

# Anne's Dreams Come True



# Dulci Daily



An "Adult Tv" Novel



# ANNE'S DREAMS COME TRUE

by Dulci Daily

## Chapter 1

*God's in his heaven; a few things, at least, are right with the world!*

It was far from the most sublime of sentiments, but it was the best Anne Oglestone could do. She had not the advantages of the “real” Anne, her beloved Anne of Green Gables, Avonlea, the Island, Windy Poplars, her House of Dreams, and Ingleside, in that order. She did not live surrounded by the beauty of nature in a country village on a secluded island, in a quieter, simpler time, as the real Anne did—and her husband was not the admirable Gilbert Blythe. She could never bring herself to say, as the real Anne once had said, that *all* was right with the world.

Still, at least today, Anne could see some genuine goodness in the world. The beauty spread forth below the big bay window of her parkside home still had power to cheer her heart, though the sky was pale and overcast as usual in Pacific Heights, and it had

been raining. Queen Charlotte Park, covering the steep side of Queen's Bluff, was filled with late summer's green leaves on many trees, dancing and mingling and showing forth glory. A rare few of them gave the first hint that soon all their leaves would turn to every evanescent hue, then fall down and die, while the tall, strong, changeless evergreens stood over them as always. Beyond the park, Anne could see the gray-green ocean all the way to Point Ransom Light-house and beyond, reflecting the measureless infinity of the sky above.

Best of all by far, Anne today had welcomed a kindred spirit into her home, and the kindred spirit's two little children too. Caring for widows and orphans was a Christian's duty, of course, but this was no mere duty. Indeed, it was so delightful to lend a helping hand to Jeannette Hearthward and her offspring, the bright, vivacious seven-year-old Vickie and the wide-eyed almost one-year-old Winston, that it seemed hardly consistent with strict duty!

Jeannette's husband, Anne was thinking with every beat of her heart, had been a most fortunate man while he lived. Even for mere outward beauty, Anne had hardly ever seen Jeannette's equal. The young widow's dark eyes, almost matching her deep mahogany-colored hair, seemed to have kept the innocent glow of childhood, along with the shy but ardent radiance of maidenhood. Her plump, ruddy cheeks and her full, wide lips were such as could only grow more and more delightful, for a husband to see and to kiss, as the years made them ever more familiar. Her figure, not too plump to be pleasing, but full of all the womanly curvature that Anne completely lacked, was so delightful to view even when fully clothed that Anne dared not imagine a husband's greater delight in seeing and doing more. Jeannette's loveliness even evoked Anne's memories of long-ago days when she had fancied herself bisexual—dreadfully dangerous memories, now that Anne was married to a man.

Yet all this beauty paled, Anne thought, compared to the beauty of Jeannette's bright soul. Anne had seen living devotion, both to God and man, when she delicately evoked Jeannette's memories of her departed husband Andrew, and her unfailing hope that Andrew was at home with God. Anne had seen a mother's kindness to her beloved children, and a

mother's wisdom in answering Vickie's unheard-of, imaginative questions (with some much-appreciated help from Anne herself). Anne had seen, too, this newly lonely woman's tender hope for deep, enduring friendship with Anne herself—undaunted by the knowledge that Anne was not, as she seemed to be, a woman quite like Jeannette.

"Would you like to go down into the park for a bit when we've finished our tea?" Anne asked from her seat on one side of the bay window. "I think it's starting to clear up." She took a sip of tea from one of her finest china cups, a delicate white one embossed with twin roses of real gold, given to her by her husband Richard, known to the world as Richard Oglestone, M.D.

"Oh, yes!" Jeannette said at once from the seat on the other side. "I'm sure Vickie would love to run around in the park for a little while before we go home. And, you know—well, the park is a proper enough place for conversation, but I'm not sure Andrew would have approved of me visiting a *man* alone in his house." She giggled a bit, but soon stopped. "But of course everything's been perfectly decent," she hastened to add, "and you don't really seem like a man at all, Anne!" Vickie was staring at Anne, obviously in silent agreement.

