potential threat. You are correct that something like this told to an executive could potentially ruin a person’s career and that is not humorous at all. Carol and I are laughing because your wife has chosen to tell The Times executive who is extremely interested in my career and who has chosen to personally mentor me. Mr. Goldman knows that I am a homosexual, and it is my openness and honesty that has impressed him as much as my skill at my job.”

John Aird’s mouth was still open as he looked from Carol to Therese in disbelief. Carol added, “Jerry Goldman’s wife, Grace, is my best customer at O’Halloran’s Furniture where I work. We have an excellent relationship. To top it all off, this Wednesday night, the Goldmans have invited Therese and me to have dinner at their apartment along with Therese’s immediate supervisor and his wife. We will be socializing as a couple—open and honest about who we are.”

Carol said to John, “We have been honest with you. You can do what you wish with the information and your wife’s impending threat, but believe me, she would harm herself, and do Therese no harm whatsoever. That’s what happens when someone like Therese is brave enough to be open about the person she loves.”

John finally composed himself enough to say, “I’m not sure if I want to stop my wife from humiliating herself or not. I will decide soon. Therese, you are one of the bravest people I know. It takes courage and integrity to do what you are doing in your life. No wonder your employer is impressed. I would feel the same way about an employee of mine who would be so brave.”

After Therese and Carol said their goodbyes to Rindy and Harge and promised to be in touch about the upcoming start of the spring break, John Aird walked them to the front door.

“I think Harge will sleep in late tomorrow morning. I will get Rindy ready for school and the chauffer and her nanny will be arriving early, too. Harge and I will probably be in the office by noon. He will call his doctor just to report the angina incident, but I suspect that’s all it will amount to.”
As Carol and Therese started their journey back to Manhattan, Carol turned to Therese and asked, “Now where is that dark spot in the neighborhood where I can pull over for a decent kiss?”

“It’s just ahead on the right, my love,” said Therese with a smile.

Carol stopped the car as Therese slid over on the bench seat. Her hands were lost in Carol’s blond hair as Carol felt for Therese’s coat lapels to pull her closer. Soon they were lost in an endless kiss.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 25 takes place Sunday March 8, 1959 on the way from Harge Aird's home in New Jersey to the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan. Carol and Therese use the ride home to talk over a number of topics. We get a glimpse of their lives together as they share both intimate conversations and also just talk about life.

Chapter Notes

I want to thank my favorite author Employee645A for the references to the book, "Lady Chatterley's Lover" (from her Chapter 17 of her masterpiece, "Built for Two") and Kinsey's "Sexual Behavior in the Human Female" (from her Chapter 22 of her work "The Misfits"). A tip of the hat to my AO3 author hero.

This is a continuing storyline, so please read the preceding chapters before embarking on this one.

In my last chapter I made a not-too-subtle plea soliciting comments from readers. I want to thank the many of you who responded. It really lifted my spirits. Sometimes writing is a lonely activity and it is so helpful to know that my story is connecting with readers. There are some exciting chapters coming: the dinner party with Therese's big boss at The Times, preparations for the ring ceremony, the ring ceremony itself, the honeymoon and lots more.

Regards,
Pipestone

Sunday, March 8th, 1959

8:30 PM – near Harge Aird’s residence in New Jersey on the way back to Manhattan.

Carol and Therese broke from a very loving, intense kiss in a dark area of Harge’s neighborhood. It was their custom to have a kiss in a dark wooded area of the street before heading back to their apartment in Manhattan. Their kiss tonight was particularly intense and left both women breathless. Carol spoke first.

“Dearest,” Carol said, still catching her breath, “that was very unexpectedly romantic for a car kiss in the New Jersey night.”

Therese chuckled and Carol thought she could see Therese’s sly smile by the light of the Packard’s dash.

Carol observed, “If this weren’t a Sunday night, with a workday tomorrow, I would be driving us to the first motel we could find and make you gasp and moan for hours.”
Carol expected Therese to be somewhat shocked, but instead, Therese replied, if we weren’t in such a populated area, I would have my hands all over you until you begged for us to get into the back seat and make love right here, right now!”

Carol gripped the steering wheel, leaned into it, then turned to Therese and said with a smile, “Dear one, I am not complaining in the least, but what on earth has brought forth these wonderful amorous thoughts tonight?”

Actually Therese was thinking back to the very brief private conservation she had with Harge while Carol and Rindy and John Aird were upstairs in Rindy’s room getting her settled. Harge had told Therese to expect a phone call early in the upcoming week from Michael Thompson about the proposed honeymoon getaway to the Florida Keys aboard the Sinclair company yacht. Carol had no idea, and Therese and Harge wanted to keep it a surprise for a while. Michael and his lover, Jack Sinclair had shared with Harge at the end of Saturday’s poker night that they had planned a ten-day getaway starting April 19th, the day after Carol and Therese’s ring ceremony. Harge had summoned all his courage and asked Jack and Michael if they would be willing to have Carol and Therese join them, with Harge picking up the travel costs for both the couples. Harge knew Carol had always missed having a honeymoon when they married (due to Harge being off to serve in Europe during the war). Harge had been surprised at the reaction of Jack and Michael. They were thrilled at the prospect of having Carol and Therese with them and they knew the boat was large enough to give both couples complete privacy for romantic activities. In the past, when the two men traveled together, they encountered frequent disparaging remarks and insinuations. This way, both couples could relax while still being true to their own couple status.

Therese knew she would have to tell Carol some details, because of the need to pack the appropriate clothing, etc., but it would be fun to postpone the true nature of the trip for a while. All Therese had told Carol was that she would arrange a honeymoon where they could “be themselves.” Therese also knew that Carol would become increasingly curious about the destination. Therese planned to keep Carol distracted with other details about the ceremony, the rings, the music and other logistical details.

When Harge had whispered the idea to Therese back at the house, Therese was so overcome with happiness that she started crying. Unfortunately, Carol and Harge’s father had chosen that very moment to come back downstairs. Harge grabbed Therese’s hand and started patting it and told Therese to quickly make up a story as to why she was crying. Fortunately, Therese was quick to tell Carol and John Aird that she had been overcome with emotion by Harge’s bravery in telling Jennifer Aird to stop her horrible behavior and language about Carol and Therese in front of Rindy. It worked, for no one suspected anything unusual.

Therese’s thoughts snapped back to the present, as Carol was still leaning on the car’s steering wheel waiting for an answer to her question about Therese’s unusual fixation on sex in the car.

Therese decided on an honest approach to answering Carol’s question. “I think about having sex with you a lot of the time, Carol, especially when we’ve exchanged a sultry kiss as we just did. The fact that we have been together for six years has not diminished my desire for you. Sometimes I wonder if that’s normal. Quite frankly I kept waiting for our ‘love life’ to ‘settle down’ and become somewhat routine, but that just hasn’t happened to me. What about you?”

Carol paused and said, “let me try to drive while we talk sweetheart. If that becomes too difficult, we’ll think of an alternative. Is that all right?” Therese nodded ‘yes.’

Carol took a deep breath and said, “Not long ago I had lunch with Jeanette Harrison, my dear friend from New Jersey. As you undoubtedly remember, Jeanette was the person for whom you cleverly hid the book she was dying to read, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, in your camera equipment
Therese laughed. “She still makes a point of thanking me all these years later for getting it through customs.”

“Well,” said Carol, “Jeanette has never been one to be shy about talking about sex. I’ve known her for years and that has not changed. She seems to be particularly curious since she found out I was in a romantic relationship with you. Mind you, I’ve not shared details, except to say that sex with you was extremely satisfying. You would not believe how interested she was—but that’s just Jeanette.”


“Oh yes,” Carol recalled. “The book had something of interest for everyone, but I recall how surprised I was that a chapter was devoted to ‘Homosexual Responses and Contacts.’”

Therese offered this opinion, “Not to question the famous researcher, but I just know that our own experiences don’t necessarily fit perfectly within the boundaries of the book. For example, you and I have an amazingly high success rate of achieving orgasm.”

Carol smiled, “Angel, I believe that we are at 100 percent are we not?”

Therese put her hand lightly on Carol’s thigh, “Yes. 100 percent, and I would tell you if that were not the case, as I hope you would tell me.”

“I certainly would, Therese.” said Carol. “Now someday something is bound to happen when one of us does not have an orgasm, but I think we just need to be honest and not panic.”

Carol broached a subject that was somewhat sensitive to her. “Darling, you know I am approaching my 40th birthday this year, but that has not seemed in any way to take the edge off of my desire. If anything, it seems greater than ever. I am a bit curious to know what research says about this, but honestly, I don’t want to ‘rock the boat.’ I’m happy, satisfied, love our sex life and above else, desire you.”

Therese took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. “Carol, you are amazing. My God, we share a gift and I don’t take it for granted. Where is that motel when you need one?”

Carol said, “We could change the subject and lower our body temperatures a bit.”

“Agreed.” said Therese. “Let’s talk about some of the clothing to take on our honeymoon.”

“Perfect,” said Carol. “You go first.”

Therese said, “Well, I was thinking that we could use new gowns. I love those that are made out of rayon and are so soft. I think for a honeymoon it might be practical to buy ones that come up to just above the knee. Some styles have boy-type shorts that would allow us to grab them and put them on in a hurry if, for example we needed to answer the door. Many of these styles have a matching longer robe with a tie off belt. I actually looked in Macy’s the other day over lunch and found some that were perfect. The colors are beautiful. There’s a gorgeous blue for you and a coral color that I think would go well with my hair. What do you think, Carol?”

“Oh, I think that would be lovely.” Carol mused, “We really should have a new nightgown for our honeymoon. It is a honeymoon after all. I can just imagine both of us having come from taking a romantic shower together, and watching each other slip into those beautiful new gowns. We’d
glance down and see our matching rings on our fingers and then perhaps light a scented candle and have some soft music play.”

“Ummm,” said Therese “I wonder how many kisses and caresses it would take before one of us decides to slide a hand down into the pants of the gown and ease the nightgown top up?”

“Therese!” exclaimed Carol. “What are we doing?” We seem to have a one-track mind tonight. I’m going to either find a motel or we need to totally change the subject so I can manage to drive home.” The two women laughed.

“OK,” said Therese. “Let’s talk about the dinner party on Wednesday night at Jerry and Grace Goldman’s apartment.”

Carol chuckled. “Sounds safe. I’ll call Grace to see whether a white or red wine would be appropriate. Then you can pick out a nice wine. You’re the wine expert. I’ll choose a bottle of bourbon for the men and some flowers, too. I’ll talk to Grace about attire, but I suspect she will say to just wear work clothes. Oh, Therese, this is going to be so exciting and fun! We will be socializing as a couple with two other couples. I love being able to live more openly and it’s thanks to you, my brave darling.”

Therese replied, “I love living as who I am, Carol, and I don’t want to go back into hiding. This feeling of freedom is unlike anything I have ever experienced. I’m so glad you feel the same.”

Carol said, “Dearest, I honestly don’t think I would have been brave enough to take the first step as you did, but now that we are more open, I am loving life so much! Being open with Rindy about the fact that we love each other is frankly, liberating, and with Harge on our side now… well, life is entirely different.”

Therese said, “Did I tell you that Mr. Goldman insisted that I put a picture of you and of Rindy on my desk?”

Carol gasped, “No! How fabulous. Are you going to do it?”

“Of course.” said Therese. “I’m going to put a small 3x5 or 4x6 in a plain frame. I want to start with something small, because I suspect I will get harassment over it. Mr. Goldman and Lee Barnes, insisted that I go to them with any issues. I plan to lock the picture in my drawer each night. I will not back down, though.”

“My brave darling,” said Carol. “I want to broach the subject with Mr. O’Halloran, too. I’ll do the same—a small photo of you. I already have one of Rindy on my desk.”

Therese patted Carol’s leg. “One step at a time and eventually the world changes. It just takes some bravery, but the satisfaction is enormous.”

“I love you, Therese.”

“I love you, Carol.”

They had been so immersed in their conversation that they had talked all the way home. Carol adeptly maneuvered the Packard into their parking space and turned off the engine. Both women looked at each other and sighed “home” at the same time.

Since it was later in the evening, no one else was in the elevator. Carol and Therese exchanged a kiss during the ride up to their floor and held hands as they walked down the hall to their apartment.
As their front door shut behind them, the lovers stared into each other’s eyes. The passion that had been necessarily put aside during the drive began to grow again.

Therese spoke first. “Carol, you are to be congratulated for being able to drive home instead of pulling into the first motel we could find.”

Carol replied, “Angel, it took all the resolve I had to keep the car pointed toward home. Now that we are home, though, my objective is to get you into bed, naked, and remind you of all those conversations about pulling off silky new honeymoon nightgowns.”

Therese trembled with desire. “Let’s get these clothes off, makeup off, teeth brushed, clock set and then let’s keep our 100 percent record for orgasms intact.” Carol could only nod.

Therese grabbed her makeup remover, cold cream and toothbrush and headed for Rindy’s bathroom to speed things up. She could already feel the moisture gathering between her legs.

Carol made quick work of her face cleansing and makeup removal. She brushed her teeth. Finally, she took a quick look in the mirror to decide where she would ask Therese to put one of the love bites she dearly loved. Tonight she wanted to be marked as Therese’s woman.

As Carol entered the bedroom, Therese was waiting for her. A fragrant candle provided just the right amount of illumination. Carol asked, “Is the clock set?”

Therese whispered, “Yes,” and pulled the covers back and smiled a most loving smile. She was naked, as Carol had hoped. Carol dropped her robe and slid into the arms of her beloved. They each felt the familiar softness of each other’s breasts, stomach, and soft short hair on their mounds. They began to move slowly against each other while their kisses grew deeper. Soon they were lost in the sensations and the joy of loving each other.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 26 takes place Wed. March 11, 1959, first at the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan as Carol and Therese prepare for the dinner party to be held at the Goldman's Manhattan apartment. Carol offers Therese some advice from Carol's wealth of experience attending small dinner parties held by work associates.

There's a big surprise when Grace, Carol and Rebecca Barnes, the wife of Therese’s supervisor Lee Barnes tour the apartment while Jerry, Lee and Therese are in the living room “talking business.”

The chapters are sequential.

Thank you dear readers for providing more comments in the past few chapters than I have received in the past. Several of your comments have touched me deeply and have inspired me. This chapter is much longer than my usual posting and I still needed to break the dinner party into two chapters.

So again, I appreciate comments, no matter how long or short. It is so helpful to know that my story is connecting with readers. I'll answer all comments. There are some exciting chapters coming: the second part of the dinner party with Therese's big boss at The Times, preparations for the ring ceremony, the ring ceremony itself, the honeymoon and lots more.

Chapter Notes

The chapter title, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" was taken from the 1967 film of the same name. Among the stellar cast were Katherine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy and Sidney Poitier. This film explores the emotions and dynamics of Hepburn and Tracy hosting a dinner party for their white daughter and her black fiancé played by Poitier. At the time this movie was released, it was still against the law for blacks and whites to marry in 17 States. I would highly recommend watching this film.

In this chapter's beginning I refer to Therese's friend, Carmen, as a "Negro." Although this term is very outdated, it was a very common term among both blacks and whites in 1959.

A tip of my hat to the AO3 author Employee645A, who introduced Longchamps restaurant in her masterful work "Built For Two" (Chapter 17).

Longchamps was a chain of several upscale restaurants in Manhattan. At its peak there were twenty or moreover in the chain. The Longchamps restaurant in Washington D.C. was among the first of the fine restaurants of allow black customers. Longchamps was founded in 1919 and all branches were closed by the mid-1970s. (source: Wikipedia)
Monday, March 9th, 1959

2:30 AM – the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan.

Therese stirred from a deep sleep feeling some kind of discomfort. As she became more conscious, she realized that she had a twinge in her bladder. ‘Damn,’ she thought, ‘I hate to leave a warm cozy bed, but I can’t wait until morning to go.’ As she started to sit up, she realized that she had fallen asleep on top of Carol. Carol’s arms were wrapped snugly around her, and Therese remembered drifting off to sleep in that position. Now awake, and trying to figure out how to disentangle herself without awakening Carol, Therese took a moment to savor what had taken place earlier during their lovemaking.

Carol had made love to Therese first, then Therese eagerly reciprocated.

After Carol’s climax, Therese recalled Carol softly asking Therese to mark her, saying “I want to see your mark tomorrow and know I’m your woman.”

“Where, love?” breathed Therese.

“My breast,” whispered Carol.

Therese began to softly suck on the soft skin at the top of Carol’s left breast. Carol had hummed her approval.

“Therese…” Carol murmured. “Yes, sweetheart?” answered Therese, ready to carry out any request, heard Carol softly plea, “Please mark my other breast, too.”

Therese had looked into Carol’s grey eyes and softly replied, “You’re mine, my love, and I’m yours,” as she bent over Carol’s right breast.

Carol had shifted slightly after Therese had completed the second love mark with a kiss to both of Carol’s breasts. Carol whispered, “Come closer, Therese.”

Therese put her ear next to Carol’s mouth and heard a request that sent a thrill of pleasure through her body. Carol whispered, “I need you again, Therese. Please touch me, darling.”

Therese scooted down Carol’s chest and stretched her arm so that her could reach between Carol’s legs. She was astonished to find how wet Carol still was. Therese groaned softly, then began to stroke Carol. She heard Carol breathe softly, “Hurry.”

Therese complied and felt Carol’s muscles grasp her fingers as she exhaled a moan. Therese’s thumb caressed Carol’s favorite spot and Therese felt Carol’s climax within a minute. The lovers adjusted their bodies so that Therese rested comfortably on top of Carol with Carol’s arms around Therese.

“My darling.” said Carol.

“My woman.” said Therese.

“Are you comfortable going to sleep this way?” asked Carol.

“Oh, yes.” said Therese.

With those words, sleep had overtaken them both.
Therese guessed they had been in that position for hours.

As soon as Therese gently eased off of Carol, she heard her lover mumble incoherently and turn onto her side away from Therese. Success. Therese quietly slipped into the bathroom. On her way back to their bed, Therese caught her foot on Carol’s robe that was left on the floor as Carol slipped into Therese’s arms hours ago. In the heat of their lovemaking, both had forgotten about the garment on the floor.

“Ooof.” muttered Therese as she landed on the end of the bed. A soft “Dearest?” came from their bed. Therese put Carol’s robe on the end of the bed.

“It’s all right, darling,” said Therese soothingly. "I just tripped on my way back from the bathroom. Go back to sleep.”

Therese cuddled up to Carol’s back and reached an arm around her. She felt Carol capture her hand and kiss it. “I love you so, Therese.” whispered Carol.

“I love you too, Carol.” whispered Therese as she drifted back to sleep. Therese’s last waking thoughts were ’I’m so lucky, so lucky, so lucky…’

6:30 A.M. – the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan.

The alarm signaled the start of the work week. Therese stretched and looked over at Carol’s blond hair spread on the pillow. Carol was facing away from Therese. ‘She is my sunrise,’ thought Therese. There were a few faint red marks on Carol’s upper back intermingled with Carol’s freckles. Therese remembered clutching Carol at the height of her own ecstasy.

Carol slowly turned to look at Therese and almost shyly glanced down at her own breasts which bore the mark of last night’s lovemaking. Carol smiled in approval and stroked Therese’s cheek.

“Good morning, Mrs. Belivet.” said Therese with a happy smile. “I love you.”

“Good morning, Miss Belivet.” said Carol, kissing Therese softly. “I love you. You were an incredible lover last night.” Therese blushed from Carol’s complement.

They had a brief, happy ‘good morning’ pillow talk.

Carol inquired about the incident in the early morning hours. After Therese explained that she had tripped over Carol’s robe, they decided that no matter how overcome they might be with passion, one or the other would remember to hang up any discarded clothes between their bed and the bathroom.

After another kiss, they left their bed to begin preparations for the day.

8:00 A.M – Offices of The New York Times in Manhattan.

Therese Belivet arrived at work early. She was in a superb mood—still overcome with happiness and satisfaction from last night’s lovemaking. “Nothing like great lovemaking to start the week,” thought Therese.

Around 8:30 Dannie McElroy stuck his head into Therese’s office to greet her and saw the look on Therese’s face.

Dannie teased, “Somebody had a good Sunday night.”

Therese winked at her best friend and teased back, “Could be…” Dannie laughed, rolled his eyes,
Therese chuckled and returned to her task at hand.

During a break in the morning routine, Therese stopped by the desk of her friend Carmen Williams and asked if she might talk to her.

Carmen smiled and said “Of course, Therese. What’s on your mind?”

Therese explained to Carmen her desire to find out more about the custom of “Jumping the Broom”—the substitute that Negroes had used during slavery days when they were not allowed to marry.

“Oh, you’ve asked the right person, Therese.” said Carmen with enthusiasm. “My great-grandmother and great-grandfather had to ‘Jump the Broom’ before they were allowed to marry after the Civil War ended. Their story was told down through the generations, until I decided to record it on paper. As I was doing the writing, I also did quite a bit of research on the custom.”

Therese beamed with excitement and said, “Carmen, could we go to lunch this week? I would love to hear everything you know about the subject.”

Carmen smiled. “It’ll take longer than lunch for me to tell you everything I know about Jumping the Broom, but I’ll be glad to tell you the short version over lunch this week. Tonight I will look for some articles to bring into the office for you.”

Therese said, “I can’t tell you how much I appreciate it!”

Carmen gave Therese a sly smile. “I don’t suppose it has anything to do with you and your lady friend. Is that the right word to describe her?”

Therese chuckled, “There are about six descriptors I’ve heard, but ‘lady friend’ or just ‘Carol’ works fine. We have purchased matching rings and want to have a meaningful ceremony when we exchange them.”

Carmen nodded and said sympathetically, “You two are certainly in a similar situation with regards to marriage as was the case with my ancestors. Haven’t you two been together five years?”

“Six,” replied Therese with a smile.

Carmen shook her head and smiled with admiration. “You’ll be happy to hear what I have to say then. What about Thursday for lunch?”

Therese nodded. “Thanks, Carmen.”

Carmen said, “Of course, Therese. You’ve been a good work friend to me and I don’t take it for granted. Not everyone feels the same about working closely with a Negro.”

Therese replied with great sincerity, “Those of us who are different in one way or another seem to have a greater appreciation for what it means to be a friend. Thanks, Carmen and I’ll look forward to our Thursday lunch. I can’t wait to tell Carol.”

10:00 AM – O’Halloran’s Furniture in Manhattan.

Carol was humming happily as she prepared to open the store for business. Her colleague, Karen, said, “You certainly are in a good mood for a Monday morning, Carol.”
Carol replied, “Well, it’s a beautiful day, Karen.”

Karen looked through the shop windows into the street and scrunched her face. “It’s cloudy, cool, windy and may rain, Carol.” Carol glanced out the same window.

“Ah, so it is, Karen.” said Carol with a bright smile. “Well, somewhere the sun is shining.” With that, Carol continued her work day preparations.

A short time later Carol decided to call Grace Goldman to inquire about Wednesday night’s dinner and to determine what wine to bring and what attire would be appropriate.

“Carol!” Grace answered. “I’m so glad you called. When I saw the weather outside, I knew I would feel cooped up in the apartment today. No doubt you’re calling about Wednesday night’s dinner.”

“I am.” said Carol. “I just have a few questions. Would you like to have lunch with me?”

“Are you thinking of somewhere near the store?” asked Grace. “It would be so rude of me not to stop in and say hello to Mr. O’Halloran.”

Carol threw back her head and laughed merrily. “What a fine idea.”

“Let’s meet at the Longchamps restaurant near the furniture store,” said Carol. “Do you know the one?”

“Of course,” said Grace. “How about 12:30? Do you think we can get a table at that hour?”

Carol chuckled, “I think the staff there see me so often that I have a table with my nameplate. We’ll have no problem.”

“See you soon,” said Grace excitedly.

“I’m looking forward to it.” replied Carol.

12:30 PM – the same day at Longchamps restaurant.

Carol had arrived first knowing that it was important not to keep Grace waiting. When Grace entered the restaurant, Carol saw her right away and stood up and waived. The women greeted each other with a slight hug and double cheek kiss. Grace was wearing a beautiful reddish brown cloth coat with a brown wool dress and brown pumps. Grace was a brunette with lovely brown eyes and an infectious smile. Even in the simplest attire, Grace always looked elegant.

“Oh, Carol, it’s been too long,” said Grace. Grace emphasized the words ‘too long’ which drew a smile from Carol.

“Yes,” Carol agreed. “I haven’t seen you since you purchased that wonderful antique desk.”

Grace laughed merrily. “Usually I know how to handle Jerry’s reaction to my purchases, but he still gives me ‘the look’ with his eyes over the top of his glasses every time he sits down at the desk to catch up with some work or correspondence.”

“I’m sorry if the purchase has caused some distress for Jerry,” said Carol sympathetically.

Grace waved her hand dismissively. “Don’t think a thing about it, Carol. Other times I peek in on
him and find him smiling and rubbing his hand across the finish of the desk, or just staring at it and nodding affirmatively. I know he loves it.”

Carol observed, “That desk was one of the finest pieces I had seen in the store in quite some time, Grace, so I just knew from your previous purchases that it would fit perfectly in the study of your larger home. I called you the minute it was put on the floor.”

Grace laughed, “Remember how quickly I made it to the store only to find a ‘Sale Pending’ sign on it. I was just crushed until I found you and learned that you had placed it there until I could have the first opportunity to buy it.”

Carol smiled mischievously and said, “I take care of my special customers, Grace.”

There was a pause in the conversation while the women looked at the menu and ordered. Carol said, “Lunch is on me, Grace.” When Grace started to say something, Carol held up her hand and explained, “Mr. O’Halloran insisted when I mentioned I was going to lunch with you that he was paying for both our meals. He sends his regards.”

Grace smiled broadly. “He’s so thoughtful. I feel like more of an extended family member than a customer. He always teases me saying, “We Irish must stick together, Mrs. Goldman.” Then I always tease back, “I’m Jewish, Eamon. And then he usually has a delightful comeback about the Irish Jews being his favorite ethnicity.”

Carol shook with laughter remembering the clever exchanges between her boss and her favorite customer.

Carol took a deep breath and said, “Grace, I can’t express how excited Therese and I are about Wednesday night’s dinner at your apartment. It’s so kind of you to invite us. I must tell you, this is a first for us, socializing like this as a couple with other married couples.”

Grace marveled at the sincerity she sensed in Carol’s statement. Grace asked, “How long have you and Therese been together?”

Carol replied, “Six years next month.”

Grace’s eyes widened. She said, “That would have been April, 1953, am I right?”

“You are.” smiled Carol.

“I’ve been shopping at O’Halloran’s for many years, and I believe I recall when you were hired. You were hired just before that date, weren’t you?”

“Actually,” explained Carol, “I was hired before the day we mark as our ‘anniversary’ but I had not yet started working.”

Grace recalled, “When we first met, I was struck with your glowing happiness and wondered if the job was the source.”

Carol took a deep breath. “I was quite thrilled to be working as the senior buyer at O’Halloran’s, but the glow was from my reconciliation with Therese, and her agreement to move in with me. It’s a long story, but believe me, Therese has brought such happiness into my life. Quite frankly I can’t even begin to express how lucky I am and how happy I am.”

“Well,” said Grace, “it’s written all over your face, Carol. I’m so happy for you. It’s so amazing that you and I have known each other all this time and I just didn’t realize that…” Grace trailed off, unable to find the appropriate words to describe Carol’s relationship with Therese.
Grace said with embarrassment, “Forgive me, Carol. I’m afraid that I am being too personal.”

Carol reached out and squeezed Grace’s hand to reassure her. “Not at all, Grace. Therese has brought me a long way in terms of being comfortable with the fact that I live with and love a woman. I have known that I did not prefer men in the traditional way since I was old enough to start dating, but I did not know how to handle that reality. Therese is somewhat younger than I am and therefore has different viewpoints. I’ve learned so much from her. I am no longer afraid of being myself. That being said, this is our first dinner party with married couples of the opposite sex who know that we are partners, lovers, girlfriends, or several other acceptable terms. She and I are committed to be together for life, even though we have no legal way of recognizing our relationship.”

Carol sighed, then smiled. “Thank you and your husband for being so accepting to invite us.”

“Oh, Carol,” said Grace, “We need no thanks. Jerry thinks the world of Therese and considers her a rising star in his Metro division. I’ve enjoyed knowing you for years. We are delighted that you two are going to join us.”

Just then their food arrived, and the conversation turned to furniture as they ate.

After lunch while they were waiting for the check, Grace asked Carol if she had a photo of Therese. Carol smiled brightly and pulled out her pocketbook and showed her several photos of Therese and Rindy.

Grace observed, “Your little girl is growing up so fast.” Then she saw the several photos of Therese. “Oh, Carol, Therese is quite beautiful and Jerry thinks she’s brilliant as well.”

Carol’s face softened. “I love her so much, Grace. For me, the sun rises and sets with her.”

“You two are so fortunate to have found each other. I can’t wait to see you interact as a couple at our little dinner party.” said Grace.

Carol tapped her forehead. “I can’t believe I almost forgot the original purpose of our getting together. We want to bring a bottle of wine and would like to know if red or white is more appropriate. Also, are work clothes nice enough?”

Grace laughed. “Well, we’re having a standing rib roast with potatoes, salad and green beans—very simple. And yes, work attire is fancy enough. I’ll be wearing equivalent to this dress and Jerry will have a suit, but probably no tie. Be there at 7:00 PM. But I’m glad you didn’t just ask me on the phone without the lunch invitation, you know I am dying to stop by the furniture store on the way home.”

Carol joined her in laughter.

Grace’s face became serious. “Before we leave, I wanted to tell you a bit about Rebecca Barnes, Lee’s wife.” Carol listened intently.

Grace continued, "Rebecca is a lovely young woman. I’d guess she’s about twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old. She grew up in a small town in Missouri. She and Lee met at the University of Missouri. Lee was majoring in journalism and she in home economics. They’ve been in New York City about ten years and she has not been as exposed to the wonderful diverse people who live here. I feel sure she has never knowingly met a…” Grace trailed off.

“Homosexual?” prompted Carol.
“Yes,” said Grace with relief that Carol was comfortable with saying the word.

“Grace, Therese has increased my comfort about using the words that often cause others to be uncomfortable. It’s fine to say that Therese and I are a homosexual couple or just ‘a couple’—either way. Therese attends meetings of homosexual women and men. She is interested in what they have to say about the way the majority of the world views us. These are very brave individuals who are honest about who they are and whom they love. Therese has adopted that honesty herself and has helped me to do so.”

“Well,” said Grace “I’m not sure what Rebecca might say out of naivety—not out of meanness in any way at all.”

Carol smiled, “Thank you for telling me in advance and I’ll share this with Therese. Please know that we are not easily offended by a remark that’s made from lack of knowledge.”

Grace leaned back against the back of the booth. “Carol, you have no idea how you have set my mind at ease.”

Carol smiled broadly and said, “Let’s go see what wonderful and tempting pieces await you at O’Halloran’s.”

Grace rolled her eyes, “That’s Jerry’s greatest fear.” The women shared a hearty laugh.

Grace paid the bill and left a generous tip.

Wednesday, March 11th, 1959

5:00 PM – the Aird/ Belivet apartment in Manhattan.

Therese was staring into the vanity mirror in their bedroom and was using a hand mirror to check her hair. She had left work an hour early to get her hair done at a neighborhood salon. Her boss, Lee Barnes had winked and waved his hand in a shooing motion when she went to his office to ask to leave early.

Carol watched Therese fussing with her hair. She could tell Therese was nervous about the upcoming dinner party.

Therese looked at Carol who was wearing only her robe, getting fresh undergarments and hose out of her drawer in the chest of drawers. Carol had showered and styled her beautiful blonde hair. Therese couldn’t believe how calm Carol seemed.

Therese asked, “Why am I a nervous wreck and you are so calm and collected?”

“Dearest,” began Carol, “This is not my first time at this sort of thing. When I was married to Harge, this type of gathering was an everyday occurrence. Remember Tuesday evening when you and I went over the probable sequence of events at tonight’s dinner party?”

“Oh I remember,” stated Therese. “I’m grateful for your coaching, my love, but now that the time is upon us, I hope I remember everything. I’ve just not had this experience before, and these are my bosses and their wives.”

Carol smiled at her lover and rubbed her shoulder reassuringly. “You’ll be a hit, Therese. Remember that you are the rising star at The Times and that you’re already held in high esteem even before you arrive. Just approach everyone with the lovely, friendly way you interact and act
confident, even if you may not feel it early in the evening.”

Therese said, “I like the strategy of not drinking much before dinner, but enough to be sociable. You mentioned that Lee and Mr. Goldman will probably drink Scotch or bourbon or a martini. You know that I don’t really like hard liquor, except perhaps a martini.”

“Request a martini if one is offered,” Carol said. “If not, then a beer would probably be preferable to wine, which is what the ladies will be drinking. The men will have wine with dinner, though, and a brandy after dinner.”

Therese rolled her eyes, “But I am a lady, am I not?”

Carol looked at Therese from head to toe with a long pause at her breasts. “You’ll get no argument from me with that statement, darling,” said Carol with a sly smile and a sexy wink. “But you are also the employee and in a different category than the other women. You are breaking new ground, Therese,” said Carol with obvious pride.

Carol removed her robe and was putting on her undergarments. Therese was watching with her usual interest. “My God, you’re beautiful, Carol.” sighed Therese. “Can we go over once more some of the other tips you gave me previously?”

Carol laughed. “Just in case, dearest, I called Harge today to ask if the business small dinner protocol had changed since he and I last attended such a function.

He said there’s been no particular change that he’s observed to the behavior I described. He sent his warmest regards, by the way, and thanked you for your concern over his health Sunday night.”

“Is he still feeling better?” asked Therese.

“He said he was feeling 100 percent today. Of course I had checked on him Monday and Tuesday as well, and spent some time on the phone with Rindy, too.”

“I mustn’t forget,” said Carol “Harge said he was quite proud of you for earning the promotion and catching the attention of the big boss. He sends his congratulations.”

“Well then, I will definitely call him to thank him.” smiled Therese.

Carol sat down on their bed in her undergarments and talked to Therese as Therese applied mascara.

First of all, realize that in my experience, the men have been the ones to ‘talk business together’ and the wives talk about their social life and children. I honestly can’t remember a woman with a true career like we have in a business dinner party.” Carol laughed without much amusement. “That goes to show you the life I had with Harge.” She continued, “Before dinner the couples will probably socialize together in pairs. Often the wife will lock arms with her husband or hold his hand or the husband will place his hand on his wife’s lower back.”

“Are you serious?” said an astounded Therese. “This is like a Broadway play.” Therese continued to stare open-mouthed as Carol continued.

“Serious as death.” replied Carol with a wink. I’m hoping Grace and Jerry and Lee and Rebecca Barnes are more liberal than the scenario I’m describing.

“What should we do with regards to showing affection?” asked Therese.

Carol thought a moment before saying, “Let’s see if we can gauge the comfort level of the
Goldmans and the Barneses. In fairness, we should be able to do what any other couple would do, but this is 1959 and we are breaking new ground by simply attending this dinner party as a couple.”

Therese said knowingly, “Perhaps after the others have had a drink or two, things will loosen up.”

Carol stood up and kissed the back of Therese’s neck. “My brilliant darling, you are so right. I don’t know about you, but I am intentionally going to limit my alcohol intake tonight.”

“Oh, I certainly am too, Carol,” replied Therese. I may relax with the after dinner brandy, but I will only sip my other drinks.”

Carol said, “Let me finish telling you what I believe will be the way the men and women will socialize during and after dinner.” Carol glanced at the clock and noticed it was already 6:00 PM.

“The main thing to remember, dearest, is that you must go where the men go. You will be engaging in ‘work talk’ no doubt.” Jerry will undoubtedly give you the cues. I’ll go with the other wives.” Carol gave Therese a loving smile when she said the words ‘other wives.’

After Carol had finished laying out the probable interactions, Therese felt relieved and confident.

Both Therese and Carol were satisfied with their dresses, hair and makeup.

Before they applied lipstick, they shared a very loving kiss.

“Let’s have fun tonight, my darling, Therese” said Carol. “I’m so very proud of you.”

Therese looked into Carol’s eyes and said, “I adore you, my love.”

The women put their lipstick on and after gathering the gifts of wine, bourbon and flowers for their hosts, they were out the door.

Wednesday, March 11th, 1959

7:00 PM – the Goldman apartment, Madison Avenue in Manhattan.

Promptly at 7:00 PM, Therese knocked on the door of the Goldman’s apartment. Jerry Goldman answered the door and greeted them warmly. Just as Grace had predicted, he was wearing a suit but no tie.

Grace immediately appeared at his side with a brilliant smile. “Welcome to our home,” she said. Grace took the flowers and exclaimed over them while Jerry relieved Therese of the two bottles.

Their maid, Martha, dressed in the traditional black dress with a white apron appeared next to Jerry and took the women’s coats. Therese and Carol thanked her. Also Martha took the flowers, smiled at Carol and Therese, then went in search of a perfect vase.

Grace gave Carol a hug and double cheek kiss. She moved to stand directly in front of Therese. She extended her hand and said, “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Therese. I’ve heard many wonderful things about you.”

Therese blushed slightly, and took Grace’s hand and shook it with the perfect amount of pressure. “The pleasure is mine, Mrs. Goldman.”
Grace held up a finger to emphasize her point. “You must call me Grace and I hope it’s acceptable to you if I call you Therese.” Grace pronounced Therese’s name perfectly.

“I’m delighted.” said Therese, “Especially since you and Carol have been on a first-name basis for years.” Grace laughed merrily and said “Indeed we have.”

Jerry turned to Carol and extended his hand. “Carol, it’s a pleasure to see you again. We met on one occasion at O’Halloran’s while Grace was shopping.”

Carol smiled and exchanged a firm handshake with Jerry. “I certainly remember, Mr. Goldman. By the way, Therese has not yet come down from the clouds since her meeting with you.” Therese smiled and blushed appropriately.

“Well, Carol, the pleasure was mine. I consider Therese a rising star at The Times and I hope to have more to say about that this evening.”

Jerry Goldman continued, “By the way, please call me Jerry. You are guests in our home and we drop the formalities here.” He addressed Therese. “This isn’t the workplace, Therese, please don’t be reticent about addressing me by my first name and I will do the same for you. It’s so good to see you again.”

Therese smiled and shook Jerry’s hand. “Thank you for inviting us, Jerry, we’re so pleased to be here.”

Jerry cleared his throat. “Carol, Therese, thank you so much for bringing ‘liquid refreshment.’” He winked and eyed the bottle of ‘Old Forester’ Kentucky bourbon whiskey and gave a low whistle. “This is my favorite brand. Did Grace tell you?”

Therese smiled and shook her head ‘no’ and said, “Carol is the whiskey expert in the family.”

Jerry said, “Lee called and said they were stuck in traffic and will arrive about ten or fifteen minutes late. Let’s move to the living room and I’ll get drinks started.”

“We have a variety of liquors and also beer and wines. I made a pitcher of martinis as well.”

Carol said, “I would love to have two fingers of bourbon neat.” Jerry nodded approvingly and said, “I’m going to have the same thing.”

Therese said, “I would love a martini.”

Jerry replied, “I’ve made them dry. I hope that works for you.”

Therese replied, “Of course.” She gave Jerry a big smile, complete with dimples.

With Jerry absorbed in preparing the drinks and Grace in the kitchen overseeing last minute preparations with Martha, Carol and Therese had a moment to exchange a smile and a wink that conveyed to each other that all was going well. Carol was so very proud of Therese’s poise and ease with someone so high up at The Times. Also, Carol thought, ‘My God, she’s gorgeous tonight.’

Therese had worn a green and black plaid dress that looked professional, but at the same time was flattering to her petite figure. The green in the dress brought out the green in her hazel eyes. The neckline was such that her beautiful silver and ruby necklace offered the perfect accent. Other than silver ear rings, her only jewelry was her silver watch with its black band. Carol wore a red wool dress with a lovely gold background pattern. Her nails and lipstick matched the color of her dress and her hair was pulled back in an elegant French twist.
Drinks had been distributed. Carol and Therese were seated on a loveseat in the living room. Grace had rejoined the group and had claimed her martini.

Grace sat next to her husband on the arm of the large easy chair with its huge ottoman. She leaned towards him slightly and put her hand on his shoulder. Jerry smiled at the contact.

Grace said to Therese, “You have no idea how pleased I am to meet you. Jerry has raved about the memorable meeting he had with you last week. I can’t recall another employee meeting that has impressed him quite as much.”

Therese smiled demurely and replied, “It was such an opportunity to spend the amount of time that Jerry so generously allowed for our meeting.” Carol beamed and thought she would burst with pride any moment.

Jerry sat forward so quickly that Grace had to reposition herself. Jack patted Grace’s leg and said, “Sorry dear.” He continued to smile at Therese and declared, “I’ve been thinking about our conversation and sharing it with my peers as well. You wouldn’t believe the looks on their faces when I ask them to take off their wedding rings.” Jerry took a generous swig of his bourbon.

Carol and Grace had puzzled looks on their faces. Jerry noticed this and said to Therese, “We must repeat the entire story after Lee and Rebecca arrive. I never tire of recounting the story and the effect it has on people and their awareness.”

Just then there was a knock on the door and Jerry rose to answer it. Since the door was in a hallway, those in the living room could not see Lee and Rebecca Barnes’s entrance, but could hear them. Everyone stood—ready to greet the new arrivals. Carol took the opportunity to discretely squeeze Therese’s hand to convey that Therese was making a good impression. Therese squeezed back. True to the conversation before leaving their apartment, both women had only sipped their drinks.

The voices were growing closer. Therese made a mental note of what Grace had told Carol over lunch on Monday that Rebecca was from a small town in Missouri and was a bit naïve. Therese realized that Rebecca might be slightly uneasy about meeting a lesbian couple. She felt confident to handle any awkward situation, and knew Carol would as well. Therese thought, ‘This is one of the many advantages of being open and honest about who you are.’

Lee and Rebecca preceded Jerry into the living room. Rebecca’s arm was linked though her husband’s and her eyes registered a bit of unease. Grace stepped forward to lightly hug both Lee and Rebecca and said, “It’s so good to see you again.”

The Barneses said a warm hello to Grace. Then Lee extended his hand to Therese and smilingly said “Hello, Therese.”

Therese smoothly responded to Lee with her own greeting and handshake, and extended a hand to Rebecca saying, “Therese Belivet. It’s a pleasure to meet you. May I call you Rebecca?” Rebecca nodded and smiled—although a bit nervously. Without missing a beat, Therese turned to Carol and gently took her arm to bring her a step closer. “I’d like to present my companion, Carol Aird.”

Lee shook Carol’s hand warmly and with ease said, “I’m glad to finally meet you, Carol. I’ve been looking forward to it.”

Carol replied, “Likewise, Lee. Therese has spoken so highly of you.” Carol turned to Rebecca, “How do you do, Rebecca. It’s very nice to meet you.”

Rebecca took Carol’s extended hand cautiously and said, “How do you do, Carol.”
Jerry could sense that it might be wise to get Lee and especially Rebecca started on drinks. He explained the offerings. Lee opted for the bourbon Carol had brought and Rebecca took a martini and took a more than generous sip.

Just as Carol had predicted, the three couples were now standing—paired off, with the husbands and wives maintaining some kind of physical contact with each other. Jerry and Grace held hands and Rebecca still clung to Lee’s arm. Carol and Therese wisely decided to delay their own contact with each other fearing that Rebecca would faint.

Rebecca had already consumed almost half her martini, when Jerry said to Grace, “Why don’t you show the ladies some of those beautiful antique furniture pieces throughout the apartment. I think we’ll talk a little business if you don’t mind.”

Carol and Rebecca prepared to follow Grace. Carol had coached Therese on this scenario, so instead of following the other women, Therese remained with Jerry and Lee. Jerry looked immensely pleased at Therese’s poise and her assumption that she belonged with Jerry and Lee and the ‘business talk.’

Jerry motioned them to sit and asked Lee about how the announcement of Therese’s promotion was progressing. Lee explained that he had held a department meeting of the Senior Photo Editors and the announcement was well-received. There had also been a meeting of Therese’s peers and the news was similarly well-received. Lee said, "We'll be specifying Therese's new duties over the next week or so, including her participation on The Times' new multi-disciplinary, multi-department committee to advise the Personnel Department on issues of importance to the employees."

“Excellent,” said Jerry. “I want the Senior Editors to know that I am mentoring Therese on a quarterly basis. Therese will be the first woman to attain the title of Senior Photo Editor if all goes well. Therese, if you are happy with that career path, I want to fast-track your promotions so that you reach that level in three years instead of five. Three years is the soonest I ever recall someone moving from Junior Photo Editor 2 to Senior Photo Editor.”

“I certainly appreciate the confidence you both have placed in me and I plan to deliver results.” Therese nodded seriously. She continued, “I do hope that I will also have the opportunity to hone my own photographic skills. I believe the better a photographer I am, the more I can contribute to the editing team.”

“Excellent point!” exclaimed Jerry. He turned to Lee. “You know something, Lee, I hadn’t really thought about the specific importance of deliberately pairing those skills.” Jerry looked at the ceiling and tapped his fingers together contemplating what Therese had said. “I like it—I like it.”

Jerry turned to Therese, “I think I am going to get as much out of our quarterly mentoring sessions as you will.” Therese smiled broadly in response.

“Lee,” said Jerry, “keep working on that photography mentor for Therese. I don’t want it to lag, but I want it to be a good match.”

Jerry turned back to Therese and said insistently, “Therese, you need to be proactive with your photography mentor. If he doesn’t give you enough time, you need to go to Lee. Don’t be reticent. We have much confidence in you and we want to see it develop sooner rather than later.”

“I certainly will.” promised Therese.

The other ladies were touring the large apartment with its impressive furniture and other antiques. Grace teased that it was “Apartment by Carol Aird of O’Halloran’s furniture.”
Rebecca was now on her second martini and feeling more at ease with Carol. She admitted, “Lee said I needed to be careful about talking ‘furniture’ with you, Carol. He was really teasing me, though.”

Carol and Grace laughed. Grace said, “Oh, you just have to handle Lee about buying furniture—make him think it was his idea.”

Carol observed with a wink. “Grace, I think you have perfected that skill.”

Grace said “Umhm” and winked back at both women.

Carol remembered conversations with other wives like this when she was married to Harge. She could recite them in her sleep. Although she considered Grace a good friend, she was so thankful that the dynamics of her relationship with Therese were quite different.

“Carol, may I ask you something?” said Rebecca. There was a bit of a nervous slur to her words.

Grace’s eyes widened and she felt a bit of panic rising in her chest. Carol gave Grace a glance that said, ‘Don’t worry, I won’t be offended—no matter what.’

Carol gave Rebecca her full attention and smiled encouragingly. “Of course, Rebecca, what would you like to ask?”

“Well…I just want you to know that I think you and Therese are so pretty.”

“Why thank you, Rebecca,” smiled Carol. “You look very nice yourself.”

“I just didn’t know what to expect.” Rebecca blurted out.

Carol tilted her head questioningly. “Really?” said Carol.

Grace’s fingers were massaging the bridge of her nose. Carol was smiling and totally at ease.

“Before we rejoin the men—I mean our husbands and your…”

“Companion,” prompted Carol helpfully.

Rebecca continued, “Yes, well, you seem so nice, and I feel like I could ask you a question that has been on my mind ever since Lee told me about Therese and the dinner party.”

Grace thought, ‘Uh oh, I should have served appetizers to go with the drinks.’

“Ask away, my dear and I will do my best to answer.” said Carol. Carol thought to herself ‘So this is how Therese feels when asked odd questions.’

“What do you call yourselves?” asked Rebecca.

Grace let out a somewhat relieved breath. Grace thought, ‘It could be worse, I guess.’

“Well,” said Carol. “I call Therese ‘Therese,’ of course, or sometimes ‘dearest’ or ‘sweetheart’ and Therese calls me ‘Carol’ as you would imagine, or ‘my love’ or ‘darling.’ We call each other similar endearments to what you and Lee probably exchange.”

“That is so wonderful,” said Rebecca wide-eyed, “but by what general term are you classified?”

Grace couldn’t take it anymore. “I think dinner is ready.” she said anxiously.
“Wait, Grace,” said Carol. “Let me try to answer Rebecca’s question. Do you mean ‘homosexual?’”

“Well,” Rebecca said, “Back home I kept hearing another word.”

“Lesbian?” offered Carol helpfully.

“Nooo. Oh well, I will probably remember it during dinner. If Grace thinks we need to be seated I can just…”

Grace cut her off, imagining a scene at the dinner table where an inebriated Rebecca would blurt out a slur. “Let’s try to help you remember now, right Carol?”

“Absolutely,” said Carol. Carol thought to herself ‘Jesus, Mary and Joseph, think, Carol.’

“Queer?” said Grace, trying to help discover the word as soon as possible. Grace thought ‘Carol, forgive me. I will buy out the entire O’Halloran’s stock.’

Carol pondered all the rude slurs she had been subjected to, then a lightbulb went off.

“Dyke?” said Carol, certain that she had hit pay dirt.

Rebecca literally clapped her hands together. “That’s it! Oh, thank you Carol.”

Carol and Grace stared at Rebecca with their hands over their mouths. Rebecca sensed that perhaps the term wasn’t appropriate. Rebecca’s eyes started to fill with tears.

“Oh, I am so sorry. I’ll bet that’s not a nice term, is it?”

“Actually it really isn’t a nice term, Rebecca,” said Carol, soothingly, “but don’t be hard on yourself. You didn’t know.” Carol continued, “Therese always tells me that people have to learn by asking us questions. Now you know that you shouldn’t use that term to describe someone who is a lesbian. That is the term for women who love other women. The general term is ‘homosexual’ to describe someone who loves someone of the same sex.”

Rebecca looked down at her feet, then back up to Carol. “Thank you for being so gracious, Carol, I have learned something important tonight.” Carol smiled and nodded.

Grace had already excused herself to announce that dinner was served.

Rebecca dried her tears and excused herself to repair her make up.

Carol took a generous swig of her drink and thought, ‘I’ll be eating soon and by God, I deserve this good bourbon.’ Carol and Therese had wisely eaten some cheese and crackers at home before they left.

Carol left the room to find Grace and reassure her that all was well. As she left the room, she thought with a chuckle, ‘I have some pillow talk that will top whatever Therese discussed tonight—and the night’s not over yet.’

(The dinner party will be continued in the next chapter.)
Chapter Summary

Chapter 27 takes place Wednesday March 11, 1959, at the apartment of Jerry and Grace Goldman in Manhattan. While Therese, Jerry Goldman and Lee Barnes talk business in the living room, Grace, Carol and Rebecca Barnes, the wife of Therese’s supervisor Lee Barnes tour the apartment. Rebecca has unknowingly used a slur as a substitute for "lesbian" and is mortified. Carol tries to comfort Rebecca and also convince Grace that her dinner party is not ruined.

The entire group gathers for dinner. What starts out as a routine dinner conversation quickly becomes an in-depth exchange in which the two heterosexual couples learn about what life can be like for a homosexual couple.

Chapter Notes

Since this chapter is Part 2 of 2, it is particularly important that you read Part 1 first.

The chapter title, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" was taken from the 1967 film of the same name. Among the stellar cast were Katherine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy and Sidney Poitier. This film explores the emotions and dynamics of Hepburn and Tracy hosting a dinner party for their white daughter and her black fiancé played by Poitier. At the time this movie was released, it was still against the law for blacks and whites to marry in 17 States. I would highly recommend watching this film.

Thank you dear readers for providing more comments in the past few chapters than I have received in the past. Several of your comments have touched me deeply and have inspired me. I've poured heart and soul into this chapter. It's much longer than my usual posting and I still needed to break the dinner party into two chapters. This is the second and final of two.

So again, I appreciate comments, no matter how long or short. It is so helpful to know that my story is connecting with readers. I'll answer all comments. There are some exciting chapters coming: preparations for the ring ceremony, the ring ceremony itself, the honeymoon, Rindy's birthday and lots more.

I would truly appreciate your feedback. Your comments give me the energy I need to keep writing. I need you.

Regards,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes

1. Wednesday, March 11th, 1959
7:40 PM – the Goldman apartment, Madison Avenue in Manhattan.

Rebecca Barnes was still in the bathroom repairing her makeup and composing herself after the embarrassing conversation with Carol and Grace Goldman in which Rebecca repeated the word, “dyke” that her family used to describe lesbians which she had heard growing up in Missouri. Rebecca didn’t realize the word was a slur.

Grace and Carol tried to help Rebecca remember the word so that she would not blurt it out during dinner. Rebecca could tell that Carol and Grace thought “dyke” was offensive and she immediately apologized tearfully. Carol tried to comfort Rebecca telling her that she was not intentionally offending Carol and Therese. Still, Rebecca was clearly embarrassed and fled to the bathroom. Grace was concerned that the atmosphere of the dinner was damaged and she left the office where the conversation had taken place for the kitchen.

Carol found Grace in the kitchen leaning against the cabinet in front of the sink. She was staring vacantly into the sink trying to think how to repair the damage to the dinner party. Jerry, Lee and Therese were in the living room talking business and hadn’t the slightest idea what had transpired among the other women.

Carol placed her hand on Grace’s shoulder and patted it softly to reassure Grace.

“Oh, Carol,” said Grace, “I don’t know what to say. I’m afraid that the pleasant evening has been damaged.”

“Grace, look at me,” said Carol in a comforting voice. “No damage has been done.” Carol continued with a chuckle, “Therese has enlightened me more than you can ever imagine on how to handle situations like we found ourselves in.”

Grace looked into Carol’s eyes and could discern that Carol wasn’t upset at all.

“How do you do it?” asked Grace. “How can you let being called a slur slide off your back? Jerry and I are Jewish, Carol, and I can’t imagine someone calling me an offensive term for a Jew without being upset.”

Carol sighed. “I think the difference is that educated people such as Rebecca know the slurs to avoid, for example, in reference to Jews or Negros or Irish or Italians. However, up to this point in time, homosexuals have been so invisible in society that no one has spoken up to explain to people who are otherwise of goodwill, that there are terms that are appropriate, such as ‘homosexual,’ ‘lesbian,’ or even ‘gay.’ On the other hand, there are words that are slurs, as we heard tonight. In Rebecca’s case, she used a term that she heard growing up and there was no one to enlighten her. I doubt very much that she ever used the word around Lee, because I’m sure he would have corrected her.”

Grace gave Carol a quick hug with a relieved laugh. “Carol, you are amazing,” she said.

“Oh, Therese is really the amazing one. She has taught me so much. You’ll have to ask her at dinner about the homosexual political meetings she attends. Jerry and Lee are aware of her activities, so it’s nothing that she is hiding. Rebecca might learn something in that conversation.”

Grace visibly relaxed and with a bright smile, said, “Our party is back on track. If you would be so kind to find Rebecca and steer her to the dining room, I will break up the impromptu ‘business meeting’ in the living room and we’ll get dinner started.”

“Gladly,” said Carol, as she went in search of Rebecca.
Rebecca had found shelter in a guest bathroom. Carol knocked on the door and said, “Rebecca, it’s Carol. Grace wants us to gather for dinner now.”

Rebecca replied, “Carol, I just can’t face you, Grace and Therese. I am so humiliated that I used an offensive word to describe you.”

Carol asked in a kind voice, “Rebecca, would you please open the door?” Carol heard rustling sounds and the door opened. Rebecca had successfully repaired her makeup and now the only remnants of the incident was an embarrassed look on Rebecca’s face.

“Rebecca,” said Carol kindly, “you didn’t know you were using a slur—did you?”

“Oh, heavens no.” replied Rebecca. “Carol, I’ve never met a homosexual in my entire life.”

Carol chuckled, “Well, you probably have met someone, but you didn’t know it. We are for the most part invisible. That’s not to say that there are some people whose appearance or demeanor might give a clue as to their sexuality, but the majority of us are invisible, unless we identify ourselves.”

Rebecca smiled and said, “I would have never thought you and Therese were…”

Carol finished the sentence, “…homosexuals.” It’s all right to say the word. Give it a try.” Carol gave Rebecca an encouraging nod.

“Homosexuals.” said Rebecca with a relieved smile.

“That wasn’t so hard, was it?” asked Carol.

“Not at all,” replied Rebecca, “with your kind encouragement.”

“Let’s join the others. Grace totally understands that you were just unaware. Everything is fine now. The others have been so immersed in their business talk that they had no idea what transpired.”

Rebecca gave Carol a relieved smile and said, “I can’t wait to talk to Therese. Lee thinks so highly of her.”

“She is a gem, Rebecca,’ said Carol, with a laugh and a toss of her blond hair. “But then I am hardly impartial, as she’s the love of my life.”

Rebecca smiled and the two women followed the sounds of the voices to the dining room.

Grace and Jerry occupied either end of a Duncan Phyfe double pedestal dining room table. The mahogany table had a beautiful shine. The dining table easily seated six with the end drop leaves employed and a middle extension leaf. Rebecca and Lee were seated on one side of the table and Carol and Therese on the other. Grace put Therese and Rebecca on her end, while Carol and Lee sat on Jerry’s end.

Rebecca commented on the table and chairs, “This dining set is so lovely.”

Jerry rolled his eyes, but grinned and said, “Dining room set by Carol Aird of O’Halloran’s Furniture.” Everyone joined in ice-breaking laughter.

Martha, the Goldman’s maid, finished delivering piping hot food to the table and leaned down to tell Jerry that she was ready to catch a cab to her daughter’s apartment in nearby Queens. Jerry excused himself, and carried a sturdy sack with dinner for Martha and her daughter and went
downstairs to flag a cab and pay the fare.

Grace was pouring Cabernet Sauvignon for each guest as Jerry returned.

Everyone was exclaiming over the lovely standing rib roast with potatoes and a slide dish of French cut green beans. The salad was a wedge of iceberg lettuce with blu cheese dressing, toasted bread crumbs and finely chopped tomatoes.

Jerry held the chair for his wife after she completed the wine pouring duties, then took his place. Grace smiled at her guests and winked at her husband to prompt a toast.

Jerry raised his wine glass and said, “To the positive power of different viewpoints.” Everyone joined in the toast, then Grace said, “bon appetit,” and the meal began.

Grace was the first to speak. “Jerry, I’ve been eagerly awaiting this dinner party, so that I will finally hear the details of the stunning impression that Therese made on you during your recent meeting with Lee and Therese in your office. Each time I ask, you smile knowingly and say ‘I’ll tell everyone at our dinner party.’”

Jerry took a deep breath. “Sorry to keep you waiting, sweetheart, but it’s been fun to watch the various ways you’ve tried to get me to tell and frankly, I’ve enjoyed the attention.” Everyone laughed heartily.

Carol said, “Jerry, I couldn’t agree more. Therese has given me generalities, but when I ask for the details of what she said that impressed you so much, she just smiles.” Everyone laughed again and Therese squeezed Carol’s hand.