"Well, there's a reason for that," Anne said with a smile. Really, she knew, there were multiple reasons, from the top of her head to the tips of her toes. Anne's hair, as long and as red as the real Anne's so-called "auburn" hair, was woven into two long, neat braids—giving her, at fully 32 years of age, such girlish looks as the real Anne had tried to eschew as soon as she could. Her soft blue eyes could show as much feminine kindness and delight as the real Anne's eyes; her full, red, womanly lips could smile as warmly and captivatingly as the real Anne's lips. Her small, firm, well-formed bosoms, though false, were of such a fetching shape as she imagined the real Anne's bosoms must have had when she was a maiden or a young wife, although of course they were *not* described in the books. Her slender figure was only delicately suggested by her loose floral-print blouse and her long sky-blue skirt, below which her silk stockings (another gift from Richard) and her sensible, low-heeled black pumps peeked out. But as

for that which modesty conceals (as old Don Quixote would have gallantly said), modesty did well to conceal it very thoroughly indeed. The sight of it—especially now, when hardened, heated, and elongated to its full five inches under the influence of Jeannette's most evident desirability—would have shocked anyone who might have imagined Anne to be a real woman.

“But actually, if you'd like to know,” Anne confided, “my real name is Andrew, like your—your husband's name.”

Jeannette said nothing, but little Vickie knew well what “Andrew” and “your husband” meant. “Mommy, when is Daddy coming home?” she asked at once.

Jeannette sighed and bit her lip. “Honey, I told you before, Daddy went to Heaven,” she said. “We'll go see him sometime, but we'll have to wait until God takes us there because we can't go there on our own.” Vickie's daddy, Anne knew from Jeannette, had been summoned to Heaven by way of an abrupt and disastrous earthly event, a collision with a massive, impregnable SUV driven by a drunk.

Anne looked intently into the little girl's dark, wondering eyes in the midst of her round milk-chocolate-colored face, a heritage from her West Indian father whose picture Jeannette had shown to Anne. She smiled at Vickie, and received a most delightful smile in return. “Can't Daddy come back from Heaven to visit?” Vickie asked.

Again Jeannette sighed. “I'm not sure,” she ventured to say. “But it's really better to be in Heaven. Daddy probably wants to wait for us to come there.”

“Mrs. Oglestone,” Vickie abruptly asked Anne, “would you like to come to Heaven and see Daddy too?”

“I certainly would, at the right time,” Anne affirmed with almost no hesitation, “and of course I'd like to see you and your mommy, and Winston there too.” She looked at Vickie with love, and thought of how delightful it must be to be Vickie's mother.

“Oh, good!” Vickie cried. “I'd like to see *you* there too!” The little girl's affectionate heart overflowed into

a hug for Anne, who pressed Vickie tenderly to her own heart and caressed her close-curved black hair.

“Dear God,” Vickie promptly prayed after the end of the hug, “please take Mommy and me, and Mrs. Oglestone, to Heaven to be with Daddy! And Winston too,” she added as an afterthought. Anne looked at Winston, oblivious to thoughts of Daddy and Heaven, but not to Anne’s smiling face. He smiled back at her, and then laughed, as her eyes silently spoke the universal language of love for babies.

“Honey, God will take us there,” Jeannette assured her. “We just need to be patient. It might take a long time, but He will. Now, while we’re waiting, how would you like to go out and play in the park for a little while?”

“All right,” Vickie agreed. “After that, can we go to Heaven and see Daddy?”

“It’s all up to God,” Jeannette said. “He loves us very much, and He knows when is the right time for us to go to Heaven.”

Anne finished her tea quickly, so as not to delay the excursion to the park. Jeannette strapped Winston into the little stroller in which he had arrived. Then she pushed the stroller on one side and Vickie pushed it on the other, while Anne led the way to the miniature elevator, a feature not found in many other older homes on the seaward side of Queen’s Bluff.

“Wow, this is great, an elevator in your own house!” Jeannette exclaimed.