Jerry continued, “Rebecca have you heard the details?” Rebecca looked quite interested, but shook her head ‘no.’

Jerry said, “Well…let me tell the story.”

Jerry proceeded to tell the story of how Therese used the personal photos on Jerry’s desk at work plus his wedding ring to illustrate a point about how personal effects can potentially show whether a person is heterosexual or homosexual. Jerry put all photos face down and took off his wedding ring, then he walked around the desk to see the void of personal photos that would identify him as heterosexual.

Grace, Carol and Rebecca, all of whom hadn’t heard the story in this level of detail were speechless. Carol turned to Therese and asked, “How did you know to do this to prove your point?”

Therese replied, “Well, at one of the two homosexual organization meetings that I attend, mostly in the role of their photographer and archivist, one of the members challenged us to go away from the meeting and think about how we might have an opportunity to illustrate how some of the simplest things in life provide such a revelation to our heterosexual friends as to how we are treated differently. When I saw all the wonderful photos in Jerry’s office, I wanted to try to make the point.”

Grace and Rebecca were mesmerized with the logic. Carol was bursting with pride for the astuteness of her lover.

Jerry said, “Well, you certainly made a brilliant point, Therese. I’ve shared the experience with countless others and everyone understands the point right away.”

Therese addressed both Grace and Rebecca. “Your husbands were immediately supportive of my
putting a photo of Carol and our daughter, Rindy on my desk. I’ll have it on my desk by the end of this week.”

Grace thought about asking about their not wearing matching rings, but decided to wait until later.

Carol decided to steer the topic to the other two couples. Carol asked Grace where she and Jerry met and how many children they had.

“We met in college,” said Grace. “We were both at Columbia University.” Jerry was majoring in their very fine School of Journalism, and I was majoring in Art History and Archeology. We actually met there in 1930 and fell in love and were married right away. I became pregnant soon after we were married and I stayed at home with the baby for a couple of years. He graduated shortly before the war broke out in Europe. He was a wartime correspondent in the U.S. Army. Jerry was two years older than me. Our daughter is now 27 and was just married over Hanukah this past December. Charlotte and her husband Jacob are both medical students and they are determined to both finish medical school before starting a family.”

Therese asked, “I saw a photo on Jerry’s desk with a young woman and a baby and thought it was your grandchild.”

“Aha,” laughed Jerry. “You’re jumping to conclusions, Therese. He smiled. That’s my favorite niece, Esther and her daughter. We do not have grandchildren yet.”

Grace turned to Rebecca. “You and Lee must tell us your love story.”

Rebecca blushed. “We, too, met in college. Lee was finishing his degree in journalism at the University of Missouri. I was two years younger and was majoring in home economics. As soon as he graduated in 1945, he got a job offer with The New York Times, we got married and moved to Manhattan. Lee added, “I volunteered for the Army in 1942, but the doctors found a heart murmur and I was medically ineligible. We had our first baby—Lee Jr. — in 1950. He has a baby-sitter tonight.”

All eyes now turned to Carol and Therese. Grace suggested that she clear the table and serve coffee so that the group could be comfortable to hear their story.

Carol and Therese were seated on the loveseat, Lee and Rebecca were on the couch. Lee had his arm around Rebecca and Jerry was back in his huge leather chair with Grace perched on the arm —her hand on Jerry’s shoulder.

Only Carol and Therese had refrained so far from showing physical affection of any kind, but as they made their way into the living room, Carol whispered in Therese’s ear, “Follow my lead about holding hands.”

Therese nodded.

Grace said, “We are anxious to know how the two of you met and got together.” Grace looked from Carol to Therese and smiled easily.

Carol turned to Therese and said, “Darling, do you wish to start our story?”

Therese blushed slightly, but said, “Of course.”

Therese began by saying, “I assume all of you have seen the Broadway musical or the movie, ‘South Pacific?’” All nodded ‘yes.’

“Well,” Therese continued, “in the words from the song, ‘Some Enchanted Evening,’ we fell in
love across a crowded room on December 12, 1952.”

“How exciting,” interrupted Rebecca. “Was it at a Christmas party?”

Therese and Carol exchanged an amused but loving look. “No,” said Therese, "It was in the toy department at Frankenberg’s Department store in Manhattan.”

“Oh.” Rebecca said quietly.

Therese continued. “I was working a temporary job at the department store during the holidays and my assignment was the doll counter. There were many other toys in the large room, though. I looked at across the room and saw a stunning blond woman standing near our most elaborate train set. She was wearing a long fur coat, brown dress and gold necklace. Her accessories were a salmon-colored scarf and hat. I looked at her and she looked at me, and as Carol likes to say, ‘That’s that.’”

Carol gently reached over and took Therese’s hand, smiled at the others, and said, “I thought Audrey Hepburn was now working at the toy counter at Frankenberg’s. Therese was so sweet and beautiful. I literally couldn’t take my eyes off of her. I remember walking toward her from the train set across the room. Our eyes were locked on each other.”

Therese added, “Carol took off her gloves and laid them on the counter and proceeded to ask me about a certain doll for her young daughter. Unfortunately, we were sold out. I ended up selling her a train set for her daughter and shipped it to her C.O.D.” Therese chuckled, “That way I had her address.” Everyone either laughed or waggled their eyebrows.

“We chatted for a few minutes.” said Carol. Then I made one of the best decisions of my life. I deliberately left my favorite leather driving gloves, hoping that Therese would return them and thereby start a contact.”

Carol continued “The gloves arrived in the mail in two days and I called Therese at work to thank her. She had included a Christmas card in the package with the gloves, but she only signed with her employee number—not her name. I called Frankenberg’s, though, and asked for employee 645A and was connected with Therese.”

Therese took up the story. “We were both nervous, but went out for lunch the next day, and kept seeing each other. Here is the difficult part. How do two people who prefer someone of the same sex romantically make that known to each other without the risk of offending the other person?”

Everyone in the room paused and simply looked at each other and then looked at Carol and Therese.

Jerry spoke first. “I’ve never stopped to consider it, but I’m thinking about it now. If you assume wrong, the other person might be offended. I remember when I was courting Grace. All I had to do was knock on the door of her family home and I was welcomed by all. That just would not have happened if I called on a man.”

“My God.” exclaimed Lee to Carol. “What did you do?”

Carol shook her head and said sadly, “It was even more complicated since my husband and I were already in the final stages of a divorce and there was custody of our only child, Rindy, involved.”

Therese continued the story. “Carol and I went on a trip together at the end of 1952 while Carol was waiting for the divorce hearing. It was going to be a two to three month wait and Carol wanted to get away from New York City. The court did not allow Carol to see four-year-old Rindy during that time.”
Carol asked, “Are we monopolizing the conversation?”

“No” said everyone in unison. Grace said softly, “We must know the end of this story. Please tell us now, though, is the ending tragic?”

Carol and Therese smiled and shook their heads, ‘no.’ The Goldmans and the Barneses let out a relieved collective breath.

Carol said, “The first three months of 1953 were terribly difficult. On New Year’s Day in Waterloo, Iowa, we found out that my ex-husband had hired a detective to follow us. He made very personal, intimate recordings and sent them to my ex-husband to use in the custody hearings. I was worried that the ordeal would be too much for Therese and I did not want her future damaged, so I wrote her a letter that said in fact ‘I release you’ and left quite early in the morning. My best friend, Abby, flew out to drive the car back to New York as Therese did not drive at the time. That was the biggest mistake of my life. We had fallen in love and we really needed each other, but I feared that given societal opinions of homosexuals, Therese’s presence would diminish my chances of ever having contact with Rindy again. Also, I thought by giving Therese ‘freedom from me’ she would be able to have a better life. I certainly shouldn’t have made that decision for her.” Carol sadly shook her head.

Then Carol looked lovingly at Therese and took her hand and kept holding as she finished the story. Carol briefly talked about the difficulties of getting to see Rindy regularly and moving into Manhattan to her current apartment. She explained the events of the final custody hearing where she gave Harge full custody and Carol repeated her statement from that day that she could not provide Rindy with a happy life if she did not know happiness herself and if she had to live ‘against her own grain’ she could not be happy. Therese scooted closer to Carol on the loveseat.

Grace and Rebecca’s eyes were brimming with tears and Jerry and Lee each had a hand cupped over their mouths. All were thinking of the pain of Carol's decision.

Carol stretched her back for a moment and observed, “I’m sorry if I’ve damaged the pleasant nature of this wonderful dinner party. I really should not have gone into such detail.”

Grace was first to speak. “Carol and Therese, you have opened our eyes to a reality that we never, ever would have imagined could exist. Your story is important, but please, tell us, are things better in your life now? If I were in your position, I could not bear to go on with life, to laugh, to socialize…words fail me.”

Carol said, “Well, I did not have to face these challenges alone. After a three-month separation, on the very day the child custody verdict was finalized, I asked Therese to see me. I told her I loved her and I wanted her to live with me.”

Therese added, “I was a stubborn fool for about four hours—first saying ‘no’ but then realizing that I loved Carol and had always loved Carol, I literally ran back to find her at a dinner she was having at the Oak Room. I went home with her and we’ve never been apart. She is the love of my life and the only woman for me.”

Carol looked at Therese lovingly and linked her arm through Therese’s arm.

Carol said, “Now that we are together, there is nothing we cannot overcome.”

Therese added. “Life is so incredibly sweet when you can share it with the person you love the most in the whole world. If we encounter difficulties, we face and overcome them together.”

Carol turned to Therese and echoed, “We’ll always overcome difficulties together, dearest.”
Jerry said to Therese, “Your accomplishments at work are all the more amazing now that I know what hardships you’ve overcome.” Lee nodded.

Therese spoke. “All of you have been kind and attentive to our story, but we want you to know that there is a happy ending to this phase.” Carol’s former husband has finally realized the error of his ways. He and Carol now have joint custody of Rindy. She will turn eleven next month, and she’s a very happy, well-adjusted little girl. She spends every other weekend with us. She knows of our relationship—that we love each other and is thrilled to call me ‘Aunt Therese.’ Harge, Carol’s ex- has become our most staunch supporter. Carol and I have forgiven him after he tearfully begged for forgiveness.”

Therese continued. “We have invited him to our apartment for Easter since we’ll have Rindy that weekend. Carol talks to Rindy every day by phone. The four of us are going to spend her birthday together. We have a wonderful life now.”

Therese summed it up by saying, “You have been so generous with your time to hear our story. Hopefully, there will be more conversations like this in the future in living rooms around the country as people who love someone of the same sex share their lives with people who love someone of the opposite sex. That’s the only way that myths and stereotypes can be cast aside and people can realize their common humanity.”

There was silence in the room as the people looked at each other with a greater appreciation for who they were as individuals.

Jerry said, “Something very important has happened tonight. I can’t even put it into words, but I can say that I will never forget how I feel. What started out as a pleasant social encounter has evolved into a life-changing event because of what I’ve heard and seen.”

Rebecca said, “I need to say something to everyone.”

Carol and Grace looked at each other with an astonished expression, knowing what was probably forthcoming.

All eyes were on Rebecca as she took a deep breath. Lee took his wife’s hand. “I was very nervous about meeting Carol and Therese. I didn’t know what to expect. Lee had told me what a fine employee Therese was and told me of the confidence he had in her. He also told me she was a homosexual, too, because I was being insecure about a young woman being his most valued employee.”

Rebecca paused. After the pause was becoming awkward, Therese offered, “Did he say not to worry that he was attracted to me because I was a homosexual?” Therese started chuckling. Suddenly, Rebecca burst into laughter and said, “Yes!”

Lee looked embarrassed and shrugged and added, “I didn’t want her to worry.” Now everyone joined in relieved laughter.

Rebecca raised her hand in the midst of the laughter and said, “I don’t want to forget my important point. When I met Carol and Therese I saw two lovely gracious, intelligent women.”

Rebecca continued, “Earlier this evening when Grace was showing Carol and me this lovely apartment, I said something inappropriate. I had a bit too much to drink too quickly and I said that back home in Missouri, I heard a word used to describe homosexual women. I couldn’t remember the word, but said I would probably remember it later. I think Grace and Carol panicked thinking that I would remember it during dinner and blurt it out.”
“We did.” said Grace and Carol at the same time. Everyone burst into laughter.

“And I might have said it during dinner, having started my second martini.” confessed Rebecca.

“Rebecca!” Lee exclaimed. “You don’t usually drink that much in such a short time.”

“True,” said Rebecca, “but I did because I was nervous.”

Grace had to add to the story, that was becoming humorous now. “Carol and I starting listing terms just so that the suspense would be over. Carol, I’m sorry that I said ‘queer.’”

“Gracie!” exclaimed Jerry.

Carol interjected, “Don’t be hard on her, Jerry. She apologized to me at the time and said that she would buy out the complete stock of O’Halloran’s furniture as a penance. I was instantly soothed. We can work out a payment plan over the next six months.” Carol tried to keep a straight face, but when Jerry buried his head in his hands, Carol began laughing—as did Grace, then everyone followed.

“Jerry, we are teasing you.” said Carol between gasps of laughter. Therese was holding her sides and laughing.

Lee said, “Should I ask the word?”

“No.” replied Carol. “The lesson has been learned,” Carol said with a chuckle and wink to Rebecca.

“I do want to go to the store sometime to shop, though.” offered Rebecca.

“We’d love for you to stop by any time,” said Carol.

Jerry said to Lee, “Remember when I originally suggested this dinner party I told you that Rebecca would end up buying furniture.” Lee nodded.

Lee looked at his watch and said, “I’m sorry to say that we must be leaving. I have to get the sitter home. This has been an evening never to be forgotten.”

Everyone stood up. Jerry brought their coats and Grace went to the den to get Rebecca’s purse.

As Grace passed by Carol, she whispered, “Stay for a brandy, will you?” Carol nodded.

Lee and Rebecca thanked their hosts profusely.

Lee shook hands with Carol and Therese and said to Therese, “See you tomorrow at the office.” Therese smiled and nodded.

Carol said, “It was a pleasure to meet you both.”

Therese added, “I’m glad to finally meet you, Rebecca.”

Rebecca hugged both Carol and Therese and gave them a double cheek kiss, saying, “You two are wonderful and remarkable women.”

After Rebecca and Lee left, Grace took Carol’s arm and led them to the den where Jerry was pouring each person a brandy.

Jerry raised his brandy snifter and looked from person to person, “Here’s to the most memorable
dinner party I’ve ever attended—much less hosted.”

The others raised their glasses and exclaimed “Hear, hear.”

Chapter End Notes

The last sentence of this chapter reads "hear, hear." For those who might have heard the expression but you may not have known where it came from. It originated in the late 17th century English Parliament as "hear him!" and represents a listener's agreement with the point being made by a speaker. By the late 18th century it was reduced to just "hear, hear." (source: Wikipedia)
A Sweet Goodnight

Chapter Summary

The first part of Chapter 28 takes place Wednesday March 11, 1959, at the apartment of Jerry and Grace Goldman in Manhattan. Lee and Rebecca Barnes had to leave to take their babysitter home, but the Goldmans insisted that Carol and Therese stay for more bandy and talk. They enjoy each other's company immensely. Jerry Goldman insists that Therese arrive at the office later because they have spent several hours talking business. Carol has also arranged to arrive later at the furniture store. This leaves Carol and Therese ample time for nighttime conversation and passionate lovemaking.

Chapter Notes

I plan to continue Carol and Therese's story in the time period it occurred. That is easy for me, since I am 69 years old and I have lived the period (although as someone of Rindy's age).

Several of your comments have touched me so deeply and have inspired me. Some comments were so wonderful that I hardly could believe that I deserved them. I read them over and over for inspiration, especially when there were so few comments after many of my chapters. I answer all comments, so the number of comments per chapter is half from the readers and half from my replies.

It is so helpful for me to know that my story is connecting with readers. I'll answer all comments.

There are some exciting chapters coming: preparations for the ring ceremony, the ring ceremony itself, the honeymoon, Rindy's birthday and lots more.

If there is something that I am NOT doing that is resulting in your lack of comments, please let me know and I will do my best to live up to your expectations.

Respectfully,
Pipestone

Wednesday, March 11th, 1959

11:30 PM – the Goldman apartment, Madison Avenue in Manhattan.

Carol and Therese were walking toward the front door of the Goldman’s apartment with their arms around each other’s waists. Carol glanced back to see her hosts following them in a similar embrace. This was a perfect ending to a spectacular evening and each couple was keenly aware of
its importance.

Carol said over her shoulder, “I hope we haven’t overstayed our welcome.” Jerry Goldman chuckled.

“Hardly.” he said. “Each time either of you made a motion to leave either Gracie or I would say ‘Sit! You just can’t leave now. We’re just getting to the best part of the conversation.”

Therese laughed. “I hope I don’t have to struggle to be productive in the early hours of the morning.”

Jerry asked, “Do you have any early meetings?”

Therese answered, “No, not until 2:00. PM.”

Jerry replied, “When I get into the office, I will put in a call to Lee and tell him to expect you about 9:30 A.M.”

Therese looked immensely relieved and started to thank Jerry. “Oh, don’t thank me,” he said. “Tonight you’ve provided me with some wonderful ideas about the initial direction for our multi-departmental council on diversity issues. I especially like your idea of having a steering committee consisting of members of the largest segments of The Times. Any segment that is left out because of size can be consolidated into one or more smaller units in order to have representation. No one should feel left out of this important steering committee.”

Jerry asked “Did I mention that I’ve been named to represent the Metro division.”

“Excellent.” observed Therese. “No one could be better.”

“Oh, really?” said Jerry with a raised eyebrow.

Therese said, “Absolutely!” with heartfelt sincerity.

Grace and Carol looked at each other, then looked at Therese.

“Well, I beg to differ,” said Jerry, “and besides, the idea of the steering committee hasn’t been approved, but when I put it forth, I suspect it will be eagerly adopted.”

“Therese,” said Jerry, “Do you realize that the idea of the steering committee was yours and yours alone?”

“That may be,” observed Therese, “but the degree to which the idea is accepted has much to do with the power of the person who puts it forth.”

“Damn!” swore Jerry as he looked at Grace, then Carol. This woman has more business savvy than men twice her age.”

“You’ll get no argument from me, Jerry,” said Carol as she looked at Therese with pride glowing in her eyes.

Therese said, “Jerry, I am more than happy to advise you any time you wish about the steering committee. You know you can count on both my loyalty and candor. I so appreciate your nominating me to be a member of the diversity committee as a whole. I understand that Mr. Callahan of personnel will have the final say on membership.”

“No appreciation is necessary, Therese,” said Jerry, “and there will be no hesitancy from Callahan
in accepting my nomination.”

The two couples had reached the door and their reluctance to end the evening was palpable.

Carol said, “I don’t know how to begin to thank you for such a memorable evening. Therese and I will always remember it fondly.”

“We will, too,” said Grace, “Even though Jerry and Therese are business associates in a direct reporting chain situation, I certainly hope we will be able to do this again.”

“Well,” said Jerry, we are the ones who can make this happen.” He beamed at both Therese and Carol.

Grace appeared again with their purses. Jerry helped Carol with her coat and Grace helped Therese. Jerry shook hands with both women and Grace gave each a double cheek kiss.

The cab ride back to their apartment was very short, as Grace and Jerry also lived on Madison Avenue, although in a more high-end area.

Carol and Therese were quiet during the return cab ride. Each woman was lost in her own thoughts. As they departed the cab, Therese paid the fare and tipped the cab driver.

Therese walked a step ahead of Carol and Carol guided her by putting her hand on the small of Therese’s back. It was a gesture that Therese loved.

They were quiet during the elevator ride and the walk down the hall to their apartment, but when the door closed, both women started talking excitedly at once. There were details of the evening that each woman did not know about because they had been divided into the ‘wives’ and the ‘businessmen’ (even though one ‘businessman’ was certainly a woman).

Midnight, March 12th, 1959 – the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Therese asked Carol, “Darling, I know you must be exhausted. Is there any chance you can arrive late at O’Halloran’s?”

Carol smiled lovingly, “Dearest, I’ve already taken care of it. Eamon knows not to expect me before 10:00 AM. We can set the alarm for 8:15 AM and still have time for morning pillow talk.”

“Total bliss!” murmured Therese.

Carol faced Therese and held out her hand. Therese took Carol’s hand and Carol led Therese into their bedroom.

Carol kissed the palm of Therese’s hand and posed a question. “Dearest, did you know that the Simmons mattress company has created a queen-sized bed that is slightly longer and wider that the double bed that most of the U.S.A. uses?”

Therese arched her eyebrows and said with a sexy tone to her voice, “No, I must admit, I must have missed that very important information. I don’t suppose O’Halloran’s will be getting them in stock anytime soon?”

Carol had turned to look at their bed and Therese put her arms around Carol from the back—nuzzling her neck all the while.
“Apparently, they will arrive around May 1st.” Shall I pre-order one?”

Therese said, “I will miss this, our very first bed together, but if we decide not to take it is that a problem?”

“Not at all,” replied Carol, “and we can try lying on it at the store either before or after business hours.”

“I love these employment perks,” said Therese.

“Speaking of employment perks,” said Carol, “I don’t even know where to start in discussing our wonderful evening.”

“Let’s start by getting ready for bed,” said Carol, with sparkling eyes.

“Dearest, could you unzip me?” said Carol with an arched blonde eyebrow.

Therese wrapped one arm loosely around Carol’s waist and unzipped the back of her dress, kissing down her back all the while.

Carol reached for her robe and proceeded to hang her dress and remove her undergarments. Therese loved watching Carol unhook her garter belt and roll down her hose. Carol deposited these items in their clothes hamper.

“My turn,” said Therese as she turned around and lifted her arms. Carol performed the same action as Therese began to remove her undergarments. Therese was naked, while Carol had her robe tied loosely around her.

“Robe?” asked Carol in a sexy voice.

“Only temporarily,” answered Therese, as she stepped in front of Carol and wrapped her arms around Carol’s neck and pulled her into a gentle, yet promising kiss.

After they shared their bathroom sink for night time preparations, Therese asked Carol if she would like to light a candle in their bedroom tonight. Carol cocked her head and observed Therese with a mixture of amusement and arousal.

“I certainly think that tonight merits a candle. I want to be naked in your arms, Therese.” said Carol, and I want you naked in mine. I want to be as close to you as humanly possible. I want to fall asleep tangled in your arms and legs with your name on my lips.” They pulled back the covers and got into bed.

“That can be arranged, my love,” sighed Therese, “If only you will be so good as to tell me the word Rebecca used. I am dying of curiosity.”

“Ah my brilliant Therese,” laughed Carol. “Is there any doubt in your mind what it was?”

Therese said, “Probably not, but I am so proud of you for thinking of it and having the courage to say it in front of Rebecca and Grace so Rebecca wouldn’t blurt it out during dinner.”

“Oh Therese.” Carol laughed even harder and pulled her close. “I am not exactly unschooled in slurs. Think of Harge’s mother.” Therese began to giggle.

“Does it start with a ‘d’ and end with an ‘e.’?”

“Well of course.” said Carol. Therese chuckled and wrapped her arms around Carol. The
amazing thing about it was that Rebecca had no idea it was a slur. It was a term she heard growing up. When she realized that it was a slur she was terribly embarrassed. Grace and I had to reassure her that she had used the word unintentionally.

Therese said, “You and Grace were very effective in doing just that, Carol. It’s so important that people who make an unintentional error and are embarrassed by it are reassured immediately. That builds goodwill and understanding between the people who have differences.”

“Therese, you are so perceptive in the ways of handling people’s feelings.” Carol said with heartfelt honesty. No wonder that Jerry Goldman wants to ensure you are in his organization and that you are promoted on a fast track.”

Therese looked intensely at Carol. “Sometimes it’s difficult for me to believe that all this is happening to me. I never had a sense that I had the qualities to be an outstanding manager. All I ever wanted to be was a good photographer. Jerry seems to think I can achieve both and I am overwhelmed by his confidence in me. I suppose this is what it feels like to be on the threshold of having a true career.”

Carol gently took Therese’s chin in one hand and tilted it up. “Dearest, all these years I have been telling you of your brilliance, I wasn’t just saying it because I loved you. I meant it, Therese. You are a brilliant woman and darling, you are mine—all mine. I am so very lucky.” Carol kissed Therese gently on the lips and tightened their hug.

Carol cleared her throat, “Now about that scented candle and the promise of being in each other’s arms, now that I have told you Rebecca’s word...”

Therese beamed at Carol. “A promise is a promise. Therese’s eyes never left Carol’s as she gently pulled on the tie of Carol’s robe. Therese suspected there was nothing underneath and was rewarded.

“God, Carol, you are so stunningly beautiful, and you are all mine.” Therese breathed.

Carol copied Therese’s motion to open her lover’s robe and let the robe drop to the floor. “Uh oh,” said Carol, as she hung up Therese’s robe, I mustn’t let you trip over a robe again.”

Therese chuckled, “Passion can be dangerous, when it comes to discarded clothes.”

They exchanged a kiss that turned into a passionate roaming of tongues in each other’s mouths.

“We fit perfectly.” said Therese, breathlessly.

“Oh yes, we do, my dearest,” exclaimed Carol. “Now, my darling, I’ve been doing some rather romantic thinking. Are you in the mood for a little adventure in our lovemaking?”

Although Therese didn’t know what Carol had in mind, she completely trusted her. “I’m yours, my love. Just tell me what to do I and I will do it.”

Carol whispered in Therese’s ear, “I would never do anything that would cause pain or discomfort to you dearest. Roll on your stomach and tell me if you don’t like what I am doing. Agreed?”

“Umhmm.” hummed Therese.

Within twenty minutes, their bedsheets were in chaos. Pillows were everywhere, and Therese had blown out the candle for safety reasons.

Therese kept groaning “My God, Carol, don’t stop! Don’t you dare stop!”
Carol laughed and nipped at Therese’s breast leaving a mark, saying “of course I won’t stop.” Then she slipped inside Therese once more. Their arms and legs were tangled and Carol’s hair fell over Therese’s abdomen.

Later, after both lovers had climaxed and when both were catching their breath, Therese said, “Do you think heterosexuals experience such electric lovemaking like this?”

Carol laughed softly and said, “Well, from the very, very brief experience I had, I would say, ‘no.’”

Therese snuggled into her favorite place on Carol’s neck and put her leg across Carol’s abdomen. “Carol, you have totally consumed me.”

Carol said “I think that goes both ways. Oh, I love the way you place your leg over my abdomen after my orgasm. It extends the lovely feelings.”

Therese laughed softly. “I won’t forget that important bit of information.” Therese added, “Remember, we can sleep in until 8:15 AM. I set the alarm.”

Therese breathed, “I love you Mrs. Belivet.”

“I love you, too, Mrs. Belivet.” said Carol. Therese noticed the change in Carol’s “Mrs.” Instead of “Miss” Belivet and smiled and snuggled even closer to Carol.
Chapter Summary

My dear faithful readers, I am not trying to write these chapters at a snail's pace, but something occurred to me when I was wondering how to provide you the reader details about Carol and Therese's life together in 1959 as they prepare to join their lives in the Ring Ceremony. They enjoy a very close and intimate relationship, but as was the case in 1959 (I clearly remember 1959 as I was in the 7th grade), women did not discuss menstrual periods. This lack of knowledge, even between such a close couple as Carol and Therese has interfered with their sex life over the past six years. Since they'll soon be going on a tropical honeymoon where swimming and wearing bathing suits will be the norm, they need to make a change of habit.

I don't want to over explain the chapter, so I will just let it unfold as you read it.

By the way, I've appreciated the greater number of comments that you've sent my way. These mean the world to me.

Regards,
Pipestone

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Thursday, March 12th, 1959

7:45 AM - the Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Therese was facing Carol’s back. She eased up over Carol to see the alarm clock on Carol’s nightstand. Carol seemed to still be asleep. Therese realized that they were both sleeping in because of the late end to the dinner party at the Goldman’s apartment last night. Jerry Goldman was head of Metro at The New York Times. Jerry had told Therese that he would call Lee Barnes, Therese’s boss and tell him Jerry had told Therese to arrive at the office at 9:30. Carol also had permission to arrive late at O’Halloran’s Furniture.

After several cloudy days, the sun was streaming through the window and Carol’s blond hair, spread on her pillow, literally glowed. The covers were down off Carol’s shoulders and Therese could see the fingernail marks on Carol that Therese had put there while begging Carol not to stop touching her in the way that was sending her over the moon with ecstasy.

Therese quietly rolled over on her back and remembered their exciting lovemaking of not too many hours ago. Carol had asked Therese to let her try something a little different, and the result was that Therese might have thought their bed had been set on fire. ‘My God!’ thought Therese, ‘I’m supposed to be the energetic young lover that wears my older lover out, and here I am begging and pleading for more.’ Therese grinned a most wicked grin. ‘But oh, I would not change a thing.’
As if Carol heard Therese’s thoughts, she raised her blonde head and glanced at the clock. She reached over and turned off the alarm and flipped to face Therese.

“Dearest,” said Carol, “I could tell you were awake. Good morning.”

Therese replied, “Good morning to you, my electrifying lover. Honestly, Carol, I can’t believe I almost demolished our bed as I went crazy from the way you were touching me. I’m glad I thought to put out the aromatic candle or I would have literally set fire to our bedroom.” Therese laughed softly and a bit self-consciously.

Carol rolled on top of Therese and rested on her elbows. She leaned in and kissed Therese’s lips gently.

“You have no idea how your reaction thrilled me, dearest. I’m glad I’m able to satisfy you sexually.”

Therese gripped Carol’s upper arms and flipped their positions so that now Therese was on top. “My love,” said Therese, “that’s putting it mildly. In fact, give me your hand, I am still so wet, I can’t believe it.”

Therese guided Carol’s hand between her legs and they both felt the copious amount of moisture there.

“See what I mean?” said Therese. Therese glanced at her hand and noticed blood mixed in with the lubrication from their lovemaking. She saw that Carol’s hand had her blood on it, too. Therese was mortified.

“Oh damn!” exclaimed Therese. “I’ve started my period. That certainly puts a damper on the romance. I’d better get up before I bleed on the sheets.”

Therese swung her legs off the bed and gingerly made her way to the bathroom. Carol wiped her hand with a tissue and waited to give Therese time to herself in their bathroom.

Carol sensed Therese’s disappointment. Up to this point when either of them got their period, they used sanitary napkins and a sanitary belt and avoided lovemaking during their period, even if neither woman was having menstrual cramps or feeling out of sorts. In fact, both Carol and Therese rarely had cramps and usually felt fine during most days of their periods, but neither woman suggested lovemaking during their periods for fear of bleeding on the sheets or each other.

As Carol was trying to determine how to make Therese feel better, Carol thought back to a recent phone call with Abby.

Carol had grown so frustrated that Abby was too busy dating three different women to see Carol and Therese in person that she called Abby. Abby was very apologetic. Carol and Abby had enjoyed a long talk during a quiet time in Carol’s day while everyone else was out of the shop.

Abby was laughing hysterically about the logistics of seeing three different women. Abby had said, “Ah, Carol, it’s great! I feel like a teenager again. I’ll bet I’ve had more sex in the past six weeks than I did in my entire senior year in college.”

“You nitwit!” Carol laughed. “No wonder you haven’t been around, but seriously, we must get together for dinner. Bring whichever of your ‘women’ you wish or just come alone, but we have missed you terribly. ‘Here’s an idea, Abby—bring them all.’ Carol could hear the sharp intake of breath on the other end of the line, then hoots of laughter from Abby.

Abby had said, “Carol, call me on or about March 12th and we’ll decide on a date for dinner. I’d
Abby had said, “Carol, call me on or about March 12 and we’ll decide on a date for dinner. I’d love to see you two and I’ve already marked April 18th on my calendar for your ring ceremony.”

“By the way, Carol, since my love life is so incredibly active, I’ve made a discovery that solved the problem of missing several days of sex because I was having my period.”

Carol was drawing heart doodles with hers and Therese’s initials in them. The last sentence got Carol’s attention.

“Say that again, Abby.” requested Carol.

“What?” said Abby.

Carol said “The part about solving the problem of missing days of sex when you’re having your period.”

“Ah,” teased Abby. “That got your attention.”

“Please, Abby” said Carol. “Both Therese and I are chained to those damned sanitary napkins and belts for days on end.”

“Earth to Carol.” “It’s 1959 for God’s sake. Carol, you’ve been reading too many of those ‘Modess…because’ ads in Ladies Home Journal.” Carol chuckled.

Abby continued, “You do know about tampons, don’t you?”

“Yes, of course.” said Carol, “but I don’t use them, and don’t ask me why because I honestly don’t know. I guess because Therese uses napkins, I do.”

“Oh,” Carol suddenly remembered. “I used napkins when I was married to Harge because the very thought of menstrual blood would keep him so far away from me. It was heaven.”

“Oh, you nitwit!” exclaimed Abby. “Do yourself and Therese a favor and run, don’t walk, to the nearest drugstore and buy some TAMPAX in two different sizes—probably a medium or small. Hey, buy both and you and Therese can have a party,” chuckled Abby.

Carol thanked Abby profusely, even though Abby kept chuckling about it right up to the time they said goodbye and hung up.

Carol followed Abby’s advice and bought the two products that very day and put them in the bottom of her lingerie drawer until she and Therese could have a discussion. Although Carol didn’t realize it at the time, today was the day.

Carol heard Therese finishing her shower. Carol knocked on the bathroom door.

“Come in,” answered a dejected Therese. She had put her sanitary napkin on the bathroom dresser top along with her sanitary belt and her panties.

Carol walked over to Therese and hugged her tightly. “Having cramps, darling?”

“Not at all, but I did bleed a lot in the shower.” Therese was a bit uncomfortable with the conversation. Carol and she just didn’t usually talk about their periods in detail.

“Do you know why you bled so much, other than perhaps your first day?” asked Carol. “It’s probably because we made love last night. I read an article in a magazine at my gynecologist’s office of factors that might affect the flow. Also, you were standing in the shower, and gravity affects the flow.”
“Carol, do we really need to talk about this? I don’t recall that we’ve had in depth conversations about each other’s periods.”

Carol finished washing her hands and held out her hand to Therese and said, “Trust me again, dearest?”

Therese looked at Carol skeptically, but they had enough time, so she took Carol’s hand.

Carol grabbed an older, dark-colored bath towel and led Therese back to bed.

“Wait,” said a panicked Therese. “I might bleed on the sheets.”

“You won’t darling, because I’m putting down this dark towel for you to lie on, besides you’ll be lying down and the flow responds to gravity.”

Carol placed Therese’s robe gently on Therese so that it came down to her waist. Carol had her robe on, too. She faced Therese and gave her a most loving, caring look and stroked her cheek.

“Dearest,” Carol began, “for whatever the reason, you and I are so very intimate with each other in so many ways, but we never talk about our periods. Would you agree?” Therese nodded, and she added, “I don’t recall having menstrual conversations in general with anyone.”

“You’re right,” said Carol.

Carol continued, “It’s almost a little barrier between us that can last up to 12 days a month if you and I have periods at different times.” Therese listened intently.

Carol said, “There is nothing wrong or ‘dirty’ if I touch you inside while you are menstruating, sweetheart.” If you are cramping or generally out of sorts, I wouldn’t touch you inside. I would try to make you more comfortable, hug you and kiss you in a non-romantic way. You know that I’ve done that over the years, right.”

Therese nodded.

Carol said, “But I’ve come to realize that many times we both have been avoiding making love with each other for no other reason than we are having our periods.”

Therese said, “Well, those damn belts and napkins are not very romantic.”

“True, said Carol. “But there are alternatives, like tampons.”

Therese frowned, “I thought those hurt to put them in and uncomfortable to wear unless you’ve been married.”

Carol said, “Dearest, this is an intimate thing for me to say, but I’m your lover and I’ve been inside you many times over the past six years, and I have a very accurate idea of the dimensions of your vagina, wouldn’t you say?”

Therese laughed with relief, “Yes, you do and there definitely has been some stretching going on over the years much to my delight.”

Carol laughed as well. “Oh, Therese, I love you so. Now give me a minute. Stay there. I want to wash my hands again thoroughly and then I want to do something if you will let me.” Before Carol left their bedroom, she pulled a small bag out of her lingerie drawer.

Therese waited. She heard the water running and Carol returned.
Carol sat down gently next to Therese on the bed. “Darling, my hands are scrubbed. I even used a nail brush. I want to go inside you with my index finger. The tampon will be smaller than that—probably about the size of my little finger and not quite as long.”

Therese’s eyes widened. “But Carol, you will probably get my blood on your finger—perhaps under your fingernail.”

“I’m washable, Therese. I have been since I was a baby.” They laughed to break the tension.

Carol smiled and slipped a pillow under the older towel and slid Therese’s hips up on it. “Comfortable, darling?” Carol asked.

“Comfortable but mortified,” said Therese.

“I love you, Therese,” said Carol. “Relax darling. Open your legs just a bit.”

Carol said, “Now in I go. Tell me if it’s uncomfortable and I’ll stop immediately.”

Therese closed her eyes and took a deep breath. She relaxed because she knew it was Carol and that Carol loved her.

Carol was so very gentle. She rubbed Therese’s abdomen to relax her and moved her finger inside Therese just a bit. Carol pulled her finger out and sure enough, there was blood on Carol’s finger, including under the nail.

The lovers looked at each other and then at Carol’s finger again. Carol broke the silence. “Hmm. Therese, you most certainly are having your period.” They laughed together.

Carol wiped her finger with a tissue and patted the opening to Therese’s vagina. Carol said, “Now let me go wash my hands again while you look in the bag beside you.”

Therese’s curiosity was killing her as she emptied the bag’s contents. She started looking at the TAMPAX. Also, there was a small nondescript holding case that looked as though it could accommodate four tampons—a carrying case, Therese imagined. Although she knew the products existed, she never would have thought she could or would use them. She put three of the smaller sized TAMPAX and one medium sized one into the carrying case.

Carol returned from washing her hands. She extended her fingers to Therese and asked, “See any blood?”

“No.” replied a relieved Therese.

“Therese, I recently talked to Abby on the phone and she started telling me the joys of these products—given the fact that she was dating three women. Now, I forgot exactly how tampons and Abby’s three girlfriends are connected, but it’ll come to me later. Abby teased me saying that you and I were probably using sanitary napkins and belts and avoided sex while we’re having our periods even if we felt fine and wanted to make love.”

Therese asked Carol in a quiet voice, “Did you and Abby talk about your periods when you were involved years ago?”

Carol smiled. “To tell you the truth, it’s been so long ago that I remember very few specific details of what we did or didn’t talk about, but I definitely remember that we never discussed details of our periods and we never had sex during those times.”

Carol continued, “But today, Abby is in a different state of mind with the excitement of three
girlfriends. She convinced me that we should try these products, so here we are. You’re the first one of us to get a period since I purchased them.”

Therese was really interested now because she began to think about their upcoming ring ceremony and surprise honeymoon to a tropical paradise where water and swimming were the main activities, and both of them would be wearing shorts or bathing suits. Neither attire was suitable for bulky sanitary napkins. Of course, Carol did not have the slightest idea about the honeymoon destination yet, but what if she or Carol had their periods and had to miss either the ocean fun or lovemaking because of the damned napkins? Therese realized that she, too, wouldn’t hesitate to go inside Carol if Carol were having her period.

As Carol said, we’d just have to keep our hands very clean before and after going inside each other and have an old clean towel handy if we bleed while lying down. Therese made a mental note to pack the old towel and an extra nail brush to use just for this purpose. This was exciting.

Therese couldn’t wait to try the tampon. “I want to try the smaller size. The machines in the women’s restroom at work almost always are stocked with the brand with the applicator.”

“Oh, okay,” said Carol, “I have no experience at this either, so it’s time to read directions. Scoot up on the bed and I’ll put the towel under your hips and we’ll learn together.”

Both women were excited that they were embarking on a new journey together and now they would be able to talk about their periods from now on, feel comfortable making love during those times of the month if they wanted to and if they felt fine physically. Also, they no longer had any reservations about going inside each other and finding out that their fingers might have some blood on them along with the lubricating moisture of sexual desire.

Carol opened the TAMPAX box and found a small folded piece of paper with directions. It even had drawings. They learned that there were different sizes for different amounts of flow. Carol explained that she had chosen a box of mediums and a box of smalls under Abby’s advice. After reading and re-reading the directions, Carol took a deep breath and said, “Let’s give the small one a try.”

Therese rolled her eyes. “I like the way you say ‘let’s’ when obviously, I’m the guinea pig.”

Carol chuckled, but said, “Darling, I would try to put one in, too, but since I’m not having my period, I’m concerned that there would be nothing to absorb. The instructions say not to use one unless you’re having your period.”

“That’s fine, love.” said Therese. “When you have your period, I will have had all this experience and can help you with your first time.”

Carol felt a flood of love and tenderness at Therese’s words. “Thank you, sweetheart.”

In the bathroom, Therese washed her hands thoroughly and sat on the toilet while Carol stood by reading the step-by-step directions again. Carol rubbed Therese’s back for reassurance. Then Therese inserted the applicator and pushed the tampon in to its proper place, then withdrew the applicator.

Therese looked up at Carol glowingly. “I did it! Carol, it was so easy.”

“The string is hanging out, isn’t it?” asked Therese. “I feel it—take a look, Carol.”

Carol peered at the string and said, “It looks just the way the directions say it should. Sweetheart, how does it feel?” Therese stood up and took a few steps. Therese washed and dried her hands.
“Wow, Carol! It’s relatively comfortable. I can feel it a little, but the instructions said that would be the case until it absorbs some blood.”

Therese looked embarrassed. “What is it, sweetheart, asked Carol?”

Therese asked in a quiet voice, “Can it get lost in there?”

Carol smiled. “Oh yes, I forgot to read that part aloud. No darling. There’s nowhere for it to go. If for some reason the string goes up inside you, you just feel for it and pull the string back out. The brochure said that if necessary, a mother or female relative could help you—that’s me by the way.” Carol grinned at Therese.

The brochure stressed two things: One: the string rarely if ever goes up into your vagina and two: always wash your hands before and after touching the tampon or inserting or removing it. Apparently, you could get an infection otherwise.”

Therese contemplated Carol’s words. “That makes good sense, Carol.”

Carol said, “Remember to change it about every four hours. It’s 8:30 now and so around 12:30 would be best. Remember to pull it out using the string—it shouldn’t break. You should place the applicator and the used tampon in those little metal bins in the bathroom stalls.”

Therese frowned. “I was supposed to have lunch with Carmen today to discuss Jumping the Broom.”

Carol could sense Therese’s growing anxiety.

Carol said, “If you prefer, invite her to have dinner here tonight. I’ll pick up whatever take out she would like and the two of you can come here. I’d love to meet her. We can even drive her home or pay for a cab.”

Carol continued, “If that doesn’t work, try to adjust your lunch start time. Also, just put a sanitary napkin and belt in your purse and put it on in case you leak if the time goes beyond 5 hours. Call me to let me know how things are going.”

“Don’t be anxious, my darling. This will work out fine. You have several options.” Carol kissed Therese lovingly. “I’m so proud of you for being our ‘tampon pioneer.’”

Therese said wryly, “Sounds like an impressive title for a business card.”

Both women exploded into giggles.

Carol went to the kitchen to fix breakfast to go for Therese while Therese got dressed.

Therese ensured she had all her supplies. The tampon was feeling better and better. Now Therese could barely tell she was wearing it. Therese was so excited that soon both she and Carol would have the freedom from those damned sanitary napkins, even though she would keep one with her during her period should she leak.

Therese was so happy that she started humming “Here Comes the Bride.” Carol could hear her from the kitchen and was overjoyed that Therese was happy again. It had been heartbreaking to see Therese wake up this morning all glowing from their lovemaking last night and then suddenly everything had changed when Therese discovered she had started her period. Since they had rarely discussed their periods nor had they made love during their periods, no wonder Therese had been so crushed.
Carol was thrilled with this new development that had brought them closer as a couple.

Carol was waiting for Therese as she came into the kitchen ready to leave for work. She was wearing a green sweater that brought out the green in her hazel eyes. In fact, today her eyes looked like the loveliest of emeralds. She also wore a plaid wool skirt. She looked like a confident young businesswoman. Carol’s chest tightened with love and pride.

“Sweetheart, you look so beautiful.” Carol said with love clearly in her voice.

Therese smiled and hugged Carol tightly, kissed her and whispered in her ear, “It’s another of our perpetual sunrises, Mrs. Belivet. I love you so much.”

Chapter End Notes

TAMPAX (spelled with all capital letters) is a registered trademark brand of tampon. In the late ’50s there were fewer brands than today.

Abby makes a reference to an advertisement for a sanitary napkin called Modess. The printed ads in women’s magazines featured very beautiful, glamorous women in fabulous high fashion gowns of the period and the ads just said "Modess...because.” I urge you to look at some of these beautiful images of the ads on the Internet.

The subtle messaging of this ad certainly represents a time gone by, and the "...because" part of the ad inspired me to use it as this chapter’s title.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 30 takes place on Thursday March 12, 1959, at The New York Times building and later at the apartment of Carol Aird and Therese Belivet in Manhattan.

Therese is off to work at The New York Times. She meets with Metro Director Jerry Goldman and head of Metro Photography Lee Barnes regarding her new office space and is pleasantly surprised that she now has a door.

She goes out to lunch with her workplace friend, Carmen Williams, who has spent years researching the custom of Jumping the Broom. In the evening Therese shares the information with Carol.

I'll say it again, I've appreciated the greater number of comments that you've sent my way. These mean the world to me.

Regards,
Pipestone

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Thursday, March 12th, 1959

9:15 AM - The New York Times offices in Manhattan

Therese Belivet confidently strode through the doors of The New York Times. She had arrived later having been given permission by the head of the Metro Division, Jerry Goldman. Therese and Carol had enjoyed a wonderful dinner party the night before at the Goldman’s apartment. Her immediate supervisor, Lee Barnes and his wife, Rebecca, had also attended. Jerry and Therese had talked late into the evening about the new personnel committee on diversity.

When Therese arrived at her office she was surprised to see a new door on her tiny office with a nameplate that reflected her new promotion, “Therese Belivet, Junior Photo Editor 2.” There was a note on the door from Lee that said “When you get settled, come see me—no rush.”

Therese smiled and put her camera case and purse in her desk’s large drawer. She also put the new 4” by 6” photo of Carol and Rindy on the top of her desk. It was a wonderful photo of the two of them smiling on a park bench in Central Park with the beautiful Bow Bridge in the background. Therese grinned with joy at the photo of her lover and their daughter, right there on top of her desk. She was determined to live her life as who she was and both her bosses had supported her having the photo.

‘I can be like everyone else with loved ones,’ thought Therese with a smile. She realized though, that she might experience some backlash. Someone might leave a nasty note or deface the photo or even take the photo, but she had plenty of photos to replace any that suffered such a fate. She
had weighed the positives and negatives of having the photo on her desk, and the positives won and the photo was on her desk.

Therese knew that Carol was also taking a new photo to work. It was also a 4” x 6” of Therese that Carol would put on her desk at O’Halloran’s Furniture next to Rindy’s photo. Mr. O’Halloran had given Carol his blessing to put Therese’s photo on her desk.

Carol related that Mr. O’Halloran had said “How can I refuse when Therese has taken all the photographs of furniture pieces anytime I need them?”

Therese immediately went to Lee Barnes’ office. They exchanged greetings and Lee asked her to close the door. Therese no longer had concerns about a conversation with Lee with the door closed. She knew he had confidence in her and she was the employee in the department ‘on her way up.’ A closed door just meant a private conversation.

Therese smiled confidently and took the chair that Lee indicated she take.

“Well good morning, Therese,” said Lee. “That was a wonderful evening last night, wasn’t it?”

“Indeed it was,” answered Therese. Carol and I truly enjoyed meeting Rebecca, and of course, Carol was glad to finally meet you.”

“Therese,” Lee began, Rebecca has talked non-stop about how wonderfully generous you and Carol were to her, despite the fact that she vocalized a slur in reference to homosexuals that she had heard in her youth.”

“Well,” Therese began, “no one should be held responsible for mistakenly using an improper term if they don’t know the difference.”

Lee explained, “I never heard Rebecca use that term, and the only time I had referred to you as a homosexual was when she was worried that I was lavishing praise on a female employee who was about her age. She was afraid I was attracted to you and I wanted to ease her fears.”

Therese smiled, “That’s not a problem, Lee. I trust your discretion regarding sharing my sexual identity. It seems like even though I haven’t really told everyone in Metro Photography. Word seems to have gotten around.”

Lee chuckled, “Oh, anything out of the ordinary has a way of getting around, and you seem so open and easy-going, people just mention it and move on. It’s really rather remarkable and I hope this attitude continues.”

“I do, too,” said Therese. “It’s much more important for all of us to concentrate on doing the best jobs we can for The New York Times instead of people worrying about who Therese Belivet sleeps with.”

Lee threw back his head and laughed heartily. “That’s the truth. By the way, did you bring Carol’s photograph in today to put on your desk?”

“I did.” smiled Therese. “It’s a small framed photo of Carol and our daughter Rindy. It’s so wonderful to see it on my desk. It gives me comfort and motivation.”

Lee replied, “That’s what photos of loved ones on our desks should do—remind us of what we are working for. If anything happens to the photo, be sure to come to me right away.”

“I will,” promised Therese.
Lee said, “Let me change subjects for a moment. I want to speak to you as your mentor.”

“Of course,” said Therese. She scooted her chair up a bit and sat up straighter, leaned slightly forward in a totally attentive manner.

Lee said, “Today the door to your small office was installed. Here are two sets of keys.” He handed Therese the keys and she nodded in acknowledgement. Lee continued, “As your supervisor, I will keep a spare in case you are out of the office and something in your office is urgently needed. We’ll not abuse the privilege of having it. I will tell you if we needed to access your office in your absence.”

Lee looked intently at Therese. “This is important now that you will have more people reporting to you and looking to you for technical guidance and advice: when you’re in the office, always leave your door open unless you are on the phone or in conference with another employee. This gesture sends a powerful message that you are open and accessible—as I know you are.”

Therese nodded solemnly, understanding for perhaps the first time the new level of responsibility that she carried. She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, knowing that somehow she would succeed. She felt the power of the confidence that Lee had in her, that Jerry Goldman had in her, and most important, Carol’s unconditional love and support.

She could do this job. She would do this job and succeed.

Lee smiled at Therese. “I know you can do this. We’ll talk later this afternoon about some specific assignments I want you to tackle first. By the way, remember that you agreed to work the first part of Easter Sunday photographing the Easter Parade. I’ll ensure you’re briefed by another more experienced photographer prior to then. I still haven’t decided on a permanent photographic mentor yet.”

Therese nodded and said, “I’m happy for the opportunity. May I make a request?”

Lee said, “Of course.”

Therese said, “If the specific locations have not been assigned yet, may I request the 5th Avenue closer to Central Park.”

Lee chuckled, “Ah, a little closer to home base?”

Therese nodded, “It’s our daughter’s first Easter Parade and she and her best friend have made bonnets. We’ve invited her friend, her friend’s mother and two uncles and Carol’s former husband for a late lunch after the parade.”

“Ohm,” mused Lee. “If you started early, you could go off duty by 2:00 PM. I’m sorry that you will have to work, but we need you.”

Therese was insistent, “Lee, I don’t mind at all. It’s a great opportunity.”

Lee looked down at his watch. It was nearly 10:00 AM.

“There’s one more thing, Therese,” said Lee. “You might want to invest in an attaché case or a small briefcase. When you carry both camera case and purse it can look bulky. Besides, you’re probably going to have paperwork to carry home occasionally. I know you and Carol can find something appropriate. Therese, I want you to look the part of a senior photo editor. Even though you’re not there yet, it’s good to look like you belong to the next higher position. Please realize I’m not giving you this advice because you are a woman. I was given the same advice by my mentor and I believe it was helpful to me in my career. I don’t know what I would do without my
attaché case. It’s too bad that men can’t carry purses without ridicule. Having a bag is very handy to carry the things you need.”

Therese smiled broadly—dimples and all. “I appreciate your advice, Lee, more than you know. By the way, I had planned to step out for lunch earlier in the week with Carmen Williams. She has some material that will be helpful to Carol and me as we plan our ring ceremony. I’ll make it a short lunch.”

“That’s fine, Therese. I appreciate your telling me. By all means get that information.” Lee smiled.

Therese stopped by Carmen’s desk and asked about a good lunchtime for her.

“Let’s avoid the crowd,” said Carmen. “How about 12:30? I have material in an envelope that you can keep over the weekend to show to Carol.”

“Great!” enthused Therese. Come by my desk to get me and I will show you a photo of Carol that I just put out on my desk.”

When Therese returned to her office, she found two workmen, Lee and Jerry Goldman crammed into the small space. They were deep in animated conversation. When Therese walked up, Jerry Goldman gave her a big smile and extended his hand. Therese noticed that any and all her co-workers in the vicinity had their eyes glued on the group.

Therese smiled back at Jerry and shook his hand.

“Mr. Goldman, what a surprise,” said Therese. “Had I known you were coming I would have been in my office.”

“No problem, Miss Belivet. This is a bit of a surprise visit. I had a couple of ideas about your office that I wanted to share with you and Mr. Barnes and happened to be in this part of the building.”

Therese’s eyes widened slightly with the realization that Jerry Goldman had been thinking about her workspace.

One of the workmen sighed. He was restless to move on to his next job—installing a new phone for Therese.

“Therese,” said Lee, “you are getting a phone with 4 buttons. That way you can put multiple callers on hold if you need to. It’s not much different than using a one-line rotary dial phone. Get with my secretary, Marsha for the instructions. Once you start using it, you’ll never want to just have a single line. Your new position will require you to be more available by phone. Also, when you don’t pick up, the phone will ring to Marsha. She will take messages for you. She’ll explain it all.”

Therese always considered phone with buttons to be reserved for the use of executives and secretaries. She never thought about needing one.

Therese turned her attention to Jerry and the workmen. They were outside her office. There was about a twelve-foot space between one of Therese’s walls and a set of file cabinets. Jerry was eyeing the space.

Jerry approached Lee and Therese. “I think we can enlarge Therese’s office a bit by coming closer to the file cabinets. I think seven feet is plenty of room for people to access files and still have
room for other people of walk around. Let’s try it.”

Jerry waved at Dannie McElroy to come over. Therese smiled at Dannie and introduced to Jerry. “Mr. Goldman, this is Dannie McElroy, one of the fine Junior Photo Editors. He was the person responsible for my coming to the Times by encouraging me to apply to be a photography clerk.”

Dannie blushed. Jerry Goldman shook his hand. “Well, Dannie, we at the Times certainly owe you a great debt by recruiting Therese. I know you’re aware of her promotion.”

“It’s an honor to meet you, sir,” said Dannie. “Mr. Barnes called a meeting of the Junior Photo Editors and our interns to announce Therese’s promotion. We’re all very happy for her and want to support her any way we can.”

Therese’s heart swelled with pride and affection for Dannie.

“All right, young man,” said Jerry. “We’re trying to determine if there will be enough room to use the file cabinet if we move the wall of Therese’s office out a few feet. Mr. Barnes and I want to install a small light table and two more chairs in her office so that she can do some one-on-one teaching and demonstrating with the interns and Junior Photo Editors without bothering others who might be using the common area light table.”

Dannie nodded and waited for instruction.

“Open the file drawer as far as it will go, Dannie, and we will try walking around you.” Everyone simulated the action and Jerry and Lee were satisfied that seven feet was plenty of room. That would allow for five additional feet to be added to one side of Therese’s office. The workmen got out their large industrial measuring tapes and went to work.

“Thank you, Dannie,” said Jerry. “I won’t forget the fact that you were the person responsible for convincing Therese to join the Times.”

Therese quickly added, “Mr. Goldman, Dannie is not only my friend, but the colleague I rely on the most.”

Jerry nodded and smiled slightly at Dannie and made a motion with his head toward Lee as if to say, ‘keep an eye out for talent from this one, too.’ Lee nodded. Both men shook Dannie’s hand and he smiled and nodded to Therese before returning to his desk.

Jerry said to Therese and Lee, “Let’s go back to your office, Lee.”

Lee said to Therese, “Do you want to take your purse and camera out of your desk for a while? They should be done in several hours.”

Jerry closed Lee’s door and asked Therese and Lee to sit. They gave their full attention to Jerry.

“I want to have another all hands meeting of the Junior Photo editors and interns. I want there to be no misunderstanding of the crew that Therese’s promotion is in effect. Lee, I know you have already ably conveyed that to your people, but because of Therese’s openness of her… homosexuality (Jerry looked at Therese as if to say ‘is it all right that I put it that way’?). The management stands behind her and will tolerate no slurs or disrespect. And I want to deliver that message myself.”

Lee nodded solemnly and said, “I agree completely.”

Therese nodded equally solemnly and said, “I appreciate the expression of support more than you will ever know.”
Jerry finally smiled and relaxed. “I want you to succeed, Therese. It’s very important to all those employees who are different from the white males that you do.”

Lee said, “By the way, Therese, your new business cards came in.” He handed her two boxes. Therese thanked him and took the boxes, resisting the urge to open them in front of her supervisors.

“Thank you so much, but this is a lot of cards.”

“May I have your first card?” asked Jerry.

“Of course,” smiled Therese, as she gave one to Jerry and to Lee. Each man gave one to her.

Jerry and Lee looked at each other and laughed. Lee spoke first. “Oh you’ll need that many all right. One of the first things you need to do is go around to each and every employee who reports to you in one way or another. That includes all the Junior Photo Editors and interns. Mr. Goldman and I will explain the reporting details in the all hands meeting on Monday.”

“Lee said, today while your office is inaccessible, you can start by going around and giving each employee your card. Chat with them a few minutes and leave the memo about the mandatory all hands meeting. Marsha will have those ready after lunch.”

“Marsha will give you additional office supplies that you will need in your supervisory role.”

Jerry said, “You’ll have your own Rolodex for your contacts.” Therese smiled broadly. Lee added, I wish I had been the person who invented this valuable office tool. I can’t believe they’ve been on the market only a little more than a year and I can’t imagine not having one.”

Jerry laughed, “That’s for sure! Now I must be going. It’s nearly noon and I have an appointment.”

Therese extended her hand to Jerry. Thank you for your support, Mr. Goldman. With you and Mr. Barnes behind me, I cannot and will not fail.”

“That’s the spirit, Miss Belivet,” said Jerry with a wink. “By the way, give Carol my regards. That’s a very fine photograph of her and your daughter on your desk.”

“Thank you, sir!” enthused Therese.

After Jerry left, Lee said to Therese, “Take a handful of cards and your purse. I’ll keep your camera in my drawer. If you need access to it, just knock and come in. If I’m away, Marsha has a key to my office.”

Therese realized that she needed to see Carmen for lunch soon and it was also nearly time to change her tampon. She was not nervous about it all. She had completely forgotten she was wearing it. What freedom!