“Yes, my husband loves gadgets,” said Anne. She didn’t mention that sometimes she wondered what else, if anything, her husband loved, other than gadgets, money, medical achievements, and now politics. She surmised that he probably did still love *her*, although sometimes it was hard to tell.

“He’s a doctor, isn’t he?” Jeannette asked as the elevator descended. “I’ve seen the ads for Dr. Richard Oglestone. He’s your husband, right?”

“Yes, he is. He’s doing quite well in his profession.” *Quite well enough to have adopted children by now,*

Anne thought with a well-concealed grimace, if he really had any interest in it as he used to tell Anne he did.

“Andrew was doing really well in his profession, too,” Jeannette said, pushing the stroller out of the elevator. “He was driving back from a high-powered academic conference in California, where he delivered a big paper, when—it happened.” She meant the fatal crash, of course.

“You seem to be taking it, uh, quite well, quite bravely,” Anne said, drawing close to Jeannette and speaking softly, as they left the house and entered the park after a moment of walking in silence.

“I’m not,” Jeannette said at once. Anne looked at her, just in time to see her starting to cry. “Oh, Anne,” Jeannette confided, “I’d cry myself to sleep every night, if only I could *get* to sleep! If I could never hope to see him again, I couldn’t bear it!”

Anne felt a deep stab of pity for her new friend, tinged with a touch of self-pity. She did not think she would respond like this if Richard died. She did not like to think how she would respond, barely seven years now since her dream of marrying Richard had come true—since she had vowed to love, honor, and cherish Richard “until death do us part.”

She forced her thoughts to return to Jeannette, despite her fear of the growing danger. Soon they flew to what the real Anne (a Presbyterian) used to call “predestination,” but Anne Oglestone (an Episcopalian) preferred to call “providence.” Not long ago, Jeannette and her husband Andrew had been no more than acquaintances of Anne and Richard, saying hello after church and not much more. Today, in the mysterious designs of providence, the newly widowed Jeannette bade fair to become Anne’s dearest friend—if not more than a friend, something Anne would be ashamed even to imagine. Anne raised up a quick, fervent prayer to the Almighty to make her worthy of such a friend, and to help her overcome all temptations to unfaithfulness—no matter how strong, and even how overwhelming, they might become.

“Jeannette,” Anne murmured, drawing very close, “I know no one and nothing can take your Andrew’s

place, but—if there’s anything I can do for you, no matter what or when, please let me know. I’ll help you in any way I can.” The hot, hard elongation modestly concealed beneath her skirt, and the fast-beating heart not nearly so well concealed beneath her blouse, united in whispering to Anne that she might well wish to take Andrew’s place someday after all, if only she were not married to Richard. She tried to ignore the frightful, wrongful whispering, but she lacked the will to reject it out of hand.

Jeannette’s eyes opened as wide as Winston’s. “Anne, thank you!” she said. “You’re so kind! I wish there was some way I could help you too!”

“Oh, there is,” Anne assured her. “I’m sure there is. We’ll just have to see what it is, in the mysterious designs of providence.” She could not think that providence might have such mysterious, unheard-of designs as to break up her marriage with Richard and give her to Jeannette—and yet she was finding it terribly hard to think of anything else.

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“Anne!” Richard called out at once when he walked through the front door.

“I’m here,” Anne answered from her study. She put down her electronic tablet, yet another gift from Richard, on which she had been reading a book—not one of the Anne books, for she had those largely memorized, but a non-fiction book about widowhood.

“Anne, I’ve got lots of great news,” Richard told her after they embraced and kissed. The kiss was long and lingering, with Richard’s tongue entering deep into Anne’s mouth, and his hands caressing her slender hips. From the unusual warmth of these events, almost reminiscent of the early days of their marriage, Anne wondered whether Richard wished to reveal that which modesty conceals, and wished her to do so too. It had been too long since they had united, Anne felt, and her visit with Jeannette had given her a new and urgent motive for seeking release with Richard. Her elongation rose to the occasion, and she began to return Richard’s ardor with interest.

No sooner had she done so, however, than the long kiss ended and the real causes of Richard's excitement became apparent. "Our new TV commercial is ready to show," he informed her, "and it's terrific! Come on and look!" He whipped out an unmarked DVD and walked toward the living room; Anne dutifully followed. He inserted the DVD in the player, sat down on the sofa with the remote in his right hand, and beckoned to Anne with his left; she appropriately sat down beside him, and he put his arm around her. She did not place her hand upon his manly member, as she had been contemplating.

The commercial began, rather loudly and even shockingly. "Bitch tits!" shouted a boy from the midst of a big crowd of what appeared to be high-school students. "Wow, look at those man-boobs!" a girl cried out to the laughing crowd. A deep-voiced boy, imitating the sound of a cow, moaned over and over: "Moobs! Mooooobs! Moooooooooobs!" The victim of this verbal abuse, a fat boy wearing a tight, form-fitting shirt that plainly displayed his enlarged breasts and protruding nipples, walked the gauntlet between two lines of abusers, with his face growing redder and angrier as he walked. Quickly the crowd began to sing a simple, catchy tune with repetitive, memorable words: "Call the Moob Doc, Moob Doc, Moob Doc! Call the Moob Doc now!" The victim's face became redder and angrier than it could ever have been in real life, as it filled the entire screen.

Abruptly the scene changed to show the tall, handsome, broad-shouldered, only slightly stout Richard in a white coat, radiating maximum medical authority from his round, handsome face. "Millions of American men," Richard said, "suffer from male breast enlargement, medically known as *gynecomastia*, commonly called "man-boobs" or simply "moobs." This easily correctible condition can lead to acute and prolonged embarrassment, or worse—*far worse*."

For a few brief seconds, which seemed much longer, an extremely shocking scene flashed onto the screen. The victim was now in the nude. His face was distorted in what seemed quite like horror and anguish. A man with his face hidden was grasping the victim's breasts from behind and making quick, rhythmic pumping motions, while two other men gripped the victim's arms and held him still.

Anne shuddered. She felt sure the actors were simulating violent rectal abuse, though of course no penetration was actually shown. She could never condone the showing of such a thing, even in simulation—and she was not sure she would find it easy to forgive Richard for showing it. Her elongation had diminished to minimum size.

“I’m Dr. Richard Oglestone, known as the Moob Doc,” Richard said in the commercial when the presumed rectal abuse had vanished. “I’m the leading specialist in MBRS, male breast reduction surgery, in the State of Pacificum, and I can help. Call me for a free initial consultation at 987-MOOB, that’s 987-6662, or visit [www.moobdocofpacificum.com](http://www.moobdocofpacificum.com).” The phone number and the website address were shown in glowing golden letters near the bottom of the screen. Above, a sailboat floated on a moonlit sea, while a smooth-voiced crooner, accompanied by a harp, sang the simple song again: “Call the Moob Doc, Moob Doc, Moob Doc! Call the Moob Doc now!” In the sailboat sat the erstwhile victim, now fully clothed and smiling, gazing steadfastly upon his destination ahead. As he sailed, his big breasts swiftly, magically grew smaller. When he reached the shore, at the word “now,” he seemed to have no breasts at all any more.

That was the end. “Isn’t that great?” Richard rhetorically asked Anne.

“Ah—it’s very well done, and very attention-getting,” Anne cautiously said. “But are you sure it was wise to put in the part that showed—er—violent abuse?”

“I’m positive,” Richard declared. “That’s essential. Prospective patients have to face grim reality and see what can happen if they don’t get the surgery. And it’s not only prospective patients, Anne, it’s the legislature. We’ve got a serious chance of getting MBRS coverage included as preventive care in the state health insurance plan. To do that, we’ve got to push the right buttons and show what this surgery can prevent. That includes bullying, including extreme bullying and sexual abuse like you saw in the commercial, plus depression, panic attacks, obesity, drug abuse, sex addiction, gender identity confusion, poor performance in school, suicide, and school violence. You know that sledgehammer attack last

month in the parking lot at Rutland Ridge High School? That was moob-related. The perp was a big fat kid who got fed up with the teasing about his moobs, so he bashed a couple of teasers' heads in. Horrible tragedy, of course, but it came at a perfect time to draw attention to the need for MBRS coverage, which could have *prevented* the tragedy."