As she was leaving Lee’s office, Marsha stopped her. “Miss Belivet, here is a phone message for you. If you would like to use the phone at my desk, I am going for lunch.”

“Thank you Marsha, and please call me Therese.” Marsha looked a bit uncomfortable. “Thank you for offering, and I will in private, but with your promotion comes a bit more formality.”

“Really?” Therese asked.

“Yes,” said Marsha. “You’ll see.”
As Marsha left, Therese looked at the message and noticed it was from Michael Thompson. Her heart skipped a beat. He wanted her to return his call—undoubtedly, Therese supposed to arrange for a lunch meeting to discuss Carol and Therese’s honeymoon in the Florida Keys on their yacht.

Michael answered on the first ring. “Therese,” he said with delight. “Sorry to have waited until the end of the week, but I have been stuck in New Jersey on a furniture job. It’s done now. Is it possible that you and I could have lunch tomorrow at a café close to The New York Times building? I have some photos you can keep to show to Carol whenever you want to reveal the happy news. Also, I can fill you in on a wonderful hotel in Key West that you two may want to stay a night or two on your own.”

Therese was overcome with joy at the thought of finding out the honeymoon details. She had kept Friday open for lunch in hopes of Michael contacting her.

“I can’t even tell you how excited I am, Michael.” said Therese. “Could you meet me at the main reception desk at the front entrance to the Times at 11:00 AM. Tomorrow?”

“Perfect,” said Michael. “I can’t wait.”

“Nor can I,” said Therese.

Therese headed for the ladies’ room. She was a bit nervous about changing her tampon for the first time somewhere other than home. She first washed her hands, and everything went just as it should and she was set for four more hours.

After washing her hands, upon exiting the stall, she saw Carmen at the sinks. “Just the person I want to see,” said Therese.

Carmen said, “Let’s just swing by my desk and I’ll get the envelope with the information.”

Therese walked with Carmen with a big smile on her face.

“Oh, may I use your phone for a quick call to Carol?”

“Of course,” said Carmen. She stepped back a few feet to give Therese privacy.

Carol answered, “O’Halloran’s Furniture, Carol Aird speaking.”

“Hello Carol,” said Therese, smiling ear-to-ear. “I’m at Carmen’s desk heading out to lunch. I was successful, too.” Therese knew that Carol would know the message involved the tampon change.

“That’s wonderful, my dearest.” said Carol. “I’ll want details later. Give Carmen my best and my most sincere thanks for the Jumping the Broom information.”

“I will, my love. ‘Bye for now.” Therese hung up and turned to Carmen.

“Ready?” asked Therese.

“Definitely ready,” answered Carmen.

They chose a small diner near the Times that Carmen frequented. The crowd was mixed black and white clientele. Therese could certainly imagine why Carmen would want to come here. A few customers looked at Therese—probably because she was white, but Therese was focused on Carmen and the upcoming conversation.

They gave their orders and Carmen immediately pulled her material out of the envelope. She
explained to Therese, “This represents years of my research on Jumping the Broom. Much of it I got from conversations with elder friends and relatives during family reunions.”

“What was your original interest in the subject?” asked Therese.

Carmen smiled, “Oh, I think I am just a romantic at heart and I have always had a curiosity about Jumping the Broom, especially since my great-grandmother and great-grandfather actually used this as their way of solemnizing their marriage vows. My great aunt actually attended the ceremony as a small child and I interviewed her before she passed.”

Therese raised an eyebrow at the last word.

Carmen explained, “‘Passed’ means died. It’s used in the Negro community, especially in the South. My family is originally from coastal South Carolina and were slaves on the rice plantations.”

Therese and Carmen were silent, thinking of the inhumanity of slavery. Therese said softly, “I am so, so sorry, Carmen.” Carmen shrugged. “It’s not your fault, Therese. Who knows, at some point in our history you might have been burned at the stake for loving another woman.”

At that point their food arrived. “I’m glad for a change in subject,” Carmen chuckled. Therese exhaled. “Me too.”

Carmen said, “There are several sheets in the envelope that describe the tradition used besides the slaves from West Africa. For example, in 16th century Wales, gypsies from Eastern Europe practiced the custom and in isolated, remote areas of the island of Wales and actually still jump the broom.”

Therese thought of her Czech background and wondered if some of her ancestors might have practiced the very custom that Carol and she were going to use.

Carmen cleared her throat to bring Therese’s attention back. “I’ll bet you were thinking of your Czech ancestors, weren’t you?”

“I was,” admitted Therese. “But wasn’t the most documented use of Jumping the Broom done by slaves brought to America against their will.”

Carmen said, “We probably associate Jumping the Broom with the Negro slaves from West Africa practicing the ritual in the 1840s until the end of the Civil War in 1865. Ever since marriage was available to Negroes after Emancipation, the practice of Jumping the Broom has been all but abandoned by Negroes.”

Carmen continued, “Personally, I’m fascinated by the tradition and I don’t want it to be forever relegated to the shame of slavery. I wish my people would rediscover the tradition. Its history was a beautiful way that two people in love utilized to publicly declare their love and their wish to be together for life when there was no other legal means.”

Therese sighed, “That is certainly the situation that Carol and I find ourselves in.”

Carmen agreed. “Therese, your skin may be white, but because you love another woman, you are denied a legal institution that even those of us who are discriminated in other ways have at our disposal—and I’m talking about marriage.”

Carmen continued, “If you and Carol want to jump the broom during your ring ceremony, I want to help you in any way I can.”
Therese was stunned for a moment at Carmen’s generosity.

“Oh, Carmen!” Therese exclaimed. “Well, first, we want you and your fiancé to come to our ring ceremony on Saturday April 18th, then, if you were willing, we would like you to present a short history of Jumping the Broom before the ceremony starts.”

“I’d be honored, Therese,” replied Carmen, but unfortunately it’ll just be me. Ronald works evenings as an orderly at Bellevue Hospital in order to pay his tuition. He’s enrolled at City College of New York taking basic science classes. He is hoping to get accepted into one of the area hospitals that has a licensed practical nursing program. It’s just hard for a Negro man to get into one of these programs even though he was a medic in the war. If he can get his LPN license, then he wants to go to the Harlem Hospital School of Nursing to take the additional coursework to become a Registered Nurse. They won’t accept you into the program unless you are an LPN. I’m very proud of him.”

“As you should be,” said a very impressed Therese. “I can’t believe there are so many hurdles for him to reach his goal.”

Carmen replied tight-lipped. “Therese, he has two impediments: First, he’s a Negro and second, he’s a man trying to get into nursing. Most nurses are women. It’s like reverse discrimination.”

“I’m so sorry.” said Therese, as she reached out to squeeze Carmen’s hand.

Carmen shook her head and said, “Ronald is determined to succeed. Let’s get back to another barrier we need to overcome, you and Carol having a semblance of marriage via the jumping of the broom.

Therese asked “Where can we purchase a broom suitable for such a ceremony?”

Carmen shook her head. “You can’t buy one, Therese.” Therese’s face registered disappointment.

Carmen laughed as she said, “I want to make one for you! It would mean a lot to me to actually try to create something that I have been interested in for so long. Ronald doesn’t know it yet, but when we get married after he graduates we’re going to have a legal marriage by a minister and we’ll jump the broom, too.”

Therese was stunned by Carmen’s generosity. “Oh, would you, Carmen? Carol and I would be forever grateful. By the way, when I spoke to her on the phone this morning, she told me to give you her regards.”

Carmen smiled, “Look at the materials in the envelope over the weekend and then on Monday tell me what color theme you want me to use. You’ll see what I mean by colors when you see some of the pictures.”

Carmen glanced at her watch as did Therese. They decided it was time to return to work. Carmen reached for her pocketbook and Therese covered Carmen’s hand. “Don’t even think of paying for your lunch after all you’re doing for us.”

Carmen winked and smiled. “That’s what friends do for each other.”

Thursday, March 12th, 1959

9:00 PM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan
Carol and Therese had gone to bed early. The evening had been spent going over the material Carmen had provided on Jumping the Broom. Both women were excited at the prospect of including it in their ring ceremony.

Shortly before 9:00 PM Therese had started to experience menstrual cramps. Carol fixed some hot tea for her and Therese had taken two aspirin and crawled into bed in her flannel pajamas with the heating pad. She was wearing a sanitary napkin, belt and panties for the overnight hours.

“I’m disappointed,” complained Therese. “Tonight was going to be our great experiment of making love while one of us has our periods. We had never tried that before and this morning we discovered that we wouldn’t be reluctant to make love while I’m still bleeding.”

“Poor darling,” said Carol lovingly, while rubbing Therese’s back. Carol had put on her flannel nightgown in case she rolled over on the heating pad. “Let me cuddle up to your back and put the heating pad on low heat against your stomach.”

Therese said “That feels so soothing, Carol, “but I was so looking forward to trying our ‘great experiment’ in lovemaking.”

Carol kissed the back of Therese’s head gently and inhaled the scent of her lover. “Dearest, I’m not going anywhere. There’s always tomorrow. I was just thinking about how we’ve been burning up the sheets lately and it’s perfectly alright to skip lovemaking for a night.”

Therese chuckled, “Just last night we almost were literally burning up the sheets when I lit the aromatic candle and you tried a new way of touching me that caused me to almost wreck the bed.”

“Well, there you have it, dearest.” Carol said with the low-pitched laugh Therese loved. “We’ll be fine cuddling to go to sleep. You feel so good in my arms, Therese. Are your cramps any better?”

“Yes,” Therese said with relief. I think I can easily go to sleep now.”

“Carol?” Therese asked after a pause.

“Hmm?” responded Carol, cuddling closer to Therese’s back.

Therese said, “I can’t wait to jump the broom with you and wear your ring.”

Therese felt Carol kiss the back of her head again. Carol said, “I can’t wait, either, my darling—my own true love. Goodnight sweetheart. Wake me up if you need me.”

“I will, my love.” answered Therese. “Goodnight.”

Chapter End Notes

There are a couple of references I want to explain in the Notes.

Therese is given a Rolodex for her office. If you are too young to remember a Rolodex, check it out on the Internet. It was an incredibly useful office tool that is still used by a few (but not many) people.

There is a reference to the Island of Wales, one of the places where Jumping the Broom was practiced. Wales is one of the countries that makes up the United Kingdom. Wales is located on a mountainous western peninsula of the island of Great
However, Jumping the Broom is most commonly associated with African American slaves, especially from West Africa. As Carmen tells Therese, the custom died out after the Civil War when Negroes (term Carmen uses--common until early to mid-1960s) gained the right to marry. In today's American culture, Jumping the Broom experienced a revival after the airing of the famous television mini-series "Roots" which was based on the 1976 book by Alex Haley. Its first episode aired on ABC-TV in January 1977 and ran for eight episodes (the video was edited to contain six episodes). This mini-series was watched by an estimated 130 million people (more than half the U.S. population at that time). It remains the mini-series with the largest viewership (percentage-wise) in U.S. history. I personally remember when this series aired. I can hardly imagine that soon it will be 40 years since it was originally aired. "Roots" was not just a mini-series. It was a cultural phenomenon that exposed large numbers of Americans to the horrors of slavery in the American South. "Roots" dominated workplace discussions during the time it aired. Having personally experienced the effect of this historical event, I can truly say that it changed this country. If you have never seen "Roots" you should do so. It is available on DVD.

Harlem Hospital where Carmen's finance Ronald wanted to go to nursing school still exists. Its School of Nursing was established in 1923 due to the lack of nursing schools in New York that accepted African American women (source: Wikipedia).
Key West Surprise

Chapter Summary

After much anticipation, Therese reveals their honeymoon destination to Carol. It's Key West, Florida.

Chapter Notes

Dear readers, I know how eagerly you have been awaiting the moment when Therese tells Carol their honeymoon destination.

I've put heart and soul into this chapter. I've tried so very hard to make it enjoyable for you. In the next chapter you'll find out more about Key West of 1959. I've done much research and I'll share it in the next chapter as Therese gives Carol the details.

If you appreciate my efforts, it would mean so much to me to hear from you. There are a few of you who are very generous in your feedback with each chapter and I always appreciate those comments, but others I never hear from. I really need a boost right now as I double down on my research.

Thanks and regards,
Pipestone

Friday March 13, 1959

3:00 AM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Carol didn’t sleep as sound when Therese wasn’t feeling well. Carol was particularly conscious of Therese’s movements. Therese had wanted to go to bed early—at 9:00 PM—because had started to experience menstrual cramps. Therese usually didn’t get the cramps during her monthly period and Carol worried that perhaps using a tampon for the first time had triggered it. Neither woman had ever used a tampon, so Carol was not knowledgeable at all. Carol made a mental note to ask Abby. If necessary, Therese could schedule a visit with their gynecologist.

At any rate, Carol was glad that Therese was not wearing her tampon at night. It just seemed like a good idea of give your body a ‘rest.’

Carol reached around the sleeping Therese to ensure Therese had turned off the heating pad. Carol turned over and immediately she felt Therese turn, too and cuddle up to Carol’s back.

Carol said softly, “Dearest, are you awake? I just need to know how you feel. Are your cramps gone?”

Much to Carol’s relief Therese answered with a sleepy “Yes, love. I’m fine. Darling, go back to sleep. I’ll be fine the rest of the night. I’ll wake you up if my cramps come back.”
Carol kissed Therese’s hand and she felt Therese nuzzling against her back.

Carol thought thankfully, ‘All is well.’

6:00 AM

Therese slid out of bed to use the bathroom. Carol was sleeping deeply, unaware that the alarm would ring in thirty minutes. Therese returned to bed, but sleep was elusive. She felt fine, now and started to think about the upcoming day at the office. She would continue to make the rounds of her staff as Jerry Goldman and Lee Barnes suggested, to hand deliver the notice of Monday’s all-hands meeting of the Metro Photography staff with Jerry Goldman. The staff members that she had talked to yesterday (after her very informative lunch with Carmen Williams about Jumping the Broom) seemed to appreciate Therese’s personal touch of delivering the meeting notice and giving each person one of her new business cards.

Therese thought ‘I really must dress the part now that I am supervising more people, and I need to buy a small briefcase or attaché case. Perhaps Carol and I can go shopping Saturday.’

Therese remembered her 11:00 lunch date today with Michael Thompson where she would learn about their yacht and also about Key West, where they would honeymoon. It was still a surprise to Carol and Therese was so excited she almost burst out laughing.

Just then, Therese felt Carol stir beside her. Carol raised her head and noticed it was 6:15 AM. Carol had slept with Therese long enough to know when Therese was awake.

Carol turned over and smiled into Therese’s hazel eyes. Her green pajamas made them look green this morning. Carol was fascinated with how Therese’s hazel eyes could change color depending on what she was wearing.

Carol reached out to gently stroke Therese’s cheek. “Feeling better this morning, dearest?”

Therese gave Carol a dimpled smile. “Yes, I’m much better. The cramps are gone. You were a terrific heating pad last night and I don’t have to remember to turn your switch off so we don’t start an electrical fire.”

Carol chuckled. “What were you thinking about, Therese?”

Therese thought, ‘Oh if you only knew!’ but said “Our ring ceremony. Do you know that it’s only about five weeks away?”

Carol rolled her eyes and said, “There is much to do. Perhaps we should make a list tonight and also finalize the list of attendees.”

Therese thought to herself, ‘Is this the night I tell Carol about the honeymoon destination? I’ll certainly have the information.’

Carol broke into Therese’s thoughts. “Dearest, you realize, of course that you haven’t told me where we are going on our honeymoon. You said I should leave the destination in your capable hands and that the location would be one where we can be ourselves. Therese, do you know where we’re going?”

Therese knew Carol was on a fishing expedition. She was going to have a little fun with this.

Therese lightly kissed Carol on the lips. “I love you, Carol and will never lie to you.”

Anticipation was written all over Carol’s face—Carol’s grey eyes were sparkling.
Therese cupped Carol’s face with her hands.

Carol said excitedly, “That is so grand, Therese! Darling where are we going?”

Therese grinned slyly, “I really need to get ready for work.” Therese sat up and put her legs over the side of the bed.

Carol gently pulled Therese back into bed. “Oh, no you don’t!”

Therese started laughing and Carol joined in. Carol pleaded, “Will you tell me before the day is over?”

Therese was starting to feel sorry for Carol—but not that sorry. “Yes, my love. You will know before the clock strikes midnight tonight.”

“You had better,” teased Carol. “OK, I will just have to make it through the day in suspense.” The lovers hugged and exchanged kisses before ending their pillow talk.

“I love our pillow talks,” said Therese.

“So do I, dearest,” replied Carol.

7:00 AM

Therese was out of the shower and Carol opened the bathroom door with a steaming mug of coffee for Therese. “Thanks honey,” said Therese.

Carol said, “Abby wants us to come to her house Saturday night for dinner. Is that all right with you, Therese?”

“Sure,” answered Therese. “Which girlfriend will we be meeting?”

Carol laughingly said “None, actually. It’ll be the three of us, but Abby promised to show us photos of the other two. We already know Mary.”

Carol continued, “Why don’t we use the opportunity to ask Abby’s advice on some ring ceremony logistics? As you said, Abby knows every homosexual businessman or woman in New York City. She could help us select a caterer and baker.”

Therese nodded, “And we might think of some other ways she could help during the drive to her house.”

Carol agreed, “Abby told me that no matter how many girlfriends she has, she will prioritize helping us in any way she can with our ceremony.”

Therese chuckled, “How many more girlfriends can she handle? I can barely keep up with one.”

Carol said, “Good! You only need one and the same goes for me. Go ahead and get ready and I’ll fix you some bacon and fruit.”

Carol left the bathroom laughing and Therese thought to herself, ‘Oh how I love you, Carol.’

11:00 AM – Lobby of *The New York Times* building
Earlier this morning Therese had learned to use her multi-line button phone with the help of Lee’s secretary, Marsha. Marsha would now take messages for Therese, just as she did for some of the Senior Photo Editors. There were three secretaries just to cover the entire department, and now that Therese was definitely on her way to becoming a Senior Photo Editor, she could use Marsha for phone messages and type memos. Currently Therese was the only Junior Photo Editor.

Also, by the end of Thursday, the workmen had extended one of her office’s walls and perhaps today a small light table would be installed in that space for Therese to use in teaching.

Therese had met informally with almost all the people who would now report to her. This afternoon she was going to make a chart of their desk locations and names so that she would have everyone memorized by Monday.

Therese had gone down to the lobby a few minutes early. She did not want to keep Michael Thompson waiting.

It was easy to spot Michael coming through the lobby doors. He truly must be six foot four, blond and handsome as a movie star with his youthful crew cut. All the women in the lobby snapped to attention when he walked in, but he was looking for one special brunette—Therese.

Michael was wearing a turtleneck sweater and his olive leather Army jacket with the elbow patches. He looked very dashing. Therese smiled broadly, dimples and all and stepped forward to shake his hand.

“It’s so good to see you, Michael” said Therese. There happened to be two of her female co-workers in the lobby at the time and of course they drifted over to Michael and Therese like metal slivers to a magnet. Since both these women knew Therese was with Carol, Therese was careful to introduce Michael as “a friend of Carol’s and mine.” Both women cooed over Michael until Therese intervened, saying that they needed to be on their way.

Michael hailed a cab. They had previously agreed that the best place to eat was a small Italian place a short drive from The Times so that they wouldn’t be interrupted by Therese’s co-workers.

Therese laughed at the antics of her co-workers. “Michael, I’ll bet you get that kind of attention from women and men all the time.”

Michael chuckled modestly, “Actually mostly from women, but that’s fine with Jack. He isn’t too happy when lots of men flirt with me. I really don’t like it either. With men, I just usually hold up my right hand and smile and point to my wedding ring. Jack does the same.”

Therese sighed, “I’ll be so glad when Carol and I can do that, too. We can’t wait to wear our rings.”

“We love ours,” said Michael. “I know you two will love yours as well. We can’t wait to see them.”

They walked into the restaurant and were seated right and ordered the daily soup and half-sandwich special. Each ordered coffee.

Michael pulled out a large envelope. “Therese, there’s a lot of information in here but I will just hit the high points.”

“Did you know Harge is paying for a plane ticket for me to fly to Key West to ensure everything is set with our yacht for the honeymoon?”

Therese gasped. “Really! I knew Harge was involved with the honeymoon, but I didn’t know to
what extent.”

“Let’s put it this way…Harge engineered the entire honeymoon and Jack and I were overjoyed to be a part of it.”

Therese was stunned. Michael let the information settle in before proceeding.

Michael explained, “Harge was at our home for poker night a few weeks ago, (Therese nodded) and noticed the photo and the small-scale model of the yacht, *The Sinclair*. He began to ask questions, and before we knew it, we were happily planning a possible honeymoon for you and Carol to coincide with Jack and my annual trip to the Keys. We were thrilled at the prospect because, as we explained to Harge, even though Key West is fairly gay-friendly, in some parts of town, two men who are walking together and are obviously ‘together’ can be the object of slurs like ‘faggot.’”

Therese gasped with dismay. Michael reassured her. “It happens more to male couples than female couples, and the best part is that if the four of us are walking together, even though Jack and I would be side by side as you and Carol would be, there are no slanderous remarks.”

“So is Key West friendly to homosexuals or not?” asked a concerned Therese.

“Yes!” said Michael. “Definitely.” It’s not as gay-friendly as say, Fire Island, but I would say it’s a close second.”

“For example, the top hotel in town is named the Casa Marina.” Michael handed Therese the hotel folder. While he talked, she looked. “It’s absolutely gorgeous—top of the line. You would have no issue at all walking up to the desk like you owned the place and ask for your suite with a balcony with a breathtaking view and one double bed. In fact, you have a reservation for the first three or four nights at that hotel so that you can do some in-town shopping and sightseeing. Then if you wish, you can move to our yacht and we’ll do some outstanding sailing.”

Therese was open-mouthed with the shock of the generosity.

Michael said, “Harge has arranged the hotel. If for some reason you get sea-sick on the boat, you can stay there the whole time, but Jack and I hope you will join us.”

Michael could sense that Therese might have a question about privacy on the boat for the couples. “Don’t worry Therese, there are two staterooms, each with a double bed and a dresser with drawers for your clothes. The bathroom is small, but there’s a sink, toilet and ample shower that two can share (Michael winked).”

Michael addressed a question he knew was in Therese’s mind. “Jack and I tried an experiment once. No one else was on board. Jack lay on our bed and I did the same in the guest room. He moaned and groaned quite a bit. I must admit it was quite realistic. Therese held her sides laughing. Unless you and Carol are more vociferous in the throes of passion than we are I think we’ll have privacy.”

“We can talk to you later about clothes, but in the past, Marge has taken one or two nice outfits for dinners out and otherwise capris, T-tops, and shorts. Of course, you will need a bathing suit and cover-up. You can get more details from Marge.”

“Jack and I wear bathing trunks most of the time we’re on board. I must warn you, my legs are both completely covered in scars and bullet holes from the Korean War. You may be shocked the first time you see me, but you’ll get used to it.”

Therese reached over and took Michael’s hands and squeezed them. “Michael, thank you for
telling me, but the scars you bear were in the service to our country. We owe you a tremendous
debt. Do they cause you much pain?”

“Occasionally,” said Michael, “but I’m lucky I have both my legs and more or less have full use of
them.”

Michael added, “We have a crew to help with the sailing if we need them. The two are cousins—
one gay man and one lesbian. Their names are Roberto and Patricia Munoz. They are quite
friendly and discrete and their crew quarters are two bunk beds at the stern (meaning the back of
the boat) with their own bathroom, even though their shower is tiny.”

Michael tucked the material back in the envelope and gave it to Therese.

Therese finally spoke. “Do you mean to say that Harge is paying for the airfare for all of us,
including your preliminary trip?”

“Exactly,” said Michael. “Harge didn’t go into detail, but he did say that he wanted to give Carol
the honeymoon she always deserved with the love of her life—that’s you, Therese.”

“My God.” Therese finally said.

“Well, Marge, Jack and I thought it was quite generous,” but it’s clear to us that he loves Rindy
more than life itself and he wants only the best for her mothers, who bring Rindy untold
happiness.”

Tears of joy trickled down Therese’s face and Michael handed her his crisp handkerchief.

“I’m speechless.” said Therese.

“I was too,” said Michael. “We will have a wonderful time.”

Michael asked, “When are you going to tell Carol?”

Therese said, “I promised I would tell her tonight before the clock strikes midnight.”

“Ah,” noted Michael, “That lends a bit of drama.” If you are so inclined, I know a bakery near
your apartment that makes fabulous Key Lime pies. That might be an entrance to the surprise.”

“I know the one,” said Therese. “I’ll call and have them save two slices for me. I can’t thank you
enough, Michael. Words fail me.”

Michael said, “Just remember Carol’s reaction and that will be enough. You can return the
material in a couple of weeks next time Harge drops off Rindy or when we come to your
apartment for Easter.”

Therese paid for lunch, waving off Michael’s attempt. They took separate cabs since Michael was
headed for a furniture store on the Upper West Side and Therese was returning to The Times.

4:45 PM

Therese called Carol late in the afternoon and asked her to pick up some kind of take out that she
would like and Therese promised to bring a small dessert.

Carol had already figured out that Therese wanted to eat at home in private to finally surprise her
with the honeymoon location. Carol didn’t have a very productive afternoon. She noticed Mr.
O’Halloran watching her and she wondered if Therese had confided in him. Perhaps Therese asked for a certain amount of time off. Carol decided against peppering him with questions, though.

About 5:00 PM Carol decided that seafood would taste good tonight and would be a light meal. She called a nearby seafood restaurant and ordered some lobster bisque and two salads.

6:00 PM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Carol arrived home first and put their meal in the refrigerator. Carol decided to put on some sexy loungewear that Therese loved to see on her. Carol even put on her reading glasses and pretended to read *The New York Times*. Carol put on some of their favorite Margaret Whiting albums and put a good bottle of champagne in an ice bucket.

The song, “My Foolish Heart” had just started to play when Therese came through the front door with two lavender roses in a beautiful vase. She also had what looked like a pie box.

Carol jumped to her feet and approached Therese. “Dearest, may I help you?”

Carol took the flowers. “Oh Therese, they’re lovely.” “Is there a significance to lavender roses?”

“Actually, yes,” said Therese. “The florist said lavender roses symbolize love at first sight.” Carol’s breath caught. Therese continued, “I thought we might discuss having lavender roses at our ring ceremony.”

“I’d love it.” said Carol.

Therese said, “let me put dessert in the refrigerator.”

As Therese returned to the living room she walked into Carol’s arms, gave her a chaste kiss and said “My love, you look ravishing.”

Carol looked deeply into Therese’s eyes and said, “Well, ravish me, then!”

Therese extended her hand to Carol and led her to their bedroom. Carol asked, “Do you feel well enough to make love? I mean do you have cramps?”

Therese shook her head ‘no’ and proceeded to get the old brown towel out of the bathroom closet. It was the towel they’d used yesterday when Therese was afraid she would bleed on the sheets.

Therese laughed, “This towel may become our aphrodisiac. Carol laughingly threw back her blonde head in the gesture Therese adored.

Therese said in a sultry voice, “Carol I want to undress you now.”

Carol groaned, “Please…”

Carol now stood nude before Therese. “May I?” asked Carol.

“Only if you hurry.” teased Therese. Carol’s fingers flew and in a few moments Therese’s clothes lay in a bedside chair.

Therese said, let me remove my tampon. Carol washed her hands thoroughly and used the nail brush that they decided should be put aside for that special use.”
With arms around each other they settled into bed, with Therese on the towel.

“Silly me,” said Therese. "I was afraid our periods would always interfere with lovemaking."

Carol leaned over and gave Therese the gentlest of kisses. Then Therese’s mouth opened slightly and Carol’s tongue met hers. Carol began to stroke Therese’s breasts, kiss her nipples and move her hands lower, across her stomach, through her hair and between Therese’s thighs. Therese involuntarily opened her legs for Carol.

“May I go inside you, dearest?” whispered Carol into Therese’s ear.

“Please! Now, my love.” Carol had tucked a tissue under the towel in case Therese was bleeding. That way she could wipe her finger until they finished their lovemaking.

Carol slid in and could feel Therese’s arousal. Both women caught their breath from the passion that was flowing between them.

Therese arched her back as Carol’s tongue found Therese’s favorite spot. Therese kept chanting “my love, my love, don’t stop.” All of a sudden, Therese’s body was incandescent with her orgasm. Carol lay with her cheek on Therese’s abdomen, her finger still within her. Slowly Carol withdrew her finger and glanced at it. Sure enough, it was covered with blood and the slickness of Therese’s arousal. Carol took the tissue and wiped her finger thoroughly.

Therese was still relaxed completely after the lovemaking. “Did I bleed on you?” Therese asked in an unconcerned tone. They had crossed that boundary already and would never be concerned again.

“Ummhmm.” replied Carol, "but it’s all wiped off now. I’ll wash my hands after you make love to me."

“I like the sound of that, Mrs. Belivet.” Therese nipped at Carol’s ear and all of a sudden Therese’s hands were everywhere.

Therese slipped on top of Carol and their bodies began to move together—slowly then faster. Carol opened her legs for Therese’s fingers. Carol began to moan and plead for more contact. Something akin to fireworks went off in Carol’s senses and she held Therese as close to her as possible.

“Dear God,” said Carol. “How does it keep getting better?”

Therese replied, “I just know it does, my love.”

“Are you hungry?” asked Carol.

“Starved.” replied Therese.

Carol said, "Let me thoroughly wash my hands and under my nail, then I’ll start heating the food. I got seafood. Is that all right?"

Therese replied, “Yes, perfect, but please don’t open the dessert box, Carol. I’m going to get ready for bed with my napkin and belt and panties.”

Therese grinned at Carol. "This tampon thing is going to do wonders for our lovemaking."

“It’s wonderful.” replied Carol as she tossed the brown towel into the laundry hamper.
They enjoyed the seafood takeout. Carol was trying to be patient as she watched the clock. Therese had promised to reveal their honeymoon location before midnight. It was time for dessert. Therese opened the champagne and poured them each a flute. Carol waited patiently for dessert. She wondered what kind of clue the dessert might give to the destination.

Therese got her camera and adjusted some settings.

Carol asked, “Is it going to be that monumental a surprise?”

“Yes” said Therese. “Carol, close your eyes, I am going to place three important pieces of paper on the table. I will keep them away from the dessert and champagne as I don’t want to get them wet. Then when you open your eyes, and it dawns on you where we’re going I am going to take a photo of your reaction.”

“Okaaay” said a puzzled Carol as she closed her eyes.

Therese went into the kitchen and took the two pieces of pie out of the box. The baker had written “Key” on one piece and “West” on the other with icing. The two pieces of pie were in front of Carol.

“Keep those eyes closed,” called Therese.

“I promise, darling,” said Carol.

Therese propped up a photo of the Casa Marina Hotel and also propped up a photo to The Sinclair yacht, with the name highly visible. Finally, Therese laid a brochure saying ‘Key West’ in the middle of it all.

Everything was in place. Therese had her camera trained on Carol. She wanted to capture Carol’s delight for Harge and for the Sinclairs, all of whom had made the honeymoon possible.

In the moment before Therese told Carol to open her eyes Therese wondered to herself ‘has my heart ever been this full of love?’

Therese said to Carol, “I love you my darling. Open your eyes!”

Carol’s mind registered the pie first. Carol turned to Therese with the most glorious expression of surprise Therese had ever seen.

‘Click’ went the camera’s shutter, capturing Carol’s expression.

Therese put the camera down and watched with indescribable joy as the love of her life discovered where their honeymoon would be.

Carol finally took it all in, burst into tears and hugged Therese with all her might. Therese cried tears of joy too—knowing the joy that she had brought to her darling.

Carol kept repeating “Oh my God.” and “Dearest is it true?”

Therese gently took Carol’s face in her hands and said, “It most certainly is true. I have many details to share with you. We can enjoy the Key Lime pie and champagne while I fill you in.”

Carol whispered to Therese, “It’s another perpetual sunrise.”
In the background, Margaret Whiting’s record played ‘The Way You Look Tonight.’
Chapter 32 takes place late on the night of Friday March 13, 1959, at the apartment of Carol Aird and Therese Belivet in Manhattan and at Dannie McElroy's apartment in early morning hours of Saturday March 14. Therese reveals details of their honeymoon to a stunned yet overjoyed Carol. Later a series of unexpected, shocking events is set in motion.

11:00 PM, Friday March 13th, 1959

The Arid/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Carol and Therese literally spent hours looking at the material that Michael Thompson had provided on Key West, plus numerous travel brochures that Therese had picked up on her own from Manhattan travel agencies on the Florida Keys. She recently had written to the Key West Chamber of Commerce to obtain even more information. Now she could pull the stack of information she had been hiding in her photography lab in their apartment.

Therese joined the American Automobile Association and took advantage of their new 'Tour Book Guides' and maps. All this information had to be sent to her work address, but now that Carol knew their destination, Therese would be using their home address to gather even more information.

Carol was a voracious reader and she was eager to read the history of the Florida Keys. She took a stack of informational brochures to their bedroom and set them on her nightstand.

Therese had to laugh at all the information perilously teetering on Carol’s nightstand.

“Darling,” said Therese. Are you planning to read all this material tonight?” Carol swept into the bedroom flourishing her last glass of champagne and wearing a particularly clinging nightgown and her reading glasses.

Carol said, “Well, I’m much too excited to sleep and we’ve already had a torrid romp in bed. Whatever shall I do?” Carol posed this question with a sexy wink.

Therese laughed.

Carol said “First you need to tell me the story of how you knew that Jack and Michael had a yacht and that they would be willing to share their precious time on the ship with us?”

Therese was quiet. Her mind was running a mile a minute. She was unsure of Carol’s reaction when she found out that Harge—not Therese—had engineered the honeymoon location, then offered it to Therese for her approval.

What had at first seemed like a flawless idea, now appeared to be full of pitfalls. What if Carol didn’t want Harge involved in something so personal between Carol and Therese?

“Well, it’s actually rather complicated” stammered Therese.
Carol tilted her head quizzically. This response was so unlike Therese. It almost seemed to Carol like Therese was hesitant to explain the way the idea had come about.

Therese had now begun to fidget and traced circular patterns on their quilt. She seemed reluctant to make eye contact with Carol.

Carol set aside the travel literature and focused on Therese. If Therese had merely teased her saying something like ‘wouldn’t you like to know?’ or ‘working for a newspaper requires keeping my sources secret,’ then Carol might not have thought anything was amiss, but Therese’s reaction was so atypical, Carol was concerned.

Carol gently put her hands on Therese’s shoulders and turned Therese’s body towards hers. Therese had dropped her head to her chest, so Carol took one hand and raised Therese’s head to better see her eye-to-eye.

“Dearest, what’s wrong?” Carol asked. “I know *something* is wrong just by your demeanor and your reluctance to answer my simple question. “Sweetheart, I’m just astonished at your amazing ability to arrange such an incredible honeymoon that I wanted to hear how it came about. I never cease to marvel at your brilliance…”

“NO!” Therese almost shouted. “Carol, stop saying that I’m so damned brilliant. I refuse to take credit for an idea that wasn’t mine. I can’t even arrange our honeymoon as I promised to do.”

Therese threw the covers back and bolted from their bedroom, slamming the door behind her.

Carol was so stunned that for almost a full minute she sat motionless in bed, doing nothing except blinking. Finally, Carol took one hand and began to massage her forehead, trying to replay every word of their conversation to try and make sense of Therese’s reaction.

Carol heard their front door slam. Alarmed, Carol jumped out of bed, grabbed her robe and dashed toward the front door. She didn’t even bother to put on slippers. She noticed that their coat closet’s door was open and several garments were on the floor. Therese’s coat and rainboots were gone.

Carol opened their front door and dashed towards the elevator. Carol looked over the railing from their position on the 9th floor and saw the building’s front door closing.

“God damn it!” Carol swore aloud.

Carol turned back toward their apartment and realized that she had forgotten to grab her keys. Their front door was heavy and would slowly close by itself—a great safety measure if you had your keys in your hand.

Carol sprinted for the door knowing the disastrous outcome if she did not reach the door in time to catch it before it closed.

Their door shut with a resounding “click!” Now Carol was locked out in her robe, gown and no shoes. She wanted to let fly a multitude of curses, but did not want to cause a stir in the hallway. Unfortunately, they weren’t acquainted with many of their neighbors because they feared rejection years ago. Now with their new openness, they just had not taken the opportunity to get to know the neighbors on their floor (now much to Carol’s regret).

There was a large clock on the wall at the end of their floor that read ’10:30.’ Carol remembered that the building’s doorman at street level changed shifts about this time. He would have a master key. She gathered her courage to venture barefooted into the elevator and rode downstairs. There
was a note on the doorman’s office that read: “Third shift will not arrive until midnight, tonight only (March 13). We regret any inconvenience.”

Carol stared open-mouthed at the paper and muttered “Shit!”

As she rode dejectedly back to their 9th floor, only then did Carol begin to wonder what had caused Therese’s uncharacteristic behavior. Her initial anger and the difficulties she was now encountering had obliterated concern for Therese. She was tired, cold and frankly at her wit’s end. She reached their door and tried the handle to no avail. Frustrated she put her back against the door and slowly slid to the floor until she was sitting on the carpeted, drafty hallway.

All of a sudden, she heard the sound of the elevator. She fervently hoped it was Therese, but dreaded if it were not Therese and a stranger found her pitifully sitting in the hallway in her robe without shoes.

She heard the elevator stop on their floor, but there were two voices—a man and a woman. Carol stood up, thinking that standing might display a modicum of dignity to a very undignified situation.

Carol recognized the man and the woman as an older couple who lived next door, Levi and Berta Katz.

At least they nodded and spoke occasionally when encountering each other in the hall. Carol always had the feeling that the Katz’s ‘knew’ of her relationship with Therese and disapproved.

Tonight, they were dressed nicely, as if they had come from a play or a dinner party. They were very concerned. Berta spoke first. “Mrs. Aird, what on earth are you doing at this time of night in the hall with your robe and no shoes?”

Carol managed to say, “I am locked out and Therese is gone. The doorman who could let me in with his master key is off duty until midnight.”

Berta said, “Please, come in to our apartment,” as her husband unlocked their door. Sit, please,” gestured Levi. Berta brought a lap robe and draped it over Carol’s waist down and around her feet.

“I will heat some water for tea to warm you up.” Levi said over his shoulder as he disappeared into their kitchen.

Berta hovered over Carol and rubbed her back in a very motherly fashion. “I am so sorry for your inconvenience, Mrs. Aird. You can stay here until the doorman returns or Miss Belivet returns—whichever is first.”

“You are so kind,” said Carol tearfully. “Please call me Carol. Therese and I never took the time to get to know you and your husband better. I am deeply sorry for that Mrs. Katz.”

“We are ‘Levi’ and ‘Berta’—not ‘Mr. and Mrs. Katz.’” As to the matter of being better neighbors, we understand my dear. My husband and I are very perceptive about people and we have noticed over the past several years that you two women seem to love each other very much. It has been very refreshing to see such love and devotion. The world could use much more of it.” Berta Katz smiled at her husband who had arrived with Carol’s tea.

Relief registered on Carol’s face. Carol asked if she could write a note for Mr. Katz to post on the doorman’s office to call their apartment as soon as he arrived so that Carol could gain access to the apartment.
“Of course,” said Mr. Katz. He opened a desk drawer and wrote the note and took it downstairs.

While they were waiting for Mr. Katz to return, Carol asked Mrs. Katz how she knew that Carol and Therese were ‘together.’

“Well,” said Berta Katz, “Sometimes one hears things said as one comes and goes from the apartment. We don’t pry or attempt to listen, but…”

Carol nodded. “Thank you for your candor. We consider ourselves a couple and have been together for nearly six years. In all that time, I don’t recall an occasion when Therese left the apartment visibly upset for a reason I cannot determine. I’m worried about her. She has been gone over an hour now.”

Berta asked, “Do you have someone you can call that she might have contacted?”

Carol replied, “She is very close to one of her co-workers at The New York Times where she works, however, his number is in an address book in our apartment and I’m locked out.” A tear slipped down Carol’s cheek, thinking that Therese might have gone to be with Dannie.

“We have a telephone directory of Manhattan,” said Berta. “Let me get it.”

Carol found a listing for Daniel McElroy, and dialed it. Carol was prepared to offer an apology for waking him, but Danny picked up on the first ring saying “Carol?”

“Dannie!” exclaimed Carol. “Is Therese with you?”

“Yes,” answered Dannie, “but she’s not in very good shape. She has been smoking and drinking and crying for the past forty-five minutes. She keeps repeating how she has let you down. Let me see if she’ll talk to you.”

Carol felt relief coursing through her body. She smiled and nodded at Berta Katz. At that very moment, Levi Katz came in the door followed by the doorman holding the master key.

Berta quickly intercepted the two men explaining that Carol needed to be on the phone, but the doorman could unlock Carol’s door and she would return to her own apartment momentarily. Carol looked up from her call to nod her agreement.

All three left Carol so that she could have a semblance of privacy. “Therese, are you there?”

“Yes.” Therese said nothing more.

“Dearest, we need to talk. I want to come and get you. I’ve been locked out of our apartment until just now. Our next door neighbors, the Katz’s, have been very kind and helpful and now I can get back in the apartment and get dressed. Give me half an hour at most, all right?”

“Okay.” said Therese. “Here’s Dannie.”

Carol said to Dannie, “Thank you for taking care of Therese. I’m not sure what’s going on or why she left, but I just want to come and get her. Could you watch after her until I arrive?”

“Sure.” said Dannie. “She’s my best friend.”

After quickly thanking the doorman and Levi and Berta Katz for their kindness, and with a promise to the older couple to get together soon, Carol threw on her clothes, secured her purse and keys and headed for Dannie’s.
As Carol was driving to Dannie’s apartment, she kept replaying their conversation just prior to Therese’s outburst and sudden running out of the apartment.

Carol remembered that she had praised Therese for setting up the honeymoon. Everything seemed to be fine before Carol lavished praise on Therese. For some reason, Therese was terribly upset that Carol had complemented her on her arranging the honeymoon. “Why would that be?” said Carol aloud. Perhaps Therese had received help from Jack and Michael in planning the trip. Obviously, the men had been involved because the photo of their boat was prominently positioned in the information about Key West. But Jack and Michael were a couple, too, so their involvement shouldn’t have unwelcome at all.

Carol shook her head. She would have to rely on Therese telling her. Still, Therese’s reaction to Carol’s praise just didn’t warrant the extreme outburst from her usually sweet-tempered, easy-going lover.

As Carol drew closer to Dannie’s apartment, a thought suddenly broke through the fog. ‘Harge!’ thought Carol. What if Harge noticed the photo of the Sinclair yacht when he had been at their home and what if Harge with his usual guilt over how he had treated Carol and Therese in the past would want the very best, the most wonderful and exciting honeymoon ever for Carol and Therese, especially since the war had cancelled their own honeymoon.

That had to be it, thought Carol. Therese probably had mixed feelings about allowing Harge to be a part of his ex-wife’s honeymoon with her lesbian lover when Therese knew of the past heartache he had brought on their lives. On the other hand, Carol thought Therese would see the opportunity for an unforgettable romantic get-a-way with a gay male couple as their hosts on such a fabulous yacht. So, if Therese chose the practical path of accepting Harge’s arrangement, she would be quite sensitive about being praised for having thought of the whole thing herself.

Carol was sure that she knew the reason for Therese’s outburst. Now, all she wanted to do was to get her home and hold her in her arms—conversation about the honeymoon could wait until tomorrow.

12:30 AM, Saturday March 14th. Dannie McElroy’s Apartment

Carol managed to find a parking place close to Dannie’s apartment. She eased the Packard into the slot and quickly made her way to Dannie’s door.

One knock was all it took for Dannie to open the door. Carol hugged Dannie and kissed him on the cheek. “Dannie, you’re a star,” Carol said. “Thank you for being here for Therese.”

“It was nothing, Carol. I would do anything for Therese” said Dannie.

“I know, dear,” replied Carol. “We would do the same for you.”

Therese was asleep on Dannie’s couch. Carol’s heart ached for her lover. Therese looked so pitiful, dressed in Dannie’s robe and socks with her own coat and a quilt from Dannie covering her. Her rain boots lay in a heap near the door. Cigarette packs and beer cans littered the coffee table in front of the couch where Therese lay.

Carol asked Dannie, “Did she say anything other than she had let me down?”

Dannie said, “No, except she kept repeating those words, along with complaining about her hormones. Carol, I know I’m a guy, but my girlfriend, Louise, says that to me sometimes when
she’s hurting with cramps. So, I know a bit about it.” Dannie concluded with some embarrassment.

Carol nodded, then said, “Do you mind if I just get her home now? I hate to leave you with this mess, but I really want to get her home.”

Dannie said, “Of course, Carol. Don’t give it another thought. I’ll help you get her ready.”

Carol gently and tenderly put her hand on Therese’s shoulder. “Dearest,” she said, “I’m here, my darling. Let’s go home.”

Therese was groggy but her eyelids fluttered and opened. “Okay, Carol.”

Dannie slipped her rain boots over his socks and helped Carol prop Therese up. Therese was waking up now and starting to feel embarrassed.

“I’m so sorry, Dannie. Sorry, Carol. I feel like a fool…” Both Dannie and Carol rubbed her back to comfort her.

Carol said, “Darling, no need for apologies. You can talk to Dannie tomorrow if you wish. Let’s get you home. Our car is right in front of the apartment. It’s nice and warm, too.”

Aided by Dannie and her lover, Therese slid into the car, and as soon as the door closed, she lay her head against the passenger side window. Carol gave Dannie a hug and kiss and quickly jumped into the car and headed for home.

While stopped at a red light, Carol looked over at Therese’s body sleeping with her head against the window. Carol adjusted Therese’s coat to better cover her shoulders. The movement immediately reminded Carol of another time, more than six years ago, when Carol tenderly covered a sleeping Therese in the front seat of the Packard. Tears sprung to Carol’s eyes and she thought, ‘but this time you’re mine, my darling Therese.’

The light turned green. Carol smiled. Tomorrow they would talk and everything would be all right again. Tomorrow Carol would tell Therese that she would have made the very same decision about accepting Harge’s assistance, if indeed that was causing Therese’s anguish.

With a full heart, Carol steered the car toward their home. Soon they would be safe and sound—asleep in their bed with Therese in Carol’s arms.

All of a sudden, Carol saw bright headlights filling her windshield. A car was barreling towards them at a high rate of speed. Carol had no chance to react other than to throw her body protectively over the sleeping Therese while she took her foot off the accelerator. As she braced them for the crash, she said “I love you, Therese.”

Dannie had barely had time to close his door when he heard the sickening sound of brakes squealing, a ‘boom’ and metal grinding on metal.

“Oh Jesus, NO!” Dannie screamed as he bolted down his stairs and looked down the street at the smoke coming from smashed cars. He pounded on his downstairs neighbor’s door and yelled, “Call the police and an ambulance.” He heard a faint “OK” from within the apartment.

Dannie started sprinting down the street towards the wreck, praying “Holy Mary, Mother of God…”
Chapter Summary

Chapter 33 takes place in the early morning hours of Saturday March 14, 1959, at the apartment of Carol Aird and Therese Belivet in Manhattan. After a near-miss of being in a serious car accident, Carol, Therese and their untouched Packard are back at their apartment building. Dannie has driven them home and after warming up in their apartment with a cup of tea, Therese goes to bed while Carol accompanies Dannie downstairs to secure a cab to take him home. In a brief talk, Dannie tells Carol of the tremendous pressure Therese is experiencing at work, even though she is unequivocally supported by upper management in her being open about her homosexuality. Carol learns one other pressure Therese is under that Carol herself has unknowingly helped to bring upon her lover.

Chapter Notes

Dear readers,

It has been a month since my last chapter was posted. My apologies for the long wait. A day after returning from a vacation trip, I became very, very ill and am just starting to feel like writing again. I honestly thought I was going to die with this illness.

This chapter is short, and is nothing to set the world on fire in a literally sense, but at least you know that I am back and that Carol and Therese and car are fine after the events of Chapter 32.

I am committed to write their story, at least through their honeymoon. The number of chapters that remain and whether or not the story continues beyond that point depends on my health to some extent, and my enthusiasm for writing which is nourished in part on the amount of feedback in terms of comments from readers like you. I know that I am not writing Carol and Therese in AU and my love scenes are not graphic enough for many readers, but I believe on telling their story with authenticity, mainly because I lived through some of their times and certainly lived the pioneering openness of their sexual orientation.

I admit, I would love to get feedback through reader comments but I have requested comments from readers so often in the prior 32 chapters and received so few reader comments relative to the number of chapters. An important exception is that some readers have been so kind to comment quite often and quite eloquently. For those I am very, very grateful.

So, this will be my last request for comments. It's too discouraging to request comments then get so few. Folks, I do need you. My energy is lagging.

Regards,
Pipestone
2:00 AM, Saturday March 14th, 1959

The Arid/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Carol, Therese and Dannie were quietly talking in Carol and Therese’s apartment in the early hours of Saturday morning. It had been an eventful evening, with most of the drama occurring after midnight. Carol and Therese were so thankful to be safe in their home.

Dannie had driven their Packard back to its parking slot at the rear of their building. Carol had insisted that Dannie come up to warm up before going home. She glanced up from their kitchen to watch Dannie with his arm protectively around Therese as they sat on the green couch. Dannie was quietly explaining to an ever-more-alert Therese what he had learned from talking to the car crash’s eyewitnesses.

Dannie’s was the first face Carol saw when she peered up from the Packard’s floorboard. The second face was that of a uniformed policeman. Both men seemed astounded that Carol and Therese were unhurt, as was their car.

Carol could faintly hear Dannie’s voice through the rolled-up car window and the roar of air from the Packard’s heater. Another policeman shouted at Carol and Therese to open the car door so they could move the Packard out of the way of the oncoming emergency vehicles.

Carol could hear the wailing of sirens growing closer. She managed to help Therese into a sitting position on the passenger side and sat in the middle while the policeman steered their car to the curb, then turned off the ignition.

Carol watched as if in a dream while witnesses crowded around the policemen, waiting their turn to give their account of the events. Carol was still dumbfounded that she, Therese, and even their car, could have escaped unscathed when a car that had plowed through the night, directly towards them was crunched into several parked cars not far from where they had been.

Dannie was outside the car listening to the witnesses’ accounts—all of which confirmed that the other driver was at fault and that it was Carol’s skillful response that had saved them. The other driver, who was in the wrong lane, turned sharply out of the way of a certain crash with Carol into a row of parked cars.

Carol’s statement to the police had been short. Actually, she remembered very little of the accident—only taking her foot off the accelerator just as the light turned green and thrown her body over Therese to protect her as she unknowingly reclined in the passenger seat.

Dannie finished his hot tea and Carol called down to the night door guard to request a cab for Dannie. Over his protests, Carol pressed ample cab fare into Dannie’s hand followed by a lingering hug. Carol kissed Therese’s cheek and told her she would stay with Dannie until his cab came. Therese nodded.

“You’re such a good friend to us both,” whispered Carol in Dannie’s ear as they rode down in the elevator. “Thank you for everything, Dannie.”

“I thought for a minute that I had lost you two,” Dannie said mournfully.

“I know,” said Carol as she squeezed his shoulder and leaned in to kiss his cheek.
“Carol,” said Dannie, “Therese has been under a lot of pressure at work. Frankly, I don’t know how she handles it.”

Carol’s eyebrows shot up and she said, “Can you share details with me?”

Dannie said, “Yes.”

Dannie sighed. “The promotion carries its own amount of pressure, but upper management has let Therese know that they are very pleased with her performance and, quite frankly the expectations are high.”

Carol smiled wanly, “Sometimes great expectations carry great pressures.”

Dannie nodded. “Carol, there’s a lot of extra pressure on Therese because she is open about being a homosexual. Jerry Goldman, Vice President of Metro is having a meeting on Monday of all the Junior Photo Editors and the Senior Editors that report to Lee Barnes to express his support of Therese. Supposedly Mr. Goldman will tell us that he will not tolerate any discrimination towards her.”

Carol laid her hand on Dannie’s arm and said, “But this is a good thing, isn’t it?”

Dannie replied, “Yes, of course, but on the other hand, anyone who didn’t already know that Therese was a homosexual will now know. Carol, I’ve never, ever heard of anyone being so open at work. Don’t get me wrong, Therese is my best friend. I’d do anything for her and I’ll stand up for her always. It’s just a lot of pressure on her now that everyone will know. She told me she is glad that people know, but the pressure on her to be what she considers to be the ‘perfect employee,’ the ‘perfect supervisor,’ and the ‘perfect photographer’ is just overwhelming. At my apartment tonight she told me that she is so tired of people saying that she is ‘brilliant’ that she could scream. She just wants to be Therese.”

Carol thought back with guilt and regret at her own words to Therese earlier tonight (…’I never cease to marvel at your brilliance…’).

Just then Dannie’s cab pulled up. Carol hugged Dannie once more and pressed cab fare back into Dannie’s hands when he tried to return it to Carol.

With a smile and a wave Dannie was gone. Suddenly Carol couldn’t wait to return to their apartment and hold Therese in her arms.

Carol stepped into the elevator and punched ‘9.’

Carol found a sleepy Therese in their bed, wearing her flannel gown but Carol noticed that Therese had not been too tired to place Carol’s comfy flannel gown on top of the turned-down sheets and quilt on Carol’s side of the bed.

“Did Dannie get a cab?” asked Therese quietly.

Carol said, “Yes, I made sure he accepted cab fare and I stayed until he was in the cab and on his way.”

Therese exhaled quietly. “He’s such a good friend.”

Carol replied, “Yes. In addition to being your best friend, he is a good friend to me, and for that I’m very grateful.”

Carol donned her gown, then finished with her bathroom necessities and crawled into bed. Carol
lay on her back and Therese turned to her and put her face in Carol’s neck and her hands across Carol’s upper chest.

Carol leaned down and kissed Therese’s hair and stroked it softly. Carol said quietly, “We’ll sleep late tomorrow. If the phone happens to ring, I’ll get it. We can determine tomorrow if we still feel like going to Abby’s for dinner.

“Carol?” Therese said.

“Hmmm,” Carol replied soothingly as she hugged Therese to her.

“I do want to talk tomorrow to explain my behavior tonight. This wasn’t typical of me, you know,” said Therese.

“Dearest, I certainly know that to be true. Please don’t worry. We’ll talk tomorrow after getting a good night's sleep.”

“Carol?” Therese said.

“Hmmm,” Carol said again.

Therese said, “Of course, I’m most thankful that both of us are uninjured. This may sound odd, but I’m also thankful that the Packard was not wrecked, or even touched in any way. Do you know why, Carol?”

Carol smiled in the darkness. Therese felt a gentle kiss on her forehead. “Yes, I think I do know, Therese. It was inside the Packard on that first drive we took to New Jersey in December, 1952, that we fell in love.”

Therese tightened her arms around Carol. “Yes. I’ll never forget the car’s dashboard, the hiss of the car heater, the soft sound of the car radio and the feel of the leather seats. I watched you drive, effortlessly shifting the gears on the steering column. It felt so comforting. I’ll never forget the way I felt that afternoon, Carol.”

“I agree, Therese.” Carol said as she gently stroked Therese’s hair. “I kept watching you as you sat in the passenger seat. I didn’t know what the future would hold but I knew that I wanted you to be in my life. So, dearest, the Packard is an important part of our romance, and even though it’s a car, it’s a part of our life together.”

“Goodnight, Carol, I love you so much.”

“Goodnight, Therese, I love you, too.”

Chapter End Notes

While in California over the holidays, I had the remarkable opportunity to sit in and examine a 1948 Packard that was in mint condition. It was an oyster gray color—same as in the Carol (2015) movie. In the movie, the Packard was a 1949 model, but the one I sat in and went over with a fine toothed comb was as similar as a Carol fan could dream of. I shifted the gearshift on the steering column, ran my hands over the grill, gazed at the instrument panel and stroked the fine leather seats.

In a forthcoming chapter, I will use my experience of being inside this remarkable
In a forthcoming chapter, I will use my experience of being inside this remarkable automobile to lend authenticity to my writing.

Regards,
Pipestone
Conversations

Chapter Summary

Chapter 34 takes place in the late morning of Saturday March 14, 1959, at the apartment of Carol Aird and Therese Belivet in Manhattan. Therese and Carol have slept late due to the traumatic events as described in the previous chapter. Life is returning to normal for our heroines. Carol slips out of bed to call and ask Abby to come to their apartment for Saturday night dinner. Carol and Abby have a meaningful conversation about various topics. There's more of an explanation in the Notes at the end of this chapter. Carol calls Rindy and Harge as well. Finally, Therese and Carol have a pleasant, loving morning conversation before heading out to shop for some professional attire for Therese.

Chapter Notes

At the beginning of the last chapter I wrote that I had been very ill and that my energy was lagging. I put out a plea for supportive comments due to my lack of energy for writing. I told you that I was very discouraged. Now I want to thank you for the bottom of my heart for some of the most kind, considerate, heartfelt, touching comments that boosted my spirit more than any of you wonderful folks could ever know. I tried to reply to each and every one. I pledge to continue this story, at the very least through their honeymoon and return. You shouldn't worry about the end to my story, though. Consider this: Chapter 1's date was February 27 and the date of my most recent chapter (Chapter 34) is March 14th. So, it has taken me 33 chapters to go 16 days. Their ring ceremony is scheduled for April 18. Looking at the math, I think I had better pick up the pace just a bit, or my story will last at least 60 chapters.

Again, thank you, thank you, thank you for reading and letting me know what I'm creating is meaningful to you.

Warmest regards to all,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Saturday, March 14, 1959

9:00 AM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Carol awoke from a very sound sleep to find Therese curled around her back with one hand nestling just below her breasts. Both women were wearing flannel gowns to ensure a comfortable sleep after the traumatic events of the early morning hours.
Carol gently extracted herself from Therese’s sleeping embrace and reached for her robe and slippers. She padded down the hall to Rindy’s bathroom to use the facilities to ensure she didn’t wake Therese.

Carol needed to call Abby to discuss possible alternative plans for the dinner they had scheduled tonight at Abby’s home in New Jersey. Quite frankly, Carol didn’t feel up to driving the distance so soon after the near-miss car wreck. The Packard was unhurt, but Carol didn’t want to press her luck. She hadn’t had her usual amount of sleep, and besides, there still might be patchy areas of ice and snow on the roads after the large snowstorm on Thursday. (Historical note: On Thursday, March 12, 1959, an unusually large snowstorm hit New York City and northern New Jersey dumping up to five inches of snow in some areas. The city streets were cleared quickly, but the roads around Abby’s region of New Jersey were another matter. Carol wanted to see if Abby were willing to come into the city. Carol recalled Therese saying last night that she would be glad to have Abby stay the night if Abby didn’t have one of her three girlfriends to see.

Carol craved a cigarette as she sipped her coffee listening to Abby’s phone ring.

‘I’m not going to give in to my nicotine craving,’ thought Carol. ‘Apparently, I need to live until after the beginning of the 21st century, so Therese and I can be legally married.’ Carol sighed.

Just then Abby answered the phone with a bright “Hello.”

Carol smiled. It was so good to hear the voice of her best friend.

“Well, Abby,” said Carol, “I hope I’m not interrupting anything this Saturday morning.”

Abby hooted with laughter. “No, Carol, I’m the only one here. Mother and Father are at their home in the Hamptons. They probably will stay there until the weather warms up. Did the snow inconvenience you?”

Carol decided to skip the story of Friday night’s events. “No, but I really don’t feel like driving to New Jersey tonight. Therese had a very big week at work, too.”

Abby said, “I’ll bet some of the news flurry at her office was about Congress approving Hawaii to be our 50th State. How about that! We can now vacation in a tropical paradise without leaving the U.S.A.”

Carol chuckled, “Well some Caribbean islands are much closer to New York City than Hawaii, but I do agree that it’s exciting. Wouldn’t it be something if Therese were assigned to photograph the Hawaiian Islands’ tourist potential?”

Abby replied, “I’d volunteer to carry all her camera equipment.”

Both women laughed. Carol observed, “Remember that we have another new state, Alaska, that was approved in early January of this year.”

Abby laughed, “Flag makers must be tearing their hair out. First, they had to figure out a way to make 49 stars fit in the field of blue, and now, here comes another star. At least with a 50th state the rows of stars will line up.”

“Well,” Carol laughed heartily, “I’m so glad you are taking an interest in politics.”

Abby replied, somewhat seriously, “Do you follow politics?”

Carol answered thoughtfully, “Well, I certainly do more now that I’m with Therese. She is
immersed in the news and she is a fascinating conversationalist with regards to the news that I might be interested in, plus she has expanded my areas of interest. In fact, we have a tradition of 'pillow talk' at night and in the morning, and many times during 'pillow talk' she shares what is going on in her world at The Times.”

Carol waited for what she knew would be Abby’s response to her last statement.

Abby hooted with laughter, “Well, Carol, the 'pillow talk' I have with whomever I’m sharing the bed, isn’t about politics. There is some geography involved, but it’s the geography of my bedmate’s hills and valleys.”

Carol shared a laugh with Abby.

“Well,” Carol said, we enjoy that too, but I love Therese’s mind so very much and have learned so much from her. When I was married to Harge I never paid attention to what was going on outside of Rindy and her school events, the social scene, his work, and those dreadful luncheons with his parents.”

Carol continued, “Now we subscribe to The New York Times, Time magazine, The Saturday Evening Post and now National Geographic for Rindy. Did you know that you can’t just subscribe to National Geographic? A member of the National Geographic Society must recommend you, then you are offered the opportunity to subscribe. I enjoy reading all the magazines as does Therese and we discuss current events, especially on the weekends when Rindy is with us. I want Rindy to develop a curiosity about the world and its people.”

Abby replied, “Good for you, Carol. Rindy is a great kid and she’ll grow up aware that the world is made up of a lot of different, but mostly good-hearted people.”

Carol smiled and offered this observation: “You know, Abby, Harge has changed so much in his outlook that you wouldn’t recognize him. It may be difficult for you to believe, but Harge is completely supportive of my relationship with Therese. We have joint custody of Rindy now and if anything were to happen to Harge, I would have full custody. Harge and Therese have mended their differences as well. He has on many occasions tearfully asked our forgiveness for his actions during the divorce. Rindy is the happiest I’ve ever seen her because all her parents are getting along. Harge has set down the law to his mother, too. He told her she must not criticize us in Rindy’s presence.”

Abby was very quiet. Then she asked, “What about Harge’s father?”

Carol replied, “He has apologized to both Therese and me and pledged to be an ally. He even welcomed Therese into the family.”

Abby said “You must be kidding.”

“No,” said Carol. “I witnessed the moment. John took Therese’s hands in both of his and said, ‘Welcome to the family, my dear’.”

Abby whistled. “All these important events and I was too busy to see you because I was busy bedding women. I’m so sorry, Carol.”

Carol said, “It has happened in the last couple of weeks. Also, Rindy knows of our relationship and is thrilled that we shared the news with her. We feel comfortable showing some affection for each other in front of her—like a hug or a brief kiss. She knows that she cannot talk to anyone about it except for her best friend, Karen, who has two Uncles.”

Abby asked, “Does she know about me?”
Carol replied, “No dear, we want to leave that up to your discretion.”

Abby said, “I’m glad I was sitting down while talking to you. This would have knocked me right off my feet.”

Carol laughed and tossed her head. “Well, you can’t say we haven’t had our excitement, too. It may not be in the form of multiple girlfriends, but…”

Abby interrupted, “Carol, you and Therese have made a lot of changes in a short time.”

Carol returned to the subject of Saturday’s dinner. “Yes, and we can tell you more over dinner.”

Carol asked, “Abby, would you be willing to drive in to the city for dinner? You could spend the night here.”

“Of course, Carol, I really want to see the two of you and as you know my social calendar fills up fast.” Carol cleared her throat as a way of answering.

Abby said, “You two don’t need to cook, though. I had planned to make my famous lasagna and it’s easily transportable. If you two could supply rolls and a salad, we’d be set.”

Carol replied, “That would be fine. We can pick up a small desert, too. There’s a fine neighborhood bakery nearby.”

“The one that makes the New York cheesecake to die for?” asked Abby.

Carol laughed and Abby added, “Say no more, I’ll be there with bells on. Seriously Carol, I am so glad that we are having dinner and spending time together. You’ve been busy in other ways, according to what you’ve just told me. Your ring ceremony is a little over a month away and unless you’ve done more planning than you’ve indicated in our recent phone calls, we need to speed up the planning process.”

“Well, we certainly could use your expertise and your list of many contacts of business owners who are part of our community.” Carol added sincerely.

Abby said, “If you and Therese are agreeable, I might take the opportunity to drop in on one of the women’s bars later in the evening after all our planning conversation is done. You two are certainly welcome to join me, but I suspect you two ‘nesters’ will just want to cuddle and watch a late movie, or hey, discuss current events.”

“What bar were you thinking of, Abby?” asked Carol.

Abby replied, I hope to see Mary. I’d probably start out at ‘L’s.’ It’s nice and cozy. You know the one—it’s on a little side street in Greenwich Village.”

Carol observed, “I do know the one. You and I went there several times just before I met Therese. I don’t mean to be critical, but it’s a bit dark for me, but at least it doesn’t seem to be run by the mafia. I got so tired of seeing those hulking men wearing pinkie rings guarding the door. The clientele was nice the few times I went there—well-dressed women who were certainly younger than we were.”

Abby tried to muffle her laughter, “Well look who’s talking. Here you are about to pledge your life—matching wedding rings, ceremony, the works—to a gorgeous younger woman, with whom you have lived and loved exclusively for nearly six years.”
Carol threw back her head and laughed, but softly enough not to awake Therese. “Excellent point, Abby.” Carol looked down at her right ring finger that was empty now, but soon would be adorned with the symbol of her love for Therese.

“Listen, Abby,” Carol continued, “We do like to go out dancing occasionally.”

“And the place is...” teased Abby.

Carol said, “Well there’s the Sea Colony on West 8th, although we don’t really have a lot in common with the clientele except that we all are lesbians. My main complaint about that bar is that it is subject to frequent police harassment.”

“I agree,” said Abby. “Remember how the room for dancing is in the back and they have a red light mounted in the dance room to alert women that the police were coming so we can stop dancing and just sit down at tables. Of course, those lights are common in many of the bars.”

“Oh, I remember, all right. One night Therese and I just felt like dancing even though Therese isn’t much of a dancer. The red light went on and we sat at a table as prim and proper as school children. The police took one look around and left, but it really unnerved us. We are more assertive now and more open about the fact that we are together, but it’s just not a pleasant experience. We’re hoping that in the fall when the Daughters of Bilitis is supposed to get some space in the building leased by the male Mattachine Society, that there will be some nice events.”

Abby marveled, “Carol, how do you know all this?”

Carol replied, “Oh, Therese tells me. She attends some of the DOB meetings.”

“Isn’t she afraid her employer will find out?” asked Abby.

“Oh, Abby, you are behind in knowing the latest news. Guess that comes from all that dating.” Carol laughed. “Her bosses at The New York Times know all about it and they support her. Isn’t it wonderful?”

“It’s unheard of!” exclaimed Abby. “I can’t wait to see you two tonight to catch up on some of this other news. What time should I arrive?”

Carol said, “Therese will be up shortly. She wants to go on a brief shopping trip this afternoon. Let me ask her and call you back. Is that all right?”


“Bye, my dear.” said Carol.

After she hung up the phone, Carol warmed up her coffee and made a cup for Therese. Carol approached their bedroom door and found Therese stretching and sitting part-way up on fluffed pillows. Therese gave Carol the dimpled smile that Carol dearly loved.

“Good morning, dearest,” said Carol, “How are you feeling this morning?”

Therese answered, “Well, I have just a bit of a headache, but I took two aspirins and I suspect it’ll be gone shortly. I heard you talking on the phone. Were you talking to Abby?”

Carol replied, “Yes, and we decided that she would bring her famous lasagna and we’ll supply the salad and a desert that we can pick up at our favorite neighborhood bakery. I just don’t feel like driving to New Jersey this afternoon. We’re getting a late start and I know you wanted to buy a new suit or two and a small briefcase for work.”
Therese looked slightly guilty as she said, “Carol, I know I’m the reason for the late start this morning…”

Carol interrupted her. “Oh sweetheart, let’s not worry about the past. We’re fine, the car’s fine. There’s nothing more to say unless you want to talk about it.”

Carol reached down and kissed Therese’s lips, ‘I love you, my sweet woman. Here’s a pick-me-up for you.” Carol extended the coffee mug.

“Mmmm,” said Therese with her eyes closed. “Heaven.”

Therese smiled softly, “Oh, my darling Carol, I love you so much. I may want to talk later, but I really think that my hormones were in overdrive and I was feeling a lot of pressure to be perfect at work. I just took it wrong when you praised me for the honeymoon. I felt guilty getting praise for something Harge actually helped arrange with the Uncles.”

Carol reached out and squeezed Therese’s hand. “Dearest, when I was driving to Dannie’s I was racking my brain as to the reason for your action. I came up with that very reason. Also, Dannie explained the pressure you’re feeling regarding Monday’s meeting that Mr. Goldman has called with your staff. If you want to talk about that later, I would be glad to be an attentive and supportive listener. Therese, you need not feel that you must face stressful situations alone. I love you and I am here for you always.”

Therese’s mouth gaped, followed by a smile. She took a sip of coffee to hide her amusement that Carol could have known her that well.

“My love,” said Therese, “Sometimes it scares me how well you know me.”

Carol observed her lover with amused, but loving eyes. “Therese, we’ve only been together six years. Imagine how well I’ll know you after twenty or thirty years.”

Therese laughed, “I will love every minute of those years.” She leaned across the bed to gently kiss Carol.

Therese set her cup down on her nightstand and stretched.

“Carol, I would like to go to Macy’s Herald Square to look for one or two new suits. Also, I wonder if Macy’s has a selection of briefcases?”

“Dearest, why don’t I call Harge and ask him while you’re in the shower?”

“Good idea,” replied Therese. “Carol, please don’t mention the events of last night.”

Carol stepped into a very affectionate hug with Therese. “Of course, I wouldn’t say anything dearest. There is no reason for Harge to know.”

Therese smiled and kissed her lover and gently stroked Carol’s cheek. “I love you so, Carol.”

“And I love you, Therese. I’ll call him now for I don’t know if he and Rindy have plans for today.”

Carol dialed the familiar number and waited for an answer. She was delighted to hear Rindy’s voice.

“Mommy! I’m so glad to hear your voice. Daddy and I are going to the Sinclairs this afternoon. Karen and I are finishing our Easter bonnets and Daddy and Mrs. Sinclair and the Uncles are
going to play cards.”

Carol said, “Well that sounds like a lot of fun, snowflake. Too bad it’s too cold for riding horses.”

“Yes,” said Rindy, the four horses are snug in the barn in their warmed stalls. We may go out and feed them some apples. I’m trying to get on the good side of Daisy after that accident involving the scratching post.”

“That’s a good idea, sweetie. How was school this week?” asked Carol.

“So so,” answered Rindy. “Everyone is getting excited about spring break. Mommy, do you have the Thursday front part of The New York Times?”

“I think so,” said Carol. “Is there some mysterious reason?”

Rindy laughed a laugh that sounded remarkably like her mother. “Yes, but please just put it aside for next weekend when I visit.”

Carol replied, “If we happen not to have it, please bring your copy, sweetie.”

Rindy asked, “What are you and Aunt Therese going to do today?”

“Oh darling, we must go shopping at Macy’s. Aunt Therese needs a new outfit for an important meeting at work on Monday. We may be buying her some more clothes next weekend and you can come.”

“Yay!” exclaimed Rindy—always ready for an adventure with the three of them.

“One more thing, Rindy,” said Carol. “Aunt Abby is coming to our apartment for dinner tonight. Shall I give her a hug and a kiss from you?” said Carol.

Rindy said thoughtfully, “please explain to Aunt Abby how very happy the four of us are now that we have had our talk. I really want her to know so that she won’t continue to be mad at Daddy.”

“Rindy, you are such a thoughtful young lady. I certainly will tell her. Now in light of the four of us getting along so well, may I speak to your Daddy?”

An excited Rindy called, “Daddy, Mommy wants to talk to you.” Rindy added, “Bye Mommy. I love you. Tell Aunt Therese I love her, too.”

Carol answered, “Of course I will. Aunt Therese loves you too, and I love you the most. Bye.”

Harge came on the phone with a cheerful, “What do I owe this delightful Saturday morning call from my favorite ex-wife?” Harge laughed heartily as did Carol.

“I need some shopping advice, Harge.” said Carol.

“Whoa!” said Harge with a laugh. “First Rindy peppers me with questions about a bonnet and now you need fashion advice! Carol, you and Therese always look beautiful and I could never offer any advice to improve on perfection.”

“Well!” said Carol. “Now that’s as fine a complement as I’ve heard in a while. Actually, this question will be one you’re qualified to answer. Therese needs to purchase a briefcase or attaché to improve her professional appearance at work. Do you know if Macy’s at Herald Square offers any selections?”
Harge was quiet for a moment. “I think Macy’s has a limited selection in their luggage department, but there’s a small office supply store close to Herald Square that has better selections. It’s just a short walk. Do you have a Manhattan phone book?”

Carol replied, “Yes.”

Harge continued, “The store’s name is Rodgers’ Complete Office. Call first and explain what you’re wanting to buy. Mention my name and they should give you a nice discount. I send quite a few customers there.”

Carol sighed and thanked Harge.

Harge said, “Why the sigh, Carol, if I may ask?”

Carol explained, “Abby is coming here for dinner tonight and I want to thoroughly explain to her how you and Therese and I have formed a truce and have actually started to enjoy each other. Even your father has been very kind to Therese and me. I started that conversation with her today on the phone, but I think she’s skeptical.”

Harge whistled though his teeth. “I honestly can’t blame Abby for her skepticism. Well, that won’t be an easy conversation, Carol, but I want you to know that I will meet Abby anywhere, anytime to explain how much I regret the pain that I’ve caused her. I want to make things right with Abby. She is your best friend and Rindy’s godmother. Honestly, Carol, I will do anything within my power to make things better.”

Carol sighed, “I know you would, Harge—just as you have with Therese and me. When I spoke to Rindy earlier, she said that she wants Aunt Abby to know how happy the four of us are now. All I can do is try.”

Harge offered, “Let’s think of ways to make this reconciliation happen. Perhaps Therese has some ideas as well.”

“I’ll ask her, Harge. By the way, she sends her regards to you as always.”

Harge replied, “And send mine to her along with a repeat of my heartiest congratulations on her new position at *The New York Times*.”

“I certainly will, Harge.” said Carol. “By the way, enjoy your time with the Sinclairs and give them our best.”

“Will do, Carol. Good luck shopping to you both. Bye.” Harge closed.

As Carol hung up the phone, she felt two arms slide around her and a gentle kiss on the back of her neck. Carol straightened up and clasped the arms surrounding her.

“Who is it?” Carol teased.

“Oh you!” exclaimed Therese. “Come here for a proper kiss.” Therese’s hands turned Carol around, closed on the lapels of Carol’s robe and brought their lips together.

“I’ll want a reward for helping you shop,” said Carol with a mischievous smile in her gray eyes.

“And what might that be, Mrs. Belivet?” asked Therese.

“Hmm,” laughed Carol with a toss of her blonde hair. “I’ll think of something. By the way, I’ll call Abby back. She wants to know what time to arrive. I’ll be sure to allow plenty of time for my
Chapter End Notes

There are several historical notes. I subscribe to "The New York Times" every day and thus have access to its digital edition. I've just discovered that I can call up the edition of the paper of the date(s) of my chapters and view the actual edition--stories, advertisements, etc. I plan to use this tool to bring even more factual realism to my storyline. From this chapter forward, the weather that I state in my story will reflect the weather that was actually occurring on the date of my story. Also, Abby and Carol's conversation about the newest States (Alaska and Hawai'i, both joined the U.S. in 1959) was referred to in the March 14th "New York Times" newspaper.

In this chapter, I also refer to the fact that a subscription to "National Geographic" magazine wasn't as easy to acquire as it is today. When I started my subscription to "National Geographic" in 1965, my Aunt, a schoolteacher who was a member, had to recommend me in order for me to begin my subscription. Over 50 years later, I'm still getting each and every issue.

The conversations that Abby and Carol have about the bars are based on fact. The reference to the bar, "L's" comes from the book, "Highsmith: A Romance of the 1950s" a fascinating memoir by Marijane Meaker, about her two-year relationship with Patricia Highsmith. I located the reference to the bar "The Sea Colony" and its location on the Internet.
Chapter Summary

Most of Chapter 35 takes place in downtown Manhattan on Saturday afternoon March 14, 1959. Because of the events of Chapter 33, Carol and Therese are getting a late start at shopping for new work clothes for Therese. Abby is bringing her famous lasagna and Carol and Therese will furnish a salad and desert. Abby is going to help Carol and Therese with planning their ring ceremony. Carol is an excellent shopper and she is completely devoted to helping Therese find several new work outfits. Therese wants to look her best in her new position of authority and responsibility.

Chapter Notes

Thank you, thank you, thank you, dear readers. I have been overwhelmed with the outpouring of supportive and appreciative comments from so many of you readers. Unfortunately, when I set up my storyline, I chose option "Approval of Comments" without knowing exactly what it would do. What happens is that your comment doesn't automatically appear as soon as you post it. I must "approve" it. I am so sorry I chose that option but I can't change it now (oh boy, have I tried!) but I do check for comments at least once a day and I have a goal to reply to each and every comment I receive within 48 hours of my seeing it. I will try to shorten the time it takes to respond to your comment as I regain my health. I was ill for a solid month and am still not back to my old self. Also, I wish I could promise a new chapter each week but that's still my goal. My last chapter was posted 9 days ago, so I'm giving it the old college try as the saying goes, but I suspect you're more likely to see a new chapter every 10 days to 2 weeks.

I apologize to you readers who were hoping this chapter would feature Abby. I promise (cross my heart) that Abby's dinner visit will be the entire next chapter. I really got carried away with the shopping trip. I hope you find it sufficiently interesting. The clothes that they buy for Therese actually reflect photographs I found on the Internet as a result of a search for women's clothing of the late 1950s. Also, I can tell you from my personal experience of living during those times that the clothes I describe match the time period.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Saturday, March 14 1959

11:00 AM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Carol called Abby as promised to let her know that they would return from their shopping trip by 4:30 PM.
“Well,” Abby chuckled, “undoubtedly you’ll need to ‘rest’ for several hours before I arrive. I would certainly need that much time to ‘rest’ if I had gone shopping with a date, but then I can’t imagine going shopping with a date.”

Therese watched as Carol tossed her blonde hair and laughed. “Abby, dear, Therese has promised me a reward for helping her shop, so I must claim it.” Carol winked at Therese, who blew a kiss back to her lover.

Carol and Abby agreed that Carol would call as soon as they returned from shopping. Abby would have already cooked her lasagna, and would start the hour to hour and a half drive at an agreed-upon time. Abby was planning to spend the night at the Aird/Belivet apartment. Abby promised Carol that her top priority was advising Carol and Therese on logistics for their ring ceremony. If they finished early enough, Abby might go bar hopping.

Carol and Therese finalized their preparations for an afternoon shopping trip in the city. The goal was to find two or three new work outfits for Therese and Carol was determined not to be distracted by anything for herself. That activity could wait. The spring fashions would be dominating the racks of clothes, but the temperatures would be cool for at least another month or so and Therese needed to dress more professionally to match her new promotion. They were hoping to find some very nice outfits on sale. The Saturday edition of *The New York Times* was open to page 7 on their dining table and the two women were pouring over the big Saturday ‘One Day Only’ sale at Macy’s.

“My God, Carol, Macy’s Herald Square will be a mob scene! We’ll be trampled to death,” laughed Therese.

Carol winked conspiratorially at her lover and replied, “We’re wearing comfortable shoes and are carrying small purses and we know our way around Macy’s. Let’s go there first. Forget taking the subway, we’ll get there faster by cab. It should only take about 20 minutes by cab to Macy’s.”

Therese gave Carol a grateful hug and a kiss that wouldn’t disturb their lipstick. “Thanks, love.” said Therese.

They held hands during their elevator ride and nodded a greeting to their building’s doorman. It was cold, but the forecast said the temperature would reach the low 40s by afternoon. Therese stepped to the curb and flagged a taxi. As usual, as Therese stepped into the back seat, Carol laid a gentle hand on the small of Therese’s back. It was a gesture that never failed to give Therese a loving glow.

Carol told the driver, “Macy’s Herald Square, Broadway entrance.”

“Oh,” replied the cabbie, “You ladies are shopping for fashions today, right?”

Therese laughed as she answered the cabbie, “Obviously, you know the store layout.”

“It’s a must,” replied their driver. “If I let a customer off at the wrong entrance, then they could be lost for quite a while. I don’t need to tell you ladies that it’s one of the world’s largest department stores.”

Carol joined in the conversation as the cab lumbered down the streets of Manhattan, “We’re familiar with the store, but we never go there without seeing bewildered shoppers wandering aimlessly.”

The three cab occupants shared a laugh as Carol discretely squeezed Therese’s hand. Therese winked and smiled back at Carol. Both women were hoping for a relatively quick and very
successful shopping spree.

As the cab pulled up to the Broadway entrance of Macy’s, Carol and Therese hopped out as Therese gave the cabbie their fare plus a nice tip. The driver, pleased with his tip, wished the two women good luck in their shopping endeavors.

Prior to leaving their apartment, Therese had inventoried her work shoes and determined that she was probably set for footwear until spring.

Therese knew she must keep in mind that she would be purchasing a briefcase today and its color should be one that would be appropriate for many different dress or suit colors. Following Harge’s advice, Therese had called Rogers’ Complete Office and found that their store was quite near Macy’s. The salesman said they would gladly offer a discount based on Therese’s mention of Harge Aird’s name.

As they entered the store, Carol and Therese agreed that if they became separated for more than 15 minutes they would meet at the Broadway entrance street floor—unless they agreed to meet elsewhere.

Carol was a superb shopper—and a fast one. Therese marveled at Carol’s ability to spot a desired item practically on the run, swoop next to the racks and quickly locate it in Therese’s size, and look for a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ head nod from Therese. If ‘yes’ then Carol had an uncanny ability to find an unoccupied dressing room and whisk Therese and the clothing into the dressing room, assist Therese with changing her clothes and wait for Therese’s decision. They were a formidable shopping team. Abby loved to go shopping with them because they never dawdled or lost focus.

Therese observed, “It would have been fun to have Abby along today, but time just won’t allow for it.”

Carol replied, “I suspect that Abby will help each of us shop for our attire for our ring ceremony. You know that we should follow the wedding tradition of not seeing each other in our new clothes until the moment the ceremony begins.”

Therese replied, “I get goosebumps thinking about that shopping trip.”

Carol leaned close to Therese and whispered into her ear, “Me too, dearest.”

Just then Carol spotted a dressy dark green lightweight wool jumper that had a larger than usual oval neck cutout. There was a faux belt tied off to the side. The sweater that went under the jumper was a cream color. Carol held it up for Therese and after getting an affirmative nod, quickly found Therese’s size and ushered Therese into the first available dressing room.

Although the room was unoccupied, there were mounds of clothes stuffed into the small space. Carol rolled her eyes in frustration, but just left Therese in the room and leaned against the door. “Sorry, darling,” said Carol, “I can’t fit in the room. Just get dressed and if you like it, step out for me to see.”

Soon Carol heard a soft “nice” from Therese and the door opened. Carol beamed at the sight of her lover in a perfect outfit for work.

Carol winked at Therese and said, “Stay put, let me see if I can find something else. I’ll be quick.”

Therese knew from many shopping trips with Carol that when she said ‘I’ll be quick,’ she meant it. Soon there was a knock on the door and Carol appeared with a black and grey pencil skirt that would come to the bottom of Therese’s knees. The skirt could be worn with several white blouses that Therese already owned and her favorite black cardigan sweater, but Carol also picked out a
new black sweater that had flecks of grey that matched the skirt.

“Ooooh, I love it!” exclaimed Therese. She tried the outfit on quickly and it was a perfect fit.

Carol quickly decided that the growing crowds attracted by Macy’s one day sale were becoming overwhelming.

“Let’s check out and go to the office store for briefcases,” said Carol. “I’ll pay for these with my American Express card.”

Therese smiled. They were beyond worrying about whom should pay for purchases. Except for purchasing the wedding rings, the women pooled their money. Carol had one of the newly issued American Express credit cards, although it was still a paper card. Therese had one as well. Carol also had a Diner’s Club Card that they used for restaurants and other entertainment.

Therese replied, “Since we’re here, should we quickly go by Macy’s luggage department to see if there are any briefcases?”

Carol nodded, and as they stepped in front of the bank of elevators, the doors opened and were packed with people.

Carol and Therese looked at each other and without saying a word, headed for the exit that Rogers’ Office salesman said to take to quickly make their way to his store.

One ten-minute walk later, the women entered Rogers’ Complete Office and were greeted by an efficient salesman. Therese introduced herself as working for The New York Times and had been referred to their store by Mr. Aird.

Carol stepped back to let Therese take the lead in shopping for the briefcase. The salesman introduced himself as ‘Dan’ and led Therese to the back of the store where there were briefcases of all styles and colors. Most were leather, but some had a combination of leather and cloth. Therese explained that her recent promotion necessitated a briefcase that would hold her purse plus a slim writing portfolio cover for a yellow legal pad. She offered Dan one of her business cards. He even showed her a small pocket on the inside of her portfolio that could hold a number of her business cards.

Carol watched their interactions with pride. Her darling was moving up in the corporate world and was going to look the part.

Dan was a knowledgeable salesman and quickly eliminated the bulkier briefcases. Also, he suggested a charcoal grey leather case that would be more appropriate for “today’s businesswoman” as he put it. Therese found a smaller briefcase in that color that would easily accommodate the purse she was carrying today plus the writing portfolio and there was still ample room for papers, or photos or even some of her photo magnifying tools.

Therese looked at the briefcase price tag and silently gulped, but Dan was quick to inform Therese that clients of Mr. Aird were given a 30 percent discount.

While Therese was busy picking out her briefcase, Carol slipped over to the section that displayed pen and pencil sets and picked out one she knew Therese would like. She was able to use her American Express card without Therese knowing it. When Carol’s salesman noticed ‘Carol Aird’ on the card, he smiled and discounted the writing set. Carol winked her thanks as the salesman quietly slipped her purchase in one of the Macy’s bags.

Therese was overjoyed with her briefcase and portfolio and her two outfits.
“How about a light lunch, Carol?” asked Therese.

“I’m starved,” replied Carol. “Since everyone in New York seems to be at Macy’s Herald Square, why don’t we have a light lunch at Bloomingdale’s in Rockefeller Center and see if we can find one more outfit for you. Is that alright?”

Therese leaned into Carol and surprised her with a small kiss to her ear, whispering, “Wherever you go, I will follow.” Carol responded with a sexy smile and a wink—uncaring as what any observers might think.

After a light lunch, they headed for the petite misses’ section and Carol stopped in front of a gorgeous lightweight wool pink pleated skirt and matching elbow length sweater. Therese cocked her head and looked at Carol quizzically.

“Are you serious, Carol?” said Therese. “You know I don’t care for pink.”

Carol took a step back and touched Therese’s elbow and said quietly, “But darling, look at this shade of pink. I don’t think I’ve seen anything like it.”

The matching skirt and sweater was a very dark, rich pink, and Carol pointed out that Therese could wear the skirt with either the matching pink sweater or a cream-colored sweater that Therese already had.

“Humor me, dearest, and try it on, please.” Carol batted her blonde eyelashes at Therese and gave her a look that Therese simply couldn’t resist.

Just then a tall, strikingly handsome saleslady with black hair, whose nametag said ‘Miss Ford’ joined them and commented on the color of the outfit. “Isn’t that a magnificent shade of pink? I’ve never seen it before in any store, not just Bloomingdale’s.”

The saleslady added, “The perfect accessories would be a strand of real or artificial pearls with rounded pearl earrings.” Miss Ford paused dramatically, “And, our costume jewelry department has a dark pink necklace with matching earrings in the exact color of this outfit. Just imagine how the pink accessories would look with a cream-colored sweater.”

Carol gazed at Therese with raised eyebrows as if to say once more, ‘Humor me and try it on.’

Miss Ford excused herself to go get the pink necklace and earrings.

There was ample space in the dressing room for both Carol and Therese, so Carol took advantage of watching her beloved disrobe and try on the outfit that Carol was sure would look stunning on Therese. As Therese bent over to remove her shoes, Carol gave an affectionate pat to Therese’s behind.

“Behave yourself.” Therese said unconvincingly, while winking at Carol and displaying the dimples Carol loved so much.

“Let’s look at this in the big three-way mirror.” said Therese. “It’s right outside the dressing room so we can leave our things here.”

Carol nodded and followed Therese. Therese spun slowly this way and that—looked over her shoulder for the full effect and held out both arms as in surrender. “I love it, Carol, and I would have never thought I would look good in pink.”

Just then Miss Ford reappeared with the dark pink necklace and earrings that perfectly matched the outfit.
“Oh, my dear,” she said to Therese. “You are absolutely stunning in that color! Please try on these accessories.”

As Carol kept one eye on the dressing room and the other on Therese, a smile grew and grew on Carol’s face. Carol said to Therese, “Please tell me you will buy this entire ensemble.”

Therese gave Carol a loving look (that the saleslady noticed) and said, “I have no match for your powers of persuasion, Carol.”

Therese said to Miss Ford, “I love the pink accessories, too. Do we need to purchase them in that department?”

Miss Ford quickly replied, “I took the liberty of having the sales manager in that department assign them to me. They will get the ultimate credit for the sale, but you can pay for everything at my register.”

Therese changed back into her own clothes, and handed the items to Carol’s waiting arms over the dressing room door.

Carol took everything to the register while Therese gathered their many other packages.

Miss Ford looked Carol directly in the eye and with a smile, said “Who will pay?”

Carol slid her American Express paper card across the counter and commented, “I will certainly be glad when American Express finishes the distribution of their plastic cards this year. A paper card seems unprofessional.”

“Indeed.” Miss Ford agreed as she looked down at her own right hand and tapped the wedding band on her right ring finger.

Carol’s eyebrows shot up, and she lowered her voice and leaned in and said, “We’ll exchange ours in about a month.”

“Congratulations.” said Miss Ford, sliding a business card to Carol. “I would love to have the opportunity to show you some stunning fashions if you are going to have a ceremony of some kind.”

Never one to pass up an opportunity for business, Carol reached into her purse and gave one of her own cards to Miss Ford.

“Thank you, Miss Aird.” said Miss Ford. Just then Therese walked up to the counter. Carol was signing the credit card form.

Carol said, “This is my companion, Therese Belivet.” Therese looked as though she might faint from being introduced that way to a stranger, but Carol quickly added, “Miss Ford attends our church—as you are prone to saying, dearest.”

Miss Ford and Carol laughed, and Therese joined in after she glimpsed the wedding band on Miss Ford’s right ring finger.

Therese managed to gather her wits about her and said, “Thank you for an eventful shopping encounter. We will certainly remember your kind personal service.”

“The pleasure was all mine, ladies.” Miss Ford chuckled. “I hope to see you in a future shopping trip.”
“Likewise,” Carol and Therese said at the very same time. The three women laughed.

4:00 PM, that same day – Carol and Therese have a short taxi ride home.

Carol and Therese wearily leaned against the closed front door of their apartment. Carol walked to the phone and called Abby. Therese poured some red wine for them both.

“I’m glad Abby is bringing her famous lasagna,” said Therese. “Darling, why don’t you shower while I run to the corner market to get a fresh head of lettuce. We can just have the easy salad—a quarter head of the lettuce with croutons and Italian dressing, both of which we have. Then I’ll get some dinner rolls and three slices of New York cheesecake for dessert. I can be back in less than half an hour.”

Carol asked mischievously, “Then will I get my reward for helping you shop?”

“Of course, my love, of course.” twinkled Therese.

“Hurry dearest,” said Carol over her shoulder. “I’m going to hang your new clothes in Rindy’s closet for now and put your briefcase on her bed. Then I’ll jump in the shower.”

Therese was back in half an hour and Abby wasn’t due until nearly 7:00 PM.

Therese opened their bedroom door bringing both glasses of wine. Carol was already in bed, naked, waiting for Therese.

“Sweetheart, I’ll shower after your reward, if that’s okay,” said Therese.

“Fine, dearest,” said Carol taking a swig of her wine, then turning on her stomach—her long legs stretched across the bed so that her feet were hanging off.

Therese lovingly gazed at Carol as she undressed. “How many times during our shopping spree did you think about your reward?”

“More than you’ll ever know, angel,” said Carol.

“Ready?” asked Therese as she poured a bit of lotion onto her hands and rubbed her palms together.

“Mmmhmm.” Carol hummed contentedly.

Therese crawled onto their bed and kissed the back of Carol’s neck softly and said, “Thank you for helping me shop, my love.”

“Mmmhmm.” Carol hummed again.

Therese began to knead Carol’s back between her shoulders and Carol began to purr. After several minutes, Therese proceeded to Carol’s back along her ribs (more purring).

“Okay, Carol, here’s one of your favorite parts.” Therese said.

Therese positioned herself over Carol’s legs and began to knead her buttocks and the top of both legs.

“Oh. my God, Therese, excuse me for saying, but this is almost as good as sex.” Carol said.
Therese laughedsoftly and replied, “There are lots of ways to make love, darling.”

Therese kneaded both of Carol’s calves, careful to massage upwards as she had learned during a professional massage of her own. Finally, Therese reached Carol’s very favorite part—her feet. Therese thoroughly massaged the balls of Carol’s feet, her arches and finally her heels.

“How do you feel, my love?” Therese asked softly. The answer was soft snores from Carol.

Therese gently covered the love of her life with a quilt, set the alarm for a nap, and slipped under the duvet. There would be time for a quick shower later.

As Therese felt sleep come over her, she turned to look at the beautiful woman she loved with all her heart and thought, ‘I’m so lucky…so lucky.’

Chapter End Notes

As I mentioned in the End Notes to Chapter 33, I am taking advantage of my digital subscription to "The New York Times" that comes with my daily and weekend newspaper subscription. I am gleaning fascinating information that helps me enormously in meeting my goal of writing as authentic a chapter as possible. For example, in this chapter Carol and Therese shop at Macy's One Day Sale. This sale actually occurred on March 14th 1959 and is documented in a full page ad on page seven of that day's paper. Also, the weather that I describe is the actual weather as it occurred that day in 1959.

In this chapter, I used a tool to compute the time it would take for the cab rides as stated in the chapter. I am having a lot of fun presenting as authentic a setting possible for the storyline, and I hope you enjoy it as well.

I have also included some factual information about charge cards in 1959. Carol uses a paper American Express card to purchase Therese's clothes. American Express started issuing cards in 1958, but the first ones were paper. In 1959 they switched to plastic cards, but neither Carol nor Therese had received their plastic card yet by the time of this chapter.

Regards,
Pipestone
Abby Comes to Dinner

Chapter Summary

This chapter covers Carol and Therese's last-minute preparation for Abby's visit, Abby's arrival and their pre-dinner conversation.

Chapter Notes

Many, many thanks to you, dear readers for continuing to give me feedback. I appreciate all the lovely and encouraging comments. I apologize to readers who hoped this chapter would feature all of Abby's dinner visit. The final third of the chapter features Abby's arrival and the pre-dinner conversation, but the next chapter will be Abby's dinner visit and nothing but Abby's visit. I really got carried away with details of our two heroines waking up and getting ready for Abby. I hope you will enjoy the details.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Saturday, March 14 1959

5:45 PM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Therese woke up from their nap about five minutes before the alarm went off. She carefully slid out of bed and walked around it to turn off the alarm clock. Therese wasn’t ready to wake Carol yet. She quietly returned to her side of the bed and slipped under the duvet.

Therese wanted to watch Carol sleep for just a few minutes. With a smile on her face, Therese looked across the pillows at Carol and was rewarded by a sight no one but Therese could see. Carol was fast asleep, with her blond hair falling partially over her face. Carol’s mouth was slightly open and she was peacefully snoring. Only Therese would ever see Carol like this.

Abby would arrive in just over an hour and there were a few tasks to be done, plus Therese must shower. Therese reached over and gently placed a kiss to Carol’s forehead and stroked her cheek.

Carol slowly opened her eyes and was greeted by a dimpled smile on her lover’s face.

“Dearest, you really know how to put a lady to sleep,” said Carol.

Therese chuckled softly. “You certainly earned your reward, my love. Thank you again for helping me shop for my new work clothes. I could have never found so many wonderful selections by myself.”

Carol stretched, turned on her back and pulled Therese to her so that Therese’s head was on Carol’s shoulder. Therese traced Carol’s collarbone repeatedly as she often did when they cuddled in bed. “Pillow talk time,” said Carol.

“I need to shower and Abby will be here in a little over an hour,” said Therese.
“Hmm,” Carol mused aloud. “I really should shower again to get the lotion off my backside. Would you like some company in the shower?”

“I’d love it,” said Therese. “We can do one of our together quickie showers.”

Carol laughed, “That’s fine, angel. I wish we had time for another kind of ‘quickie’ but…”

Therese finished the sentence, “There’s always later, my love.”

Carol pulled Therese closer. “It’s only been yesterday that we last made love, but it seems longer. I’ve missed you.”

Therese’s spirits soared at Carol’s remarks. “Carol, I love you so very much and I can’t wait until we make love again.”

“Well, it’s unanimous.” Carol said as she gently pushed Therese off of her while laughing. Carol stood up beside their bed. “Therese, why don’t you warm up the shower and I’ll straighten up the bed and be right in.”

“I’ll be working up a good lather of your favorite soap,” called Therese over her shoulder.

Carol took notice of Therese’s trim nude figure heading for their ensuite bathroom, shook her head with a smile and began to straighten their bed. Carol folded the quilt that Therese had so lovingly put over Carol after Carol’s “reward” massage. She contentedly hummed the tune, “Easy Living” as she worked.

When Carol opened the bathroom door, she was greeted by the fragrance of a favorite soap which complemented Carol’s perfume, Chanel’s *Cuir de Russie*. Neither Therese nor she was concerned that Harge originally gave Carol *Cuir de Russie* many years ago. Carol never found another scent that she loved as much and Therese was delighted to continue to give it to Carol as a gift.

Carol opened the shower curtain and slipped in behind Therese, and was immediately presented with a soapy washcloth. Therese had already lathered and rinsed her hair.

“My turn to be pampered,” teased Therese.

“Well, where do you want me to start?” Carol asked as she kissed the shell of Therese’s ear.

“My back will do nicely, my love.” Therese said.

Carol washed Therese’s back, buttocks and back of her legs.

“There’s still plenty of soap dearest,” Carol said with a laugh. Therese turned around and Carol washed Therese’s neck, arms, breasts and torso. “I think if I go lower, we may end up back in bed, sweetheart,” Carol cautioned.

“Agreed,” said Therese as she retrieved the washcloth and finished washing her face, between her legs and down the front of her legs. Carol was preparing a lathered washcloth for Therese to return the favor.

Therese left Carol to complete her more intimate washing and shampooing her hair, but not before the two had exchanged a kiss. Therese’s arms slipped around Carol’s neck and their wet bodies pressed together, while delicious warm water cascaded over them.

As Therese toweled off next to the shower, she called out to Carol. “I’m going to give Harge a quick call. I want to tell him that I was able to buy a briefcase at the store he recommended.”
Carol answered, “He and Rindy were going over to the Sinclair’s this afternoon to play cards. They might not be home yet.”

Therese smiled and said, “I’ll just try to reach him, darling.” Therese left the bathroom, donning her robe as she closed the bathroom door. She glanced at the clock on Carol’s nightstand to ensure there was enough time for the quick phone call before Abby arrived.

Therese stretched as she approached the phone in the office. She dialed Harge’s number. Harge picked up on the third ring.

He was laughing before he paused and said, “Aird residence.”

“Harge, it’s Therese. I hope I haven’t called at an inopportune time. Carol said you and Rindy were going to the Sinclair’s home this afternoon.”

“Not at all, Therese. I’m delighted to hear your voice,” Harge said with sincerity. “The group decided at the last minute to come here instead.”

Therese could hear laughter and conversation in the background along with the higher pitched voices of two girls.

Harge explained, “We just finished an afternoon of cards and dominoes and now Marge and Jack are cooking for us, with the help of the girls. Michael and I are having a cigar and a drink. I was just laughing because Marge told us to sit next to a slightly opened window to minimize the cigar smell.”

“It sounds wonderful, Harge,” said Therese. “I won’t keep you. I just wanted to thank you for your recommendation of Rodgers’ Office store. An employee named Dan helped me select a very handsome dark gray briefcase with a matching leather portfolio.”

“Oh, Dan is very knowledgeable. He really knows his products. Did he give you the thirty percent discount?” inquired Harge.

“He certainly did,” said Therese with a chuckle. “I certainly appreciated it, as it wasn’t cheap by any means.”

“It’ll give you years of service, Therese. You’re a woman on the way up at The Times, and the right briefcase and leather portfolio speak volumes regarding your professional standing.”

Their conversation was interrupted by Carol, wrapped in her favorite robe. Carol gently laid her hand on Therese’s shoulder.

Without missing a beat, Therese said, “Thank you Harge, I appreciate the kind words. I believe Carol would like to speak with you. I’ll look forward to having dinner with you and Rindy here at the apartment on Friday.”

“We’ll be there,” said Harge.

Carol took the phone as she kissed the top of Therese’s head. “Hello, Harge. I hope you and Rindy are having a good time with the Sinclairs. I do hope that Michael doesn’t mind that we group him in with ‘the Sinclairs,’” Carol said.

“Well,” said Harge, “I think nothing would please him more. Honestly, Carol, these men are very much in love—just as you and Therese are.”
Carol cleared her throat, “Harge, Abby is coming for dinner shortly and I wanted to ensure that you didn’t mind if I told her that you wanted to meet with her in the hopes of making amends.”

Harge was quick to reply, “Carol, I would be so grateful for whatever you and Therese can do to convey how the three of us, and Rindy, of course, have come together after you and Therese so generously forgave me.”

Harge continued, “I’ll meet Abby whenever and wherever she wishes, with or without you and Therese. I truly want to mend this relationship. It’s very important to Rindy as well.”

“We’ll certainly discuss it with Abby,” said Carol. “Therese and I want to see the air cleared between you and Abby, and we’ll do all we can to set up a meeting. I think if Therese and I were part of a meeting, there would be a better chance for success.”

“Wonderful!” exclaimed Harge. “I can’t wait to hear the result of your attempts. Could you call tomorrow? I know Rindy would love to talk to you both as well.”

“Of course, Harge,” said Carol. “I’ll ring off now so you can get back to your guests. Please give our regards to everyone and a special kiss and hug for Rindy.”

Harge and Carol said their goodbyes. As Carol replaced the phone handset into the cradle, she heard sounds of meal preparation coming from the kitchen.

Carol walked into the kitchen as Therese was finishing the iceberg wedge salad preparations. Therese was so deep in concentration that she didn’t hear Carol until two arms surrounded her.

“Mmmm,” hummed Therese as she felt Carol’s soft breasts against her back.

Carol whispered into Therese’s ear, “Thank you for getting the salad ready.” Carol noticed that Therese had already opened a nice bottle of burgundy and had set out the wine glasses.

“It’s so easy,” replied Therese, as she crushed large croutons between two sheets of wax paper to ready them for quick toasting in the oven.

Carol teased, “Sweetheart, you always say that you’re helpless in the kitchen. I beg to differ. Look at you. You’ve crushed the croutons into breadcrumbs and you’re preparing to freshen them in the oven and you’ve cut the lettuce wedges.”

Therese rolled her eyes and replied with more than a touch of sarcasm. “Oh well, this is so difficult, Carol. I washed the head of lettuce, cut it into quarters and put three of the quarters on plates. Perhaps I should quit my job at The Times and apply for a sous chef position at the Oak Room.”

Carol threw her head back and laughed.

Therese asked, “Should I leave the oven on 350 degrees for the lasagna?”

“Yes,” replied Carol, glancing at the clock. Abby will be here in twenty minutes or less. I must get dressed and fix my hair. Darling, can you finish in the kitchen and get dressed in time?”

“I’m very fast,” twinkled Therese. She set out a small bowl for serving the breadcrumbs and placed the lettuce on plates and put them in the refrigerator. She also poured her newly-purchased blue cheese dressing into a small gravy boat and refrigerated it next to Abby’s requested dessert of New York cheesecake.

Therese laid out the place settings on their dining table with cloth napkins. As she was finalizing
these tasks, Therese decided that she would pull out a favorite album of Abby’s, “Staring Jo Stafford” in readiness to play in the background.

Therese ran to their bedroom and was thankful that she had selected sweater and slacks for the evening before she and Carol took their nap. Therese knew Carol loved how the deep green sweater brought out the green in Therese’s eyes. She fastened her beloved necklace of rubies in a circle on a silver chain that Carol had given her for Christmas in 1953. She fastened her watch and selected simple silver hoop earrings.

Carol wore a white sweater with a gold crescent pin and simple gold earrings. Her slacks were plaid as were Therese’s. Both wore their casual moccasins.

Carol was applying lipstick while seated at the vanity in their bedroom. She had applied red nail polish for the evening, and Therese’s eyes widened at Carol’s glamorous appearance even while dressing casually.

Therese knew Abby would arrive any minute, but she wanted to ensure her hair would be pleasing to Carol. She used the hair dryer and hairspray to create what Carol called her “Audrey Hepburn hairstyle.”

As Therese walked back into their bedroom, Carol looked up at Therese from where she was seated at the vanity. Carol’s breath caught at the sight of her lover.

“Come closer, dearest,” said Carol. As Therese approached the vanity bench where Carol was seated, Carol pulled her into her lap.

“You still need lipstick, my darling,” sighed Carol. “Allow me to apply some.”

Carol arched a her blond eyebrow in anticipation of Therese’s consent. As soon as Therese nodded and smiled, Carol kissed her fully on the lips. Therese’s hands cupped Carol’s cheeks as Carol repeated the kiss.

“Wow,” gasped Therese. “Now that’s what I call lipstick application!”

As the women looked lovingly into each other’s eyes, the doorbell sounded signaling Abby’s arrival.

“Later!” they said in unison, signaling their intentions for the end of the evening.

Therese arose from Carol’s lap and bent into the mirror to repair her lipstick while Carol headed for the door to greet Abby.

The doorbell sounded again.

“Coming!” Carol called out to her best friend.

Carol neared the front door. She checked the mirror next to the door to ensure her lipstick wasn’t smudged by their kiss.

Carol opened the door as was greeted by a beaming Abby carrying a box emitting the aroma of lasagna. They exchanged a double-cheek kiss as was their custom.

“Here, Abby,” said Carol, “Let me take the box. It's so wonderful to see you. It’s been far too long.”

Abby chuckled as she shrugged off her coat and followed Carol to the kitchen. “That’s my fault,
Carol. I’m so sorry that I let my social life get in the way of seeing you and Therese.”

Carol opened the box, then opened a drawer to find some hot pads. “You’re here now, Abby, and that’s what counts. How much longer does the lasagna need to cook?”

“Oh, fifteen minutes should be enough,” answered Abby.

“Well, Therese pre-heated the oven to 350 a while ago,” said Carol as she slid the tasty dish into the oven.

Just then Therese walked into the kitchen. Abby walked over and hugged Therese and said, “I thought you didn’t know how to cook, Therese. Carol informed me that you pre-heated the oven.”

Therese feigned indignity as she replied, “I’ll have you know that I sliced the lettuce wedges and crushed croutons into breadcrumbs.”

Abby and Carol laughed appreciatively as Carol put her arm around Therese’s waist and gave her a loving wink.

Abby’s eyes landed on the bottle of red wine that Therese had opened. “I think we have just enough time to enjoy one glass of wine while my famous lasagna reaches the perfect temperature for serving.”

Therese moved to pour each of them a glass of wine. Abby lit a cigarette and offered one to Carol. Carol’s eyes spoke a silent ‘just one’ plea to Therese, who smiled and pursed her lips in a kiss to Carol.

Abby raised her eyebrows as she lit Carol’s cigarette. “I thought you were on the smoke-free wagon, Carol?”

“Oh, I am,” replied Carol with conviction. You missed the silent ‘permission granted’ look I just received from my true love. Honestly, Abby, I don’t think I smoke over two or three a week. If I didn’t have the lovely case you gave me years ago, a pack would get stale before I smoked them all.”

Therese heard Carol’s explanation to Abby and rewarded Carol with an ear-to-ear smile—dimples included.

“I should quit,” Abby muttered, “but I still enjoy the bar scene with my dates, all of whom smoke except Mary.”

“Mary has quit?” inquired Therese as she re-entered the kitchen after putting the Jo Stafford album on the turntable to play.

“Oh, yes,” replied Abby, with a touch of sarcasm. “Remember the dinner the four of us had at the Ceylon India Inn last month—the day you decided to buy matching rings?” Therese nodded. “Well, you brought up the ‘Cancer by the Carton’ article in Reader’s Digest. Mary went to the Public Library and found it in the December 1952 issue. She read it and re-read it and hasn’t had a cigarette since.”

As unobtrusively as she could, Carol extinguished her cigarette. Carol decided to change the subject. “Let’s go in the living room to finish our wine.”

Abby cocked her head towards the music and smiled appreciatively. “Thanks for playing Jo Stafford for me, Therese.”
Therese smiled and took a seat. “We’re so glad you’re here, Abby.”

Abby returned the smile and said, “I must thank you both for ensuring that one of the apartment building’s guest parking slots had a small sign that read, ‘Reserved for Gerhard.’ Now that’s hospitality!”

Carol asked, “Is your overnight bag in your trunk, Abby?”

Abby grinned mischievously. “We can get my bag later. I’m not sure if I want to join you in your domestic bliss and turn in early or hit the bars. Believe it or not, I don’t have a date later tonight.”

“Is there a story behind that statement, Abby?” asked Carol. “We thought you were dating three women.”

Abby sighed. “Well, it’s not too long a story, but I think it’ll take longer than the lasagna should cook. Let me explain over dinner. Then, I recall that you would like some input on your ring ceremony.”

“That would be wonderful, Abby,” said Therese. “We particularly need some names of merchants in our community who are caterers and printers.”

“I can certainly give you some names. Let’s have dinner and I’ll tell you about my girlfriend adventure, then we can switch gears to your upcoming wedding.”

Both Carol and Therese’s eyebrows shot up at Abby’s last word.

Abby shrugged, then smiled as the loving friend she was. “Well, you’ve bought matching wedding rings, haven’t you? What else is a ‘Ring Ceremony’ as you’re calling it?”

Carol and Therese’s eyes locked on each other in a wondrous, loving look.

Chapter End Notes

I first read of Carol using the perfume, Cuir de Russie in a AO3 single-chapter work, "An apartment big enough for two." by adreadfulidea. I did some research on this perfume on the Internet and was fascinated to read that this French perfume by Chanel was created in 1924 specifically for women who smoked cigarettes--especially in public. Cuir de Russie means "Russian Leather" in French. This perfume was even considered unisex, as some men wore it.

I was fascinated by what I read and I set out on a field trip to the elite Neiman-Marcus department store, because I thought it would be the only store in my city to carry it. Sure enough, a salesperson produced the "tester" with the scent of my intrigue. One sniff later, Carol Aird practically appeared in dreamscape before me. I gulped and purchased .5 ounce for a pretty penny--a very pretty penny. Now I wear it when I am either writing about Carol and Therese or put a tiny bit on my pillow at night before going to sleep in search of a Carol and Therese plot dream. Oh yes, the author adreadfulidea in the previously cited story, wrote of Carol giving Therese a gift of the perfume, Apres l'Ondee. Hmmm. Back to Neiman-Marcus I went and this time it took several quizzical looks from younger sales staff before I was referred to a seasoned staff member who recognized it. It was back ordered. Rather than wait the 6 weeks until it arrives, I found a tiny vial on eBay, sufficient to either whisper
"Therese" or not. It's on its way to me as I write. I'll expand on their perfumes in later chapters.

Another thanks to my favorite AO3 author, Employee645A, for the description of Therese's ruby and silver necklace in her fabulous work, "Built for Two."

Finally, I see the clock has crossed midnight and it's March 1st here in Central Standard Time. I was hoping to post in February, since late February (Feb. 26th) marks one year since I began writing my storyline. I marvel at the fact that I've been writing this storyline for an entire year. Whew. When I started this journey, I had no idea that I would still be writing about these fabulous women a year later (to date, 36 chapters with a total word count of 119,075--that's approximately 250 pages if in a book). In a year, I've covered the fictional time period, February 27th to March 14th 1959. Thanks for sticking with me, dear readers. I'm looking forward to another year of Carol and Therese's adventures in love and life.

By the way, in your comments many of you have said you have been reading my storyline from the beginning, which means we have been together a year. Happy anniversary to us!

Thanks and warmest regards,
Pipestone
Abby Comes to Dinner, Part 2

Chapter Summary

This chapter covers the middle part of the long-awaited dinner of the three friends at Carol and Therese's apartment. Abby tells our heroines about her dalliances with two new women in additional to her longstanding girlfriend, Mary. Also, Carol and Therese express appreciation to Abby for her advice involving TAMPAX (covered in my Chapter 29).

The next chapter will be "Abby Comes to Dinner, Part 3."

Chapter Notes

As always, a special thank you to readers who have given me feedback in the form of a comment. I appreciate the time you spend in composing heartwarming messages. I also appreciate readers who have pressed the "Kudos" button. I'm thrilled that to date 755 of you have given me this form of recognition. Of course, many thanks to all you readers of my storyline, whether you just started to read my work or have been reading it for the past year.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Saturday, March 14, 1959

7:30 PM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

After relaxing with a glass of wine, the three friends prepared to serve dinner. Carol set out the lasagna casserole dish on the kitchen counter. She had already arranged two trivets to protect the counter.

Abby eyed the colorful square hot pads Carol used to hold the casserole. “I’ll bet Rindy made these. They remind me of those we made when we were Girl Scouts.”

Therese said, “Rindy gave them to us two years ago, as a Christmas present. I’m surprised we haven’t showed them to you before.”

Abby noted, “Well, we usually go out to eat when we get together.”

Abby examined the hot pads closely. “These are terrific. I love the colors and patterns. Maybe my goddaughter would make a set for me for Christmas.”

Carol smiled with pride and added, “I think she would love to make some for you, Abby.”

Carol wondered if this might be a good time to bring up Rindy and Harge. ‘No,’ she thought, ‘Abby wants to talk about her girlfriends during dinner.’

Carol was eager to move along to dinner so she requested everyone bring their plates to serve
themselves from the large lasagna dish. Therese placed the salad and dressing on the long dining table. Everyone refilled their own wine glass.

Carol and Therese exclaimed over the Abby’s lasagna and Abby teased Therese over the “complicated” salad—a wedge of iceberg lettuce with breadcrumbs and blue cheese dressing.

“It’s good, Therese,” Abby noted.

Therese smiled good-naturedly and said, “Well, Abby, speaking of complications—we’re eager to hear about all those girlfriends.”

Abby explained how she met both new girlfriends at lesbian bars—Lorene at the lesbian bar, L’s and Alice at The Sea Colony.

“Of course, they’re both redheads,” Abby joked.

“Of course,” Carol said. Everyone laughed.

“What does Mary think of all this?” asked Carol.

Abby’s shoulders sagged as she rubbed her forehead. “It’s very tense, to say the least.” Abby explained how Mary is not pleased, even though Mary occasionally sees other women. “Mary says I’m the only woman she sleeps with.”

“Here’s the most awkward part.” Abby continued. “Last night I was on a date with Lorene. We had gone to dinner and decided to go dancing. When we arrived at The Sea Colony, Mary was on the dance floor.”

“Please tell us that she wasn’t dancing with Alice,” said Carol.

Abby shook her head and replied, “Can you believe that in a city of nearly eight million people…” Abby didn’t finish the sentence.

Carol thought to herself, ‘Thank God I’m not part of the dating scene.’

Therese reached for Carol’s hand and thought to herself, ‘Thank God I’m not part of the dating scene.’

“What does Mary think of all this?” asked Therese.

“Well,” Abby sighed, “We made the necessary introductions. I told Lorene that I no longer felt like dancing and asked if we could go to L’s and have a drink. She knew something was up, but she waited until we had been served at L’s and had a cigarette to ask why I wanted to leave.”

Carol said with a smile, “Well, Abby, how did you explain yourself?”

Abby groaned, “It was too complicated to lie, so I just told her the truth.”

Therese said impatiently, “Abby, what happened next?”

“She was amazed by the irony of it all, but she wasn’t pleased. She thought I was only dating her.” Abby explained. “She asked me if we could leave and we took a cab to her apartment. She didn’t ask me to come up, so I just got in my car and drove back to New Jersey.”

“Abby, you should have called. You could have stayed here,” said Carol.

“Well,” Abby replied, “I thought you would have been asleep, or otherwise engaged.”
Carol remembered last night’s late events, including the misunderstanding with Therese and their near-car wreck and decided that it was probably best that Abby returned to New Jersey.

The three friends continued to eat as Abby resumed her story.

Abby explained, “I’m not certain what to do about the whole situation. I’m not comfortable with Mary’s jealousy, but neither Lorene nor Alice have any permanent ‘feel.’ Actually, Mary doesn’t either, because we’ve been dating for six years and neither Mary nor I have talked of moving in together.”

Abby summed up her story by saying that she’s content to just see Lorene and Alice occasionally—if either wants to date her again.

“Quite frankly,” Abby said, “it may be time to try to cultivate meaningful friendships and have fun dates without ending every date night in bed. I’ve been stuck in a routine of superficiality and physical pleasure without getting to know the person I’m going out with better.”

“I want try once more with Mary. Right now she doesn’t want to talk to me. Oh yes, Mary and Alice compared notes and my little girlfriend secret was no longer a secret.” Abby concluded glumly.

There was a pause in the conversation. Abby stretched, rubbed her neck and said, “I told you the girlfriend story wouldn’t take long to tell.”

Carol stood up and went to Abby and rubbed Abby’s shoulders with affection. “I’m sorry, Abby,” said Carol. Abby patted one of Carol’s hands.

“Well,” said Abby with resignation, “Let’s talk about something happier—your upcoming ring ceremony.”

Therese put on the Billie Holiday album, “Lady in Satin,” at a low volume and returned to the dining area.

Therese cleared their plates and inquired of Carol and Abby whether they wanted Sanka or coffee. They opted for coffee, as did Therese. Carol and Abby adjourned to the living area to get ready for dessert.

While Therese was still in the kitchen, Carol thanked Abby for the TAMPAX advice. Carol laughed and said, “Only close friends can have these kinds of conversations.” Abby nodded.

Carol informed Abby that Therese was using the tampons and that they both enjoyed the freedom offered by the product. Carol added, “I won’t be needing them until my period which is closer to the end of the month.”

“Unfortunately, using tampons can’t solve all the barriers to having sex during the first days of one’s period,” Abby said while lighting a cigarette.

Carol arched a blonde eyebrow and smiled mysteriously.

Abby took a deep drag on her cigarette and furrowed her brow.” You aren’t, are you?” said a shocked Abby.

Therese appeared with a tray containing the three coffee cups, cream, sugar and spoons.

Therese asked, “What are we doing or what are we not doing that would cause you to have a such
a look on your face, Abby?”

Carol turned to Therese and answered for Abby who was still sitting in stunned silence, “Dearest, apparently, we aren’t supposed to make love during the first days of your period while you are still bleeding more heavily.”

Therese exchanged a teasing look with Carol and said, “Oops, it’s too late, Abby.”

Carol had a proud grin on her face and she repeated, “Oops, indeed.”

Abby spluttered, “But, but…you’ll get blood on your hands.”

Carol and Therese said in unison, “Washable!” and dissolved into giggles.

Abby cocked her head and said thoughtfully, “Perhaps I’ve learned something.” A thought occurred to her and she added, “What about the sheets?”

Carol answered with a mischievous grin, “Don’t you have any old bath towels, Abby, preferably dark colored ones?”

Abby was still wearing the aghast expression. “Vampires…” she muttered.

Carol and Therese laughed. Therese crossed behind the couch where Carol was sitting and playfully bared her teeth against Carol’s neck.

Abby looked at Therese and back to Carol and said, “You are kidding, aren’t you?”

Carol said, “Abby, I recall that only two days ago, you and I talked while I was the only one in O’Halloran’s at the time and you told me how TAMPAX solved your lovemaking problems during your or your girlfriend’s period.”

“Well,” Abby blushed and said quietly, “I didn’t mean that you could do anything that you could do when you weren’t having your period.” Abby continued while blushing, “Surely you don’t…”

Carol held up her hand to get Abby’s attention. “Abby, dear, even close friends don’t have this intimate a conversation. At any rate, we’re quite grateful for the enlightenment.”

Therese winked at Abby and distributed their coffees and said she would return with the New York cheesecake that Abby had requested. Carol watched Therese’s exit with a clear expression of love in her eyes. Abby couldn’t resist a comment.

“Carol, it’s so crystal clear that you absolutely adore her, don’t you?” asked Abby.

“Oh, I do, Abby,” replied Carol. “As a matter of fact, it’s getting difficult to hide my love for Therese in public.” Carol proceeded to tell Abby the story of how she was able to persuade Therese to try on the dark pink outfit at Bloomingdale’s.


Therese reentered the living room with dessert. “I heard that!” said Therese. “Carol merely had to bat her beautiful blond eyelashes at me to get me into the dressing room with the outfit, and the efficient saleslady was on her way to the costume jewelry department to bring back matching pink earrings and necklace.”

“Dearest, do you think my patting your delightful behind in the dressing room helped seal the deal?” Carol asked Therese.
Abby rolled her eyes.

Therese replied, “No, my love, recall that I was swatting your hand and telling you to behave.”

“Umhmm,” said Carol.

“See what I mean?” said Abby with a laugh. “You two lovebirds can’t keep your hands off each other even in public.”

“We weren’t exactly ‘in public.’ We were in a dressing room with the door closed,” said Carol, “Besides, we had a very sympathetic saleslady, to say the least. She was one of us.”

“Really?” said Abby, instantly interested in a situation where a saleslady would divulge her sexuality to customers.

Carol explained, “Miss Ford was very subtle about it. As I signed the American Express bill for Therese’s purchase and I think she gathered from the way we spoke to each other and looked at each other that we were romantically involved.”

Abby repeated, “You two don’t exactly hide your affection for each other—even in public.”

“Actually,” Carol continued, “Miss Ford tapped the wedding ring on her right ring finger and smiled at me.”

“Tell Abby what you said, darling,” prompted Therese.

“Well,” Carol said with a sly smile, “I leaned into the counter and quietly told her that we were going to exchange rings next month.”

“That’s not all, my love,” said Therese, sitting down next to Carol and placing a hand on her thigh. “Tell Abby how you introduced me.” Therese turned to Abby with a grin and said, “Keep in mind that I was totally unaware of the ring conversation. I had just left the dressing room for the checkout counter.”

“Well,” Carol said blushing slightly, “I said, ‘Allow me to introduce my companion, Therese Belivet.’”

“Holy shit, Carol!” exclaimed Abby. “You really put one over on Therese.”

“Well,” said Carol, looking at Therese with affection, “that wasn’t my intention, but it certainly worked out that way.”

Abby urged them to provide more information. “How did you leave it? Are you going to shop with her again? And most important of all, does she have a sister?” asked Abby.

Carol rolled her eyes at Abby’s last question. “She gave me her card and invited us to allow her to show us some fashions that would be appropriate if we were going to have a ring exchange ceremony—which we are, of course.”

Abby excitedly said, “I’d be thrilled to accompany each of you on your shopping trip for ring ceremony attire. You do realize that you shouldn’t see each other’s outfit before the ceremony.”

“We do,” said Therese, “and we would certainly appreciate your assistance.”

Carol cautioned, “Remember, Miss Ford already has a companion with whom she has exchanged a ring.”
Abby grinned as she said, “I just want to know if she has a sister.”

Therese rolled her eyes and held up her hand for counting Abby’s girlfriends on her fingers. Therese said, “So far there’s Mary, Lorene and Alice, and you’re looking for a fourth?”

Abby sighed and replied, “Not really; I may not have any girlfriends before long, or I may have four. I still stand by the statements I made during dinner about casual sex”

Abby continued, “Honestly, I would give anything to have the kind of relationship that you two have. You enjoy each other, find each other mentally stimulating, have a great family with Rindy and yet you still set the sheets on fire in the bedroom.”

Carol blushed as did Therese. Carol spoke first, “I won’t argue any of your descriptions of the life we have together, but Abby, we are just extremely fortunate, plus we work at our relationship to keep it exciting and fresh.”

Abby leaned in and said, “Now I want to ask you two something. Perhaps this is too personal, but…”

“Go ahead, Abby, dear,” said Carol. Therese nodded her assent as well.

“OK,” Abby said nervously. “You don’t have to answer if you don’t feel comfortable.”

“Please ask,” Carol said to her best friend.

“Can each of you say for certain that you cannot foresee any circumstance in which you would go outside the relationship?”

“For sex?” asked Therese, with eyebrows raised. Abby nodded.

Carol and Therese looked at each other with a loving look, then smiled. Therese spoke first. “In just a few weeks we’re going to have a ceremony to exchange rings. Carol and I have discussed some parts of the vows we’ll make to one another in front of our friends. I want to use some of the same wording found in the traditional wedding vows when I say that I will be true to Carol, forsaking all others until death do us part; so no, I will never go outside the relationship for sex.”

Carol took Therese’s hand and said, “I plan to say the same. I know that in my previous marriage to Harge, I broke those vows, but we all know the reason. I’m now with the person I want to spend my life. I will never be untrue to Therese…ever.”

Carol stood up, went to where Abby was seated and leaned over and kissed the top of Abby’s head. Therese joined her and kissed Abby’s cheek. “We both love you, Abby,” said Therese.

Abby brushed tears from her eyes and said, “You’ve helped me make some important decisions tonight.”

Abby sought to change the subject. “How about a brandy—not too much, so that we can stay sharp to talk about your ring ceremony. It’s going to be fabulous you know.”

“Agreed!” Carol laughingly called out as she went to get the brandy snifters and brandy. Therese cleared the coffee and dessert plates and took the dishes into the kitchen. Therese scurried into the office to get her new portfolio with legal pad and a pen, ready to take notes.

Therese secured the writing materials and headed back to the living area, but decided to detour into the kitchen where Carol was pouring brandy into three snifters.
Therese told Carol, “Just pour a very small amount for me, darling. I want to be sharp for taking notes.” Carol smiled at Therese and nodded.

The two lovers heard sounds of Abby snapping her cigarette case closed, the lighter wheel’s ‘scratch, scratch’ sound as it produced a flame, and a soft “ahh” from Abby as she took a deep drag of the lighted cigarette.

“My love, if you want to have one cigarette with Abby while enjoying your brandy it’s fine with me.” Therese moved closer to Carol.

Carol set the brandy decanter on the counter and paused from pouring their drinks; she took the portfolio from Therese and laid it on the counter too.

“No dearest,” said Carol. “Here’s what I need instead of a cigarette; come here, you.”

Carol pulled Therese firmly against her body and wrapped her arms around Therese’s waist.

Therese’s arms encircled Carol’s neck and one of her hands slipped into Carol’s hair. She pulled Carol’s head down as their eyes closed and their lips came together in a lingering kiss.

They didn’t even notice that Abby had reentered the kitchen. Abby cleared her throat. Carol and Therese broke from their kiss and turned to face Abby—grinning like guilty children caught with their hands in a cookie jar.

Abby sighed and shook her head, “I was going to ask you if lovemaking with the same person ever became boring after six years. I guess you’ve answered my question.”

Carol and Therese spoke at the very same time, “No!”

The three friends burst into peals of laughter.

Chapter End Notes

The two lesbian bars I mention (L’s and The Sea Colony) were operating in 1959 in New York City.

Both record albums mentioned in the chapter were issued prior to 1959.

I imagine most of you are familiar with trivets, or objects made of various materials to protect surfaces from hot dishes. The "tri" in trivets indicates "three" and in this case a three-legged design is optimal to minimize wobbling on uneven surfaces (source: Wikipedia).

The potholders that Rindy made were created using a 7 inch by 7 inch metal loom that has small vertical-standing prongs on each of the four sides. Cloth loops, made of a material such as jersey are stretched across the loom and hooked on the vertical set of prongs. With the use of a long crochet hook, other jersey loops are hooked onto one prong along the horizontally-positioned side then threaded through the vertically-positioned loops until the opposing prong is reached. Then that end of the loop is positioned over the other horizontal prong. The edge finishing is a bit complicated, but the entire process can be viewed on the Internet via short videos.

(Yikes, I just re-read my instructions for making these handy potholders and they’re
not the best. Check out the videos on the Internet. They're a bit of a yawn, but if you're into crafts... )

You can create myriads of patterns with the colors. You can purchase the loom, crochet hook and a sack of loops as a set. Search the Internet for the many dealers who sell this inexpensive set. We still have a couple of potholders I made when I was in grade school over 60 years ago and use them in our kitchen. Needless to say, they've quite broken in from repeated washings. I still make these potholders to give as gifts.

Finally, Sanka is a brand of instant decaffeinated coffee. It was one of the earliest decaf coffees marketed in the U.S. Sanka was a sponsor of many popular television shows of the 1950s. There's an interesting write-up about Sanka in Wikipedia. If you love coffee, you will probably find this interesting.
Abby Comes to Dinner, Part 3

Chapter Summary

This chapter covers the end of the dinner itself at Carol and Therese's apartment with Abby attending.

The last chapter covered a dinner discussion of Abby's dalliances with two new women in additional to her longstanding girlfriend, Mary. This chapter covers the assistance Carol and Therese seek from Abby in planning their ring ceremony. Abby has already given them the most important advice, i.e., Devon Jewelry where Carol and Therese purchased their fabulous rings. Now our heroines are seeking more advice from Abby and also they're requesting that Abby play an important role in the ring ceremony itself.

Finally, Carol and Therese urge Abby to join them in forgiving Harge for his past behavior. They explain how much Harge has changed for the better and how forgiving Harge has brought happiness to Rindy.

Chapter Notes

IMPORTANT NOTE. PLEASE READ:
After I post the chapter (Chapter 39) after this chapter, I will be taking a leave of absence until the end of April. I'm not abandoning this story and I'm not going to leave you hanging, but I will be absent for a while--probably will post again by May 1st if not sooner.

I am going on a very important field trip. I'll be in New York City from April 11-19 to celebrate my wife's 70th birthday and our 46th anniversary. Our anniversary is on April 18th, just like that of Carol and Therese. I plan to do a lot of Carol and Therese research. We are staying in one of those apartment rentals and it's on Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side. It's Carol land! I'll publish one more chapter (Chapter 39) which is nearly finished before we leave, then I won't post another until the end of April. Please bear with me. If you thought my field trip to chase down their perfume (see end notes to Chapter 36), was cool, just wait until I bring back information from this ultimate Carol field trip! As Rindy would say, "Yay!" I'll be thinking of you readers while I'm there.

Many thanks to readers who have provided feedback. I send a very special thank you to readers who have given me feedback in the form of a comment. I appreciate the time you spent in composing your remarks. I try to answer all comments within 48 hours of when you post them. Your comments give me the strength to keep writing. Believe it or not, writing is hard--rewarding but hard, especially when I strive to be as historically accurate as possible.

Here is my pledge to you. I will not under any circumstance except serious illness or death (that does bring writing to a grinding halt) leave this story "hanging" before I have completed the Easter Parade with Rindy's bonnet, their Ring Ceremony and their honeymoon and Rindy's birthday (that occurs just after they return from the
honeyymoon). After that I just don't know. My continuation will depend to a large part on reader interest and encouragement. I do need to know that you care about my continuing to write this storyline.

Regards,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Abby Comes to Dinner, Part 3

Saturday, March 14 1959

8:45 PM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

Carol, Therese and Abby had enjoyed a delicious dinner with the kind of meaningful conversation, laughter, and love that only the best of friends share.

Therese put aside the dishes from dining, post-dinner coffee and dessert. Now it was time for some serious ring ceremony planning activities.

Abby had agreed to provide Carol and Therese with the names of some entrepreneurs who could be resources for their ceremony scheduled for April 18th.

Therese was returning from their office with writing materials when she slipped into the kitchen where Carol was pouring brandy into three snifters. With Abby lighting yet another cigarette, Therese and Carol decided to take advantage of a moment alone to share an embrace and a kiss.

Abby must have sensed something other than after-dinner drink preparation was going on in the kitchen and upon investigation, witnessed a kiss that sizzled with emotion. When Abby announced her presence by clearing her throat, Carol and Therese turned to their good friend with guilty chuckles.

“Well,” Abby said with an exasperated expression, “can’t a person get served in the lovebirds’ nest without time set aside for smooching in the kitchen?” She winked her approval at the two lovers.

“We really are ready to start planning the ring ceremony, Abby,” explained Carol. “Therese was standing next to me and I just couldn’t resist a kiss.”

Therese blushed and agreed. “Oh, we are absolutely ready for your advice, Abby, especially the names of some places of business where we would be comfortable seeking their services for our ceremony.”

Each woman took her drink into the living area. Carol and Therese sat next to each other on the couch. Therese was on Carol’s right for ease of writing and Abby returned to her favorite chair.

Abby asked if they had general categories of their questions.

Carol turned to Therese and said “Dearest, I believe you already have categories in mind.” Carol smiled proudly at the organizational skills of her lover.

Therese began. “We will need the name of a printer because we want a short program for each of
our guests with the order of the activities of our ceremony. It can also serve as memento of the occasion.”

Carol added, “We would really like to have a black and white picture of the two of us on the front of the program.”

Abby asked, “Are you going to send printed invitations?”

Therese and Carol weren’t surprised by Abby’s question. They had already discussed printed invitations. Carol spoke first, and directed her remarks primarily to Abby. “We discussed the pros and cons of invitations, Abby, dear, but in the end we decided against it. Although an invitation would be wonderful, there will be very few attendees.”

Therese added, “At my work, someone who received an invitation might inadvertently leave it on top of their desk and another person might wonder why they weren’t invited. The same goes for Carol’s workplace.”

Carol stretched and put her arm around Therese and pulled her close. “Can you imagine, though,” Carol said longingly while gazing at Therese, “an invitation that reads ‘Carolyn Ross Aird and Therese Marie Belivet request your presence to celebrate their love and commitment with a double ring ceremony,’ and so on.”

Therese looked adoringly at Carol and with her left hand reached over and cupped Carol’s left cheek. Carol captured Therese’s hand and kissed her palm.

Abby looked at her friends with pride realizing that they would be so open by having an invitation were it not for the difficulties limited attendees caused.

Abby opened her address book and said, “Write this down. ‘Printing Art Press,’ is located at 417 Lafayette in the Village. Their phone is GR7-8675. Ask for James. I know this isn’t in your neighborhood, but Mary knows one of the owners and they’re bohemian to say the least. They’ll do a great job and won’t even raise an eyebrow at your print request. Also, they’re a small shop and will give you a quick turnaround.”

“We have our potential guest list finalized, with one or two exceptions,” said Therese. Carol nodded.

Therese added, “There will be guests who will be invited to play a role in the ceremony.”

Abby looked at them expectantly.

Carol said, “For example, we want you, Abby, to have the role of a kind of mistress of ceremonies. There will be several parts of the ceremony that will need an explanation. We would appreciate it if you would accept this role.”

Abby blushed and said, “I would be honored to play any role you wish in your ceremony, but can you give me an example of what would need an explanation?”

Therese answered, “Jumping the Broom.”

Abby’s eyebrows shot up. “Perhaps you could explain that one to me now.”

Therese explained, “One of my co-workers, Carmen Williams, is a Negro and knowledgeable about this custom that was used by slaves in the South before the Civil War. Slaves were not allowed to legally marry, but Carmen said Negroes married by jumping the broom. The couple would pledge their love for each other. Then holding hands, they would jump over a broom that
had been placed behind the couple—assuming that the couple was facing a figure of authority. If there were no figure of authority present, then the broom was placed on the ground in front of the couple. After the couple pledged their lives to each other, they held hands and jumped over the broom, signifying the start of a new life together. We want Carmen to explain the background and significance of this substitute for marriage that was used by people who were not able to legally marry.”

Abby’s mouth was open as Therese continued telling how Carmen offered to make a wedding broom for them to use in the ceremony and keep.

“How incredibly generous of her,” said Abby. “I had no idea that this custom existed.”

Abby asked, “Would I just introduce Carmen and say that she will provide the background on the custom of jumping the broom?”

“Exactly,” said Therese with a smile. Abby nodded.

Abby said, “I would be glad to take the role of keeping the different parts of the ceremony moving.” Carol and Therese smiled.

Abby asked, “What about a cake?”

Therese answered, “Dannie’s girlfriend, Louise, knows a bakery that would be happy to decorate a sheet cake with ‘Carol and Therese’ and the date on it.”

Carol added, “Given the small attendees list, we think a white sheet cake with white icing and lavender lettering would be beautiful.”

Abby arched an eyebrow as she repeated, “Lavender?”

Therese answered, “Abby, lavender is our community’s color—at least as far as I know. I’ve heard it mentioned at Daughters of Bilitis and Mattachine Society meetings.”

Therese added, “We want to have the ceremony catered so that we can be free to mingle with our guests.”

Abby scratched her head. “Honestly, I don’t think I can help you with caterers in Manhattan, but I’ll keep up my inquiries. It will give me an excuse to talk to Mary,” Abby said with a wan smile.

Carol recalled something that Grace Goldman had mentioned to her during a visit to O’Halloran’s. Carol said, “Grace Goldman is my best customer, Abby. She said they use a catering service that is very discrete. They must be discrete if they catered Grace and Jerry’s apartment. They live several blocks away on Madison Avenue.”

Abby had a blank look on her face, so Carol explained. “Jerry Goldman is Vice President of the Metro Division at The New York Times. We attended a small dinner party at their apartment this week as a couple with two heterosexual couples. Anyway, Grace told me that they use a wonderful catering service who knows how to be discrete when dealing with clientele who write the news. I think they would be with us, too. I certainly don’t mind asking Grace.”

Therese said, “We don’t need many servers, but we want the catering service to bring their own food and dishes. We prefer to pay for the liquor and soft drinks separately, but sometimes caterers insist that is a part of the package.”

“What kind of food and drinks have you planned?” queried Abby.
Carol said, “Well, we thought of heavy hors d’oeuvres to eat. We want to have the ceremony around 4:00 PM in the afternoon. That way people would be able to make other plans for dinner and a Saturday evening out. People will be hungry, and we’ll give them something substantial, but not a sit-down dinner.”

Therese added, “The celebration should be over in two hours. As Carol said, that will give people an opportunity to attend other events in the evening.” Abby nodded agreement.

“One other thing,” said Carol, “Our apartment is fairly small for all the food service that must happen in the background. I had planned to ask our next-door neighbors, Levi and Berta Katz, to attend the ceremony. Perhaps they might be willing to have some staging done in their apartment.”

Abby smiled, “That would solve a lot of logistical issues.” Abby turned to Therese and inquired, “Shall I assume that you’re handling the music?”

“I certainly am,” answered Therese. “I’ll work with Dannie’s brother, Phil, who has access to a reel-to-reel tape recorder. I will supply the records and he will transfer them to tape. During the ceremony, Phil will work the tape recorder—starting and stopping it at agreed-upon times.”

Abby took a large sip of her brandy. “Well, friends, you seem to have a lot of the details worked out and I’ve given you my input. Shall I make my way to the bars tonight?”

Carol looked to Therese, then back to Abby. Carol began, “Abby, dear, we really need to discuss one more subject with you that’s very important.”

Abby had begun to rise out of her seat, but sat back down. She reached for a cigarette. Carol looked at Therese who nodded ascent, knowing that Carol wanted to have a cigarette, too. Carol opened her own cigarette case and leaned toward Abby for a light.

Both women inhaled deeply and exhaled. Therese sat up a bit straighter and took Carol’s hand.

“Well,” Abby observed, “it looks like it’s that kind of discussion.”

“It is,” admitted Carol. “Do you remember this morning when I spoke with you on the phone that Harge had become very supportive of my relationship with Therese?”

“I do remember,” said Abby, tapping some cigarette ash into the ashtray. “I was completely surprised when you said ‘very supportive’ and I assumed that you must be exaggerating.”

“I’m not exaggerating, Abby,” said Carol. Harge is a changed man. The change began last October when he was taken to the hospital with chest pains. I told you about that, did I not?” Abby nodded.

“Well, Harge wasn’t sure if he would survive or not, and he wanted to clear his conscience, so he begged me to forgive him for all the horrible things that he had done leading up to the divorce and after the divorce. Actually, he had started to be more pleasant before the health issue, but the hospital experience was the catalyst for his complete change of heart.”

Abby was mesmerized by Carol’s story. She leaned forward and asked, “What has happened since that episode?”

Carol replied, “A couple of weeks ago, Harge called to tell us about an incident that occurred while Rindy was attending a sleepover at her best friend Karen’s home. Karen’s mother overheard the two girls talking about Karen’s uncles, who share the mansion with Karen and her divorced mother. Karen told Rindy that her uncles were in love with each other.”
Abby began to chuckle. She said, “If I know my goddaughter, Rindy probably chimed in that her mother and her Aunt Therese were in love, too.”

Carol smiled with pride and said, “Of course she did. At any rate, Marjorie Sinclair invited all of us to lunch with Karen, Rindy, Harge and the uncles in attendance to talk to the girls about being discrete. When Harge drove us back to his home, we had a heart-to-heart talk with Rindy and offered to answer any questions she had about our relationship.”

Abby slapped her knee and laughed. “I’ll bet that took a while.”

“It did,” replied Carol. “Through the conversation with Rindy, Harge and I had the most honest exchange we’ve ever had. I explained how I had always liked girls better than boys, but married Harge because society expected it. I told Rindy that even though I liked girls better, Harge and I wanted to have a baby and that’s how she came into the world. Harge was so supportive during the entire conversation. Rindy kept asking if the three of us were no longer mad at each other. That was her main concern.”

Therese spoke up, “She’s not exaggerating, Abby. It’s true.” Both women turned to look at Therese. Therese continued, “I can’t describe the depth and breadth of the anger and resentment I had in the past toward Harge for hurting the love of my life. I had believed previously that it would be impossible for me to ever forgive him.”

Therese paused, and during the pause, Abby asked Therese, “You’ve forgiven him, too?”

Therese took a deep breath. Carol squeezed her hand. Therese addressed Abby. “Yes, I’ve forgiven him. He tearfully begged for forgiveness back in October and after some hesitation, I forgave him. I’m not saying that I’ll ever forget what happened, but I am moving forward, for Rindy’s sake, and for Carol’s sake, since she has forgiven him. If Carol can forgive Harge, then who am I to do otherwise?”

Abby sat in stunned silence. She took another drink and looked at her best friend and said, “Carol, I don’t understand how you can forgive him.”

Carol looked deep into Abby’s eyes and said one word, “Rindy.”

Abby nodded in understanding.

Carol continued, “Abby, you absolutely would not believe the change in Rindy now that Therese and I have forgiven Harge. She is the happiest little girl you would ever meet. Oh, you should hear the laughter and happy chatter when we talk on the phone each day.”

Abby’s eyebrows shot up. “You talk with Rindy every day?”

“We certainly do,” Carol said with a bright smile. “She calls me whenever she wants. Now the legal papers have been signed for joint custody. Harge is even working on a way to legally assure Therese would get custody of Rindy should something happen to us both.”

Therese interjected to an astonished Abby, “Harge’s father has welcomed me into the family. Those were his very words.”

“What about Harge’s mother?” asked Abby.

“Well…” Carol began, “Harge has told her in no uncertain terms that he will not tolerate her negative talk about the two of us in Rindy’s presence and Harge’s father has pledged to back him up.”
Carol continued, “We no longer have a set visitation schedule. Oh, every other weekend seems to work the best, but there’s flexibility as long as Harge and I agree. Rindy can have input, too.”

Therese told Abby, “Both of us talk on the phone to Harge as well. We laugh and are always polite to each other. It’s sincere, too. As Carol said, Rindy knows Carol and I love each other so there’s no more hiding. Rindy and Karen both have same sex couples in their families and the girls know that they can talk with each other about us but to no one else.”

“And, there’s no more fear of some kind of reprisal from Harge,” said Carol. “We can be ourselves. It’s a freedom that is beyond description.”

Abby extinguished her cigarette. It had long since burned into a trail of ash as Abby was too focused on Carol and Therese’s words to smoke. Abby stood and put her hand to her forehead.

Carol and Therese waited anxiously for Abby to speak.

Abby began, “Rindy is my goddaughter and you both know how much I love her.” Carol and Therese nodded.

“I want to do whatever is in Rindy’s best interest, even if I may be somewhat skeptical. Therefore, I’ll follow your example, and put aside my resentments even though they’re very deep in my heart. I’ll give Harge a chance—a chance to show me that he’s a changed man.”

Carol and Therese leapt to their feet and embraced Abby. Tears flowed from the eyes of all of the women.

Abby said while hugging her friends, “It’s the dawn of a new era of forgiveness.”

Chapter End Notes

I refer to the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) and the Mattachine Society in this chapter, too. Please refer to the notes about the DOB in Chapter 3 within the text of the story. I mention the predominately male organization, The Mattachine Society, in my Chapter 3, but if you are interested in finding out more about The Mattachine Society, I suggest browsing the Internet.

Therese mentions the color, lavender, as "our community's color. I've found some historic notes on the Internet that confirm that lavender was a symbol of homosexuality in the in 1950s.

This chapter's most interesting historical note (my opinion) was the "old way" telephone numbers were presented. Notice in this chapter the use of letters and numbers. The telephone number of the printer Abby recommends is GR7-8675. The GR stands for "GRamercy" and the number "7" was associated with GRamercy. Even in the telephone directories, the words were spelled out. I found a 1946 Manhattan phone book on the Internet and happened to pick this printer because it was located on Lafayette Street in the more bohemian Village near New York University. Different geographic regions of New York City had distinctive telephone exchanges. For example, the posh Upper East Side where Carol and Therese live had several exchanges, one of which was "BU" which stands for "Butterfield" and the number following it was "8."
Some of you who love old movies may recognize a film released in 1960 starring Elizabeth Taylor called "BUtterfield 8" but did you ever notice that both the B and the U are capitalized in the movie's title.

So, a telephone exchange name was a distinguishing, memorable name that was associated with a maximum of 10,000 subscribers. That's why there were so many names and letters in mid-century America. By the early 1960s the demand for telephone service outpaced the alphanumeric system and letters and numbers were converted to numbers only. For example, I remember when I was in grade school, the phone service in our small Oklahoma town needed operators to place the calls. Our home phone had no dial. We picked up the receiver and gave the operator the number we wanted to reach. As I recall, in 1958 we switched to a rotary dial phone and we were given alphanumeric letters and numbers. My parents' phone was FEderal 2-2735. Then in the early 1960s, the "FE" was dropped and our number was just 332-2735. Eventually area codes came along and our phone was 405-332-2735. Area code 405 covered all of Oklahoma. Not too many years ago, Oklahoma needed to be divided into two area codes and my hometown's area code changed, much to the dismay of the old-timers.

If you look carefully in older parts of cities, you may see faded signs on old buildings that still have the old letter plus numbers as the telephone number. It's very interesting to find these.

IMPORTANT! Remember I'll be on leave after the next chapter (Chapter 39) is posted. I'll return about May 1st. I'm not leaving you forever. See the top note for complete information on my leave.

Regards,
Pipestone
Goodnight, Abby

Chapter Summary

This chapter covers the end of the evening of Abby's visit to Carol and Therese's apartment to help plan the ring ceremony and for the three friends to spend time together. The chapter begins immediately after the end of Chapter 38, so it would make more sense to read them in order. Basically, my entire storyline builds chapter after chapter.

Chapter Notes

IMPORTANT. PLEASE READ.
Now that I've posted this chapter (Chapter 39), I will be taking a leave of absence until the beginning of May. I'm not abandoning this story and I'm not going to leave you hanging, but I will be absent for a while--I probably will post again by first week of May 1st.

I am going on a very important field trip. I'll be in New York City from April 11-19 to celebrate my wife's 70th birthday and our 46th anniversary. Our anniversary is on April 18th, just like that of Carol and Therese. I plan to do a lot of Carol and Therese research. We are staying in one of those apartment rentals and it's on Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side. It's Carol land! We'll be on Madison Avenue on Easter to see the Easter bonnets. I can't wait.

Many thanks to readers who have provided feedback. I send a very special thank you to readers who have given me feedback in the form of a comment. Your comments give me the strength to keep writing. Believe it or not, writing is hard--rewarding but hard, especially when I strive to be as historically accurate as possible.

I usually try to answer all comments within 48 hours of when you post them, but I may take a bit longer due to the trip.

I'll be back with a chapter before the end of the first week in May. I will answer comments during my absence, but the answers may be brief because I'll be using my iPhone to type them.

Regards,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sunday, March 15 1959

12:30 AM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

After a time, the three women stepped back from their embrace. All three were wiping their eyes. Therese stepped into their bedroom in search of tissues.
“Do you still want to go out to the bars, Abby?” asked Carol.

Abby shook her head ‘no’ and said, “This has been very emotional and I feel very comfy here with you two.” Carol smiled at Abby with affection.

Therese returned with the tissues which Carol and Abby took with gratitude. Therese offered to go downstairs to get Abby’s bag from her car.

“Is it safe to be prowling around the back of your building at this time of night?” asked Abby.

Carol glanced at the clock on the mantle over the fireplace. The clock read 12:30. Carol turned to Therese. “Dearest, could you go down to the night doorman and ask him to accompany you to Abby’s car?”

“Sure,” replied Therese. She slipped into her coat and headed for the door. Abby handed her the car keys and informed Therese that there was a single small suitcase in the trunk.

While Therese was gone, Abby asked Carol if she could have some chamomile tea to help her get sleepy.

“I’ll fix some for all of us,” replied Carol as she started for the kitchen.

Abby started looking through the magazines in the metal magazine rack near the couch. She selected one issue of Brides, the latest issue of the Saturday Evening Post, and the March issue of National Geographic which featured an article on the upcoming opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway which would open the Great Lakes to the Atlantic.

Carol noticed Abby’s choices. “Well, Abigail, you have an eclectic collection of reading material there.” Abby smiled.

Carol glanced at the National Geographic’s cover. “The seaway will open in late June. I’m sure it will be televised and I certainly want to ensure that Rindy watches the event. Both Queen Elizabeth and President Eisenhower will lead the ceremonies.”

Abby laughed, “Well, Rindy may not be excited about watching the opening of the seaway. It’ll be summertime and she’ll have other things on her agenda.”

Carol smiled slyly. “Harge and I have already agreed that whatever plans she has, watching this historical event will take precedent. When Rindy is older than we are now, she can tell her grandchildren that she saw the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway.”

Abby noted, “The three of you are determined that Rindy is going to be well-versed in current events.”

“We are going to try our best, Abby,” replied Carol.

The two best friends turned at the sound of the front door of the apartment opening. Therese entered, her cheeks red from the cold. “Brrrr!” exclaimed Therese as she set the suitcase down and rubbed her hands together to warm them.

Abby stepped forward to take her suitcase and Carol helped Therese with her coat. Carol took Therese into her arms and hugged her.

“Mmmm,” said Therese. “What a nice way to get warm.”
“Dearest,” announced Carol. “I’m making some chamomile tea for all of us. Then it’s bedtime. Abby has already picked out some nighttime reading material.”

Therese noted Abby’s selections. “Good choice,” said Therese. “We probably will go right to sleep after our shopping excursion today.”

Abby strolled over to the entrance to their bedroom and examined the small bell with a gold ribbon attached. The bell occupied the phone niche in the wall.

Abby rang the bell and Carol and Therese immediately turned toward the sound.

“Well, well,” said Abby, “what have we here?”

Both Carol and Therese blushed. Therese explained that the idea came from Karen’s uncles. Therese explained, “Apparently, Karen had knocked on their door when the men were… err… indisposed; therefore, the uncles suggested that a bell might be the best way to announce yourself. The person ringing the bell would not necessarily expect a quick response; perhaps there would be no response from within. If there were no response, the ringer of the bell would try later.”

Abby looked from Therese to Carol and said, “Who are these uncles? Are they flamboyant like Jonathan Devon?” Carol and Therese began to giggle and the giggles turned into laughter.

“Oh, okay,” Abby said, “obviously, they aren’t flamboyant. Let’s try again. What do the uncles look like and what do they do for a living?”

Carol answered, “Jack Sinclair is Karen’s real uncle. He’s the younger brother of Karen’s mother, Marjorie, who is divorced. They’ve been in the Paramus area less than a year. Jack is the silent partner of the General Motors dealership. Tom Diamond is his business partner.”

Abby nodded. “I get my Cadillac serviced there. I didn’t know there was a silent partner, but I do recall recently seeing a new man in the back-office area who looked like he was a movie star—tall, dark and handsome.”

“Well, that’s Jack,” said Therese. If you were to hear him talk, you might swoon. His voice is so calming and melodious. It has that ‘radio announcer’ quality. He’s probably 36 years old and he certainly is tall, dark and handsome.”

Abby’s eyebrows shot up. Carol continued, “Harge said he weighed probably 185 pounds, but I think he’s a bit slimmer. His black hair is greying at the temples. I suspect heterosexual women would call him a ‘dreamboat.’”

Therese continued, “Jack’s lover of five years is Michael Thompson. I think he might be two years younger than Jack. He restores furniture for the various dealers around northern New Jersey and New York City. He’s also a custom painter. He is almost as tall as Jack and slightly slimmer.”

Carol added, “I’d heard of him through O’Halloran’s furniture. My boss thinks Michael is the best of the best of furniture restorers. He’s originally from California. His college studies were interrupted when he volunteered to be a medic in the Korean War. Even though he was a medic, his unit was in some of the fiercest battles of the war. We don’t know all the details, but apparently, Michael subjected himself to heavy enemy fire to carry several of our wounded soldiers to safety. The last one Michael carried out was Jack’s current business partner, Tom Diamond. Michael was shot multiple times in the legs, but he kept on going until they reached safety. He was awarded the Bronze Star for his bravery as well as a Purple Heart.”
Abby was literally hanging on every word. Therese continued the story. “When Michael was convalescing at the Army hospital at the Presidio base in San Francisco, Jack made a business trip there to donate several General Motors vehicles from his father’s dealership to the Army base there. He saw Michael sitting on the lawn in a wheelchair. They locked eyes and fell in love.”

Carol said, “Michael knew that as a homosexual he couldn’t stay in the Army. He was granted an honorable discharge and still receives a pension for his severe injuries. By the way, years before Jack tried to enlist, but he had flat feet and that was an automatic disqualifier.”

Abby prompted, “Did you say Michael was handsome, too?”

Therese laughed, “I’m a lesbian, mind you, but I almost swooned over him myself.” Carol nodded in agreement.

“He looks like he could be a twin of Tab Hunter—tall, slender, broad shouldered, trim hips, and did we say tall?” Therese laughed.

Carol teased, “I must keep my eye on Therese when it comes to Michael.”

Therese started to protest, so Carol clarified, “I’m just teasing you, Therese. But Michael is so masculine and handsome—yet shy and boyish at the same time. Jack is head over heels in love with him and vice versa.”

Carol recalled, “When Harge first met the two of them, he was on the phone to us right away. He couldn’t believe two very masculine men could be homosexual.” Abby threw back her head and laughed at Harge’s reaction.

Therese explained, “Harge and Rindy spend a lot of time with Marjorie, Karen and the uncles—as we call them. It’s perfect. Marjorie is a divorcee and Harge has taken her to dinner several times. Karen and Rindy are best friends with an important secret that they must share only with each other. Carol and I get along well with all of them.”

“You know,” Abby said, “it’s perfect that Harge met masculine homosexual men with whom he could relate. No wonder things have been going so well.”

“Yes,” Carol agreed, “they’re poker buddies, along with Jack’s business partner Tom Diamond.”

Abby yawned, then apologized. “I’m not bored with this conversation, but I’m a bit tired, and the sleepy-time tea has done its job. I think I’ll turn in.”

“I’ll make breakfast for us in the morning, Abby,” said Carol, “but if you wake up first, there are some bagels in the freezer or you can have a piece of fruit and juice or coffee until we wake up. The New York Times is delivered to the door.”

The three friends said their good nights. Carol reminded Abby of the fresh towels in the guest room. They oriented Abby to Rindy’s new trundle bed which had taken the place of the former double bed.

Carol and Therese held hands as they stepped into their bedroom and closed the door. They looked deep into each other’s eyes and smiled lovingly.

Carol asked Therese, “Where is the ‘special’ bath towel?”

Therese smiled and answered, “It’s in the laundry, but we have another one.”

Therese said, “I want to be sexy for you, Carol, but I must take out the tampon, rinse off, and get
my panties, sanitary belt and napkin ready to put on after we make love.”

Carol hugged Therese close to her body and said, “Oh dearest, take the time you need. It’s so wonderful that we now know we can make love while you or I are having our periods.”

Giggling like schoolgirls, they began their preparations, with Therese going into the bathroom to remove her tampon and rinse off and Carol, mindful of their guest, put their gowns on each other’s nightstand so each could put one on after they made love. Carol tapped on the bathroom door, to respect Therese’s privacy.

“Come in, love,” said Therese. I’m just removing my tampon and rinsing off.

Carol washed her hands and scrubbed under her nails with the nail brush.

“Are you still bleeding?” Carol asked.

“Not much,” replied Therese, with a smile so large that her dimples appeared.

“Don’t wash too much,” teased Carol. “I don’t want to be blowing bubbles.”

Therese found Carol’s quip extremely amusing and she laughed aloud.

Carol exited the bathroom. She was lost in romantic thoughts of the lovemaking that would begin in a few minutes. She removed her clothes and slipped into bed to wait for Therese.

A nude Therese exited the bathroom, grinning and holding a large, old bath towel. She also had washed her hands.

Finally, the lovers were alone in bed. Therese had lit a candle before Carol turned off the lamp on her night table.

Carol and Therese were facing each other. Carol asked, “Did you start to think about making love when I kissed you in the kitchen?”

“No, darling,” answered Therese. “I’ve been thinking about it ever since you patted my behind in the dressing room at Bloomingdale’s.”

Carol laughed softly, “I think we have a serious case of lovemaking on the brain. If Abby only knew.”

Therese started giggling and couldn’t stop. “Carol, I just have an image of Abby standing outside the door with her ear next to the wood.”

Carol joined her in the giggles. Therese started tickling Carol and Carol began to tickle Therese in response.

Soft laughter filled the room. They were conscious of trying to be as quiet as possible.

All of a sudden there was a “ding-ring-ding” in the hall outside their room.

“Oh, Jesus!” Therese swore, as she slapped her palm to her forehead.

“What the hell?” thought Carol. She threw on her gown and she opened the bedroom door, barefoot and clothed only in her gown.

Abby stood outside the door looking sheepish, but grinning all the same.
“Abigail, what are you doing?” asked an exasperated Carol.

“Oh,” Abby explained, “I was just checking to see if the bell functions as it should.” Abby peeked around Carol to Therese in bed, reclining on an elbow with covers up to her neck.

Abby asked, “Therese, is that a candle I smell? I like the scent.”

Therese flopped back down with her head on the pillow and said, “I’m sure you’re wondering, Abby. The answer is ‘yes.’”

Abby coughed discretely and struggled for an excuse as to why she rang the bell, other than to make it work. “Since you are members of the National Geographic Society, would you recommend me for membership? I think I’d like to subscribe.”

Carol rolled her eyes and said, “Abigail darling, we’ll give you a gift subscription and then you’ll be a member.”


Carol said, “Goodnight Abby. We love you.”

Abby grinned and gave Carol a double kiss on her cheeks and a wink. As Carol was closing the door she heard Abby say, “Pajama parties with the two of you are a real hoot.”

“We’re glad, dear,” said Carol, “now goodnight.”

Carol closed the door and rested her head on it for a moment to process what had just taken place. She could hear Therese’s soft laughter emanating from their bed. Carol turned to look at Therese and laughed herself when she saw by candlelight the amused eyerolls and headshakes Therese was exhibiting.

“Alone at last?” asked Therese.

“I think so,” replied Carol. “Since I’m standing here in my gown and you’re lying naked in bed, I think I just might show you a bit of a strip tease. It’s been years since you’re seen me do that.”

Therese quipped, “Did Abby’s knocking at our door do this to you?”

Carol winked and just said, “hmm.”

Therese chuckled and scooted up in bed, arranging the pillows behind her and adjusting the old towel under her. The sheet fell to Therese’s waist as she crossed her arms behind her head—grinning in expectation.

Carol smiled a mysterious smile and turned her back to Therese. She began to lightly sway her hips and softly hum a melody that Therese couldn’t identify at first, then Therese gulped at the realization that Carol was humming “Here Comes the Bride” while continuing to sway her hips and inch her gown higher and higher.

Therese’s breath caught as Carol’s gown cleared her hips. Carol paused, a mysterious smile on her lips and looked over her shoulder at Therese. Therese said softly, “For God’s sake Carol, don’t stop now!”

Carol strode seductively to the foot of the bed, stopped and crooked her index finger towards Therese. The gesture was unmistakable, even by candlelight. In a flash, Therese was on her knees,
wide-eyed, crawling to the end of the bed and grasping the fabric of Carol’s gown. Carol let Therese set the pace now, as Carol continued to hum. Therese poised the gown below Carol’s breasts and Carol leaned in to Therese’s ear and spoke one word, a breathy “higher.” Therese immediately complied and eased the gown over Carol’s head. Carol was naked now and both women were on their knees in their bed.

Carol took the gown and expertly twisted it and slipped the fabric behind Therese’s back and pulled her into a heart-stopping kiss. Therese’s mouth opened to Carol’s tongue. When they finally broke from the kiss, Carol said, “Let’s get down to business, dearest.” Therese gasped with delight.

Therese relinquished her hold on the gown and Carol expertly tossed it so that it draped over the headboard of the bed.

Carol lay on her back and pulled Therese on top of her and both women began to move sensually against each other. The prelude had brought both women very close to orgasm. Both were breathing heavily and whispering each other’s name and the words, ‘yes,’ ‘faster,’ ‘closer’ and ‘more.’

Therese moved as close to Carol as she could. Carol opened her legs to Therese and with their centers aligned, the lovers rocked against each other, whispering endearments, sprinkled with “I’m nearly there,” and “stay with me.”

Suddenly each woman was jolted with a shattering orgasm that obliterated all thought. As the intense trembling and aftershocks receded, Carol and Therese held each other tight, planting featherlight kisses on each other’s faces, eyelids and necks, and smoothing sweat from each other’s brow.

They lay still for a time, then Therese quietly said, “Wow.” Carol replied with, “Wow, is right.”

Therese reached over to her nightstand and pulled on her panties with the sanitary napkin, then donned her gown. Carol reached for her gown.

As Therese folded the old towel and put it on the floor she said to Carol, “Guess you don’t even need to wash your hands.”

Carol replied, “Dearest, you have demolished me. Come here, lover.”

Therese inched backward into Carol’s arms. Carol arranged the covers over them both. Therese murmured “I’ve demolished you?” No response was necessary. Sleep overtook them.

Chapter End Notes

See End Notes to Chapter 34 if you missed how a person gets "National Geographic" magazine. Abby is certainly exhibiting an interest in this magazine (smile).

This is a very special note:
Carol's remarks about the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway being televised and that she and Harge are going to ensure Rindy watches it are autobiographical. I remember as clear as if it were yesterday the summer day, June 26, 1959 when the St. Lawrence Seaway opened. I was almost twelve years old, and I was headed out the door to ride my bicycle to the nearby tennis court to hit balls against the backboard.
My mother, whom I adored (and still miss each day even 35 years after her passing), had other plans for me. She informed me that the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway was going to be on television soon and that the Queen of England and President Eisenhower would speak. She said that I needed to watch this historic occasion. I was an excellent student and usually interested in historical events, but for some reason this one did not outweigh the siren's call of the tennis court on a perfect summer morning. Being an obedient daughter, I put down my racquet and balls and settled into a chair to watch it from beginning to end on our black and white television. As it was being televised, my mother remarked that when I was old and grey I would remember that I saw it as it happened. By the time I was in college I understood the enormous impact the Seaway has on our country and on Canada. Now I am nearly 70 and turning grey and I want to say, "Thank you, Mommy, for your wisdom in insisting that I watched the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway. I still remember it and I always will remember the day that we watched it together." Signed, your loving daughter.

See you in May. Never fear, I WILL be back--you have my word and my word is as good as gold. Thanks for your patience.

Best wishes,
Pipestone
Prelude to Reconciliation

Chapter Summary

This chapter covers Sunday morning at Carol and Therese's apartment. Abby has been their overnight guest. The topics of conversation during Abby's visit have been varied, from a discussion of Abby's approach to dating, to Carol and Therese's ring ceremony, and finally, the three friends discussed the prospect of Abby reconciling with Harge.

Chapter Notes

IMPORTANT. PLEASE READ.

Dear readers,

I'm back!

I had promised an update by the end of the first week in May following my vacation/Carol field trip in New York City. When I signed off on Chapter 39, I told you when I would be back and I said that my word was good as gold. I promise I will never leave you hanging. There's nothing more frustrating to a reader and I value and appreciate each and every one of you.

My wife and I had a wonderful time in New York City. She was a real trooper as I visited quite a few locations important to the Carol storyline. One of the biggest thrills was seeing the (closed) door to The Oak Room at the Plaza Hotel. I visited with the owner of Plaza's boutique about The Oak Room. He was kind enough to give me a single postcard of the interior of The Oak Room when it was at its height of popularity. I had the impression that he had very few of these postcards, so I really treasure mine. The sign over the door is still lighted, but from what I could see by pushing my iPhone through the crack where the two entry doors meet and taking a photo that the room would need sprucing up before renting for a private party. One interesting note about The Oak Room. It's not at the top of a flight of stairs as shown in the movie, "Carol." It's on the ground floor near the right rear of the hotel near the entrance to the Plaza's private apartments. In the movie, The Oak Room scene was shot at the Queen City Club in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio.

In forthcoming chapters, I will point out more of the insight and information I gathered during the trip. Please see the Notes following this chapter for my trip to Bloomingdale's perfume counter.

Again, thanks for your patience during my absence. It's good to be back.

Warmest regards,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Therese awoke to the sound of two voices and soft laughter coming from their living room. She stretched luxuriously, enjoying the softness of her gown next to her skin. Therese touched the ring finger of her right hand with the thumb and index finger of her left hand. She massaged her ring finger with a smile growing on her lips, knowing that in a few short weeks, there would be a ring on that finger—a symbol of their love—and Carol would have a matching one as well.

She turned her face into Carol’s pillow to inhale the familiar mixture of Chanel’s *Cuir de Russie* and Carol’s own scent. Also, there was a faint smell of Phillip Morris cigarettes on Carol’s pillow, as Carol had smoked one with Abby at the end of the evening. The smell of cigarettes on Carol’s clothes had become unfamiliar. Therese was delighted that Carol had almost quit smoking.

Therese resisted the urge to hop out of bed right away to join the two best friends. She wanted to ensure they had time together.

Therese’s thoughts turned to tomorrow’s meeting at work—the meeting would be attended by those employees who would now report to Therese, as well as the senior photo editors who reported to Lee Barnes, her supervisor. Jerry Goldman, vice president of Metro would be there to express full confidence in Therese. The plan was for Jerry to say he would not tolerate any disparaging remarks about Therese’s living with another woman. She and Jerry had decided that was the best wording for the meeting. Then Therese would have the opportunity to say a few words. At the end of the meeting, Jerry and Lee would open the room for any questions.

Therese knew what she was going to say and was confident that her message would be appropriate. She felt sure that Jerry and Lee would back her up completely. Also, she felt comfortable answering questions. It’s just that she was nervous about the potential reactions of some of the employees who would be finding out, possibly for the first time, that she was a homosexual.

Therese wanted her body language to be perfect. She had not had the opportunity to address her new charges in a meeting. Fortunately, many already knew that Therese lived with another woman, and Therese had sought out some of the more admired employees—those whom other employees trusted—and talked with them privately. Therese felt as though she had prepared as much as possible, but she was not yet confident of how she should stand or sit and her tone of voice—all the non-verbal ways of communicating.

She was reluctant to ask Lee Barnes questions about body language, especially the day before the big meeting. ‘I shouldn’t have left this until the last minute,’ Therese chided herself.

Therese stared at the ceiling and a thought came to her, ‘Harge.’ He could probably provide valuable insight to answer her questions about body language. She had planned spending the afternoon at the office instead of accompanying Carol and Abby to New Jersey, but if Harge had time for her after he spoke with Carol and Abby, she would be most grateful.

Therese decided to call Harge.

Therese prepared to join Carol and Abby in the living room. She brushed her teeth, washed her face and made her hair presentable.

Therese pulled on her dark blue robe and noticed that it was getting a bit worn. She would
probably ask Carol for a new one as a Christmas gift, but wearing it brought back sweet memories of their first night together on that road trip over six years ago. Therese smiled and shook her head at the memory of how she felt awed by Carol and wondered back then if she would ever feel like Carol’s equal. The terrible events that transpired after their one night of love turned both their worlds upside down.

Therese hoped Carol and Abby were discussing a possible visit to Harge and Rindy. Both Carol and Therese fervently wished for a reconciliation between Abby and Harge for Rindy’s sake and theirs.

Therese opened their bedroom door and readied herself for a certain quip from Abby. She didn’t have long to wait.

“Well, well. Sleeping beauty emerges from the boudoir of love,” smirked Abby. Even knowing Abby’s quip was coming, Therese still blushed a bit, however, she had a ready response.

“Abby, should I have rung the bedroom bell in advance of my entry into the living room?” Abby hooted with laughter, and Carol reached back to caress Therese’s neck as Therese placed a kiss on Carol’s cheek.

“Good morning, dearest,” Carol said to Therese. “Would you like some coffee?”

“Of course, my love,” replied Therese as she poured coffee from the ceramic pot into a third coffee cup and added cream and sugar. Therese noticed that Carol had started a fire in the fireplace. Therese nodded toward the fire. “It’s a good morning for a fire. It’s cold and rainy outside. What does The Times say about the forecast?”

Carol replied, “the front page weather summary says to expect more of the same all day.”

Abby moved to her favorite chair next to the couch. Therese shook her head to indicate the move wasn’t necessary, but Abby said, “I want to have a better view of my favorite lovebirds.”

Therese settled close to Carol on the couch and placed a hand on Carol’s knee. Carol explained to Therese that Abby and she had been discussing a meeting with Harge at his home in New Jersey. Abby would be driving near Harge’s home on her way back to the mansion she shared with her parents north of Ridgewood.

Abby said, “I want to begin the process of healing that wound if it’s at all possible. Carol makes a very eloquent case for what it would mean to Rindy. I love my goddaughter so very much and since you two have forgiven Harge, who am I to be the only one to carry a grudge?”

Carol turned to Therese, “I thought that we could drive with Abby, stop at Harge’s and then take the train back to Penn Station.”

“Darling,” replied Therese, “I hope that you and Abby don’t mind, but I really need to spend some time preparing for tomorrow’s big meeting. I want to be ready to answer potential questions. I’m hoping to have some time with Harge after you are done to ask him some business decorum questions.”

Abby addressed Therese. “Carol explained what was happening tomorrow at your office. First, congratulations on your promotion and, more important, my hat is off to you for being so brave to present yourself to those in your office as the person you are and the person whom you love. It’s unheard-of bravery. Therese, I admire you and appreciate what you are doing.”

Carol gazed lovingly at Therese and took her hand. Carol added, “I’m so lucky to have such a brave partner in life.”
Abby said, “Well, what’s the next step?”

Carol replied, “Let me call Harge to find out if he’ll see us today. I’d like for Rindy to be there too, but Rindy doesn’t have to be with us for the entire time. Some of the conversation would be more appropriate for grown-up talk.”

Abby asked, “Do you think Harge is even home?”

Carol smiled and arched an eyebrow. Therese mimicked Carol’s expression.

Carol rose and went to the phone. Before she dialed, she said to Abby, “I imagine he’s been sitting close to the phone all morning hoping for a call. I told him we would talk to you.”

Carol dialed the number, but seemingly before the phone could ring, Harge picked up and said eagerly, “Carol, what did Abby say?”

Carol tossed her hair back in the gesture Therese loved and said, “Harge, what on earth would you have done if I hadn’t been the caller?”

Harge replied sheepishly, “I guess I would have made up something.”

In the background, Carol could hear Rindy saying, “Daddy, is it Mommy? Is it Aunt Abby? Is Aunt Abby coming today?”

Carol laughed and said, “Harge, now you can breathe and do something besides sit next to the phone. Tell Rindy that Aunt Abby and I will visit you today. Aunt Therese is coming, too. We’ll have a late breakfast here and be at your house as soon as you two return from your parents’ house for lunch.”

Carol said, “Harge, Therese wants to talk to you. What time will you return from your parents’ Sunday lunch?”

We’ll be back here no later than 1:30. Lunch is always served precisely at noon—remember those lovely lunches?” Harge said sarcastically. “Carol, I don’t know how to thank you. Rindy and I are very excited at the prospect of reuniting with Abby.”

Carol replied with sincerity, “I know, Harge. Here’s Therese.”

Therese took the phone and turned slightly to allow Carol and Abby to talk,

“Harge,” Therese began, “I need some advice about my big meeting and how I should present myself.” Therese explained the setting for the meeting and the nature of her questions to Harge.

“Therese,” replied Harge, “I’d gladly do anything to help make your big meeting go more smoothly for you. I think I can help. Do you mind if I ask my dad to come over after Abby leaves to help as well? He has decades of experience on the topic of business meetings.”

Therese sighed with relief. “Thanks so much, Harge. I’d be grateful for your father’s input, too. Talk to you soon. Tell Rindy I love her.”

“I certainly will,” replied Harge. “By the way, in case we run late, I’ll leave a spare key under the flowerpot on the right side of the doormat. Carol knows the spot.”

After Therese hung up the phone, she turned to notice Abby and Carol watching her.

“What?” asked Therese.
Abby shook her head incredulously. “Did I overhear you say that you want Harge and his father to help you with suggestions for body language for your big meeting tomorrow?”

Therese rolled her eyes. “Yes, Abby, you *overheard* correctly. We do get along very well with Harge now and I wouldn’t hesitate to ask for his assistance in something like this. Also, his father was very kind to me when we were at Harge’s a week ago taking Rindy home from her weekend at the apartment. John Aird pledged his unwavering support to us.”

Abby looked incredulously at Carol, who nodded in agreement.

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Noon – the same day, at the Aird/Belivet apartment

The three friends finished cleaning up from the late breakfast; they had showered and were ready to load Abby’s car for the drive to New Jersey.

“Therese, I don’t suppose you would mind riding up front?” inquired Abby.

“Oh, and be squeezed hip to thigh with the love of my life?” laughed Therese, “not at all.”

The apartment doorman held a large umbrella while each of them made a run for the car. As the three friends settled in for the drive, Therese took Carol’s hand and leaned into Carol’s side. Carol was wearing her fur coat which brought back memories of their first years together.

Traffic was light in Manhattan due to the rain. Abby drove a bit slower because of the slippery conditions. Nevertheless, they made good time getting to the Lincoln Tunnel.

Carol remarked, “This time next week, the city will be packed with those attending the Easter Parade. We’re thrilled that Rindy will be experiencing her first one as a participant wearing an Easter bonnet. I do hope the weather cooperates.”

Therese said, “I’ll be photographing the event for the *Times.*”

Carol said, “Abby, would you like to join us for a late Easter lunch?”

Abby said, “Don’t tell me…Harge will be coming.”

Carol retorted, “Well of course. This is Rindy’s first time to wear a bonnet and Harge wants to be there and naturally he’ll come to lunch. The two men we spoke of, Jack Sinclair and Michael Thompson, will be there with Marjorie Sinclair and her daughter, Karen. I would have asked you sooner, but you’ve been completely absorbed in your girlfriends.”

Abby replied, “Let’s see how the meeting with Harge goes. If I am counting correctly, I could still fit in to your 19th century Chippendale table for ten.” Abby winked at Carol and Therese.

Abby suggested that they continue the conversation about Carol and Therese’s upcoming ring ceremony.

Abby asked, “Are you sure that you want to have the ceremony at your apartment? That will really limit the number of attendees, even if your neighbors agree to offer their apartment as a staging area for the caterers.”

Carol spoke first, “We’ve gone back and forth on it. The people on our potential guest list are fairly evenly split between those living in Manhattan and those living in the Jersey suburbs. Marge
Sinclair and the uncles have offered their large, lovely home. Harge has even offered his, although that would be a bit awkward.”

Abby said, “If I were sure that Mother and Father would be at their other home in the Hamptons, you could use mine, but unfortunately, there would be no ‘sure thing’ as to their absence.”

Therese said, “We’re leaving for our honeymoon on Monday and will be flying out of Idlewild on an Eastern airlines flight to Miami. It would be convenient for us to be in the city with access to our things for any last-minute packing.”

Abby quickly spoke up, “But you must have a wedding night in a nice hotel if you stay in the city.”

Carol rolled her eyes and said, “Oh God, Abby, we’ve been sleeping together for nearly six years. There is no mystery of the wedding night.”

Therese choked on the coffee from her thermos. Carol patted her, asking “Are you alright, dearest?” Therese nodded and began to chuckle.

Abby said, “I should have a joke handy for that statement, Carol.”

Therese laughingly replied, “Carol’s words speak volumes, Abby. Let’s leave it at that.”

The three friends continued to discuss the ring ceremony details during the rest of the ride. Before too long they pulled into Harge’s large circular driveway and parked next to Harge’s car.

Abby took a deep breath and opened the car door. Therese hopped out and held out her hand to assist Carol in exiting the car from the middle of the seat. Carol gave Therese a dazzling smile and said, “Thank you, dearest.”

The front door opened and a small blur dashed for the car. “Aunt Abby, Aunt Abby!” exclaimed Rindy.

Abby beamed and shouted, “Rindy! Come here, kiddo!”

Carol whispered to Therese, “It looks like we’re off to a good start.”

Chapter End Notes

I couldn't resist a side trip to Bloomingdale's in downtown Manhattan. My wife teased me that I was in search of Miss Ford (refer to my Chapter 35). At any rate, I sought out the perfume counter to chat with a salesperson about Carol's scent, "Cuir de Russie." The saleslady I encountered did not know the fascinating story that I discovered while researching Carol's scent for my Chapter 36's Notes. She was so appreciative of my passing along the perfume's history and other fun facts about it that she gave me two small vials. I watched while she filled them. Unfortunately, it was difficult to fill the smaller bottle from the "tester" bottle and quite a few drops of the precious scent ended up on the floor behind the counter. I had to resist the urge to vault over the counter and lie down beneath a shower of the precious scent.

My reference to Carol's 19th Century Chippendale dining table is from Employee645A's fabulous AO3 Carol story, "Built for Two." By the way, if you
have not noticed, on April 17th, Employee645A added a new chapter to this wonderful story. I urge you to read it.

Regards,
Pipestone
Reconciliation

Chapter Summary

This chapter covers the Sunday afternoon trip by Carol, Therese and Abby to the Aird residence near Ridgewood New Jersey. The purpose of the trip is two-fold. One reason is to allow Harge to apologize in person to Abby and attempt to repair their relationship, The second is for Therese to practice for the next day’s business meeting at “The New York Times” when she is introduced to her entire team. Harge has volunteered to share some of his business meeting experience with Therese and she has gratefully accepted his offer.

Abby has driven Carol and Therese and they plan to take a later train back to Manhattan, while Abby continues to her own nearby home.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Reconciliation

Sunday, March 15 1959

1:30 PM – Harge Aird’s residence near Ridgewood New Jersey

The front door opened and a small blur dashed for the car. “Aunt Abby, Aunt Abby!” exclaimed Rindy.

Carol and Therese watched with sheer delight while Abby hugged Rindy in Harge’s driveway.

Harge appeared in the front doorway with an enormous grin on his face. “Come in everyone,” he called, “The weather is awful.”

Carol looked from Abby and Rindy to Harge and to Therese. A tremendous warmth surged through her entire body. An image crossed her mind: ‘This is the Harge I married.’ The years of questioning, then chastising herself for the decision to marry Harge were suddenly gone. They had to divorce so that Carol could live her true self and because Harge had morphed into a loathsome person, but there was a good side to him that she had lost so long ago.

She squeezed Therese’s hand and felt Therese squeeze hers. Carol gazed at Therese who simply said, “I know.”

Carol mouthed ‘I love you,’ and was rewarded by Therese’s dimples.

Abby had her arm around Rindy’s shoulders and Carol took Therese’s arm as they all approached the front door.

“Oh, hello Mommy. Hello Aunt Therese. I’m very glad to see you, too,” said Rindy. “It’s just that…”

“We understand sweet pea,” replied Carol, while planting a kiss on Rindy’s cheek. “It’s been a long while since you’ve seen Aunt Abby.”
Therese leaned down to exchange a kiss with Rindy.

“Welcome,” enthused Harge as he stepped back to let the foursome in the house.

Harge regarded Abby with a special smile while extending his hand for a handshake. Harge said, “Abby, I’m so glad you’re here. Thank you for giving me another chance.”

Abby’s smile was wary as she shook Harge’s hand. “Well, Harge, Carol and Therese convinced me to give you that chance, and besides, I need to be closer to my goddaughter.”

Carol held Rindy in front of her and tightened the embrace. Rindy said to Abby, “I know you’re here to make up with Daddy, but could I show you my room first? You’ve not seen it and there are so many pictures on the wall.”

Harge regarded Rindy with a look of love and pride. “Let’s get everyone’s coats off and then you can show Aunt Abby your room.”

“I definitely want to see your room, Rindy,” Abby responded. “Your daddy can spare me for a few minutes.”

Harge helped Abby with her coat while Carol and Therese removed theirs. Harge carried the armload of coats to a front closet and hung them with care.

As Abby and Rindy retreated upstairs, Harge turned to Carol and Therese and said with genuine emotion, “I don’t know how to thank you both for enabling this reunion.”

Carol leaned over and placed a light kiss on Harge’s cheek, while Therese patted his shoulder. “No thanks are necessary, Harge, said Carol. I’m just amazed that this is happening. Did you notice Rindy’s joy and excitement?”

“I did,” replied Harge. “I love her so much and I’m very proud of our daughter. Please make yourselves comfortable in the living room. I’ll turn on the kettle for some hot tea, hot chocolate, or even a hot toddy.”

After Harge excused himself, Carol and Therese stood in front of the fireplace and enjoyed the warmth. They locked eyes and exchanged a loving glance.

“I believe today will be one that we’ll remember for many years,” said Carol.

Therese smiled, stepped forward and lovingly touched Carol’s cheek. “I agree, my love.”

Carol captured Therese’s hand and kissed her palm without breaking eye contact with her lover. Carol gazed deep into Therese’s dark hazel eyes and murmured, “I love you, my darling.”

Therese’s lips turned up in a gentle smile. “I love you, Carol.”

The loving exchange took just a few moments, then the women turned to gaze into the inviting fire.

Unbeknownst to Carol and Therese, Harge had opened the kitchen’s swinging door and he stood riveted as he witnessed the brief loving exchange from inside the kitchen.

Harge felt like some kind of intruder, but he couldn’t tear his eyes from the scene. He quietly closed the door and leaned back against the kitchen counter, folded his arms and stared vacantly into space. He never recalled such a tender moment that Carol and he shared in all their years of
Harge thought, ‘Carol has finally found the love that was missing between the two of us. Why, oh why did I become a stone-cold monster because of the simple fact that Carol had finally summoned the courage to live as her true self.’ Harge sighed as he continued his reverie. ‘She’s now back in my life as a co-parent and as a friend. I’m grateful for the relationship I do have with Carol. It shouldn’t have taken my fear of impending death for me to realize this truth. Thank God for her forgiveness—hers and Therese’s.’

Carol rang out from the living room, “Hey, slowpoke, do you need some help?”

“I’m almost done,” called Harge. “The water’s hot,” he announced with a bit of pride as he reentered the living room.

Carol and Therese exchanged a glance. Carol spoke. “Do you want me to help setting up the cups and saucers, tray and spoons?”

“Oh gosh, yes.” Harge's face flushed with embarrassment over his lack of hospitality skills.

Carol pushed open the kitchen door and Harge followed. Therese remained near the fireplace, thinking ahead to later in the day when she would practice for her Monday workplace meeting.

Carol appeared in the door first and held it for Harge. He carried a tray, a teapot, five cups, tea bags, instant coffee, paper napkins and one envelope of hot chocolate."

“Thanks, Carol,” said Harge apologetically.

“It’s fine, Harge,” replied Carol. “You have a lot on your mind right now.”

The three settled in while Abby and Rindy were upstairs.

Harge explained to Therese the plan for helping her prepare for her Monday morning meeting when the head of Metro, Jerry Goldman and her supervisor, Lee Barnes would explain the organizational change to the interns and junior photographers who would now report to Therese.

Therese said, “Harge, I’m so grateful for your help. This meeting won’t be the usual organizational change meeting. Jerry Goldman is going to express his support for me and tell the group that he won’t tolerate any negative talk about my sexual identity. About half of the group already knows I’m Carol’s companion. Now I have a small photo of her and Rindy on my desk, and I’ve chosen to be open about being homosexual.”

Harge smiled at Therese. “You are a brave woman, Therese. You are the personification of what we in the corporate world call a ‘risk-taker.’ ‘Risk-takers’ are usually highly regarded employees who are much in demand.”

Therese blushed with Harge’s complement. “Thank you, Harge. Your praise means a lot, especially coming from a successful businessman like you.”

Meanwhile, a conversation had been going on upstairs.

Rindy was giving Abby the tour of her room. Abby carefully viewed the framed photographs. “These are great, Rindy. Which ones did you take?”

Rindy pointed out those she had taken. Abby looked more closely at those. “You’re a skilled young photographer, Rindy.”
“Well,” Rindy said with obvious pride, “Aunt Therese was a super teacher. I love the times we went to Central Park and shot the sights. She taught me how to angle the camera to improve the pictures.”

Rindy stepped back from the photos and regarded Abby. “Aunt Abby, may I ask you a question?”

“Sure, Rindy. You can ask me anything,” replied Abby.

“I’m not supposed to talk about this to anyone except Mommy, Aunt Therese, Daddy and the Sinclairs, but you’re Mommy’s very best friend, so I think it’s okay.”

Abby squeezed Rindy’s hand and waited for her to continue.

“You know that Mommy and Aunt Therese are in love, don’t you?”

Abby relaxed and smiled. “Yes, sweetie, I do.”

“Did you know that a couple of weeks ago they let me ask them questions about everything… why Mommy and Daddy had to divorce and lots of other things.”

Abby let out a breath, “Yes, Rindy, your mother told me that you were very grown up and asked good questions.”

Rindy asked, “Did you know that they chewed two packs of Doublemint gum while I was asking questions?”

Abby tried unsuccessfully to suppress a chuckle. “No, I didn’t know that, but did you know that your mother and father are trying to quit smoking and chewing gum helps them from wanting a cigarette.”

Rindy giggled, “Well they must have wanted a lot of cigarettes. Wrappers were all over the table.”

Abby laughed and kissed the top of Rindy’s head as she thought to herself, ‘Oh, boy. I’m going to remember this story.’

“Aunt Abby, I’m so glad that my parents finally thought I was grown up enough to talk to me. Oh, and when I say my parents I mean Aunt Therese, too. It’s just shorter to say ‘my parents’ instead of naming everyone.”

“One more thing I want to tell you,” Rindy said earnestly. Abby cocked her head as Rindy continued. “Today at Sunday lunch at my grandparents’ house, Grandmother didn’t say one mean thing about Mommy or Aunt Therese. I think she started to once or twice, but Daddy and Grandfather gave her a look and she changed the subject. Last week Daddy told Grandmother she had to quit saying mean things about Mommy or Aunt Therese. He was so brave, but he had to leave the house because his heart was hurting. He took one of his special pills and Grandfather drove him home and stayed with him.”

Abby carefully pondered what Rindy had just said. “Rindy, I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall to see that conversation. It sounds as though your daddy has been trying very hard to be a better person.”

Rindy smiled, “Oh he has, Aunt Abby.”

Abby rubbed Rindy’s back and said, “I have loved talking to you, Rindy but I think we’d better go downstairs. Your daddy and I need to talk.”
Rindy’s eyes grew moist. “Please forgive Daddy, Aunt Abby. Mommy and Aunt Therese have forgiven him for being so mean to them and now we all are so much happier. We are going to start having a family dinner night on the Friday’s when Daddy takes me to the city. All of us will have dinner at Mommy and Aunt Therese’s apartment and I can tell everyone what I am doing in school while everyone is together.”

Abby enveloped Rindy in a tight hug. “Well, everyone else is so happy I might as well join the crowd.” Abby silently thought to herself, ‘God Almighty, now they’re setting up a family dinner night every other Friday.’

“Yay!” exclaimed Rindy as she hopped up off her bed. She took Abby’s hand and said, “let’s go.” Rindy was literally glowing with happiness. Abby couldn’t remember her goddaughter ever expressing such elation.

Rindy and Abby rejoined the group, they were all smiles. Rindy exclaimed excitedly, “Aunt Abby likes my photos on the wall.”

Abby added, “Therese, you are teaching her some advanced techniques on how to frame the subject and how to take advantage of certain lighting conditions. Congratulations, teacher.”

“Well,” said Therese modestly, “Rindy picks up my instruction so quickly and seems to enjoy it a lot. She’s a natural.”

Rindy said to the entire group, “I have an announcement to make. I want to be a photographer like Aunt Therese when I grow up and take photos of wildlife or people.”

“Well,” Carol remarked, “Rindy dear, if you still have these goals when you are in high school, Daddy and Aunt Therese and I will make sure you are able to go to the best university for that training.”

Harge hugged Rindy. “There’s no better role model than Aunt Therese.”

Therese blushed furiously. “Rindy, I’ll help you in any way I can. In a year or two we need to get a better camera for you.”

Abby was sitting back marveling at the conversation that was taking place right before her eyes. It was a family discussion, just like any other family discussion about a child’s goals and the support by the parents. It’s just that in this case, the parents were her best friend and her lover and the best friend’s ex-husband that until today, she couldn’t stand to be near.

‘Where in hell did this new Harge come from?’ wondered Abby. She was even wary of Harge when he married Carol. Abby had stood by reluctantly as Carol’s maid of honor. But this…this man sitting a few feet from her was as different as night and day from the Harge she had ever known.

“Harge,” Abby began, “could we have a candid discussion? I have some questions.”

“Uh oh,” said Rindy, “I think this is the part where Aunt Therese and I go up to my room.”

Carol grabbed Rindy in a tight embrace, “Sweet pea, you are the smartest girl I know.”

Therese stood and took Rindy’s hand, “Let’s go through the latest photos we developed last weekend and you can tell me which ones to enlarge.”

“Okay,” said Rindy brightly. The two went up to Rindy’s room.
Harge extended Abby and Carol another option of a hot drink. “Would you like a hot toddy? I’m assuming Therese would stay with her tea given the next part of the afternoon.

“I’ll take a hot toddy, but just one finger of rum,” said Abby.

“Same for me, Harge,” said Carol. “You’re right about Therese. She wants to be razor sharp when you and your dad talk to her later.”

Harge remained seated and looked directly at Abby. “Before I get the drinks, I want to tell you, Abby, how much I regret my behavior towards you over the past years. Carol and Therese have already received my heartfelt apology and they’ve generously accepted it. I’d be most humbly grateful if you could find it in your heart to forgive me. I am so very sorry.” Harge’s voice trembled and his eyes filled with tears, but he continued to hold Abby’s gaze.

Abby was astounded at the sincerity of Harge’s apology. “Harge, I don’t know what to say.”

“Let me get your drinks and let you take some time to think, Abby. It’s fine. I understand that the man you see now is quite a departure from the man you used to know.”

Harge left quietly to prepare the drinks. Abby joined Carol on the couch in the spot Therese had vacated.

“This is so surreal, my head is spinning,” Abby said in a low voice.

“Well, it is a rather amazing turn of events,” Carol agreed. “But I believe that Harge is being genuine. This is not for show. His father told Therese and me that Harge confronted his mother so bluntly and forcefully that he had an angina attack. His actions were in response to a plea from Rindy. She no longer could endure his mother and his sister criticizing Therese or me. His father had ceased criticizing us of his own accord about two months ago.”

Abby rubbed her chin thoughtfully. “And this change was due to his love for Rindy?”

Carol took Abby’s hand and answered, “Yes, for that reason, plus a conversion of sorts last October when he was hospitalized for what he thought was a fatal heart attack. It turned out to be a fairly mild angina, but he’s making life changes, diet, exercise, less smoking and drinking and making amends with Therese and me.”

“Therese and I were receptive because Harge’s change in demeanor made Rindy so very happy. Can’t you tell the difference, Abby?” asked Carol.

“Oh, my God, yes,” said Abby. “I’ve never seen her so happy. Listen, Carol, if you and Therese are sure about Harge’s changes, then I’m not even going to take the time to grill in my usual gentle fashion.”

Carol leaned over to hug her best friend. “We’re sure, Abby. Harge and I are getting along better than we have since we married. He respects my relationship with Therese and no longer judges us. In fact, he has stated his unequivocal support for us.”

Abby leaned back and sighed. “This is an unforeseen turn of events, and I’m going to jump in this ‘happy boat’ with the rest of you.” Abby looked into Carol’s eyes and said carefully, “I’ll still keep my eye out, though.”

Carol nodded and smiled as she thought to herself ‘Abby—my protector.’

Harge reentered the room with their drinks. Each took a toddy. Harge asked, “Could we have a toast?”
“Sure,” said Abby with an uncharacteristic enthusiasm.

“To the future,” said Harge. The three clinked glasses.

“Well, Harge,” said Abby, “I could sit here and grill you for hours on end and watch you and Carol consume a pack of Doublemint gum each, but hell, I’ve already made up my mind to give you a chance to show me the ‘new Harge.’”

“Abby, I’m so grateful for the opportunity to show you that I’m a changed man. I won’t disappoint you.” Harge’s smile lit up the room.

“That’s right,” because I live right down the road and I’ll watch you like a hawk.” Abby said.

Harge’s face registered surprise and then relief as Abby grinned.

“I’m just kidding—I believe you unless you give me a reason not to,” Abby said with resolve.

Abby’s face took on a playful expression, “Now tell me this, Harge, what on earth would you have done this morning when Carol called you and you answered on the half ring and asked, ‘Carol, what did Abby say?’ What if I had taken the phone from Carol and I did my best impersonation of your mother…” Harge began to chuckle. His eyes crinkled with merriment.

Abby continued, perfectly mimicking the grating sound of Jennifer Aird’s voice. “Hargess, Hargess! Explain to me right this minute why you are calling your ex-wife and asking about that horrid creature, Abby Gerhard? Have you lost your mind, Hargess?”

By this time, Abby’s perfect impersonation of his mother had Harge roaring with laughter and slapping his knees. Carol clasped her sides and bent over laughing.

Therese heard the commotion downstairs and called out, “Are we missing out on the fun? May we rejoin you?”

Harge looked at Abby and raised an eyebrow as if asking, ‘Are we okay now?’

Abby stretched back in her seat and smiled at Harge. He returned her gesture with a relieved grin. She had answered his unspoken question.

“Come on down and join us,” called Abby. “Rindy, your Daddy and I have kissed and made up.”

Rindy bounded down the stairs and into Abby’s outstretched arms, “Oh, thank you Aunt Abby, but I didn’t think you would be kissing Daddy. Don’t you like girls just like Mommy and Aunt Therese?”

Abby was rooted to the spot where she stood. Her mouth gaped in surprise at the casual way Rindy posed her question.

Therese explained, “Sorry, Abby. Rindy and I were discussing her books of questions for Daddy and questions for Carol and me, and she said she wanted to ask you a question, but wasn’t sure in which book to write it.”

“Umm, err, could you explain these books?” asked Abby.

“Oh, I want to show them to Aunt Abby!” Rindy was jumping up and down with excitement.

Harge said, “Calm down Rindy. You may show Aunt Abby the books, but not what’s inside.”
Rindy faced her father with an exasperated expression, “Well of course, Daddy, that would be in poor taste.” Rindy took off upstairs after the books and left the adults wondering where Rindy picked up her grown-up choice of words.

“Be careful and don’t run on the stairs, sweet pea,” cautioned her mother.

Harge offered Abby a pack of Doublemint gum. “We went through a couple of packs during our recent talk with Rindy,” he added helpfully.

Harge turned to Therese and asked if she wanted more tea.

“Are you serious?” responded Therese, “Stay where you are, Harge, we can’t miss a minute of this.”

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph,” Abby muttered after ensuring Rindy was still out of earshot.

“Here they are. Here they are, Aunt Abby,” Rindy called from halfway down the stairs. “You can just look at the covers, because the questions are very personal.”

“That’s fine, kiddo,” said Abby as she finished off her hot toddy in two gulps.

“Here’s the one Daddy bought for me,” Rindy said with pride. “It has my name printed on it and it’s genuine white leather. Rindy explained, “I write my questions for Mommy and Aunt Therese in this one.”


Abby exchanged a knowing look with her best friend as if to say, ‘I’ll bet you and Therese grab the Doublemint gum when Rindy brings out this book.’ Carol gave Abby a slightly pained smile.

Rindy showed Abby the spiral notebook with ‘Questions for Daddy’ written on the cover in calligraphy. There was a photo of Rindy and Harge on the cover as well.

“Aha,” exclaimed Abby, “I’ll bet our New York Times photographer had something to do with the design of this one.”

An amused smile appeared on Therese’s face. “I wanted only the best cover for such an important book.” Harge rolled his eyes.

Harge added, “We thought it was important to have a place for Rindy to record questions that we didn’t cover in our talk with her a few weeks ago. She takes both journals back and forth between both parents’ homes.”

“I love my books,” said Rindy. “I know I don’t have one for you…”

Abby gulped.

Rindy said politely, “I’m sorry if I embarrassed you, Aunt Abby, by asking you a question about liking girls.”

Abby bent down to Rindy’s level and placed a hand on each of Rindy’s shoulders. “Sweetheart, you can ask me questions, but maybe it’s better if you ask me when you come to visit me.” Abby looked at Harge to seek his permission.

Harge said, “Rindy, you live so close to Aunt Abby. We need to make sure that you can visit her
anytime both of you want.”

Rindy handed the books to Carol and hugged Abby tight, burying her face in Abby’s sweater.

Abby looked at Harge and mouthed, ‘thank you.’

After a moment, Rindy said in a voice slightly muffled by Abby’s sweater, “But do you like girls better?”

Abby looked at the three parents and could tell that they were about to quash Rindy’s question, but Abby held up her hand. She wanted to answer Rindy’s question now.

“Yes, sweetheart, I like girls just like your Mommy and Aunt Therese.”

“But do…” Rindy began, but Harge intervened.

“Rindy, Aunt Abby answered your question, but you’ll need to wait until you visit her to ask other questions. Remember that your aunt may not want to answer every question.”

Therese offered to make another notebook with a “Questions for Aunt Abby” title and a photo of the two of them.

“Swell. Thanks, Therese,” smirked Abby.

Therese winked back and said, “I brought my camera and it’s in Abby’s car. Let me take a photo of the two of you, then one of the four of you.” Therese hurried to get her camera.

When she returned, and opened the camera case, the lens was fogged from coming in to the warm house.

“It’ll just take a few minutes to clear,” said Therese.

Abby announced, “After Therese takes the photo, I must be going. Therese still needs to practice for her big meeting tomorrow.”

Harge clasped Abby’s hands in both of his. “Today has been very special, and I owe it to your generous and forgiving spirit, Abby. This reconciliation means so much to both Rindy and me.”

Carol stepped to Abby’s side and put her arm around Abby’s shoulder. “My dear Abby, you are amazing. I couldn’t ask for a more wonderful best friend.”

Rindy hugged Abby again and said, “I can’t wait to be able to call and talk to you and come to see you.”

Abby replied, “Well, I’ll see you sooner than you think. Your mother invited me to Easter lunch at their Manhattan apartment. I’m coming.”

Carol beamed with delight at the prospect. “We’re so glad you’re coming. You’ll like meeting the Sinclairs.”

“Yay!” exclaimed Rindy, as she hugged Abby again.

“Hey, everyone,” Therese announced, “the camera is ready. First let’s have one of Rindy and Abby, then one of the four of you.”

Everyone arranged themselves as directed by Therese.
When the photoshoot was done, Harge brought Abby’s coat from the closet.

With their goodbyes said, Abby left the house for her car. As she turned to get into her car, she glanced at the front door. She wished that she had a camera, because framed in the doorway were Carol holding Rindy in front of her and Harge with his arms around both Carol and Therese’s shoulders. All were either waving or calling out their farewells. Rindy’s wave was the most exuberant of all.

‘A family mended,’ Abby thought. ‘How utterly amazing. They’re united in their love for a remarkable little girl—my beloved goddaughter.’

Chapter End Notes

I want explain something that appears In the text of this chapter. You read that I describe Therese’s eyes as dark hazel. You might have picked that up from my prior chapters, but usually I tell how her hazel eyes look green because of the clothing she’s wearing. Almost all of the other Carol/Therese stories on AO3 describe Therese’s eyes as green. Certainly in the movie, ”Carol (2015)”, Rooney Mara, who plays Therese, has lovely, distinctive green eyes. I just chose to go with Patricia Highsmith’s book, ”The Price of Salt” on which the movie was based. In Chapter One of that book there is a scene in which Therese stares into a mirror:

"She stepped back…and she looked back at her own dark-hazel eyes in the mirror."

Hope that explains it. Really both descriptions are accurate. However, please note the Carol I have written loves it when Therese wears green because it makes her hazel eyes appear more green (and that's a characteristic of hazel eyes).

In this chapter I've attempted a bit of a new approach to my writing. I've either purchased or taken advantage of Kindle's loaner books to read quite a few "how-to-be-a-more-effective fiction writer."

Although I have received many wonderful readers' complements, I can see from reading my previous chapters that sometimes my wording has been a bit repetitious and downright bland in parts of my chapters.

Did you know there are even books on how to write about different body parts (e.g., "How to Write Descriptions of Eyes and Faces")? There’s also a book specifically geared to writing fan fiction ("How to Write Fan Fiction").

At any rate, I'm using some of what I learned to attempt to enrich this chapter. See if you can discern any difference.

I appreciate all of you readers more than you will ever know and your comments buoy my spirit and energy.

Did you notice that I created an avatar? I made the cover of the movie's soundtrack black and white, then overlaid it with the photo I took of The Oak Room's sign at the Plaza Hotel during our recent trip to New York City.

Warmest regards,
Pipestone
Questions and Answers, Part 1

Chapter Summary

After a wildly successful reconciliation between Harge and Abby (Chapter 41), the Aird-Belivet family is in a celebratory mood, however, most of the latest chapter covers preparation for Therese's meeting the next day at "The New York Times" when Therese will be introduced to her team. Therese is adamant about being open about who she is and whom she loves. Therese has asked Harge to share some of his business meeting experience so that Therese will be better prepared for questions that may come her way. Harge and his father will also offer tips on body language and attire to maximize the opportunity for her success.

Although Carol expressed interest in observing the meeting preparation, Harge and Therese convince her that it would be better if she spent time with Rindy in Rindy's room. During the mother/daughter time, Rindy has a few surprise questions for her mother.

Chapter Notes

I apologize for the long wait since I posted Chapter 41. I'll explain more in the End Notes, but I found this chapter extremely difficult to write because I wanted to accurately convey Therese's feelings about being "out" in the workplace and Carol's fear for her being so "out."

For some reason, I encountered my first serious case of "writer's block" and couldn't shake it off. Days and even weeks passed and I still couldn't organize my thoughts. I appreciate your patience. Please let me know if the story is still of interest to you.
Regards,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Questions and Answers, Part 1

Sunday afternoon, March 15 1959

3:00 PM –Harge Aird’s residence near Ridgewood New Jersey

Carol, Therese, Harge and Rindy completed their goodbyes to Abby and retreated into the house. Although the weather outside was cold and rainy, the glow of the successful reconciliation between Abby and Harge warmed the happy group just as much as the cheerful fire in the den’s fireplace.

Rindy began to sing one of her favorite songs from the Broadway musical, West Side Story. “…I feel pretty…I feel pretty and witty and gay…” Rindy laughed at her emphasis on the last word in
Harge beamed at the antics of his elated daughter. He looked at Carol, then at Therese, wanting to embrace them, but not sure he should. Finally, he gave both Carol and Therese a quick hug each and said ‘thank you’ over and over.

Carol and Therese exchanged looks of love. One by one, the most important people in their lives were coming back together after so many bitter years apart.

“I love you, my darling,” Carol whispered to Therese.

Therese responded with a quick kiss to the shell of Carol’s ear. They linked arms and enjoyed Rindy’s expressions of happiness.

Harge turned to Carol. “Have you ever seen her like this?”

“Maybe at Christmas,” Carol replied with a laugh.

Harge glanced at the clock on the mantle above the fireplace and said, “I really don’t want to interrupt Rindy’s celebration, but we need to move on to prepare Therese for her big meeting tomorrow.”

Harge clapped his hands and extended his arms to Rindy. “Hey there pumpkin, we need some hugs here.” Rindy dashed into Harge’s open arms. He lifted her off her feet and spun her around. “You’re getting so tall, sweetheart.”

Rindy grinned. “I’m going to be tall, just like Mommy. Daddy, this is such a happy day.

“Yes, it is, sweetie. Mommy and Aunt Therese made it possible,” said Harge.

Rindy hugged Carol and Therese in turn. “Thank you so much. I love you both.”

Therese watched Rindy and Carol embrace. Therese kissed the top of Rindy’s head and said, “we love you, too, Rindy.”

Harge cleared his throat. “Rindy, please call your grandfather and tell him we’re ready for his assistance.”

“Ohkay, Daddy,” replied Rindy as she skipped to the telephone.

Harge turned to Carol and Therese. “Excuse me while I clear the tray and glasses from Abby’s visit.”

Carol said, “Let me help you, Harge.” She took part of the serving set and followed Harge into the kitchen. Therese turned her gaze toward the fire and began to think about the important conversation that lay ahead.

In the kitchen, Harge put the dishes in the sink.

Carol said, “I really want to be in the room while you and John prepare Therese for her meeting. I won’t say a word.”

“Well…” Harge paused to consider his words. “Dad and I will take good care of her. Therese is a professional. She knows that when we do the role-playing, we’ll ask the tough, pointed questions that she may receive, especially because she has chosen to be honest and open about the person she is and the person she loves. Therese understands our purpose and knows that we're not really
grilling her. I think it would be awkward for both you and Therese for you to be in the room, Carol.”

Carol ran a hand through her hair. “Harge, I’m afraid for her—in tomorrow’s meeting, I mean. Maybe it’s not a good idea for Therese to be so…open. There are so few people who are, you know.”

Harge nodded. “Well, what about you, Carol? Your boss and your co-workers know, don’t they?”

Carol sighed. “Yes, but I’m no one’s supervisor and I only have two co-workers plus my boss and a couple of the furniture movers. It’s different for her.”

Harge could sense Carol’s apprehension. He stepped forward and gently put one hand on her shoulder. “I understand,” he said.

At that moment, Therese opened the kitchen door. Carol jumped at the sound of the door.

“Darling, what’s wrong?” asked Therese. Her voice registered concern.

Harge replied, “She just needs some reassurance that you’ll be alright at work. “I’ll check with Rindy to see when Dad will arrive.” He exited the kitchen to give them privacy.

Therese put her arms around Carol and held her close. “Sweetheart, this is what I want. I don’t want to hide the most important relationship in my life. Harge and his dad are going to help me prepare for any potential uncomfortable questions. They’re doing me a great favor. Are you hesitant because it’s Harge—because of what he did to us in the past?”

Carol walked toward the center of the room. She turned to respond. “No…well, yes. Oh hell, I don’t know, Therese. Sometimes it’s so hard to put the past behind me. I’ve forgiven him for what he did to us, but as I told him, ‘scars heal, but they don’t disappear.’ Now I’m supposed to trust him with you, the love of my life. If he hurts you or makes you cry, I swear I’ll…”

Therese interrupted Carol by gently putting a finger on Carol’s lips. “Oh, my darling, Harge is not going to hurt me. He’s going to help me. I know what I’m doing, Carol.”

Therese gripped Carol’s upper arms and looked deeply into Carol’s grey eyes that were brimming with tears.

“Whatsoever discomfort I may experience both tomorrow and in the future, is worth it to be able to be open about who I am and to be able mention you if the conversation warrants it. Carol, what if you became ill and I needed to leave work to care for you, how would I explain it? If someone asks what I did over the weekend, would I change my answer to remove any mention of you? It’s the everyday simple conversations that happen at work that I refuse to edit out of fear. I want to live my life as the whole person I am, and you are a part of me that I will not deny. Fortunately, my bosses support me and they will stand up for me tomorrow. If they weren’t supportive and if I would lose my job because I am a homosexual who does not hide, then I would rather lose my job than hide.”

Therese exhaled after her lengthy explanation, then squeezed Carol’s arms and kissed her cheek.

Carol smiled a relieved smile, and hugged Therese. “My brave darling,” Carol said with pride.

They heard a knock on the door. “Come in,” they said in unison. Harge entered with his arm around Rindy.
“Dad will be here any time now,” said Harge. He raised his eyebrows as if to ask, ‘is everything okay.’

Carol smiled at Harge and Rindy, took Therese’s hand and said, “We’re all set.”

Carol said to Rindy, “Sweet pea, let’s spend some time in your room while your father and grandfather help Aunt Therese.”

Rindy rolled her eyes, “I’m always missing out on the important stuff.”

Rindy had such an exasperated look on her face that the three adults burst out laughing.

Carol hugged Rindy. “Sweet pea, we’re not laughing at you, and we’re not punishing you by sending you to your room. Besides, I’m going with you and we can have some mother/daughter time, just the two of us.”

Rindy brightened at that prospect. “Well, in that case, I might have a question in my book for you, Mommy.”

Carol made a mental note to bring her purse with her Doublemint gum to Rindy’s room.

The doorbell rang and Rindy dashed for the door calling out, “I’ll get it.”

Harge told Carol and Therese that Rindy had spoken with her best friend Karen earlier in the day. Karen mentioned that her Uncle Michael was going to drive into Manhattan late in the afternoon to work a few days in the city at various furniture shops.

Harge said, “I hope you don’t mind, but I called Michael and asked if he might come by and give you a ride into the city instead of your having to take the train. Michael said he would be happy for the company. He said he would be leaving the Sinclair home shortly before 5:00 PM and arrive here about ten minutes later.

Carol looked at Therese who nodded her assent. “We appreciate Michael’s offer but does that give you enough time with Therese?”

Harge glanced at the kitchen clock. It was just past 3:30 PM. Harge looked at Therese and said, “I think an hour or so should be enough preparation time. What do you think, Therese?”

Therese laughed. “I would hope so. I’ve been mentally preparing for days, Harge.”

Carol said, “Well, that’s that. I’ll call Michael in a few minutes. Let’s get started by greeting John.”

Rindy was seated on the ottoman chatting with her grandfather who occupied Harge’s big leather chair. John stood.

“Carol, Therese, it’s a pleasure to see you again.” Carol and Therese shook hands with John. Carol leaned closer to John and whispered, “Thank you for supporting Harge at today’s luncheon.”

John Aird tried in vain to suppress a smile, “My wife was the object of some very pointed looks from my son and me. I think we were successful in quashing any of her usual rude remarks.”

Rindy was more vocal than her grandfather. “Oh, grandmother was left with her mouth open five times. I counted.” Rindy said proudly.
John added, “I spoke with Jennifer after Rindy and Harge left and told her that she is free to hold any opinion she pleases, but voicing disparaging remarks against her mother and her Aunt Therese will no longer be tolerated.”

“We’re so grateful for your support, John,” said Carol. She gave him a quick kiss on the cheek. Carol turned to Rindy and extended her hand, “Sweet pea, let’s go to your room. It’s time for Aunt Therese’s training.”

Carol smiled at the three adults and pursed her lips in a kiss to Therese. Therese tapped her heart with the palm of her hand and gave Carol a dimpled smile.

After Rindy’s door closed, Harge turned to Therese and rubbed his hands together in anticipation of a successful session. “Therese, I explained to Dad your request for help and the purpose of tomorrow morning’s meeting. Please tell us exactly how we might best assist you.”

Therese grinned at both men. She said, “let’s begin with some tips about my attire and body language, shall we?”

Harge chuckled, “Well, Dad and I are no fashion experts, but in this first meeting with those who will now report to you, I believe a simple look with attire that conveys confidence is best. We have some women in our firm who hold positions of responsibility. I’ll try to recall their attire. Do you have a dark colored jacket?”

“Yes,” replied Therese. “I have a black jacket that I could wear over a white blouse and a new black and grey pencil skirt that Carol found for me when we were shopping yesterday morning. I have some nice silver earrings that are quite simple, too. I always wear the silver necklace with a circle of rubies that Carol gave me years ago.”

Harge and his father nodded their approval. “Perfect!” exclaimed Harge. “Do you have some black shoes with heels of a medium height?”

“I do,” replied Therese. “They’re smooth black leather.”

“Be sure they have a fresh shine,” suggested John, “You’d be surprised, but it does send a powerful message.” Therese nodded.

“Oh,” Harge remembered, “We didn’t discuss makeup. If necessary, have Carol help you with your makeup so that you minimize the effect and wear a light-colored lipstick.” Therese nodded.

“Now let’s talk about the structure of the meeting,” said Harge. “Tell us who will be talking and how you will be introduced.”

“I’ll tell you what I know, but I will confirm this with my direct supervisor, Lee Barnes, first thing in the morning, so I’ll be prepared.”

Therese proceeded to describe the meeting to an attentive John and Harge.

Meanwhile, Carol and Rindy were enjoying time together in Rindy’s room.

Carol called Michael to confirm they would accept his offer of a ride home.

Rindy showed Carol a nearly-completed geography project. Each student had to choose a state to study. Rindy had chosen the state of Oklahoma and had created a notebook about the state’s history, cities, industries and tourist sites. Part of the project involved the student selecting one city in the state and explaining why the city was of interest to the student.
Rindy said, “I chose ‘Ada’ because it’s spelled the same forwards and backwards.”

“Why so it is!” Carol said—impressed with Rindy’s choice. She read each page and praised Rindy. “Darling, please bring this with you when you come to our apartment next weekend. Aunt Therese would love to see it, too.”

Rindy grinned proudly and said, “Sure, Mommy, It’s not due until after spring break.”

“Mommy, I have a question.”

“Hmmm...” replied Carol absently as she studied the location of Ada on the map of Oklahoma that Rindy drew. “What is it, sweetie?”

“May I come to see you and Aunt Therese exchange rings and jump the broom? I think I’m grown up enough to come and I really want to come”

Carol dropped the notebook onto her lap and stared at Rindy incredulously.

“Daddy said it would be too difficult for me to come and not be able to talk to anyone about it except the Sinclairs, and now Aunt Abby, of course. I want to be there. I think Daddy would like to come, too, but he just won’t tell me.”

Carol reached for her purse, in pursuit of Doublemint gum, but before she could open the purse, Rindy extended an unwrapped package of gum to her mother.

Carol threw back her head and laughed until tears ran down her cheeks. Rindy joined in the laughter. Carol hugged Rindy and kissed her face and head again and again. Carol unwrapped the gum and unobtrusively popped it into her mouth.

“Oh, darling, you are my special girl. I'll talk to your daddy and Aunt Therese before I make any promises, but I think we can arrange it.”

Rindy hugged Carol back and looked up adoringly at her mother. “Could I be your ring bearer or flower girl? Weddings have those, you know.”

‘Oh God,’ thought Carol. ‘This will make for interesting pillow talk with Therese after we get past her big meeting at work.’

Carol carefully composed herself and tried to put on a calm, pleasant face. “Let me talk to Aunt Therese, Rindy. We haven’t talked about all the details of the ceremony.”

“Good,” Rindy said sensibly. “That way you can bring it up with the other details.”

“Oh, sweet pea. Is there anything else you want to ask?” Carol thought, ‘Might as well get it over with.’

“Just one more for today,” said Rindy with a playful smile.

Carol cocked her head quizzically and regarded her daughter. Her hands fumbled with the second piece of gum.

Rindy paused dramatically, then asked “Are you going to change your last name to be the same as Aunt Therese’s?”

Carol relaxed. This was an easy one. “Well, no, darling. Remember not long ago when you told me how glad you were that I kept Aird as my last name after Daddy and I divorced. Remember
that Karen told you she wished her mother had kept her married name so that she would have the same last name as her mother?”

Rindy nodded vigorously. “Oh yes, I remember. But that was before I knew that you and Aunt Therese were going to wear matching rings and have a ring ceremony and jump the broom. And you’re not going back to your old name before you married Daddy.”

Carol said weakly, “It’s called a maiden name, sweet pea.”

“Okay, a maiden name.” said Rindy.

“Anyway,” continued Rindy, “there’s a new girl in my class at school and she has two last names and she spells it with a dash in between the names. I asked her about it and she said her father had the two last names from a long time ago. My new friend’s name is Katherine Simson-Larrimore.”

Carol’s mouth was slightly agape as she listened to Rindy’s logic.

“See, Mommy, you could be Carol Aird-Belivet and then you and I would still have the same last name, but you would have Aunt Therese’s name, too.”

‘That makes sense,’ Carol thought, but instead said, “Rindy, changing my name is a very, very big step and Aunt Therese and I would have to discuss it and wait until we are very sure that is what we want to do. We would want to be sure that you want me to hyphenate my last name. Also, couples like us don’t usually change names like that.”

“Well,” Rindy said with some disappointment in her voice, “I think it’s a very good idea and I wish you would, Mommy.”

“We’ll talk about it. I promise.” Carol kissed her daughter’s cheek and thought to herself ‘I absolutely love this idea.’

Mother and daughter smiled at each other. Carol asked Rindy, “What do you think is going on downstairs? Do you think I should take a peek?”

Rindy grinned and nodded.

To be continued.

Chapter End Notes

Dear readers, this chapter contains some autobiographical information, and therefore I wanted to be as precise as possible. When Therese tells Carol her need to be open about who she is, she is expressing my personal desire to be open even after I lost a teaching job (1975) because I was living openly with the love of my life (who is still the love of my life 46 years later). Before I lost my college teaching job, I didn't actually know the impact—the overpowering ramifications of living openly as a lesbian. Once I suffered that loss and knowing what could happen if I continued to be open, I still felt (in fact I felt more than ever) that was how I wanted to live and living "in the closet" had no place in my life. My partner lost a job, too, the very next year
and she was told to her face it was because she was a lesbian. She echoed my sentiments. We would never choose the closet, in fact we believed that being open about our lives might help destroy some of the myths and stereotypes. Part of our rationale for being open came from our belief in the LGBT rights movement. Of course Therese's world is a full decade before the dawn of the movement, so her reasons are personal, but in many ways Therese is far braver than I was. She and a few others like her were the brave men and women who paved the way for me to chose my life path of openness some 16 years later.

Again, please excuse the delay in my posting. I will not end this story until after the ring ceremony and the honeymoon. At that time, both you and I will decide whether the story should continue. There might be a delay or two along the way, but I will never, ever leave you hanging.

By the way, a couple of weeks ago, my wife and I had the opportunity to spend a few days in Chicago. Of course I had to visit the Drake Hotel where Carol and Therese stayed on their journey West. The day we saw it was almost a picture perfect duplication of their original arrival movie scene. It was late in the afternoon and the weather was cool and rainy. I closed my eyes and could picture our two heroines pulling up in Carol's Packard. As Carol would say..."divine."

I am angling for the ultimate Carol/Therese field trip for my 70th birthday next month. It's their honeymoon destination, Key West. We'll see if I can swing it. It would certainly lend a lot of authenticity to those chapters. What do you think?

Regards,
Pipestone
Questions and Answers, Part 2

Chapter Summary

This chapter is a continuation of Chapter 42. Please read the previous chapter before reading this one.

Carol and Rindy were upstairs in Rindy’s room while Harge and his father were helping Therese prepare for tomorrow morning’s meeting at The New York Times. The meeting would explain Therese’s role in the organizational change affecting sixteen junior photo editors reporting to Lee Barnes. Therese’s promotion to Junior Photo Editor 2 would result in her having supervisory responsibility over the group of junior photo editors who were her peers before the change. She also picked up responsibility for three additional interns giving her a total of six. Part of the meeting’s introduction by Metro Vice President Jerry Goldman and Senior Photo Editor Lee Barnes would involve the two men voicing support for Therese and her decision to be open at work about living with Carol.

This chapter focuses on additional coaching by Harge and John. Therese was delighted with what she was learning as she absorbed their many valuable tips. There are some “fireworks” surrounding the preparation for the question and answer portion of tomorrow’s meeting.

Chapter Notes

Unfortunately I continue to be plagued by "writer's block." Thanks for your patience. I believe that it was very important for me to ensure the chapter's dialog was clear for reference in future chapters.

Again, I will never abandon this storyline until at least the ring ceremony and the honeymoon are done. My dear readers, I hope you will start to think about whether or not you want to see the story continue beyond those events. I'll rely on your input as well as my own feelings.

Regards,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sunday afternoon, March 15, 1959

4:00 PM –Harge Aird’s residence near Ridgewood New Jersey

Therese listened attentively to the next part of the “lesson” which was body language. Therese found that she already had been using many of Harge and John Aird’s suggestions for successful body language while listening. However, she was excited to learn what the men referred to as a
“power stance” while speaking. She learned how stance creates a powerful image. Harge showed Therese how to stand with her feet apart—almost to hip width. He demonstrated the power stance for men and said a woman’s stance should almost (but not quite) be as wide as a man’s. Also, she learned how to hold her hands in front of her—slightly above her waist. John suggested Therese remember the childhood rhyme that involved positioning the fingers in the shape of a church steeple. Therese nodded and smiled, then perfectly mimicked the desired position of her fingers.

“This feels good,” said Therese.

Harge and John beamed their approval.

Harge suggested, “Imagine every chair in this room is occupied by an employee. Move your eyes from one to another, pausing long enough to connect with each person’s eyes. At the moment of connection, smile slightly and nod to acknowledge that person. When you’ve finished the room sweep, begin again. If you’re asked a question, fix your eyes on the eyes of the questioner. Nod slightly to indicate you understand the question. If the question is a negative one, you need not smile, just wait until they’re finished and repeat what you heard and then say, ‘Is that your question?’ They’ll probably answer ‘yes’ but if you misunderstood, that will allow an opportunity to ensure you answer the question they’ve asked.”

“This is incredibly valuable!” Therese exclaimed. “You’ve given me suggestions that definitely boost my self-confidence. Could we take a break for a few minutes? I want to practice in a mirror before we begin the role-playing for potential questions I may be asked.”

Harge stood and stretch. “Of course, Therese. There is a full-length mirror in the downstairs guest bathroom. Do you remember where it is from your last visit?”

Therese smiled and nodded. “Excuse me, gentlemen.”

Upstairs at the Aird residence:

Meanwhile, in Rindy’s room, Carol had just asked Rindy for permission to ‘take a peek’ at the progress of the downstairs preparation session. Carol kissed Rindy on the top of her head. “Do you have some homework to do while I watch for a bit?”

Rindy grinned and replied, “Yes, I need to study for a spelling bee on Friday. Karen and I are team leaders of our class. We’ll stand on opposite walls and the teacher will go through the list of words. If someone misspells a word they have to sit down. At the end of the word list, the team with the most people standing wins.”

Carol listened attentively, then asked, “Did you and Karen get to choose your team members or did the teacher create the teams?”

“Oh, we got to choose.” Rindy giggled. “Karen chose a lot of our friends, but I chose the people who I thought were the best spellers, whether or not we were good friends.”

“What a good idea, sweet pea,” Carol said. She glowed with pride at her daughter’s astute reasoning.

“Study your words, darling, and I’ll be back in a little while to quiz you.” Carol stood and moved to the door.

“Oh Mommy,” said Rindy, as she opened her spelling book.

Carol quietly closed the door behind her and stealthily moved toward the head of the stairs, taking care to stay in the shadows. She felt oddly like a thief, but she was dying to know what was going
She heard only the men’s voices. Obviously, Therese had gone to the bathroom or to get a drink of water.

Harge said, “Dad, are you thinking what I’m thinking—about Therese, I mean.”

“Well,” John said with a smile, “I probably am, but go ahead, son.”

“Dad, what do you think about Therese’s potential as a lawyer?”

John chuckled and rubbed his chin. “Well, if we were in court, I would want her on our side. She’s an extremely brilliant young woman, without a doubt. Sometimes you can just tell from the way a person carries themselves or speaks with authority. Personally, I think she has incredible potential for success. But she’s happy at The New York Times, isn’t she?”

“Oh, I know, I know,” said Harge, “But if she ever decided to entertain the idea of changing careers, I’d want to be there to discuss the possibility of her joining the firm.”

Carol was listening from her position at the top of the stairs and was riveted to the men’s words.

“Does she have a college degree?” asked John.

“Almost,” Harge replied. “Carol told me she needs only two courses to graduate from the City College of New York. Her major is Political Science, with a minor in Business. Also, she has taken all the photography classes CCNY offered. When she knew she had a job with The Times, she changed her major from Art to Political Science—thinking that it might benefit her career. Ever since she and Carol have been together, she has just chipped away at her degree.”

John mused, “Well, it’s difficult to be in love and have a full-time job and go to school, but, look, Harge, her major and minor studies would be an appropriate prelude for law school. I want her to be happy with her vocation, but my God, I think she could become a top lawyer for our firm if that’s what she wanted.”

Harge lowered his voice, as he heard Therese’s footsteps. “Let’s just see what happens in the next three years, Dad. That’s when she may be given a promotion to Senior Photo Editor, or not.”

John murmured his assent.

Carol heard Therese’s voice drift up the stairs.

After she entered the den, Therese faced Harge and John and assumed the power stance they had taught her. Her hands were placed perfectly in front of her, with fingertips making a ‘church steeple’ shape. She caught and held each man’s gaze. She spoke in a clear voice, dropping an octave at the end of each sentence as they had suggested.

Therese explained, “Here is what I need in the way of role-playing. Each of you will pose a question you believe may be asked of me regarding my decision to be open about the person I love. Please don’t shy away from asking a difficult question. I need to rehearse answers in a safe environment such as you’ve provided for me. I’m ready. Please proceed.”

Carol thought, ‘I’ve never heard my sweetheart express as much confidence and assertiveness as she is doing right now.’

Harge and John looked at each other. They were astounded by the change in Therese’s demeanor in the few minutes she had been away. Before their eyes, she had transformed into the new
managerial role she had been given.

Carol couldn’t stop smiling. She wanted to shout at the top of her lungs, ‘That’s MY woman!’

Therese turned to John, smiled slightly and nodded, an indication that he should begin.

John cleared his throat. He thought about some of the hateful and inappropriate things his wife had said in his presence for years. Only recently had he spoken up to defend Therese and Carol.

John thought, ‘I simply cannot voice these ugly and debasing words in the Therese’s presence.’ John’s chin fell to his chest and he put one hand over his eyes. His shoulders slumped and sat down in the nearest chair.

“Dad!” exclaimed Harge with alarm.

Therese reacted quickly. She flew to John’s side and took his other hand. “Mr. Aird, oh, Mr. Aird.” Therese knelt beside him. “I never meant this exercise to cause you discomfort,” Therese said with emotion.

Harge patted his father on the back.

Carol weighed whether or not she should join them. She bit her tongue and stepped back into the shadows to let Therese handle the situation.

Therese’s face registered total concern for John’s well-being. She patted his hand until he regained his poise.

John smiled weakly as he rubbed the back of his neck. Finally, he spoke.

“Now that I know you as a person, Therese, I simply cannot utter any of the hateful words I have heard ring out in our household over the past six years. I cannot voice these types of negative questions, even if it is for your benefit.”

Therese sat gracefully on the floor with her feet tucked under her. She looked from John to Harge and back to John again.

Therese took a deep breath and smiled slightly. “Well,” she said, “obviously we need to change the way the questions are posed. Let’s collaborate on a few of the more obvious questions I may face. We don’t need to role-play. As soon as we agree on the question, then I want you to act as the audience. Let’s ask Carol to actually pose the questions. That way you will be able to focus on my body language and words without being distracted by…well, if I may say it, your guilt over your past actions.”

Harge and John breathed a sigh of relief. Harge said, “I’ll go get Carol.”

Carol had been completely mesmerized by what she had observed. When she heard Harge say her name she realized that she needed to retreat quickly to Rindy’s room.

Carol did so and closed the door. She said in a quiet voice, “Sweet pea, here comes Daddy…” Carol didn’t want to ask Rindy to lie about her sneaking a peek, but she didn’t have to. Rindy winked at her mother and handed Carol the spelling book, pointing to where her mother should begin.

Carol started with the word Rindy indicated.

“Trouble.” Carol pronounced distinctly, trying not to laugh at the word Rindy chose.
Just then the door opened and Harge smiled at Carol and Rindy, but was silent while his daughter finished spelling the word.


“I’m sorry to interrupt your spelling homework, Rindy. We need Mommy downstairs.”

“That’s all right, Daddy. I was just spelling ‘trouble.’ Did I get it right, Mommy?”

“Oh, yes, darling,” said Carol with an amused look on her face. “Your spelling of ‘trouble’ was perfect.” Carol ran her hand through her hair. Rindy smiled angelically at her father.

“Could you finish quizzing me later, Daddy?”

“Sure, pumpkin,” said Harge as he led Carol away, explaining that they needed her assistance.

Carol blew a kiss to Rindy and Rindy returned the kiss.

As they walked along the staircase landing, Harge told Carol what had occurred downstairs and Harge thought perhaps Carol could vocalize the harsh questions instead of John and him.

“Carol,” Harge said, “Dad and I just don’t have the heart to say any hurtful words.”

Heat pulsed through Carol’s entire body. She took Harge’s arm and led them into Harge’s bedroom which was two doors down and shut the door.

Once in the room, Carol whirled on him with eyes blazing and nostrils flaring. She spoke in a quiet tone so Rindy wouldn’t hear, but Harge could feel her fury.

Carol found her voice. “Thank God we are getting along better so I feel comfortable telling you exactly what I think of this idea.”

Harge’s mouth fell open, and his eyes met hers in an incredulous stare. He knew she had earned the right to be angry—very angry.

“Carol, if you don’t feel comfortable asking Therese questions, I could call Michael and see if he can come over now. He could help ask Therese the difficult questions.”

Carol raised her hand to silence Harge. She jabbed at the ceiling with her index finger. She whispered, but her anger was no less potent. “Oh, so now it’s ‘call the lezzie and fag to the rescue, because Dad and I couldn’t possibly say words we’ve said for years without remorse!’”

Harge looked down at his feet then raised his head and blinked rapidly in a pitiful look. “Please don’t say those words about yourself or Michael. Anyway, it was Therese’s idea…”

“But!” Carol snapped. “Therese is so kindhearted, of course she wouldn’t want you two to be uncomfortable. She just voiced the first solution that came to her mind. Telling me it was her idea just makes me angrier at you.”

Harge pled, “Carol, I’m so sorry. What can I do? I can’t change the past. I would if I could.”

Carol spoke in a slightly gentler tone, but one still laced with irritation. “Oh, I know you would, Harge. As I said, I’m glad that I feel comfortable enough to be furious at what you’re asking. I’m no longer scared that you’ll take Rindy away again.”

Harge reached out to Carol, “You’re right to feel that comfort. You can be angry at me without
fear of repercussion. I deserve all your anger and more.”

“Oh, please. Don’t start with the string of regrets, Harge. You’ll only need a nitroglycerin tablet.”

The former wife and husband stared at each other until Carol started laughing. Harge was too relieved to risk laughing, but he grinned at Carol. He said, “Am I still in t-r-o-u-b-l-e?”

“No, Harge. Now you’re making me laugh.”

Carol stretched her back and shoulders. “My God, that outburst felt good. I’ve needed to say those words for years.”

Carol stepped to the phone on Harge’s nightstand. “I’ll call Michael now to explain what we need. Let’s all have one finger of brandy, then we’ll all help my sweetheart prepare for difficult questions.”

Harge nodded, trying to process the rapidity of Carol’s change into a good mood. He fled the room to prepare the much-needed drinks.

Carol spoke with Michael. He agreed to come right away, Carol hung up the phone and walked downstairs.

“Hello, John. Hello my darling,” Carol greeted them both with a radiant smile. “Harge is getting just a finger of brandy for each of us.”

Therese eagerly stood and embraced Carol. Carol placed a chaste kiss on her lips right in front of John.

“Many thanks for agreeing to help, Carol,” said John with a smile. “Did Harge explain…”

Carol patted John’s shoulder, “Oh yes, we had a nice discussion about it.”

Therese looked confused at the words ‘nice discussion.’ Therese had learned over the years that those words usually signaled something other than a ‘nice discussion,’ but she made a mental note to ask her lover about her word choice later.

Harge walked back into the den through the kitchen’s swinging door. He addressed Carol gingerly, “Did you reach Michael?”

“Yes. He’s on his way.” Carol smiled at Harge. Relief streamed through his body like a salve.

The group decided to wait until Michael arrived to have their drinks. While waiting, Therese demonstrated to Carol what she had learned about a “power stance” and hand placement. Carol was amazed.

‘Are men born knowing these things?’ Carol wondered. She felt a rush of gratitude to Harge and John for sharing these important tips that would be so valuable for Therese’s meeting tomorrow. Carol felt a twinge of guilt for her prior harsh words with Harge.

Within fifteen minutes, the doorbell rang signaling Michael’s arrival.

Harge answered the door and greeted Michael. The men shook hands and Harge clapped Michael on the shoulder. “Thanks so much for coming over early, Michael.”

Michael grinned at Harge. “Anything for my poker buddy and my favorite photographer,” Michael said with a nod and a big smile for Therese.
“Hi Carol, hello Mr. Aird.” Michael greeted them warmly.

“Remember, Michael, you must call me John.” Michael laughed a deep, genuine laugh (a very masculine laugh, Carol thought). Carol returned Michael’s warm greeting.

It was obvious to Carol that Michael truly liked Harge and the feeling seemed mutual. Now she had more regrets about the timing of her severe reprimand of Harge. Harge and John were spending their Sunday afternoon trying their best to help her lover succeed.

Rindy opened her door at the sound of the doorbell and the voices. She squealed with delight at seeing Michael. Rindy was downstairs in a flash. Michael picked her up and swung her around.

When he put her down, she said, “Uncle Michael, you’re so strong. Guess what? I’m studying my spelling words for school.”

“Well, Rindy,” replied Michael, “That’s a coincidence, because Karen is at home studying hers, too. She said something about each of you being on opposite teams of spellers and a big spelling contest on Friday.”

“That’s right.” answered Rindy. “We think the teacher is trying ways to keep us studying right up until spring break starts on Friday afternoon. Excuse me, everyone. I need to get back to my spelling.” Rindy dashed upstairs while the adults chuckled.

Harge had slipped into the kitchen while everyone was chatting with Michael. Carol excused herself to see if Harge needed any help with the drinks. She found Harge with both hands on the counter, staring at it as if seeking a way to face Carol when the questioning started.

Carol sighed at Harge’s despondent pose. She stepped closer to Harge and put her hands on each side of his waist. Harge felt Carol lean against his back—her forehead between his shoulders. Harge relaxed as his tension unwound at Carol’s affectionate touch.

“I was too vehement,” Harge. “I said more than I should’ve. I just couldn’t handle the irony of Michael and I being put in the position to…”

Harge turned and hugged Carol. “No. Don’t apologize. You should have said that and more.”

Carol realized that they were standing with arms around each other. “We should get these drinks ready before Therese starts to get curious about why we’re taking so long in here.”

Harge laughed as he stepped back. “You were right about one thing. You can chew me out without worrying about any reprisal.”

Carol’s eyes danced with pleasure. “That’s a marvelous feeling, Harge.”

“Good. You and Therese deserve that and so much more. Could you help me pour the drinks?”

“Gladly,” Carol said with a heartfelt smile.

Carol held the swinging kitchen door open for Harge, who carried a tray full of brandy snifters, all with a finger of the amber liquid, just as Carol specified.

“Refreshments anyone?” Harge said in his best host’s tone of voice.

Michael said, “I just got here. I haven’t earned any of this fine liquor.”

“You will,” said Therese with a grin. “Here’s what we’re going to do, Michael.”
Therese explained who would attend the meeting and said that there would be a question and answer session after Jerry Goldman and Lee Barnes outlined Therese’s new position to the sixteen Junior Photo Editors and six interns who will comprise Therese’s team.

Michael was thoughtful. “This is a fine idea—to practice, I mean. Now I understand that Carol and I will ask the tough questions while John and Harge act as other attendees and observe Therese and make suggestions when we’re done. Therese, tomorrow morning before the meeting why don’t you visit with one or two of your colleagues that you know quite well and give each a question that you know you can answer. My favorite college professor once told me that it was helpful to have ‘ice-breaker questions’ to get a group going. It might not be necessary, but it’s better to be prepared.”

Everyone nodded in agreement. Harge said, “Let me get some paper and carbon paper so we can create copies.”

The group brainstormed possible topics. Therese could give copies of the questions to Jerry and Lee before the meeting. Therese would tell them which ones she would like to answer.

- Someone might have general moral or religious objections knowing that Therese was open about her sexuality. Therese thought Jerry would be the best person to answer this one.
- Someone might object to Therese having framed pictures of Carol and Rindy on her desk. Therese thought Jerry would be the best person to answer this one, too.
- Someone will probably ask why does Therese have to expose her “sex life,” or perhaps call it her “private life.” Therese wanted to answer this one.
- A woman might say that she won’t feel comfortable being alone in the same bathroom as Therese now that she “knows.” Therese wanted to answer this one, too.
- John thought someone was bound to ask whether or not Therese could be fair to that employee if Therese knows that the employee disapproves of her “lifestyle.” Therese said she would discuss this potential question with Lee before the meeting and they would decide who would best answer it.

They continued to offer ideas until the group had exhausted potential questions. Carol had carefully written the questions using ballpoint pen, on paper and carbon paper. Carol and Michael would each have a copy of the questions. Harge and John would share the third copy for reference.

Tomorrow Therese would give these copies of the questions to Jerry and Lee before the meeting. Therese would tell them which ones she would like to answer.

Harge glanced at the clock. It was nearly 5:00 PM.

Therese noticed the time as well. “I think there’s going to be about twenty minutes allowed for questions and answers,” she said.

The chairs were arranged to simulate the meeting. John clapped his hands to get everyone’s attention. Therese stood at the head of the group and assumed her “power stance.”

John said in an official-sounding voice, “Are you ready, Miss Belivet?” Therese nodded.

To be continued...
"Trouble" was on an Internet list of spelling words for 5th graders. "Carbon paper" was the old-fashioned way of making copies. If you're under 60 years old, you're probably not familiar with it. Head for Google, folks. I recall using carbon paper quite often when I was in junior high and high school. It was tedious to carefully place the purplish carbon paper between two sheets of blank paper and roll all sheets into the typewriter. If you made a typographical error, it was "tough luck" and start over. If you were typing on a single blank sheet you could correct your error by using a round eraser of very hard rubber that had a small brush attached to keep the eraser dust out of your typewriter. In graduate school, I used a material called correction tape. It functioned like carbon paper, except that it was white. You corrected typos by taking the white correction tape (about the size of two postage stamps) and positioning it over the mis-typed letter. You hit the key of the letter that was in error and the back side of the tape rubbed off onto the paper. Then you had to backspace and type over the white spot with the correct letter. (Are we having fun, yet?) This is the way I wrote my Master's thesis (1970).

By the time I was writing my PhD dissertation (1975), I had graduated to Liquid Paper (this was the brand name). I just Googled that it was discovered by a Dallas woman--a typist and artist--in 1959, but apparently it was not mass produced and marketed until 1968. The trick to using Liquid Paper was having the patience to let it dry. If you applied it too heavily, it wouldn't dry well enough to backspace and type the correct letter. The letter would be a black blob in a dollop of white. (Here we go again with a fresh sheet of paper. Sigh.) Allow me to share one more painful memory of typing my dissertation on my pretty blue-green Smith-Corona portable electric typewriter (at least it was electric). Do you know why the term "cut and paste" was coined regarding our fabulous computer word processing programs? You guessed it...because if you wanted to move large sections of text from one page to another, you rolled the page out of the typewriter, took scissors in hand and snipped. Grab that cellophane tape and secure the section into its new home, then take all pages and trim them to the standard 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet. There! It's ready to go to your dissertation director. If you're thinking "how painful" you are right, but hey, it's all I knew.

The first copier I recall was in the library at my undergraduate college in 1968, although it was available to larger companies shortly after the date of my storyline. Making copies when I was in college and grad school was quite expensive--at least 50 cents per page. I even remember my early days as a lesbian activist when we made carbon copies of our letters to members of Congress because it was too expensive to use the copy machine.

I am still planning on a field trip to Key West to research their honeymoon location. I've been in touch with the island's unofficial historian by phone. He suggested spending a day in the Key West library's microfilm archives. Ah, microfilm, another trip down the memory lane of research.

Regards,

Pipestone
Questions and Answers - Conclusion

Chapter Summary

This chapter is a continuation of Chapter 43. For maximum enjoyment, please review at least the end of Chapter 43. The new chapter's material assumes knowledge of the previous chapter.

Harge, John, Carol and Michael are ready to assume their roles to ask questions of Therese that everyone has agreed may be asked in Therese’s big team meeting at The New York Times. Tomorrow, Therese will be formally introduced to her team as their leader and her superiors, Jerry Goldman and Lee Barnes will be in attendance and speak as well. This practice session will prove extremely valuable in preparing Therese for what may happen tomorrow.

This chapter focuses on Therese practicing answers to potential questions at the upcoming meeting.

Chapter Notes

Dear readers, thanks again for your patience. I believe I'm starting to shake writer's block, however, it took longer than I wanted to post this. I'm going to be very honest with you. I had been preoccupied with my impending 70th birthday and the introspection that accompanied it for me, but since I passed that milestone a couple of days ago, I no longer need to focus on it. I'm thankful to be alive and to be able create stories that you, my wonderful family of readers seem to enjoy a great deal.

This chapter is about twice the size of my usual chapters. There are a couple of reasons: 1) I wanted to give you a nice long chapter since you've been waiting for a while; and 2) This chapter is extremely autobiographical in that answers Therese gives to the questions that are asked in the mock Q and A session are almost identical to questions I've been asked during my speaking over the years to all kinds of groups. Therese's answers were my own answers given during my time as a lesbian activist. (Note: I really don't mean "past tense" when referring to myself as a lesbian activist, but in retirement I have very few occasions to speak to groups).

I was asked some of the more personal questions that you'll read about in this chapter rather early (1971-1980) in my activism. The questions that deal directly with the workplace were asked of me from about 1997 until my retirement in 2012. I wanted to share with you readers some of what I was asked and how I responded. So, you are seeing me in this chapter along with the history of the movement. There was one particular answer of mine that I felt reached many people and had a big impact. Actually it was more of a presentation by me than an answer to a question, but it was the photo-on-the-desk question posed to Therese. I addressed the photo on the desk issue in front of a company-wide diversity conference in 2003 with 500 or more company leaders, including the CEO and his direct reports. The event's photographer captured the key moment of the answer when I placed an 8 x 10 photo of my partner and me on the table next to me. I will forever treasure that photo.
You may notice that I do not use the term "sexual orientation" in the chapter. The term "sexual orientation" was not a term in the popular vernacular in 1959, even though it began to appear in LGBT publications in the early 1970s. I recall from my years in the movement that "sexual orientation" was the primary and virtually the only terminology favored by activists after about 1980. That year's Presidential election saw the emergence of the so-called Moral Majority. Those right-wing people tried to convince Americans that homosexuality was a choice, and therefore they always said "sexual preference" and they still do. Our movement's leaders insisted around 1980 that activists use "orientation" instead of "preference." That differentiation was very much in practice from about 1980 on.

Occasionally (but not often) even a sympathetic organization or even members of the LGBT community still use "preference."

Therese has used the term sexual identity in previous chapters. In the late 1950s that term was used occasionally to indicate sexual orientation, however, "sexual identity" is now associated more with the transgender community and refers to the gender a person believes themselves to be. To prevent confusion, I'm going to avoid using "sexual identity" very often. I've tried to be true to the time of the storyline; but to avoid confusion, I'll more or less avoid "sexual identity" from here on.

Finally, since you now know the Q&A part of this chapter is autobiographical, you might wonder if Therese would be able to articulate the answers as she did in the year 1959? Well, that's a valid question, but I'm claiming "writer's privilege" to allow her to do so. My story's Therese is a brilliant young woman with exceptional communication skills. Within that shy exterior beats the heart of an activist-to-be.

Regards,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Questions and Answers - Conclusion

Sunday afternoon, March 15 1959, shortly after 5:00 PM – Harge Aird’s residence near Ridgewood New Jersey

John Aird called the “meeting” to order. Carol and Michael were ready to question Therese. Carol asked Michael to pose the first question.

Michael sat motionless in the chair while his eyes darted over the words of the question that the group had collectively created minutes before. He exhaled forcefully with his cheeks puffed out. His eyebrows crept up toward his forehead and he sighed.

“Therese, are you sure that you want Carol and me to ask you questions like this?”

Therese replied, “Yes, Michael. It’ll be much easier for me tomorrow if you do. Now I don’t know if my new team members will be this blunt, but I certainly believe they’ll be thinking some of these same thoughts.”

“Oh, I agree,” replied Michael. "Jack has shared some of the questions that he's heard second-hand at his car dealership and they’re just as personal as these are.”
Michael rubbed his hand across his forehead, coming close to mussing his blond crewcut. He inhaled audibly and said, “okaaay…”

Carol glanced at Harge. She caught his eye and smiled. Harge relaxed in his chair as he thought, ‘At least she’s not still mad at me.’

“Therese,” Michael read from the questions sheet, “Why must you put a picture of your lady friend on your desk? Why do you get to rub our noses with what you do in the bedroom?”

Therese flinched a bit upon hearing the question. ‘Oh boy, is this the way it may sound tomorrow? Am I really ready for this?’ Her heart thudded in her chest.

Therese dropped her power stance indicating that she wanted to step out of the responder role. “Everyone, I plan to take a second photo tomorrow. I want to have it on my desk in addition to the small photo of Carol and Rindy that’s already there. The second photo will be of Carol only and it’ll be five by seven inches. I’m going to take that photo to the meeting and place it near me face down before the meeting starts. I’ll pick it up and display it in my hands at the time the question is asked.”

Harge replied. “Good idea. I think the photo you show in the meeting should be larger than the one of Carol and Rindy.”

Carol said, “Dearest, I’m not trying to be immodest, but I agree that a photo of me in the size you mention would be the most effective in the meeting.” Everyone chuckled as a way of teasing Carol.

Harge raised his hand to get Therese’s attention. “Sorry to interrupt again, but I have a framed photo of Carol somewhere in that desk.” Harge gestured toward the large mahogany secretary’s desk in the corner of the den. “I think I can find it. Let’s practice with the real thing.”

Carol quipped, “Should I be flattered that you still have a photo of me, Harge?”

“Well…” Harge drawled, wait until you see it.” The others chortled at the exchange between the two.

After digging through a drawer, Harge found the photo.

“Aha!” he exclaimed. “Here it is.” He presented it with a flourish to Therese.

“This is a wonderful photo.” Therese looked at it lovingly.

Carol stepped next to Therese. With an arm around Therese’s waist, Carol peered at the old photo. “Oh Harge, I remember this one. It was taken around Valentine’s Day before Rindy was born, wasn’t it? I’m glad it’s only my face and shoulders. I recall I was quite pregnant.”

Harge nodded and smiled with affection at his ex-wife. “Before you think it terribly romantic of me to still have it, notice that it was in the bottom of a desk drawer—not on my nightstand.”

Carol tossed her head back laughing. She smoothed her hair back in place and winked at Harge. Therese grinned at him too.

“Well,” said Harge, “Enough of this trip down memory lane. Let’s decide when Therese should pick up the photo.”

Michael repeated the question and they were back on track. The photo was face down on a small table next to Therese. Therese continued her power stance and inclined her head at Michael. She
didn’t smile.

“Michael, you’ve asked a question that I imagine several others in the room might have as well. To begin with, I would not under any circumstance talk about my most private life in or outside the office with any of you on our team or anyone else at *The Times* for that matter.” Her dark hazel eyes moved from person to person.

Harge and John nodded to indicate their approval. Therese continued.

“In the past several days I’ve dropped by the desks of each of you. Almost everyone has one or more pictures of their loved ones on their desks. I doubt that any of you consider your photographs as a statement about what you do in the privacy of your home. However, your question seems to indicate that my photo of my companion of six years is a representation of my most private and intimate life.”

“It’s a photo, Michael—no more, no less. Our photos remind all of us of our loved ones. Those images help us on difficult days. They’re a comfort and an inspiration. Each of you might express different reasons for having the photos on your desk, but it all boils down to this: they remind you of the whole person you are. Hopefully each of you has someone important enough to display on your desk. Now that I’m in a new role on this team, seeing your photographs tell me a little more about you as a person. I’m happy to have those insights. Just imagine if you were told to take your photographs down because it made a co-worker uncomfortable. You would be infuriated. You would say, ‘mind your own business,’ and you would be right to say so.

Michael, I’m no different than you. I have a loved one, too. Her name is Carol.” Therese picked up the photo and cradled it in her hands facing the photo outwards. “This photo is no more about what I do behind closed doors as your photo is for you.” Therese gently placed the framed photo standing up and towards the attendees.

“Michael, does that answer your question?” asked Therese.

Carol, Michael, Harge and John sat in stunned silence at the eloquence of Therese’s reply. Therese looked from person to person, and addressed them as a group.

“Do you think my answer is adequate and effective? I’ll take a recent photo of Carol, but it’ll be similar to this. I’ll have it handy to display right after I say Carol’s name.”

Harge said, “Therese, your response was so eloquent. I can’t imagine Jerry Goldman or Lee Barnes answering such a question half as well as you did just now. Please tell them you want to answer a photo question if it comes up.”

Therese said, “Thank you, Harge. I will.”

The others agreed. Carol wiped tears from her eyes. Michael cupped his hand over his mouth in astonishment.

At a long moment of silence, John declared, “If all your answers are of the caliber of that one, my dear, you’re going to sail through the meeting with great success.”

Carol had regained her composure after her own emotional reaction to Therese’s answer to the photo question.

“Dearest,” Carol said, “I want to ask a more lighthearted question.”

Carol was now acting in the role of an employee at tomorrow’s meeting. She held up her hand. Therese recognized her by saying, “Carol.”
“Therese, I want to ask you a question that is not mine, but it’s one that I’ve overheard and I think you should have the opportunity to answer. I heard two women talking in the restroom. One said that she was uncomfortable being in the ladies’ room when you were there. What would you say to that woman or any other woman who feels the same?”

Therese paused. She departed from her role and spoke to the group. “I wanted to get this question out in the open because Mr. Barnes mentioned to me that a team member had gone to him saying she heard the two women talking. I think I’ll ask Mr. Barnes before the meeting how we can include this question, because I really want to address it.”

“Okay, I’m ready to return to my role,” said Therese.

Therese answered, “Well, Carol, despite my smile, I consider this as important a question as any other. Anything that takes away our focus from our jobs is important and should be addressed.” She looked from person to person in the room to let those words sink in.

“When I go to the ladies’ room it’s for the same reason that any of you have when you use the restroom. I go in, close the door to the stall and use the facilities, wash my hands, check my appearance in the mirror and leave. Most of the time I’m thinking of the work task that awaits me when I return to my desk. If I fail to say hello to a woman who might be in the ladies’ room at the same time, it’s because I’m thinking of my work. I don’t use the ladies’ room to socialize, have a smoke or kill time.”

Therese took a deep breath as she continued her response. “This question implies something I’d like to clarify. Just because I’m a homosexual does not mean that I desire all women. And by the way, it’s correct to refer to homosexual women as lesbians. That word isn’t a slur. I assume that those of you who are heterosexual don’t desire each and every person of the opposite sex. If you are fortunate, as I am, you have one person whom you love and share your life. My person is Carol. We have been together for six years. I love her and only her and I have committed my life to her and only her. I hope this answers your question.”

Therese smiled at Carol and tipped her head to the others in the room. Everyone applauded. Therese wiped her brow and laughed with relief.

“I doubt that I’ll be applauded in tomorrow’s meeting, but thank you all the same.”

Harge held up his hand. Therese thought only Carol and Michael would pose the questions, but she wanted Harge to be able to ask anything he thought was important.

Harge cleared his throat, “Therese, do you think you’ll be asked if you chose to be a homosexual or perhaps the question might be posed as ‘why did you choose to be a homosexual’?”

Therese paused and replied thoughtfully, “I might be asked that question, Harge. Here’s how I’d answer: To date, science has not discovered why some people are homosexual. It’s certainly not because there’s any advantage to being a homosexual. In fact, as we all know, most homosexuals hide their sexuality because they fear if people knew they would lose their jobs, lose their friends or family.”

“However, some people like me choose not to hide, because it’s too difficult to go through life hiding your sexuality. Hiding distracts from whatever you are doing. In particular, hiding distracts from your focus on your job. Personally, I find it too difficult to hide. For example, if I received a call that Carol had suddenly become ill and I needed to leave work to be with her, I’d want to be able to say so—not stop to concoct some ridiculous and false story of who Carol is and why I need to go. Imagine yourself in the same situation. What if you felt you had to hide the person you
loved most in the world? And if you don’t think it’s difficult to hide the most precious people in your life, try it sometime. Get rid of all those photos and never speak a word about your family. I think you will find that it’s not only hard, but it’s all-consuming. I didn’t choose to be homosexual. What I did chose was to live my life openly as the whole person I am. I believe everyone should have that ability to do so without fear of repercussion.”

Therese concluded by saying “Harge, thank you for asking this important question.”

Therese made eye contact with everyone in the room.

Harge persisted, jumping into the role of one of Therese’s team. Harge kept waving his hand. Before, he hadn’t thought he could bear to ask these personal questions, but he was emboldened by Therese’s astute replies. He wanted to prepare her for a follow-up that he thought she might encounter.

“Therese, I have a follow-up question. May I ask it?”

“Of course, Harge, please proceed.”

Harge continued, “I just heard you say that you and other homosexuals don’t choose to be homosexual, but the choice is to hide or not. Is that correct?” Harge asked.

“Correct, Harge,” Therese replied.

Harge persisted, “Well, let’s imagine a world in which you could choose whether or not to be homosexual. What would you do?”

Michael leaned over to Carol and whispered, “I’m so glad Harge posed this question. She really may be asked it. I’ve had friends ask me the same thing.”

Carol shook her head affirmatively then riveted her attention on Therese’s forthcoming answer.

“Harge, I imagine that there are others who have the same question in their minds, but are reluctant to ask. I want to congratulate you for having the candor to ask me. I want to answer as best I can, even though the scenario you’ve described is not one that exists in real life. As I said before, a homosexual doesn’t choose their sexuality. The only choice in the matter is whether to live a life in hiding where the person spends valuable time thinking of excuses and false stories in place of the truth. One reason I love working at The New York Times is the value our institution places on the truth. That being said, how could I live my life here at work any other way?” Therese paused to allow her words to sink in.

Harge was spellbound by Therese’s ability to articulate her response. Therese continued. She looked mostly at Harge, but quickly locked eyes for just a moment with the others in the room. Harge thought, ‘Oh, I wish she were a lawyer for our firm.’

“Now, to address your specific question, I wouldn’t choose to change my sexuality even if I could. Here’s why. For one thing, I’ve found the love of my life, the person with whom I want to spend my life, forsaking all others. That person happens to be another woman. Besides, I believe with all my heart that being open about being a homosexual gives me a somewhat unique perspective.”

Therese continued her reply. “I believe I have a better understanding of the difficulties experienced by other groups who are outside of the persons who have most of the power in our society. I wouldn’t trade that ability to have the empathy I’ve described for any comfort of being heterosexual.”
Michael leapt out of his chair and cheered. He was jubilant. “Therese, you’re amazing. I’ve learned so much from this question and answer session. Where and how did you learn to articulate such impressive answers?”

“Well,” Therese said modestly, “I attend many meetings of the Daughters of Bilitis lesbian civil and political group. We’ve had conversations about most of these same questions. I’ve picked up ideas from these women and I’ve attempted to put some of what I’ve learned into answers to questions I might encounter in my own life.”

Harge was effusive in his praise. “Therese, if you can repeat your amazing performance tomorrow morning, you will literally take command of the room and its attendees very early into the question and answer session. I think that anyone who listens to you, whether or not they agree, will come away from the meeting respecting you. You’ll gain a lot of respect by the way you present yourself and by the eloquence of your words. Believe me, respect is a valuable asset.”

Therese was stunned by Harge’s extravagant complement. It took Therese a moment to collect herself. “I don’t know what to say, Harge.”

John jumped in. “My dear lady, you’ve said all that needs to be said, and more. Now I think you only need to give the copies of these questions to Mr. Goldman and Mr. Barnes before the meeting. Also, in reference to Michael’s earlier suggestion, you may want to write a couple of questions you would like to answer and give them to someone you feel would be comfortable asking the question. I certainly would urge you to transcribe the question about the photo on the desk. Your reply to that question was particularly brilliant and that way you can ensure it will be asked.”

Harge chuckled. “The only thing left is to polish those shoes,” he said.

Everyone laughed.

Carol walked over to Therese and kissed her cheek. Carol whispered in Therese’s ear, “Oh my God, dearest, you were magnificent. You took my breath away.”

“Oh, wait, everyone.” John spoke in a tone that got everyone’s attention. “I just recalled a question that had occurred to me when we were writing down possible questions. I forgot to mention it then, but I think it warrants consideration.”

Everyone sat down. The celebratory mood was on hold.

Therese said, “If John thinks this is important, I request that we address it.”

John sat up straight. All eyes were on him. “Therese, you don’t need to answer this question now. If you want to share some thoughts, that’s fine, but we need to write the question on the copies Carol has made so you can discuss it with Mr. Goldman and Mr. Barnes.”

“That’s fine,” Therese replied. “We’re supposed to meet at 9:30 in Mr. Barnes’ office. The group meeting starts at 10:00.”

Carol waved her hand to get John’s attention. “John, before you ask your question, let me gather the paper and carbons and transcribe it on the copies.”

John chuckled, “Carol, you and Therese make quite a formidable team.”

Each woman regarded the other with a radiating, loving warmth that literally sent electricity crackling through the air. The men noticed that exchange.
John waited until Carol gathered the papers and was ready to write, then he began.

“Miss Belivet, you’ve been a member of this team for over five years. We know that you have friends, perhaps good friends, on the team with whom you socialize. How can you now supervise the same people and not be favorably inclined to them as opposed to the rest of us?”

Carol squeezed the back of her neck with her left hand as she wrote. She immediately thought of Dannie—Therese’s best friend. How difficult it might be for Therese to be impartial, even though Carol knew in her heart that Therese would go out of her way to treat Dannie the same as everyone else. Carol tried to imagine herself in the position of a team member who knew of Dannie and Therese’s friendship and might feel uneasy.

The pen literally skipped across the page as Carol recorded the question.

Therese relaxed her power stance. She spoke in a conversational tone, as the role-playing was over.

“John, you’ve raised a very important point. As a matter of fact, I spoke to Mr. Barnes shortly after he offered me the position about how my new reports might feel about existing friendships I have within the team. We talked about getting the question out in the open at this meeting. Mr. Barnes is going to speak to it and I’ve told him how I’d like it to be addressed. We were both pleased with the outcome of our conversation.”

John’s face was creased with a wide smile. “My dear, I’ll say it again, your answers and demeanor are superb. I’m astounded at your poise and eloquence. If you ever tire of working at The New York Times, there’s a place for you at our firm.”

Therese blushed a bright red. “Well, John, you and Harge were my teachers.”

“No wait a minute, Therese,” said Harge. “We taught you the power stance and hand positions and how to look at the audience. We suggested clothing for the meeting and told you to have shiny shoes. Neither Dad nor I were responsible for your exceptional answers.”

Therese didn’t know how to respond, so she blushed and said simply, “thank you.”

Harge glanced at the clock. It was 5:45 PM. Harge stood, and everyone else followed suit.

Therese smiled with relief. The glow of a job well-done spread throughout her entire body. She felt taller than her five-foot, three-inch height.

Carol put the precious copies in her purse. She folded the used carbon paper and gave them to Harge for disposal.

Therese hugged each person in turn. “I can’t begin to thank you for your time and effort to help me succeed tomorrow.” Therese knew that with the help of her superiors she could stand up to anything that might happen.

Harge addressed the group, “I know Carol, Therese and Michael are probably anxious to be on their way to Manhattan, but it’s nearly time for dinner. I have a proposal. Occasionally, Rindy talks me into taking her to this wonderful diner a short drive away off state highway 17 in Lyndhurst. Perhaps you’ve heard of it. It’s…”

Therese couldn’t contain her excitement. “The Colonial Diner! I love that place.”

Carol explained to the group, “Almost every time we’re in the area, Therese insists on stopping there. If it’s not meal time, she gets a milkshake.”
Therese took Michael’s arm and began to extol the atmosphere, the food and the entire diner experience.

Michael laughed and put his hand over hers. “Therese, you don’t need to sell me on the Colonial. Jack and I eat there at least once a month. When I’m returning from the city and it’s nearly dinnertime, Karen insists that I stop to bring burgers and fries home. Of course, I’m happy to do so.”

Harge whispered to Carol, “Care to join me in asking our daughter?”

Carol replied, “That’s fine, but will it take too long to drive down, eat and drive back? What if she still has homework?”

“Good point, Carol. It’s not quite a half hour drive each way and the service is very quick. It’s on the way to the city for the three of you. If she has her homework done. I’d like to offer her this treat. She’s been so patient about giving all of us the time to focus on preparing Therese.”

Carol smiled at Harge and squeezed his hand. “I agree. Let’s ask her together.”

They walked upstairs. Harge knocked softly on Rindy’s door. “C-o-m-e i-n.” Rindy spelled. She was already grinning when her parents opened her bedroom door. She was delighted at the sight of her mother and father standing side by side in her room.

Harge strode over to where Rindy was seated at her desk and leaned in to be closer to her. “Do you have all your homework done, pumpkin?”

Rindy replied, “Yes, Daddy, all my homework is done and my clothes for tomorrow are ready, too.”

“Well…” Harge said, drawing out the question in a teasing way. “Would you like to go and get a burger with Mommy, Aunt Therese, Uncle Michael and me at the Colonial Diner?”

“Yay!” Rindy jumped up from her desk and headed for the door.

Carol said, “Rindy, be sure you use the bathroom and wash up before we go. It’s almost a half hour’s drive.”

Rindy dashed into her ensuite bathroom. She called out over the sound of running water, “Is grandfather coming with us? I wish he would.”

Harge leaned against the wall and folded his arms in thought. He raised his voice in order to be heard over the running water in the next room. “Well, Rindy, usually your grandfather and grandmother go to the country club on Sunday evening with some of their friends. I imagine he’ll want to do that instead.”

Carol stared at Harge incredulously. She mouthed, ‘Are you kidding?’

Harge scratched his head and looked Carol in the eye and mouthed ‘You’re right.’ The more he thought about it, the more amusing the choice was to him. Harge put his hand over his mouth to smother a laugh but his eyes shined with boyish humor.

“I’ll go ask him, Rindy. Your mother will wait for you to finish.”

“Okay, Daddy. I’ll hurry.” The thrill of an adventure with her favorite adults was evident in Rindy’s tone of voice.
When Rindy emerged, she stepped close to her mother. “Mommy?”
Carol smiled at her daughter and replied, “Hmmm?”
Rindy said in a voice slightly more than a whisper, “Please don’t forget to ask Aunt Therese about your name change. I’m afraid you didn’t like the idea and you might forget.”

‘How could I forget?’ Carol thought.

Carol bent down and whispered in Rindy’s ear. Rindy was getting taller and Carol no longer had to kneel to reach Rindy’s level.
Carol whispered conspiratorially, “Darling, can you keep a secret?”

Rindy’s face showed a hint of exasperation. “Mommy, I’m getting very good at keeping secrets, aren’t I?”

Carol suppressed a laugh after seeing Rindy’s earnest expression. “Sweet pea, I do like your idea and I promise I will talk to Aunt Therese soon.”

Rindy started jumping up and down for joy. Carol steadied Rindy with a hand to her shoulder. “Sweetie, you can write the question in your book if you wish and we’ll talk more about it next weekend.”

“Yippee!” Rindy was literally dancing.

Carol said, “Now let’s go down and join the others.”

Carol and Rindy descended the stairs laughing and talking. As they reached the foot of the stairs, they noticed that Harge was holding a finger to his lips to quiet them.

Carol arched a blond eyebrow at Harge. He leaned close to Carol’s ear and whispered, “Dad’s calling Mother. He really wants to go to the diner with us instead of the country club with her.”

Carol thought, ‘what a surprise.’ She glanced at Michael and Therese. They were standing still as statues, trying to give John privacy. Carol could overhear John’s raised voice. Obviously, there was some clash of wills between husband and wife.

“Well, dear,” John said, “I completely disagree that only degenerates eat at the Colonial Diner. Harge and Rindy enjoy a burger there occasionally.”

There was silence, then the group could barely hear John’s reply. “Well, you will have to take that up with Harge, but I completely support his choice of eating establishments. I daresay it has far more atmosphere than our country club.”

Carol thought she could hear some kind of shrieks emanating from the phone’s receiver. Only the grating voice of Jennifer Aird would make such a sound.

‘Jesus,’ thought Carol, ‘I really do want to hyphenate my name. I can’t bear to share a name with that witch.’

Harge shooed everyone far enough away to give John total privacy. However, Harge remained where he stood, ready to support his father.

Rindy whispered a complaint to her mother, “Mommy, I always have to miss the good stuff.”

Carol brought her finger to her lips to silence any further observations Rindy might have.
Rindy saw the look on her mother’s face and knew she meant business. Carol laid a hand on Rindy’s shoulder and squeezed gently to assure Rindy that she wasn’t angry.

Harge heard John say, “Well, if you must know, Harge, Rindy and I are going to the Colonial Diner with Carol and Therese.” John wisely omitted mention of Michael.

Harge could hear some garbled yelling coming from the receiver. When it was quiet, John continued. “Well, Jennifer, please give my regrets to Cy and Jeanette Harrison. When I left this afternoon, we had not agreed to eat with them at the club. I’m sure they’ll understand that I want to have a special evening with my son and granddaughter.”

Harge watched breathlessly. He had never seen his father stand up to his mother with such vigor.

John paused to let Jennifer respond. Harge saw John put a death grip on the phone receiver. John asked, “How do you know that Jerry Goldman of The Times is going to be at the club with his wife tonight?”

John paused again. He put his hand on his forehead and began to run his fingers through his hair as he listened to his wife’s response. “I see,” he said icily. His face was grim.

Meanwhile, Carol, Therese, Rindy and Michael had donned their coats and talked quietly in the foyer.

Harge saw the appearance of his father’s face change into the cunning businessman that Harge knew his dad to be. His mother had now become the prey. It dawned on him that John was setting up his wife for Jerry Goldman’s wrath.

John said, “Well, Jennifer, if you feel you must inform Mr. Goldman that Miss Belivet is a homosexual and an unfit employee, that is your choice. I certainly don’t agree nor do I condone it, but if that’s what you feel you must do…” Jennifer interrupted. Her squawk oozed out of the receiver and the sound hung in the air like a dirty towel.

John paused to listen. In an even tone that betrayed no emotion, John replied, “Yes, I know you’ll tell me all about it when we’re both home. Goodbye, Jennifer.”

John put the receiver back in its cradle. Harge took a step toward his father to ensure he was all right.

Laughter was building deep within John’s chest and it suddenly burst from his mouth in sharp, barking sounds. John clapped his hands and softly punched his left palm with his right fist. Then John removed his handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his face and beamed at Harge. Harge returned the smile. John’s strategy was now clear to him.

John shrugged and with a disarming grin said, “Well, I told Carol and Therese when they were here last that I hadn’t made up my mind whether or not to warn your mother about the possible consequences of approaching Jerry Goldman to disparage Therese. I just now made that decision.”

Harge was in awe of his father’s scheme. Harge felt a flood of affection for his father. They shook hands.

The occupants of the foyer were waiting quietly, not knowing the drama that had just taken place. John and Harge appeared with coats on and ready to go. The expressions on their faces revealed no hint of what had just transpired.
John looked at the group with a twinkle in his eye, rubbed his hands together with enthusiasm and said, “I’m starved. I’m ready for a burger, fries and a milkshake. Shall we go?”

Chapter End Notes

Check out the Internet if you're not familiar with a "secretary's desk" that I mentioned in this chapter. Since its main function was to be a place where one wrote letters, it's obviously an antique. Some homes still have them as antiques or use them for computer stands. There are some good photos on the Internet.

Could Carol hyphenate her name to be Aird-Belivet? Well, here I am claiming writer's privilege again to even raise the possibility. Carol changing her last name to Aird-Belivet would most certainly not be considered 1959, but this is an instance when I'm not following what would have happened in 1959. The AO3 writer, Employee645A, whom I greatly respect, wrote a comment to my Chapter 12. She cited Emily Post's book, "Etiquette" that said the appropriate title for Carol after the divorce would be Mrs. Ross Aird (Ross being Carol's maiden name). She's correct but I hope you, my readers will forgive my departure from the facts of 1959, especially Emily Post, as I want to continue to explore the hyphenation.

I was going to elaborate in this Chapter's Notes section on why I chose "Pipsestone" as my pseudonym (besides Highsmith's reference to Pipestone as a town through which Carol and Therese drove on their trip to the West). There's more behind my choice, but allow me to postpone that note until the end of Chapter 45.

Finally, I am still planning to go to Key West, put it'll be in August or early September. I definitely will make this research trip prior to writing their honeymoon chapters.

Regards,
Pipestone
Chapter Summary

This chapter is a continuation of Chapter 44. For maximum enjoyment, please review at least the end of Chapter 44. The new chapter's material assumes knowledge of the previous chapter.

This chapter has two scenes. The first is the Ridgewood Country Club. Jerry and Grace are being entertained by the president of the club's board in hopes they will accept their invitation of membership. John Aird's wife, Jennifer, who has an obsessive hatred of Carol and Therese's homosexuality, prepares to say words to Jerry Goldman that she hopes will end Therese's employment at The New York Times.

The second scene takes place in Carol and Therese's apartment. Therese shines her shoes in preparation for her important work meeting that will take place the next morning. An eventful conversation takes place between Therese and Carol.

Chapter Notes

Dear readers, thanks again for your patience. This chapter has been a long time coming. I hope many of you read my note in the comments section of Chapter 44 explaining my absence due to illness. I've not been able to devote the essential energy that I require to write. Hopefully you know that I put my heart and soul into this storyline. I want to give you, my loyal readers, the very best in each and every sentence I write. Lately, I've been slower in my ability to put words to electronic "paper." Please allow me to explain.

Seven years ago this month, I suffered a serious injury to my spine while boogie boarding in the California surf. As an experienced long-time surf rider, I never thought an accident like this could happen. To make a long story short, an unexpectedly potent wave sent my board and my body under the churning water. The board hit the sand and bounced back and forcefully struck my chin. My head snapped back and to my horror, I felt my spine twist into an "S."

Immediately my right arm went numb and hung uselessly at my side. My wife rushed me to a San Francisco hospital, followed by a return flight to Dallas. I underwent surgery for a crushed disc high on my spine. Fortunately, after the surgery by a skilled neurosurgeon, the feeling and function returned to my right arm, except for a numbness and tingling in my right index finger and thumb (I'm right-handed). And then there is the pain that has persisted over the ensuing years. That pain has changed the course of the life my wife and I hoped for in retirement. The summer heat of Texas seems to make it worse. Days and weeks have passed this summer before I've felt up to writing. I'm so sorry, my dear readers.

This chapter is almost twice the length of most of my previous ones. It's the least I could do for you considering my absence.

Oh, certainly more and more stories live in my mind. Our heroines' life and love
punctuate my thoughts and my dreams. The stories are in me and I hope that I will be able to post more frequently as summer turns to fall and the relentless heat subsides. I still plan to visit Key West before Carol and Therese's honeymoon. I need to see and to experience the setting with my own eyes. I've spent time on the phone with the Key West's historian. I look forward to doing the first-hand research I must do to present the most vivid and exciting chapters I'll write about their honeymoon adventures. I plan to speed up my storytelling, and there are chapters already in my mind that I can't wait to share with you. Abby is going shopping with them for the dresses they'll wear to their ring ceremony. You'll find out which music Therese has selected. I've listened to those songs almost daily. The Easter Parade is coming soon, along with the fun and excitement of their Easter luncheon guests (Abby, the Sinclairs, Rindy and Harge).

Remember when Carol told Abby in Chapter 40 that she imagined there would be no "mystery of the wedding night?" You'll find out about that, too.

I could go on and on, but I'll end this note by asking you to bear with me. Remember, I will never abandon this story until there is a satisfying conclusion and until the ring ceremony and honeymoon is over. (Actually, I have no plans to stop writing their stories.)

Finally, I have a request. Your comments buoy my spirit and provide much needed energy and encouragement. Even if your comment is brief, it would mean the world to me. I believe that you, dear readers and I have a special relationship and that is why I'm able to ask for what I most definitely need now--a comment from you. Thank you so very much.

My most sincere regards to you all,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sunday, March 15, 1959 - 8:00 PM - Ridgewood Country Club, near Paramus New Jersey

Jerry and Grace Goldman were enjoying the end of their eventful day touring the Ridgewood Country Club. They wanted to join a country club near their main home south of Ridgewood New Jersey. They kept an apartment in Manhattan to allow Jerry to be closer to his job as Vice President of Metro at The New York Times. Grace liked being closer to her daughter, Charlotte, a student at the Columbia School of Medicine in New York City. Also, Grace enjoyed the proximity of shopping in her favorite Manhattan stores, including O’Halloran’s Furniture where her friend, Carol Aird worked.

The country club president, James Andrews and his wife, Celeste, were excited at the prospect of adding the Goldmans to the country club membership roll. There had been some discussion at the membership committee meeting prior to extending this latest membership offer. The Goldmans were Jewish and there was one committee member who voiced reservations because of their religion.

James Andrews was adamant that the membership offer should be extended to the Goldmans by a unanimous vote of the membership committee. The prestige of having a Vice President at The Times on their membership roll was far more important than the concerns of Jennifer Aird, the single holdout on the membership committee. Under pressure from James Andrews, Jennifer
dropped her objections so that the committee was unanimous in making the offer to Jerry and Grace. Other committee members were surprised that Jennifer changed her mind without a long, painful argument.

Across the large dining room, Jennifer Aird sat at her favorite table with her dining companions, Cy and Jeanette Harrison. Cy was John Aird’s business partner and Harge’s boss. Jeanette was one of the few women from Carol’s life prior to the divorce who was still her good friend. Jeanette would purposefully travel into Manhattan to go to lunch with Carol or have an early dinner with both Carol and Therese. Jeanette liked Therese and the feeling was mutual. Jeanette’s beloved nephew, Bobby, was gay and had a very handsome and polite boyfriend.

Also, Jeanette was so happy that Harge and Carol were getting along better. She wished the very best for her friends of so many years.

Jeanette Harrison had tried unsuccessfully to engage Jennifer in dinner conversation. “Jennifer, are you listening? You seem miles away. Are you still bothered that John didn’t join us for dinner? Cy and I don’t mind. Don’t you think it’s nice that John is spending some time with Harge and Rindy besides your weekly lunch with them?”

“Oh posh,” said Jennifer with a dismissive hand wave. “It’s where they were going to eat that bothered me. That garish Colonial Diner in Lyndhurst isn’t what I call appropriate for a Sunday night out.”

Cy rolled his eyes. “Jennifer, their hamburgers are very tasty. We’ve gone there with our nephew Bobby and his friend George.”

Jeanette nudged Cy under the table and gave him “the look.” She was protective of Bobby and George and knew of Jennifer’s prejudice. Jeanette made a mental note to spend less time with Jennifer. If it weren’t for John, Jeanette would gladly forego Jennifer’s company altogether.

Jeanette grasped for a change in conversation. She saw the country club president and his wife taking leave of the Goldmans. “I’m glad you dropped your opposition to the Goldman’s’ membership offer. I think they’ll fit in nicely at the club.”

Cy added, “I saw Jerry Goldman in a foursome on the golf course this afternoon. He won’t find a better course in all of New Jersey.”

“Ohmm,” Jennifer murmured absently. She was not interested in a conversation with the Harrisons. She wanted access to Jerry Goldman in the worst way. She had been plotting for weeks to tell Jerry Goldman that he had a homosexual in his organization. She was confident that she only needed to say the word to Jerry Goldman and that perverse woman, Therese Belivet, would be no longer have her job. If she were out of a job, perhaps she might move from Manhattan. Jennifer hoped that she would take her perversity far away from Rindy. Perhaps Carol might follow her and Jennifer could secure a lawyer who could charge Carol with child abandonment. Jennifer could barely restrain herself from laughing at that thought.

Jennifer watched the Goldmans across the large dining room. Jennifer knew the Andrews’ habit of making the rounds in the dining room to greet other members as soon as they finished dinner. If she acted quickly, she could intercept the Goldmans before they left the club and have them all to herself.

Jeanette wondered why Jennifer was fixated on the Goldman’s table. She had an uneasy feeling, but wasn’t sure why. The Goldmans were standing up and making their way to the coat room—alone.
All at once Jennifer pushed her chair back and stood.

“Jennifer, where are you going?” asked Jeanette. There was a hint of panic in her voice.

“I want to introduce myself and welcome the Goldmans. I was on the membership committee after all. I’ll be right back.”

Jeanette stared helplessly after Jennifer who was walking purposefully toward the Goldmans. Suddenly it dawned on Jeanette what was going to happen. Therese worked at *The Times* and Jennifer hated Therese and probably wanted to expose her private life to Jerry Goldman. *What if Therese lost her job?* Jeanette thought frantically.

“Cy, I’ve got to stop her.” Jeanette pushed her chair back so forcefully that it toppled over. Diners in the vicinity noticed the ruckus.

“What’s going on, dear?” asked Cy.

“Therese…” was all Jeanette could reply.

Jerry Goldman helped Grace into her coat. Grace turned and gave her husband a loving pat on the chest. “Jerry, it’s been such a wonderful day…”

Grace was interrupted by an older woman dressed in too much jewelry and lace for Grace’s taste. Her face had a clinched and mirthless grin. She addressed them, “Mr. and Mrs. Goldman, as part of the membership committee, I wanted to welcome you to the Ridgewood Country Club.”

Her words held no warmth, so Jerry and Grace eyed her warily. Jerry remembered his manners and extended his hand. “Thank you Mrs…?

“Aird. Jennifer Aird.” Both Jerry and Grace stared at her and at another woman who was practically running towards them and calling out, “Jennifer, don’t do it. I know what you’re going to do.”

Jennifer turned to hiss at Jeanette, “Don’t interrupt. I must tell Mr. Goldman. This is of critical importance.”

Jeanette persisted undeterred. “No, it’s not. You’re going to regret this.”

The Goldmans were riveted in place. They watched the conversation between the two women with both confusion and concern.

“Will someone please tell us what’s going on?” asked Grace.

Jerry addressed Jennifer. His eyes narrowed and his brow was furrowed. “Did you say your last name was Aird?"”

“Yes. Exactly,” replied Jennifer with a triumphant air. Jeanette placed a hand on her forehead and took a step back.

Grace asked, “Are you related to Carol Aird?”

“Well, she is my son’s ex-wife.” Jennifer’s upper lip lifted in a sneer to punctuate the last word.

Jeanette inserted herself into the conversation. “Mr. and Mrs. Goldman, my name is Jeanette Harrison. Carol Aird is one of my oldest and dearest friends.”

Grace and Jerry smiled at Jeanette and shook her hand. Grace addressed Jeanette and ignored
Jennifer who was now fingering her pearl necklace. “Well, Mrs. Harrison, that makes two of us. Carol has sold us some outstanding furniture and I enjoy our occasional lunches together.”

“This conversation is quite awkward,” noted Jerry. “Mrs. Aird, please explain why you approached us.”

“Well, I needed to warn you.” Jennifer stretched her neck with a haughty air.

Jerry folded his arms across his chest and looked directly at Jennifer. “About what?” His voice was even, but hints of anger emerged.

“You have a homosexual in your organization. Her name is…”

Jerry held his hand up to stop Jennifer mid-sentence. His eyes bored into Jennifer’s. “Yes, I know. Her name is Therese Belivet.”

Jennifer felt as if she were suddenly standing on shifting sand. Color had drained from her face. She needed to regroup for another verbal assault on Therese’s character.

Whatever color had drained from Jennifer’s face was now appearing on Jerry’s face. A red flush started at his neckline and made its way up to his hairline.

Grace knew her husband’s reactions well enough to know he was approaching the boiling point of anger. She placed a hand on his arm to remind him that they were in a public place.

Jeanette moved to Grace’s side. She leaned in toward Grace’s ear and whispered, “I tried to stop her once I realized what she was going to do. I’m so sorry.” Grace nodded, but her eyes never left her husband’s face. Grace was determined to be united with him and defend Therese and Carol.

Jennifer Aird seemed oblivious to the reactions and body language of the three people next to her. “Well, since you know Therese Belivet is a homosexual, I trust that she would not be long for your organization.”

“Madam, how dare you insert yourself into my business dealings or my staff. And regarding Miss Belivet, she is a rising star in my organization. I have chosen to personally guide her career. Your words and actions have verified the prejudice that she so eloquently described to me in one of the most remarkable conversations I’ve ever had with an employee.”

Grace said, “Jerry, let’s go home. The prospect of our joining the Ridgewood Country Club no longer seems feasible. I can’t imagine being involved with any ladies’ activities that included Mrs. Aird.”

Jerry patted his wife’s hand. “Nor should you be, my dear. I cannot imagine being in this fine dining room only to look across the room and see Mrs. Aird in proximity. I would lose my appetite right away.”

James and Celeste Andrews had seen the heated exchange taking place from across the large dining room. They hurried to intercept the Goldmans before they left. Much effort had gone into encouraging the Goldmans to join the Ridgewood Country Club. Next year was the club’s fiftieth anniversary and the board was anxious to add high ranking community members to its roll for that celebration. The scene that was unfolding foretold a collapse of that effort.

James Andrews addressed the Goldmans. “Please tell me what has caused you such distress. Everything had seemed positive about your visit today.”

Jerry replied, “James, I’m so livid right now that I’m concerned that I might say something that I
would regret later. Mrs. Harrison observed this most unpleasant exchange. Perhaps she can accurately summarize what just took place. Grace and I will merely listen to affirm her accuracy.”

Jeanette took a deep breath and looked at the Goldmans, then at Mr. and Mrs. Andrews and finally at Jennifer. “Cy and I were having dinner with Jennifer Aird. The three of us noticed that you and your wife (Jeanette nodded at the Andrews) left the Goldmans’ table to make your customary rounds at the end of the evening. As the Goldmans were leaving, Jennifer hastily made her way to intercept the Goldmans before they left the club. I thought I knew the purpose of Jennifer’s interest in talking to the Goldmans and I wanted to stop her if I could.”

“Jeanette, how did you know Jennifer’s purpose, and what might that purpose be?” asked James Andrews.

Jeanette took a deep breath. She knew that she was about to sever her longstanding relationship with Jennifer, but she knew that telling the truth was far more important. Her voice shook with emotion.

“It’s no secret that for over six years Jennifer has harbored ill feelings about her former daughter-in-law, Carol Aird, and Carol’s companion, Therese Belivet, who works in the Metro section of The New York Times as a photographer and photo editor. I’ve heard her elaborate on her disgust for their relationship on many occasions. James, I would characterize it as an obsession. I have heard vile slurs about homosexual women come out of Jennifer’s mouth. She has used terms that no decent woman should ever think—much less voice.”

Jeanette continued, “Until last fall, Harge was guilty of the same behavior, except his language was not as virulent. Over the past six months Harge’s attitude has undergone a dramatic change. Both Cy and I are aware that Harge not only has ceased all ugly language that he formerly used, but he has actually become supportive of Carol and Therese. John Aird has recently undergone a conversion of his own. Cy told me that over a recent lunch at work, the Aird men commented that they both should have spoken up long ago in defense of Carol and Therese’s relationship because it was the right thing to do for young Rindy. Also, they felt it was not right to harbor ill will against these women. Both men told Cy that they have felt the great relief that comes from doing the right thing. A week ago, March 8th, I believe, Harge confronted Jennifer and his sister, Millie during Sunday lunch over their slanderous attacks on Carol and Therese. Thank God young Rindy was spending the weekend with Carol and Therese and didn’t hear them. Harge spoke so forcefully that he had an angina attack and had to miss part of work the next day.”

Jeanette paused and took a deep breath. “Many of us in the Airds’ circle of friends are aware of Jennifer’s prejudice. I’ve remained a good friend of Carol’s over the past six years and I know the anguish Jennifer has brought to the lives of these two fine women whose only difference is that they love each other instead of someone of the opposite sex. They’ve been in a committed relationship for nearly six years and have pledged their lives to each other.”

Jennifer’s eyes were downcast during Jeanette’s lengthy recitation.

Jeanette looked directly at Jennifer as she added, “Love is love, Jennifer. If you can’t understand that, well…” (Jeanette shook her head)

Grace raised her hand to catch the eye of those in the circle. “Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, I want to add to Mrs. Harrison’s last statement. Carol and Therese were dinner guests recently in our Manhattan apartment. I was struck by the love and devotion they had for each other. I’ve known Carol for several years through her position with O’Halloran’s Furniture where I shop. Only recently I found out that she was in a loving relationship with another woman. Carol is as fine an individual as anyone could hope to meet.”
Both James and Celeste Andrews’ eyes were wide as they took in Jeanette’s story and Grace’s testimony. Jerry Goldman said quietly, “I believe my wife and Mrs. Harrison have said it all. I concur.”

James turned to Jeanette and asked, “What do you have to say now, Jennifer? Has Jeanette stated the truth?”

Jennifer Aird drew herself up and squared her shoulders. She bristled with anger. “Jeanette has accurately summarized our conversation, but obviously I disagree with her praise of these… women,” she said in a flat tone of voice. “I do not regret what I’ve said. My only regret is that Mr. Goldman doesn’t share my opinion that a woman who flaunts her perversion should not have a place in such a hallowed institution as The New York Times.

Jerry’s face began to get red again. “At our hallowed institution, we are more concerned about the talent and the character of our employees rather than we are of their private lives. Miss Belivet excels in both talent and character.”

Jerry turned to James and added, “Miss Belivet is a rising star in my organization and I’ve chosen to be involved in the progression of her career. It’s my belief that she will become the first female senior photo editor at The Times. It’s true that she does not hide the fact that she is a homosexual, nor does she make a point of it. She is who she is. She brings her whole self to work and gives one hundred percent each and every day. I wish I had a hundred employees like her, and I will not stand by and hear anyone tarnish her good name.”

Jerry started to button his coat. As he did so, he addressed everyone in the small group. “Our belonging to the Ridgewood Country Club is not an option for us. We will not dine in the same room as Mrs. Aird. It would cause us too much discomfort. I imagine Grace feels the same way.”

“I do,” said Grace as she took her husband’s arm and prepared to leave. “I would not serve on a women’s activity committee with Mrs. Aird under any circumstance.”

“Thank you for your offer of membership, James, but it’s not for us.” Jerry said as he secured his wife’s arm in the crook of his own. Together they walked out of the building.

After the door shut behind the Goldmans, James turned to Jennifer Aird and said with exasperation and anger, “Do you have any idea what damage you have done, Jennifer? I don’t know how I’m going to explain the loss of the Goldmans to the club’s board. Well, I take that back. I do know how I’ll explain it, for I heard this conversation with my own ears. Jeanette, thank you for your quick reflexes and your attempt to head off disaster.”

“I’m so sorry I didn’t succeed, James,” said Jeanette with her hand at her throat.

Jennifer sniffed in a haughty way. “Jeanette, I plan to take a cab home instead of riding with you and Cy.”

“Good idea,” said Jeanette firmly as she made her way back to her table and her astonished husband.

While the excitement was dying down at the Ridgewood New Jersey Country Club, across the river in Manhattan, our heroines were preparing for Therese’s big day.

8:30 PM - The Aird/Belivet Apartment in Manhattan

Therese and Carol shed their coats as soon as they stepped into their apartment. Although it had
been a long day, each woman was energized by what had taken place. Therese was anxious to prepare her clothes and shoes for tomorrow’s big meeting.

“I’ll fix us some chamomile tea,” Carol called out from the kitchen. Therese had dashed to the bedroom to change clothes.

Therese returned, wearing her cleaning clothes—stained jeans and a sweatshirt that bore the colors of many painting projects. She saw Carol deep into concentration as she set up cups and saucers, tea bags and spoons.

Therese crept behind Carol and kissed the back of her neck. Carol shrieked in surprise.

Therese chuckled—pleased at her ability to surprise her lover. Carol turned and pulled Therese into her arms.

“You’re lucky that I wasn’t pouring the hot water,” said Carol, feigning annoyance.

Therese’s eyes were dancing with delight at catching Carol unaware. “Darling, I wouldn’t have surprised you like that if you were doing anything that could cause damage.”

“I deserve a kiss,” said Carol. Therese laughed as she slipped her arms around Carol’s neck as she pulled Carol’s head closer for a kiss.

“Mmmm,” murmured Carol as their kiss ended. “You look stunning, by the way, Miss Belivet.”

“Oh, do you like this outfit?” said Therese with a laugh. She twirled as if showing off new clothes. “I’m dressed for shining my shoes, darling,” explained Therese. “I’m going to put old papers down in Rindy’s bathroom. Did you put aside the front part of Thursday’s paper? Isn’t that what Rindy wanted you to save?”

“I did,” said Carol with a smile. “Do you want some company while you work?”

“Of course,” replied Therese. “I’ll get the shoe shine supplies while you change.”

Therese burrowed into the recesses of Rindy’s closet for her shoe shine kit. Years ago, before Therese met Carol, Phil McElroy had showed off his wooden shoe shine kit from his days in the military during a party at Dannie and Phil’s apartment. Therese found it fascinating while the other girls at the party were bored. Therese had asked Phil to help her acquire the simple equipment and the wooden box for storage. She took great pleasure in keeping all her leather shoes in top condition. When Therese moved in with Carol, she ensured that the shoe shine kit was among the few possessions other than her clothes and photographic equipment and photos that she deemed important enough to move. Carol had teased her about the shoe shine kit at the time, but Carol soon came to appreciate the time and money they saved by Therese taking care of their shoes.

Carol was in their bedroom changing into her old comfy red plaid robe and slippers. Neither Carol nor Therese could bear to relegate their old robes from their first trip together so long ago to the giveaway bag. There were many memories in those threads. Perhaps next year…

Carol stuck her head in Rindy’s bathroom. Therese was already on her knees, getting the polish, shoe brush, rags and an old t-shirt out of her kit.

“Is there anything else you need?” Carol inquired.

Therese looked up and gave Carol a dimpled smile. “Could you please bring me some yellow rubber gloves? I don’t want to get shoe polish all over my hands and under my fingernails. Oh, and please bring a cup of water and some cotton balls. I want to try Michael’s tip for achieving a
military grade shine.”

“Anything else?” Carol teased. “Honestly, sweetheart, you’re the only woman I know who makes shining shoes into a Broadway production.”

“Well,” Therese feigned indignity, “Michael found my description of this shoe shine kit very interesting.”

“You’re going to thrive in a workplace surrounded by men, dearest,” observed Carol.

Therese began her task, paying close attention to achieve a perfect shine. She recalled the shoe shine hints Michael had shared during their ride back from New Jersey. ‘I would have never thought of applying the last coat of polish with a damp cotton ball,’ thought Therese. ‘Surely Phil knows that trick from his Army days. I’ll have to tell Phil what I learned.’

Carol appeared in the doorway with one of their older cups filled with water and a chipped saucer that they used only for activities such as this. Carol’s other hand clutched half a dozen cotton balls.

“I’ll be back with our tea, dearest,” said Carol.

“Thanks, love,” replied Therese. Her yellow gloved hands moved purposefully over the shoes.

Back in the kitchen, Carol thought back to the events of this remarkable day. ‘I had no idea of the depth and breadth of Therese’s knowledge about homosexuality with respect to the place of work,’ Carol mused. ‘I’m no longer worried about tomorrow’s meeting. Therese will handle anything that comes her way.’

As she poured the hot water into the cups, Carol smiled at the memory of the time she spent with Rindy while Therese was with Harge and John. Carol was excited about Rindy’s suggestion that Carol could hyphenate her last name. ‘I must wait until the time is right to talk to Therese,’ thought Carol. ‘This conversation certainly won’t happen until after tomorrow’s meeting.’ Carol continued her musings. ‘Maybe I’ll mention it when we’re in the afterglow of lovemaking later this week. Yes, that would be perfect. Or, we could be drinking wine by the firelight with soft music playing in the background. That would be romantic, too.’ Carol sighed with these wonderful thoughts in mind. She would ensure the setting was just right to surprise Therese with this new development.

“Hey there,” called Therese. “The shoe shiner is lonely and thirsty.”

Her lover’s voice interrupted Carol’s reverie. She finished the tea preparation and carried the cups down the hall.

“Do you want me to put your tea bag in the water?” asked Carol.

“Great. Thanks, Carol.” enthused Therese. She had finished applying the polish and was waiting for it to dry.

“Do you have time to sit and talk about my work clothes?” asked Therese.

“Of course,” Carol replied as she lowered the toilet lid and sat with her tea in her lap. “I’ll be glad to iron your white blouse in the morning so that it’s crisp.”

Therese replied, “I checked my skirt and jacket. Both are ready. Harge and John suggested that you help me with my makeup. They said a subtle look would be best.”

Carol laughed. “Well, we must heed their expert makeup advice.”
Therese replied, “They were just describing the makeup worn by several women in positions of authority in their firm.”

Carol laughed, “I’m teasing you, dearest. They’re right, though, and I’m happy to help you. I have a lighter shade of pink lipstick that I seldom wear that would probably be appropriate. We’ll get up about an hour earlier so you can be ready to meet with Lee and Jerry before your meeting. I put the copies of the questions from today next to your portfolio in the office. Do you still have your things in your smaller black purse?”

“I do,” said Therese. Therese began to buff her shoes with the soft brush followed by a more vigorous shining with the old t-shirt. When that was done, Therese dipped a cotton ball into the water and squeezed it until the cotton was just damp. She applied polish again.

“Ugh, this is messy. I hope it works.” Therese looked up at Carol. “What did you and Rindy talk about today?”

“Well, she asked me if she could come to our ring ceremony and said Harge wanted to come, too.”

“Ah,” replied Therese. “You and I talked about this and decided despite our initial concerns, that she was probably old enough to come after all. She was so excited when we went to Devon Jewelry to see our rings. After everything Harge has done to help me prepare for this meeting, I want to invite him as well. Let’s invite John even though he won’t come without his wife. He deserves an invitation, though.”

“Absolutely,” agreed Carol. Therese and Carol chatted while the wet wax application dried. When Therese was satisfied that it was dry, she put her foot in the shoe and set her foot on top of the shoeshine kit box. She took the old t-shirt from her shoe shine kit and started to buff the shoe in a slapping motion. Her shoe began to take on a mirror-like shine that looked professional.

“Wow!” exclaimed Therese. “Now that’s a shine. I’ll want to do this with all our black or blue leather shoes.”

Carol smiled at Therese. “There’s no end to your talents, dear.”

As Therese reached for her other shoe to perform the same motions, she looked up at Carol.

“Oh, by the way, Carol, Rindy said something to me as we were leaving the diner. Everyone was saying their goodbyes, and I didn’t catch every word. Before I could ask her to repeat what she said, she was already in Harge’s car, and I was hugging John goodbye and thanking him again. I remember that she said to ask you about a name…yes, I’m sure it was about a name, and she said it was important. Do you know what she meant?”

Carol was startled. She hadn’t intended for Rindy’s suggestion about Carol hyphenating her last name to Aird-Belivet, to reach Therese’s ears until after Therese’s big day. ‘This discussion would be too much of a distraction tonight,’ thought Carol. ‘I want to wait for the perfect romantic setting.’

Carol stood and said hurriedly, “Dearest, would you excuse me? I want to clean up the tea cups and get the kitchen ready for tomorrow morning.”

“Oh no you don’t,” teased Therese. “You know something that I don’t, Carol. Now out with it.” Therese gave Carol a big smile, complete with dimples.

Carol said plaintively, “Please believe me, dearest, this would be better discussed tomorrow.”
“No, Carol.” Therese laughed, “I’ve worked so hard today. Think of it as my reward.”

‘Oh brother,’ thought Carol, ‘This is going to be a reward all right.’

“You win, dearest. Finish your shoes and clean up from your shining activities and I’ll go rinse the cups.”

“It’s a deal!” exclaimed a happy Therese. She buffed her shoes with gusto.

Carol returned a few minutes later. Therese was in the final cleanup stages.

“Sit, sit.” Therese gestured to the toilet with its seat down. “I’m almost done.” Her yellow rubber gloved hands flew as she stashed the materials back in her shoe shine kit. She was on her knees picking up the soiled papers.

“I’m all ears, Carol.” Therese said with a smile.

“Well…Rindy had one other question for me besides her wanting to attend our ring ceremony.” Carol began.

“Okay. But was the question about a name?” asked Therese.

“Right…yes it was,” Carol said slowly.

“Well then, what exactly was the question, my love?” Therese was looking at Carol with a bit of impatience. She was on her knees, with her yellow gloved hands flat on her thighs.

“She asked me if I were going to change my name to Belivet after we had our ring ceremony and jumped the broom.”

Therese laughed, “Oh you. You got an easy question. You’ve already had the talk with her about keeping your last names the same.”

“Yes,” said Carol.

Therese asked, “Why did Rindy think it was so important that I remind you of the name question. It was already settled, wasn’t it?” Therese cocked her head slightly as if curious.

“Well, there was a little more to it,” replied Carol.

“Carol, what do you mean when you say ‘more to it?’”

“Well, Rindy has a new friend at school...”

Therese interrupted. “Are you getting off-subject? Jesus, Carol, spit it out.”

“Okay, okay. This friend has a hyphenated last name and Rindy thought it would be a wonderful idea if I hyphenated my last name to Aird-Belivet. That way Rindy and I would still have the same last name, but I would have yours as well.”

Therese’s mouth dropped open. She attempted to say something, but no words came out—only an exhaled breath.

Finally, Therese regained her composure and asked, “What did you say?”

“I said I’d talk to you about it.”
“Carol, what do you think about it? Please be honest.”

Carol gave Therese a brilliant smile. “I think it’s a marvelous idea and I love it. What do you think, Therese?”

Instead of an answer, Therese said, “Carol, please stand up.”

“What?” replied Carol in a confused tone.

Therese repeated, “Stand up. Please stand up.”

Carol stood. Therese was on her knees. Therese took Carol’s hands in both of her own. Neither woman noticed that Therese still wore the yellow rubber gloves. Therese gazed up at Carol with shining eyes.

“Carol Aird, would you honor me by sharing my name?” Therese said firmly with an outpouring of love in her voice.

“Yes! Yes, I would, my dearest darling Therese.”

Suddenly they realized that Therese was still wearing her yellow rubber gloves.

“This will never do,” said Therese, as she quickly shed the gloves and reclaimed Carol’s hands. Carol pulled Therese to her feet and into a heart-stopping kiss. They kissed as long as they could; then they paused to breathe. Therese grabbed the lapels of Carol’s faded red plaid robe—the robe from the night when they first made love. Therese pulled Carol to her, then wrapped both arms around Carol’s neck in another kiss. Therese pulled on the robe’s sash. As was the case long ago, Carol was bare underneath. Therese stared—awestruck by her lover’s beauty.

“Bed. Now.” said Therese hoarsely. Therese quickly shed all her clothes and washed her hands in Rindy’s sink. They both dashed into their bedroom, laughing like new lovers. Carol tossed her robe over the bedpost. Therese turned on the soft light on her nightstand.

Carol asked, “Do we need the big towel…your period…”

“It’s over,” said Therese as she was swept into Carol’s arms and onto their bed.

Their kisses were fierce. They touched each other with the knowledge of longtime lovers who knew each other’s bodies so well. They knew just how to bring each other to a shattering climax. Amid arched backs, undulant hips and mouths and fingers in the most sensitive of places, the lovers tumbled toward their moment of ecstasy. Their moans and heavy breathing were punctuated by Therese, then Carol, being overcome with rapturous pleasure.

Their bedroom was filled with a heady mix—scents of mingled perfume, sweat and desire.

They lay quiet in each other’s arms, then Carol stirred.

“Mark me. Mark me, Therese.” pleaded Carol.

“Where, love?” breathed Therese, anxious to comply.

“Oh, God. Everywhere. No wait, mark me between each thigh and make them last. I want to see the marks tomorrow and the next day, too. Oh, Therese!”

Therese scooted down in a flash and set down her marks on her woman, then kissed the spots she had marked. Therese gently kissed Carol’s center as well and Therese felt Carol shudder at her
“Now me,” said Therese. “Mark me, Carol.”

Carol lay between Therese’s spread legs setting her marks on each of Therese’s thighs. Therese said shyly, “Carol, please make love to me again. I need your mouth. Ohhh…I need you inside me.”

Carol raised her head. It was if an arrow passed between Carol’s grey eyes and Therese’s hazel ones. “Oh, my darling woman!” exclaimed Carol while lowering her head to meet Therese’s request. “I love you so.”

Later, Carol lay on her back. Therese had turned off the light and Therese’s head was on Carol’s chest.

“I can hear your heart beating,” Therese said softly.

“It beats for you, sweetheart,” replied Carol.

“I know,” said Therese, “As mine does for you.”

Therese nuzzled Carol’s breast.

“If you keep that up…” warned Carol, “We’ll be up half the night making love and you need your sleep.”

“Oh, okay,” said Therese, “I adore you, Carol darling. You know, we may not make the name change for years, but we’ll do it someday.”

“I agree,” said Carol. “We’ll need to take it slow. I won’t call Fred, my attorney, until after noon tomorrow.”

“Very sensible,” laughed Therese. “Glad you’re not rushing into it.”

“Oh, I just want to know the options,” said Carol.

“Umhmm,” hummed a pleased Therese.

Carol paused. “I feel your smile against my breast, Mrs. Belivet.”

“You’re very perceptive, Mrs. Aird-Belivet,” replied Therese. “I’m so happy,” said Therese. Sleepiness was creeping into her voice. “Goodnight my darling, my love.”

“Goodnight, my dearest,” replied Carol. “I set the alarm an hour earlier than usual.”

Soft snores were Therese’s reply.

Carol smiled and gently pulled the covers over them. Therese remained on top of Carol as Carol slipped her arms around her lover.

Carol’s last thought before she was overtaken by sleep was ‘Carol Aird-Belivet loves Therese Belivet.’

Chapter End Notes
The Ridgewood New Jersey Country Club exists. There's a lengthy history and description (with photos) on the Internet. I hope you'll take a look for yourselves. As I state in this chapter, it was established in 1910.

As promised in the notes of my last chapter, I want to share with you why I chose "Pipestone" as my pseudonym. Near the end of Chapter 16 of Highsmith's book, there's a passage that caught my attention the first time I read "The Price of Salt" in February 1971 while I was a graduate student at the University of Colorado in Boulder. This passage evoked the American West as it must have been in 1952-1953. Being keenly interested in geography, the American West has always excited me. Therese must have felt this same excitement of places heretofore unknown to her.

The book's passage reads: "They went on westward, through Sleepy Eye, Tracy and Pipestone...The West unfolded like a magic carpet...and Therese thought in a fervid burst of patriotism--America." This passage still grabs me each and every time I read it, even though more than 46 years have passed since I first read it. All three are small towns in southwestern Minnesota. Since Carol and Therese were driving from East to West, they would have passed through the towns in the order they're listed in the book. They would have passed through Pipestone last. It's located a mere five miles from the Minnesota/North Dakota border. Also, Pipestone is less than forty miles north of the Minnesota/Iowa border. Pipestone stands at the junction of Minnesota State Highway 30 and U.S. Highway 75, a major North-South artery in America that begins at the Canadian border in the North to its terminus at downtown Dallas, Texas in the South. Ironically (or perhaps by a twist of fate) our home is less than five minutes from U.S. Highway 75 in Dallas. I drive on it almost every day. Until I researched this note I never knew the fictional connection between the highway mere blocks from our home and the road Carol and Therese travelled.

My then-partner (now wife) and I passed through Pipestone Minnesota in early May, 1978. I was on a research trip for my work. I was tracing the environmental effect of a proposed high-wire electrical line that (if approved) would run from Omaha, Nebraska to the Canadian border. My partner was in graduate school and was able to take off the five days for the trip. We flew into Omaha where I delivered my company's proposal to study the environmental impacts. We hopped into a rental car and drove endlessly through the northern Great Plains photographing nature and natural areas along the proposed high-wire route. I'll never forget that journey. An amazing variety of waterfowl were making their annual trek along this, the American flyway. We were captivated by the ever-changing landscape as we drove northward.

Now I imagine Carol and Therese might have had similar reactions on their trip more than three decades prior to ours. After we reached our Canadian goal, we turned back south. I'm not sure why I decided that we should take a slight detour so that we could set foot in two more new states for us (Minnesota and Iowa). My eyes spotted Pipestone Minnesota on the map. There was a U.S. Parks Service National Monument near the town (Pipestone National Monument, established in 1937). We paid it a brief visit and learned that the National Monument includes a stone quarry where the Native American tribes of the area are allowed to dig using hand implements that have been blessed in a ceremony before the earth over the sacred reddish-brown clay stone is disturbed. The tribes carve sacred ceremonial pipes from this stone, plus carvings of animal figures that have symbolic meaning to the tribes. A small gift shop at the National Monument also sells a selection of pipes and animal carvings mined from these pits to the public. I was captivated by these red stone animals and purchased two pipestone turtles. For years I lost track of my purchases, but I recently found the turtles. Now they occupy a place of honor at the base of my
computer monitor. (I gaze at them even now as I write.) These turtles both inspire me and also evoke memories of our trip to Pipestone nearly forty years ago. Now they remind me of Carol and Therese's fictional trip more than twenty-six years before our visit. Somehow I believe Therese would have been enchanted by these beautiful carved figures and Carol would have purchased one or more for her. Watch for the appearance of Therese's own pipestone animal(s) in a forthcoming chapter.

So now, dear readers you know my connection to Pipestone--its longstanding and very personal meaning to me and its place in my favorite passage from "The Price of Salt." When I decided to write my storyline some forty-five chapters ago, there was but one pseudonym for me--"Pipestone."

Regards,
Pipestone
This chapter takes place entirely in Carol and Therese's apartment in Manhattan.

Therese was shining her shoes in preparation for her big meeting at work the next day. She quizzed Carol about what Rindy had said to her as the group was leaving the diner in New Jersey earlier in the evening. Therese caught the word "name" and asked Carol if she knew what Rindy meant. Carol had wanted to postpone the conversation about Rindy's idea for Carol to hyphenate her name to Aird-Belivet until later in the week. However, Therese insisted on Carol telling her what Rindy was talking about.

As soon as Carol broke the news to an astonished Therese, Therese asked Carol to stand up. While on her knees, Therese asked Carol to share her name and Carol accepted.

While Therese sleeps, Carol lies awake. Therese's snores cause Carol to ask Therese to turn over. When Carol cuddles up to Therese and puts her nose in Therese's hair, the sweet scent of Therese's hair triggers memories of passionate lovemaking that occurred only two weeks after Therese moved in with Carol in April 1953. The details of Carol's memory while lying awake form the greater part of this chapter.

Next chapter: Therese's important work meeting.

Chapter Notes

Dear readers, thanks again for your patience while awaiting this chapter. The past few weeks have been very difficult for me. I've been in (literally) excruciating pain most of the time. This saps my energy and my imagination. Also, I've had an infection in both my eyes for weeks that requires greasy antibiotic ointment to be in my eyes most of the time. It's almost impossible to write or type when the stuff is in. Oh, how I wish it were not so!

Please dear readers, do not give up on me. I'm so very sorry that I haven't given you chapters as often as I would have wished.

Like many of you, I've been feeling the agony of the monster hurricanes that have slammed southeast Texas and now the entire state of Florida. Looks like I missed my window to go to Key West for the time being for my research trip. However, as soon as air travel resumes and the public library is open again and the Key West historian, Mr. Tom Hambright is available. I plan to use airline miles and not make a reservation very far in advance so as to thread my way through any more storms.

I've not been able to find out much about the damage in Key West. There was a New York Times story that the Hemmingway House was undamaged and the 54 Hemmingway legacy cats were inside with two caretakers who chose to ride out the storm. Everyone is fine (cats, too).

I appreciate the several comments from readers asking if I were affected by hurricane Harvey. The hurricane-affected area is about a five hour drive from Dallas, however,
I have four cousins who live in and around Houston. These are my "boy cousins" (who are now about my age) whom I played with throughout my childhood during visits my mother and father and I made to south Texas and their family made to Oklahoma. I remember that we always made trips to the nearby Gulf of Mexico beaches where we'd frolic in the surf and sand as kids do. Sadly all those beaches have been destroyed.

My boy cousins and their homes were okay, but the daughter of one of my boy cousins and her husband's home was destroyed. They've had to strip the home down to the skeleton boards and rebuild. They lost everything. They are such fine young people (she's an elementary school teacher and he's an elementary school principal). My heart goes out to them.

Again, please bear with me. I will never abandon this storyline and when you see lengthy pauses between chapters, usually my poor health is to blame.

Regards,
Pipestone

March 16, 1959 – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

3:00 a.m.

Carol was having a particularly vivid dream, complete with sound. Her family, including Harge, was at the beach with the Sinclairs. They were on a deserted stretch of sand. Harge and Marge sat in beach chairs under a large umbrella. Harge was reading a book and Marge was watching both girls play in the surf with Uncles Jack and Michael. Carol was in her swimsuit, ankle-deep in water, watching the uncles attempt to launch a kite, much to the delight of Rindy and Karen. She felt Therese's arms encircle her from the back and was thrilled by the sensation of Therese's head nestled between her shoulders.

Carol turned to say something to Therese and noticed that Marge had her bare foot on top of Harge's in a show of affection. Harge noticed her touch and leaned close to talk to her. The sound of the waves breaking near the shore was as rhymical as breathing. Therese's lips tickled Carol's ear. Carol started to say that Therese should be mindful that they were in public, but no one else seemed to be in sight. The sound of the waves grew louder, and each uncle took a girl into his arms for safety. The men easily swung the girls over their shoulders. The foursome made their way toward the beach. Rindy called out “Mommy loves Aunt Therese” and Karen answered, “Uncle Jack loves Uncle Michael!” Carol laughed as did the uncles, however, the girls’ words were soon drowned out by the sound of the waves.

Carol’s eyes opened to the darkness and cool of their bedroom. ‘What an unusual dream,’ thought Carol. Then Carol realized that the sound of surf in her dream came from Therese. Therese was intertwined with Carol. Carol could feel Therese’s wiry pubic hair against her buttocks. Therese’s right arm was stretched across the bottom of Carol’s breasts. Her head was flush against the back of Carol’s neck, and her mouth was delivering snores directly into Carol’s right ear. Carol smiled.

Without waking her lover, Carol disentangled herself and squirmed away from Therese. Carol nudged her and softly murmured, “Snoring.”

Therese responded with a sleepy, “Mmmm” as she turned over and went back to sleep.
Carol wanted to resume their contact, so she flipped over and with her left arm drew Therese to her. Therese’s breathing continued to be even. Carol was relieved that Therese was in a deep sleep. ‘She needs her rest,’ Carol thought.

Sleep proved elusive for Carol. So much had happened in the last twenty-four hours. Abby had forgiven Harge and was rewarded with a new level of access to her goddaughter. Now Abby would be able to pick up Rindy from Harge’s nearby home. Harge assured Abby that she could spend time with Rindy whenever she and Rindy wished. After Abby left, Harge and his father had spent hours helping Therese prepare for her big meeting at work that would start mere hours from now. ‘What a change a few weeks has made,’ marveled Carol.

Carol considered her beautiful lover sleeping peacefully in her arms. Only hours ago, they had made love with such intensity that Carol was still limp with satisfaction. ‘I never thought lovemaking could be so fulfilling until Therese,’ mused Carol. ‘I can express my needs and wants without embarrassment or fear of judgement. I literally ache for her. I crave her touch, her lips, her voice, her body with every fiber of my being.’

Carol breathed the scent of Therese’s hair and perfume. It was as intoxicating as a garden of the most fragrant flowers. That odor triggered memories of their first weeks together after reconciling in mid-April, 1953. Although it was almost six years ago, Carol remembered those heady times as if they were yesterday. Tonight’s lovemaking caused Carol to recall the time shortly after Therese had moved in with Carol that they had made love with a similar complete and absolute abandon.

Even though it was the first weekend in May, the temperature was cool with rain showers. They had built a fire and Carol was lying on the couch with her head in Therese’s lap. Carol was missing Rindy terribly on this Saturday night. Harge had cancelled Rindy’s visit to the apartment that had been scheduled for the next day. Even though he’d said that he would bring her the following Sunday for a few hours, Carol could never count on him to keep his word.

Carol mused, ‘I couldn’t imagine back then that Rindy would have regular weekends with Therese and me and that I would be able to spend all the time I wanted on the phone with her—every day if we wanted. Now I have no fear whatsoever of losing her.’

Carol returned to the memory of that Saturday night in 1953. Carol had wept with disappointment and Therese had offered consolation in softly spoken words, along with gentle strokes to Carol’s cheek.

‘Carol,’” Therese had said, “It won’t always be like this.”

Carol asked, “Do you really believe that?”

“Yes, I do,” replied Therese.

The fire in their fireplace was dying—embers only now. Carol wanted to be held and loved and had voiced her need. Therese monitored the last of the embers, then joined Carol in the bedroom.

The bedroom was dark. Carol had already undressed and slipped into bed.

“Carol darling,” said Therese, “where are you?”

“In bed, waiting for you,” Carol murmured.

Carol had turned off the small light on Therese’s nightstand because her eyes were burning from the tears she’d shed. Carol explained the reason for the darkened room because Carol knew that Therese preferred to make love in the light. Carol had asked if Therese had a small candle. Therese quickly produced a small votive candle that gave off a gentle fragrance.
“It’s the Catholic in me to have a votive candle ready at all times,” said Therese. Carol smiled at Therese’s explanation.

So, it was by the light of that small candle that Carol had reached for Therese with a desperation that had completely caught Therese off-guard. Therese asked Carol how she wanted to be loved.

Carol replied, “I need to feel you inside me. Please. Please!” Therese complied immediately and began to stroke Carol so intimately that Carol felt she might go mad unless her orgasm provided relief. Carol had scratched Therese’s back and shoulders in the throes of her passion.

“I need your mouth—now Therese, now!” gasped Carol.

As Carol felt her climax approach, Carol was stunned by the sounds she made. She’d never heard such grunts, groans and pants that were tumbling from her lips. Carol felt primitive and almost animal-like, and was vaguely aware of feeling shameful for giving voice to all the sexual feelings that washed over her body. Even so, she continued her vocalization along with writhing and alternately lifting her head off the pillow and arching her back. As ecstasy filled every cell of Carol’s body, she cried out Therese’s name.

After oral sex, Therese usually wiped her face with an edge of sheet or pillowcase before kissing Carol, but this time she kissed her passionately on the mouth right away. Carol felt and tasted the moisture of her own desire on Therese’s kiss—a kiss that never seemed to end.

When they paused to breathe, Carol had apologized for the sounds she’d made.

Carol recalled the conversation they’d had after Carol’s expressions of passion. Therese had silenced Carol’s apology with another kiss.

“Don’t you dare apologize, Carol. Your reaction was a gift to me.”

Carol had been surprised by Therese’s choice of words and had asked her to explain. All these years later, Carol still remembered Therese’s explanation.

Therese had said, “Tonight your reaction to my making love to you left no doubt in my mind that I was pleasing you. I’m thrilled beyond words that I could cause you to react to my touch as you did. Sometimes I’ve wondered if I were doing the right thing—touching you the way you needed. Tonight, you let me know in no uncertain terms. Please promise me you’ll never hold back again. I’ll promise the same to you. I’ve been quiet because I thought it was what I was supposed to do.”

“I promise, dearest.” Carol had told Therese as she began touching her where she knew Therese would want. “It’s funny, isn’t it? We’re taught to be lady-like in bed. There’s no reason we should do that. Silence has no place in our bedroom. Agreed?”

“Oh my God, yes,” groaned Therese. “Carol, I can’t carry on a conversation now.” Carol had laughed.

Therese had kept her part of the promise. Carol had been thrilled by Therese’s reaction to lovemaking, and their sex life was never the same after that night.

Still unable to sleep, Carol remembered what had occurred the next morning. Since it had been less than two weeks since Therese had moved in with Carol, both women were still adjusting to the everyday feeling of living together.

Since this particular Sunday morning followed a night of the most passionate lovemaking either
woman had ever experienced, each woman was unsure how to address the previous night’s activities. However, it was clear to both Carol and Therese that they should talk about what had happened.

Carol cleared her throat and Therese looked up from her coffee and the section of *The New York Times* that she was pretending to read.

Carol smiled lovingly at Therese. “Dearest, we probably should talk about last night.”

Therese lowered her eyes shyly, then met Carol’s gaze, “Yes,” Therese replied in a soft voice. “You go first.”

Carol began, “Well, we are lovers after all, and lovemaking is a very important part of a healthy relationship. It’s part of the glue that holds us together.”

“Oh, I agree, Carol,” replied Therese. “It’s just that I had a different idea about what I thought was the proper sexual behavior for a woman. Mind you, the only sexual experience I’ve had has been with you. Oh, Richard and I fooled around, but we never went all the way. I can’t imagine releasing my inhibitions with him at all. I never even wanted to do anything in bed with him. I avoided it any and every way I could. God, I didn’t even want to kiss him. No wonder I refused to have intercourse.”

Therese continued, “I didn’t know it was acceptable to say words such as we spoke last night, and well, to behave like wild women in bed. I thought the woman’s role was to be more…sedate. Carol, we were anything but sedate last night. God, Carol, you have scratches on your shoulders and sides and I saw a bite mark on your shoulder. I think I have quite a few scratches that you gave me as well.”

Carol took a deep breath and reached out to hold Therese’s hand. “Sweetheart, would you be pleased to know that last night’s lovemaking was the most exciting sexual experience I’ve ever had? Nothing even comes close. I hope we continue to lose whatever inhibitions we have and forget whatever we’ve heard or learned about how women should behave in bed. This is our life and if what we do in bed satisfies us and makes us happy then that’s all that matters.”

Therese appeared relieved at Carol’s words, but expressed a concern. “I found what we did last night exciting and fulfilling, but I’m afraid I hurt you and I don’t want to continue to physically hurt you.”

Carol replied, “Dearest, I found your bites and scratches extremely erotic. They thrilled me. I was beside myself with excitement. If I ever want you to stop doing something, I’ll tell you. Promise me you’ll do the same.”

Therese squeezed Carol’s hand. “I promise, my love. And by the way, you were the most perfect lover any woman could ever want. Are you sure that my reactions pleased you? You weren’t shocked by the way I moved and the words I said?” Therese looked concerned.

Carol took Therese’s face into her hands and looked deep into Therese’s eyes. Carol spoke very deliberately, “Dearest, please never hold back while making love. I won’t hold back, either. Also, we can and should talk about what we did in bed whenever we wish without embarrassment. Sex is just a wonderful part of life and now I have a partner with whom I want to completely share this intimate part of me.”

Therese replied, “Carol, I never thought I could exhibit such actions, then be able to talk about it the next day.”
Carol grinned, “I’m your lover, Therese, and you are mine. Please share yourself with me, for I love you so much. This is our home now---ours. What happens in the privacy of our home stays here.”

Therese had leaned over and kissed Carol on the mouth. “I promise.”

Carol continued, “Therese, you’re exactly what I want and need in a companion and a lover. Oh, my angel, you’ve come back to me, thank God, and we’re going to spend the rest of our lives together…aren’t we?”

Therese was quick to answer. She smiled. “Yes, darling. Yes, Carol. I’m yours for the rest of our lives.”

Carol returned Therese’s smile, “Well, I’m yours, too, dearest. Whatever life brings our way—the joys and the sorrows, we’ll face everything together. My God, there are no words that exist to express the joy I feel now that you’ve come back to me.”

Carol would never forget Therese’s answer. “There was never a doubt in my mind that I would come back to you. You complete me, Carol. Take my heart, my life; I’m yours.”

Carol recalled that they had kissed and kissed, until one said (Carol had forgotten who), “Let’s go back to bed.”

Carol’s beautiful memories were interrupted by Therese stirring in her sleep. Therese murmured and backed even more fully into Carol’s arms. With an exhaled breath, Therese fell back into the depths of sleep.

‘I should try to get some sleep,’ thought Carol. ‘The most wonderful woman alive is asleep in my arms and I should join her in dreamland.’

6:30 a.m. – The same day

With breakfast done, Carol and Therese were in the midst of preparations for Therese’s big day. Her work meeting would begin at 10:00 a.m.

“Hold very still, dearest,” said Carol as she applied a light shade of eye shadow over Therese’s eyes.

“Are you, sure, Carol? I don’t usually wear eye shadow to work.”

“Yes, I’m sure. This is a very light shade. It’s like not wearing any at all.”

Therese sighed. “Then why am I wearing it?”

Carol laughed at Therese’s valid logic. “Well, the effect will be there. It just brings out the beauty of those dark hazel eyes of yours. Now just a bit of mascara and we’re done with your eyes.”

Therese sighed again. “What about that pink lipstick?”

Carol smiled, “Well, let’s save that for last. If I’m lucky I might get a kiss or two before you leave. You’ll need to take the lipstick with you. Do you have all your papers and the questions and the copies from yesterday?”

“Yes mother,” quipped Therese. “They’re in my briefcase along with my small purse, my
portfolio and that 5 by 7-inch framed photo of you that I love so much. Oh, I mustn’t forget to take an extra pair of hose. Today would be a terrible day to get a run.”

Therese left the room to get her belongings. As she busied herself with the last-minute activities, Carol slipped into Rindy’s bedroom to get the pen and pencil gift for Therese that she bought Saturday at the office supply store.

Therese appeared in the doorway to their bedroom with her briefcase in her hand and coat on her arm. As soon as Carol saw her, she was overcome with love and pride.

Carol thought Therese had transformed from her beautiful young lover into a stunning and sophisticated businesswoman—every bit Carol’s equal.

“Dearest, you look like a successful New York City businesswoman. I’m so proud of you. Here’s a little gift to mark this day in your career.”

Carol extended the box containing the pen and pencil. Therese flushed with excitement as she opened it.

“Oh, Carol, what a beautiful pen and pencil set! Thank you, darling. I’m going to have so many items in my office that will make me think of you each day.”

Carol smiled and replied, “Well, soon there will be another.” Carol held up her right hand and pointed to her ring finger and winked at Therese.

Therese stepped up to Carol and put her arms around Carol’s neck. She pulled Carol’s head down for a lingering kiss.

“I can’t wait for that one more thing to remind me of you,” said Therese. “Now, Mrs. Aird-Belivet, I believe I’m ready for the pink lipstick.”

Chapter End Notes

Remember the Ridgewood Country Club from my last chapter? Well, fiction has touched my own life again. There is a neighborhood park and recreation center about five blocks from our home. I usually don’t drive by it, but I happened to do so just before my eye infection limited my driving. The name of the park: Ridgewood Park. Lordy, another connection.

I used the electronic archive of The New York Times to ensure my statement in this chapter about the cool temperatures on the evening of Saturday May 2 1953 when Carol and Therese have a fire in their fireplace. That night's low temperature was 46 degrees with rain showers. That was certainly conducive to building a fire.

I want to elaborate on the concept behind Carol smelling Therese’s hair and that action triggered the vivid memory of their lovemaking that is the subject of this chapter. Since my undergraduate college days, I’ve been fascinated by the French writer, Marcel Proust. In my fourth year French class we read portions of his "Remembrance of Things Past” in French. It was enchanting. I refreshed my memory of Proust by the ever-helpful Internet. Proust was considered by many literary critics to be one of the most influential authors of the 20th century. That's quite a statement, and I agree. "Remembrance of Things Past" consists of seven volumes.
Later English translations saw the title changed to "In Search of Lost Time." Proust was homosexual and several of his principal characters, both women and men were either homosexual or bisexual. One famous Proust passage describes how the smells and tastes of eating a sweet cake called a "madeline" and drinking tea brought back vivid memories of his youth. Proust has become synonymous with the connection of smells and tastes to the memory of things past.

Regards,
Pipestone
What’s In A Name?

Chapter Summary

This chapter features a conversation between Carol, Harge and Rindy about Carol's potential change of her last name to 'Aird-Belivet.

Chapter Notes

Dear Readers, I am back after a two-month long absence. I've left comments for you so that you know that my writing has been delayed due to health problems. Please refer to the notes that preceded the last chapter and the comments I left in the comments section of the last chapter for the details.

I had eye surgery in November and during my post-op checkup, my eye surgeon discovered that the surgery was not successful. It was necessary to go through the surgery again. Fortunately the second time around was successful. I'm still recovering, but was able to write an additional chapter. Thank you for being so very patient. Remember, I will not end the storyline (at the earliest) until the ring ceremony and the honeymoon are done.

Finally, I may be slower to answer your comments on this chapter, but I will reply to each and every one I receive.

Warmest regards,
Pipestone

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Monday, March 16, 1959

7:00 AM – The Aird/Belivet apartment in Manhattan

After Therese and Carol exchanged one more tender kiss, Carol placed the light-colored pink lipstick in Therese’s hands. Therese carefully applied the color to her lips using the mirror near their front door. Carol handed her a tissue to blot her lips. Both women smiled into the mirror—pleased with Therese’s appearance for her big day at work.

“I'll call you as soon as I can after the meeting, Carol,” said Therese, as she picked up her briefcase. “However, the group meeting starts at 10:00 AM and may end close to 11:00 AM and I have no idea what I’m doing for lunch today.”

Carol smiled at her lover, who had transformed into a beautiful, sophisticated businesswoman.

“My God, Therese, you are stunning. If appearance is any indication of potential for success—and I know it is—you will sail through your meeting. Are you nervous, darling?”
“Actually, I’m not,” admitted Therese. “Oh, I hope the questions and answers part of the meeting goes smoothly, but I’m not afraid to present my whole self to my new group. By the way, Carol, you have your own important errand today. Please let me know when you’ve talked to Fred, our lawyer, about the process of changing your name to Aird-Belivet.”

“I can’t wait to make that call, dearest,” said Carol. “I’ll talk to Mr. O’Halloran and assure him that my professional name will not change. Oh, and I want to talk to Harge before I call Fred. I’m not asking Harge’s permission, but I do want him to know Rindy enthusiastically supports the name change.”

As Therese stepped to the door of the apartment, she gave Carol a lingering and loving look. “We’ll remember today as a day of changes, my love. Call me anytime. If I can’t answer for any reason, my phone now rings to our secretary, Marsha. I’ve told her about us and she knows any call from you is a high priority.” Therese winked at Carol.

The women hugged tightly and exchanged ‘I love yous,’ then Therese was out the door.

Carol listened for the elevator down the hall that would carry the love of her life toward one of the most important days of her career.

Carol found herself at a loss now that Therese had left. So much activity had gone into giving Therese the confidence boost that comes from knowing that she looked the part of her new position at work. Yesterday Harge and John had prepared her thoroughly for her meeting with tips on body language, gestures and voice tone. Harge and John had been so generous with their time.

Carol decided to call Harge this morning to thank him again for helping Therese prepare for her meeting and to tell him how professional she looked. This conversation might also be a good time to let him know of Rindy’s suggestion that she hyphenate her name to Aird-Belivet after their ring ceremony.

Since Therese had left for work quite early, Carol had hours before she had to leave for her own work. She absently ran a hand through her hair and stepped into the kitchen to pour another cup of coffee. Her mind was restless, so she decided to take care of a household task. She had just enough time to strip their bed and wash and dry the sheets and pillowcases before she had to leave for work. The small washer and dryer in their apartment was just large enough to accommodate a set of sheets.

Carol never minded doing extra chores around the apartment. Her work hours were shorter than Therese’s and her job was less stressful. Therese often voiced guilt over the fact that Carol did more of the routine chores, but Carol was quick to allay her concerns. Carol had said, ‘Dearest, I don’t mind in the least. I love taking care of our home.’ Therese insisted on doing most of the heavy cleaning and all of the daily kitchen clean-up. They hired a maid that Grace Goldman had recommended for fall and spring cleaning, as well as an occasional thorough cleaning job before the women hosted a party.

No one but Carol or Therese performed the task of washing their sheets and blankets. It seemed too intimate to relegate it to another person. As Carol stood in the doorway to their bedroom, she sipped her coffee and regarded their rumpled sheets that bore witness to their intimate encounter mere hours ago. Carol’s lips twitched into a smile. She mused, ‘Abby was right when she said that Therese and I still set the sheets on fire in the bedroom.’ A laugh bubbled out of Carol’s mouth. ‘My God,’ Carol thought ‘When we reconciled, I had no idea that our sex life would be as torrid as it is now--six years later.’ As Carol stripped the bed, she thought, ‘Enjoy it, Carol, just enjoy it.’

After Carol had put the bedclothes into the washer, she decided to pick out her attire for the day. ‘I
need to look more professional for my potential trip to the lawyer’s office. Oh, I hope Fred can see me today. Perhaps I should call him early so that I can get an appointment. I know I told Therese I’d wait until after noon to call, but I need to be practical and ensure that I can get an appointment.’ Carol was satisfied with her rationalization.

She looked at the clock. It was a few minutes before 7:15 AM. The phone rang—startling Carol. Carol began to mentally tick off a list of potential callers. ‘Who could it be? Therese wouldn’t have arrived at work yet, even with taking a cab. Harge would be dropping Rindy off at school and then continue to his office in the Manhattan Financial District. Perhaps it was Abby. She was an early riser and might want to talk about her remarkable reconciliation with Harge yesterday. Perhaps…’ Carol decided to end her musings and answer the phone. (She was in for a surprise.)

“Mommy!” Rindy cheerfully exclaimed. “Good morning, Mommy. Are you surprised?”

“Sweet pea!” Carol exclaimed. “Is everything all right? Why aren’t you in school? Where are you? Is Daddy with you?”

Rindy giggled happily. “I knew you would be surprised. I’m at home. School doesn’t start until 10:00 AM today. The teachers are having some kind of planning meeting. Daddy is here at home with me. He was so glad to have a couple of hours to spend with me since I didn’t get to spend much time with him yesterday when all of you were here at the house. We both loved having company, but Daddy says he likes his father-daughter time.”

Carol smiled at the mental image of Harge enjoying his time alone with Rindy. He was such a loving and attentive father. Carol always admired that part of Harge, even during the difficult years of their estrangement.

“Well, darling,” Carol asked. “What did the two of you do this morning?”

Rindy was quick to reply, “We played cards—double solitaire. We have so much fun playing that game. It’s our favorite. Last night he quizzed me on my spelling words so that this morning we could have time to just have fun together.”

Carol asked, “Did you beat Daddy as usual?”

Rindy cleared her throat. “Well, no, Mommy. Daddy beat me four out of the five games we played. He was very excited about winning. He teased me about it and asked if I was letting him win to make him feel better about his mental skills.”

Carol laughed heartily at Rindy’s retelling of Harge’s choice of words. When Carol had composed herself, she asked, “Well, snowflake, why do you think you lost so many games?”

Rindy paused before answering and dropped her voice to a whisper. “Mommy, I had something very important on my mind, and I couldn’t concentrate on the game and Daddy was just too quick.”

Carol was concerned to hear of Rindy’s inability to concentrate. Something must be wrong. Carol asked, “Rindy, is everything all right? Darling are you worried about something? Do you want to talk to me about it?”

Rindy whispered, “Don’t worry, Mommy. There’s nothing wrong, but my mind is on one thing and one thing only.”

Carol was starting to imagine that Rindy was focused on the topic of Carol’s potential name change. However, she wasn’t sure that was the reason, so she decided to ask. “Rindy, dear, does your lack of focus have anything to do with our conversation in your room last night when you
told me about your new friend at school who has a hyphenated last name?"

“Yes!” Rindy exclaimed. “Mommy, how did you guess?”

“Well,” Carol replied, “I am your mother and I know you quite well, dear one. Besides, Aunt Therese told me that you asked her to remind me to tell her about the name change. Aunt Therese was very curious and she insisted that I tell her the entire story.”

“She DID?” Rindy exclaimed. “Oooh, I shouldn’t shout. Daddy will check on me and I need to let you talk to him about it, don’t I?”

“Yes,” said Carol. “As a matter of fact, you need to let me tell Daddy.”

Rindy’s voice dropped to a conspiratorial whisper. “Mommy, did Aunt Therese like the idea?”

“She certainly did,” replied Carol.

“Ooh, ooh, ooh!” Rindy could hardly contain her excitement. “Mommy, remember that this was my idea. And… (Rindy paused dramatically), since it was my idea, you’ve gotta tell me what happened.”

“Calm down, darling. And Rindy, please watch your grammar. You should say ‘you must tell me’ instead of ‘you gotta tell me.’”

Rindy’s sigh was audible over the phone. “Sorry, Mommy. I should have said, ‘Mommy, you must tell me what Aunt Therese said.’”

“Thank you, darling. Well, Aunt Therese was very excited about the idea of my changing my last name to Aird-Belivet.”

“When you told her, was it like in the movies or in the movie magazines?” asked Rindy.

Carol was caught off guard. She wondered ‘What is she reading in these magazines? I recall that Harge doesn’t like her reading them and perhaps he has a point.’ Carol knew that she should give Rindy some semblance of Therese’s reaction—a version scrubbed for young ears.

Carol cleared her throat and began. “I told Aunt Therese the story of your new friend from school whose last name is hyphenated. I told her that you thought it would be wonderful if I changed my last name to ‘Aird-Belivet’ so that you and I would still have the same last name but I would take her last name, too.”

“Oh yes!” Rindy exclaimed. “Mommy, you remembered exactly what I told you.”

Carol simply replied, “Yes,” but she thought, ‘How on God’s green earth could I possibly forget?’

“Mommy, I could hardly sleep last night I was so excited wondering if Aunt Therese had reminded you of the name change like I asked her. I was also wondering whether the two of you took time to decide what to do next.”

Rindy continued—dropping her voice to a whisper again. “Was it romantic like in the movies? Did Aunt Therese get down on one knee and ask you to take her name? Ooh… I hope so. This is too exciting. Mommy pulleeease tell me.”

“Rindy, dear, let’s talk about what Aunt Therese and I said to each other when you come to spend next weekend with us. I’m going to talk to Fred, our lawyer about how to go about legally changing my name. Perhaps I’ll know more about it by the end of the week.”
“Oooooh, this is sooo romantic.” said Rindy in a dreamy voice. “Who can I tell?”

Carol replied, “Well, darling, I need to talk to your daddy, but after I talk to him you can talk to him about it and you can tell Aunt Abby, too.”

“What about the Sinclairs?” asked Rindy with hope in her voice.

“Let’s wait on telling anyone else, Rindy. We don’t even know what is legally possible until I talk to Fred.”

“Okay,” said Rindy with a hint of disappointment. Her disappointment quickly lifted as she said excitedly, “Please tell me you’ll call Mr. Fred today.”

“Yes, darling, I’m going to call him today. Aunt Therese and I are just as excited as you are. Are you absolutely sure you’re okay with my making this change?”

Carol braced herself for Rindy’s outburst. She knew her daughter.

“Mommy! It was MY idea. Of course, I’m fine with it. Oh, oh, oh, I can’t wait! Maybe your name can be changed in time for your ceremony when you exchange the beautiful matching rings and jump the broom.”

Carol replied, “Well, that would be wonderful, sweetie, but we can’t count on it happening that fast. Don’t get ahead of yourself and then be disappointed. Aunt Therese and I are going to do this as soon as we possibly can.”

Carol could hear an odd clacking noise on the other end of the phone. “Rindy, what is that noise I hear?”

Rindy replied, “It’s me. I’m dancing. I’m soooo excited. Please tell Aunt Therese how excited I am.”

“Darling, of course I will. Now I need to talk to Daddy about all this. Could you call him to the phone and then would you please go up to your room to give us privacy? Thank you, sweet pea.”

“Mommy, don’t forget to tell Daddy it was my idea and tell him how much I want you and Aunt Therese to do this.”

“Rindy, I won’t forget. I love you, my special girl. Please try to calm down and concentrate on school today. I’ll call you tonight to tell you what happened when I talked to Fred. Will you promise me you won’t let this happy news interfere with school?”

“I promise, Mommy. I love you so much, Mommy and I love Aunt Therese, too.”

“I love you, my dear sweet girl. Aunt Therese loves you, too. Now call Daddy to the phone and please give us privacy.”

Carol heard Rindy call out, ‘Daaaddeeee! Telephone. It’s Mommy. She needs to talk to you about something important.”

Harge’s quick footsteps were unmistakable as he approached the phone. Carol chuckled softly—imagining his curiosity at Rindy’s tone of voice. Carol could hear Rindy explaining the call to Harge.

“Daddy, I need to give you some privacy while Mommy tells you something very important.”
Harge replied, “Well, okay, pumpkin. Why the change? Usually you want to listen.”

Rindy’s tone of voice was so mature. “Daddy, I’m trying to be more respectful. Excuse me while I go to my room. Oh, and Daddy, remember that this was MY idea.” Rindy’s voice rose dramatically before Carol heard her footsteps running away.

There was a pause before Harge picked up the phone. Carol imagined Harge was puzzled by Rindy’s behavior. Carol didn’t have long to wait.

“Carol, could you please tell me what on earth has gotten in to our daughter?” Carol began to chuckle—muffling her sounds by putting her hand over the phone receiver. Harge continued, “First I win most of our double solitaire games, which never happens, mind you. Then Rindy keeps talking about her new friend at school, Kathy Simson. And when I suggest that Rindy should invite Kathy and Karen to come over to our house, Rindy informs me that I must call Kathy by her ‘real name,’ Katherine Simson-Larrimore.”

Harge took a deep breath as Carol struggled to stop laughing. “Jesus, Carol, last week Rindy was telling me all about Kathy and how smart she is and how glad Rindy is that Kathy is on her spelling team. Now I’ve been told by our daughter that I must refer to this new friend by a mile-long name. By the way, I’ve been asked by our daughter if I consider hyphenated last names to be ‘extremely sophisticated.’ Those were Rindy’s exact words, ‘extremely sophisticated.’”

By this time, Carol had lost the battle to keep Harge from hearing her laugh. Harge noticed Carol’s reaction and said testily, “Carol, this is serious. How am I going to survive our daughter’s teenage years? She’s turning eleven next month. This is just the beginning.” Harge’s groan caused Carol to have pity on him.

“Harge, you’ll survive her teenage years,” said Carol with a laugh.

“You laugh, Carol, but you were a teenage girl and have some experience in all this. What am I to do?” asked Harge plaintively.

“Harge, you and Therese and I are in this together. You’re not alone. Remember that you have Marge to offer guidance, too.”

Harge brightened considerably at the mention of Marge’s name. “That’s true,” he said. “I’ll have plenty of opportunities to ask for her opinions,” he added with a chuckle. “I feel better now, except that I’m totally mystified at Rindy’s sudden fascination with Kathy’s hyphenated last name. Also, why did she run upstairs to give us privacy on this call? She usually flattens herself against some piece of furniture in order to eavesdrop. And this dancing in the middle of the living room. And…her parting words were ‘This was MY idea.’ She practically shouted ‘MY idea.’”

Harge paused and Carol knew he was waiting for her to explain Rindy’s odd behavior.

“Harge,” Carol began, “I think I can answer all your questions. Do you have time to talk now?”

“I most certainly do,” replied Harge. “Rindy doesn’t have to be at school today until 10 AM and I’m going to drop her at Marge’s at 9:30. Marge will take both the girls to school and I’ll continue in to the office. I wanted to have father-daughter time this morning, and I certainly got more than I bargained for. You have my undivided attention, Carol.”

Carol took a deep breath. “Well, Harge, yesterday when you and John were helping Therese prepare for her meeting, Rindy and I were enjoying some mother-daughter time in her room. She told me that she really wanted to attend our ring ceremony even though you, Therese and I had originally thought she was too young and it would be too difficult for her not to be able to share
such an exciting event in her life.”

“I know.” Harge said quietly. “She’s been asking me about it, too. Frankly, I was having second
thoughts about our initial rationale that she was too young to attend. You and Therese are her
mothers after all, and it sounds like the ceremony would be quite nice.”

“Harge,” said Carol, “If we do decide that Rindy can attend, Therese and I want you to be there,
too. I think Rindy would love for you to be there with her.”

There was a prolonged silence. Carol finally said, “Harge, are you still there?”

“Yes,” said Harge quietly. “I’d love to come and I think our daughter should be able to see you
and Therese exchange rings. I’m just so glad that you and I have been able to put my dreadful past
actions behind us to the extent that we can celebrate important life events together.”

“We can talk about it more on Friday night when you two come to our apartment for our first
family dinner,” said Carol.

“Ah, yes,” said Harge. “That would be wonderful, but Carol, there’s still the mystery of Rindy’s
friend Kathy and her hyphenated last name.”

“Wellll…” Carol drawled. “I have the answer for that one, too.”

“And the answer is…” teased Harge.

Carol took a deep breath. “Harge, over the past couple of years, Rindy has told me how glad she
is that I kept my last name ‘Aird’ instead of reverting to my maiden name or to use the proper
‘Mrs. Ross Aird’ without the hyphen. Rindy said Karen wishes that her last name was ‘Sinclair’
instead of her father’s last name, ‘Proctor.’”

“Rindy has told me the same thing,” said Harge, “but now I’m confused. Where does Rindy’s
fascination with her friend Kathy’s hyphenated last name come from?” Harge asked.

All of a sudden, the reason for Rindy’s behavior dawned on Harge.

“Carol!” Harge exclaimed, “Did Rindy suggest that you hyphenate your last name to ‘Aird-
Belivet?’”

“Actually, yes,” replied Carol somewhat sheepishly. “At first she asked me if I was going to take
Therese’s last name when we exchanged rings. I said ‘no’ because I knew it was important to
Rindy to have our last names the same. Frankly I hadn’t thought about it for years until yesterday
when Rindy told me about her new friend at school with the hyphenated last name. Then she
proceeded to tell me that she thought it would be wonderful if I became ‘Carol Aird-Belivet.’”

Harge was silent, so Carol continued. “When I told her that couples like us don’t usually
hyphenate their last names, Rindy was just crushed. She thought she had offered a grand idea and
I wasn’t enthusiastic.”

Harge asked, “What did you really think?”

Carol replied, “Honestly, Harge, after I thought about it, I became intrigued with the prospect. I
told Rindy that I couldn’t promise anything but said I would talk to Therese. When I told Therese
after we returned home last night, she was very excited about the idea, too and we agreed that I’d
talk to Fred today about changing my legal name to ‘Aird-Belivet.’”

Harge asked, “Will Therese hyphenate her last name, too?”
Carol replied, “We talked about that briefly this morning, but we agreed that she is on the verge of having her name printed in the New York Times for her photo credits, and having a long name might prove difficult. We agreed that she is already being so open about her homosexuality at work that we don’t want anyone affiliated with the Times to find something like a name change objectionable.”

“Well,” huffed Harge, “What about Margaret Bourke-White? Having a hyphenated last name certainly didn’t negatively affect her fame as a photographer?”

Carol was stunned by Harge’s mention of the world-renowned photographer. “Good point, Harge. I’ll let Therese know that you brought that up,” said Carol with a hearty laugh.

Harge chuckled.

Carol said, “I’m going to talk to Mr. O’Halloran this morning. I won’t change my name on my business cards and will still go by ‘Carol Aird’ at work.”

Harge groaned. “Excuse me, Carol. Rindy is standing on the landing outside her room and shouting something. Guess her patience has worn thin. Jesus!”

Carol could hear Harge clearly, but could only hear high pitched sounds from Rindy. She smiled and shook her head while waiting for Harge to return.

“Pumpkin, what is it?” called Harge to Rindy. “Yes, sweetie, Mommy has told me several times that it was your idea.” (Another pause) “Yes, she told me Aunt Therese likes the idea. Please let Mommy and me finish our conversation. Thank you.”

“Sorry,” Harge sighed. “Carol, if this is what you and Therese want to do and since Rindy is so enthusiastic about it too, I’ll support you in any way I can. Tell Fred that my lawyer, Jerry Rix will help if necessary. I’ll call Jerry to fill him in as soon as I get to the office.”

Carol was overcome with gratitude. “Oh Harge, thank you. By the way, consider yourself and Rindy invited to our ring ceremony on Saturday, April 18th. The Sinclairs will be there, and since Rindy is coming, I’m going to suggest to Therese that we invite Karen, too. We’d love to have your dad come, but there’s the issue of your mother.”

“Why not invite him?” Harge said. “My sister Millie could baby-sit mother.”

Carol replied, “We’ll invite him, then. Oh, I almost forgot, Harge, in the midst of yesterday’s excitement at your home, I didn’t thank you for arranging a honeymoon trip for Therese and me to Key West, including a stay on the Sinclair’s yacht. Therese and I visited with Michael about the yacht during our ride into the city last night. It sounds absolutely heavenly.”

Harge said, “You’re very welcome. One of these days I’ll visit Key West and go sailing. Marge and I talked about it last week on one of our dinner dates. The uncles and the girls would come, too. Who knows, someday that yacht might be the site of another Aird honeymoon.”

Harge smirked as Carol expressed surprise and pleasure.

“Seriously?” Carol asked.

“Could be,” laughed Harge. “Carol, call me later when you find out how Therese’s meeting went.”

“I certainly will. Goodbye, Harge. Hug Rindy for me.”
“I will,” said Harge. “Goodbye, Mrs. Aird-Belivet.”

Chapter End Notes

The title of this chapter, "What's In A Name?" is from William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. The full quote is: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet."

Near the end of this chapter, Harge mentions an American woman photographer, Margaret Bourke-White. I have vivid memories of her work. I would suggest that you Google her for some fascinating information. She had an incredible career. Her fame would have been at its height during the time period of my storyline.
URGENT NOTE FROM PIPESTONE

All. Had stroke. Brain surgery today. Please keep me in your thoughts and prayers.
I am here. Am in rehab working hard on comeback. No longer paralyzed left arm. Typing dexterity back. Strength almost fully back hand and arm. Left leg slower but progress too. Walked 50 feet yesterday with industrial strength walker but was me pushing leg and doing work. A real miracle. I am so strong and determined. Thanks so very much for your thoughts and prayers. Keep them coming.

Stories still in my head. I will write them. I promise. Bear with me. If you don’t hear anything from me it’s because I’m working hard.

Carol and Therese are with me here. I love you all. Merry Christmas 2017.

Regards,

Pipestone
Pipestone takes giant steps in recovery on 1-9-18

Chapter Summary

See chapter content. So elated! Pipestone.

Chapter Notes

Would LOVE to receive comments. Pipestone.

All,

You have not heard from me since 12-25-17. Here’s the incredible progress I’ve made thanks to your thoughts and prayers.

Affected left arm at 75% strength and dexterity. Affected left leg has made DRAMATIC progress but still needs work. I WILL work!!

Blood clot in left calf stabilized. Tolerating meds to ensure it’s no longer an issue.

Have moved to new facility that’s one step away from going home. It’s only 10 minutes beyond hospital and 30 minutes from our home. Yay!! Depending on progress I may go home end of January. I must be able to walk, stand, pivot to toilet with minimal help from wife. She is 70 years old too and she can’t hold me up without injuring her back.

I will protect her! My therapy will focus on building my strength to stand. Starts tomorrow.

Oh by the way, I’m in a two room apartment! I’m not joking. I can move from room to room easily in wheelchair. Will send via text to fan Casper a short video and photo. Perhaps if you contact her she would forward it to you for me. Thanks Casper xoxo.

Would LOVE to receive your comments on this new chapter. Will reply to all over next few days. Thanks in advance for your patience until I can get to all comments.

I will ask wife to bring me a full computer keyboard tomorrow so I can practice REAL typing at small desk in new bedroom.

Loving regards to all.
Pipestone

P.S. Check out new video called “Cate and Rooney in Paris October 2017.” Shows their lovely friendship has continued since making “Carol” in 2015 to current time (October 2017). Definitely worth watching the 15 minute music video.
Pipestone “comes out” plus progress videos available.

Chapter Summary

Reader Casper1066 has videos of my recovery. Since I state my real name on videos, I thought I might as well tell you my real name. If you wish you can Google me.

Contact Casper1066 (Beth.Cassford@verizon.net) to request videos of my therapy progress.

Regards,
Pipestone
aka Louise Young
Dallas TX

Chapter Notes

Google me at Louise Young Raytheon lesbian to get the most Google hits.

All,

I can’t wait until I can write a real chapter again!

I think I will be able to go home about 1-25-18. Walking a lot on walker now. Arms are so strong. So strong!

Beth Cassford sent me fabulous Wonder Woman t-shirt today. Wow!

Several of you wanted full name of beautiful Cate and Rooney video. Google Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara - Still so good with you in Paris

This YouTube video was posted in November. It shows them together in October 2017. That’s 3 years after movie Carol was made. In my opinion, there is so much platonic love flowing between these women. On the other hand, I watched videos of Cate and her husband Andrew Upton and could see the romantic love between them. Cate told Ellen DeGeneris that Andrew asked her to marry him the third time they slept together and she KNEW he was the one for her for life. They’ve been married for 20 years. Three sons and one adopted daughter. Reminds me of how quickly my wife and I decided that we would be partners for life— faithful to each other for 47 years this April 18 (same anniversary as Carol and Therese)!

By the way, daughter is named Edith Vivian Patricia Upton. She was adopted right after Carol was being filmed. Rooney’s name is Patricia Rooney Mara. Think there is a connection between names? I sure do.

I will probably write one more update on my progress, then chapter after that will return to my storyline. Yay!!! Thanks for your patience.
Your thoughts and prayers have helped me SO MUCH! Keep them coming as I wind up my therapy.

Please Leave a comment on this chapter. It would mean so much to me.

love and regards,

Pipestone

(Louise Young)
Pipestone GOING HOME on 2/4/18!

Chapter Summary

Details in chapter.

Chapter Notes

Such good news! Details in chapter.

I wanted to let you readers know that FINALLY the day is nearly here. I will be discharged on Sunday afternoon 2/4/18, 2 months and a day after suffering the devastating stroke that left me paralyzed on my entire left side and in critical condition.

Oh, my dear friends, what a journey this has been. Your thoughts and prayers helped me SO much—you’ll never know how much.

I want to thank Beth Cassford (Casper1066) for steering emails to you. Also thanks to Employee645A who agreed to write the chapters on Carol and Therese’s ring ceremony and honeymoon if I had died. I’m so happy that I will be the one to write those. Plots have been swirling in my head as I do therapy exercises that are repetitive in nature.

I will continue to do therapy as an “outpatient “ for several months. There is a “time window” in which I can continue to make progress and I will do so, with every fiber of my being.

Best regards to all,
Pipestone (aka Louise Young)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!