Richard drew Anne closer to himself and spoke to her most earnestly. "And you know, Anne," he said, "if MBRS coverage becomes part of the state plan, we're going to be rich—rich beyond our wildest dreams!"

Anne wished Richard could not see her face, but he was holding her too close and too tightly for her to turn away. She stared at him and did not smile, though her mouth was open. She thought they were already quite rich enough; she had no wildest dreams of wealth to become rich beyond, as he could surely see. She wanted to ask him, "Will we be rich enough to adopt children *then?*"—but she did not dare, for she knew he would become offended, and she was pretty sure she already knew what would be his answer.

"And that's not the only great news I've got," Richard went on. "We made the cut for poster couple! We beat the Runciples in the final round! We're in!"

Not everyone, perhaps, would have known what this meant, but Anne did. The State of Pacificum's liberal laws accepting same-sex marriage were under attack by fundamentalist fanatics led by the infamous Bob Stimson IV, promoting "Initiative 491." If passed, Initiative 491 would redefine marriage as one man plus one woman only, and that wasn't all. It would force same-sex married couples either to end their marriages, or (if they preferred) to redefine their marriage contracts as mere "homosexual service contracts."

The existing law's defenders were seeking a same-sex "poster couple" to appear in a pre-election barrage of photo ads and signs bearing the caption "DON'T BREAK UP THIS HAPPY MARRIAGE! VOTE NO ON 491!" Anne and Richard, a beautiful, feminine-looking gay cross-dresser and a handsome, prominent, masculine-looking gay physician, who were married in one of the most gay-friendly

churches in the Anglican Communion if not in the world, were a natural choice. Their opponents in the final round had been Jim and Joe Runciple, two totally manly gay guys who had adopted three boys. Anne had wished the Runciples would win.

“Oh, I’m sorry for the Runciples,” Anne gently said. “They seem like such nice, intelligent men, and they’ve really done a lot for their boys.”

“Yeah, but that’s not what will sell the voters on defeating 491,” Richard said. “The undecided voters would see two masculine-looking guys who sure wouldn’t look like a real married couple to *them*, and they’d think the guys adopted the boys to molest them. That’s not the ticket at all. You and I are the ticket, Anne. We’ll look like a real married couple to the undecided voters. Imagine how heartbreaking it would be to even think of breaking up Anne and Gilbert Blythe in the books and the movies!”

Anne sighed, and dared to speak. “Anne and Gilbert had *children* after they were married,” she said, so softly she was not sure Richard could hear.

He could. He was not pleased. “Anne, we’ve been through all this before,” he said, meaning that he had repeatedly refused to adopt children whenever Anne brought the subject up. “I’ve considered it fully and fairly, and it just wouldn’t work. We need to drop the subject. It’s not something that should come between us.”

Anne grimaced in pain. Richard meant they would *never* adopt children. He had lied, he had misled her into hoping for children. Now she would never have them, at least until Richard died—or their marriage did.

Anne frowned, clenched her thin fists, and set her slender jaw. She had vowed to be a devoted wife to Richard until death, and she would go through with it. She would even smile brightly in the photos, so convincingly that no one would even imagine their marriage might not be as happy as it seemed.

“When and where are we going to be photographed?” she asked.

“On Sunday at St. Austin’s, after church.” St. Austin’s, on Queen’s Boulevard near the highest point of the bluff, was the church that Anne and Richard attended each Sunday, the church where they had been married seven years ago.

“Very well, then,” said Anne. “I’ll wear my Sunday best, and smile my brightest smile.”

“That’s more like it,” Richard said, giving her a smile, if not his brightest, and squeezing her shoulder.

“That’s my Anne-girl.”

Anne swallowed hard and tried to get up, but Richard held her down. “One more little thing, Anne,” he said, caressing her almost tenderly. “I really think you need to start the hormone treatments soon. I’ve been pretty patient with your misgivings, but you know how much it would please me to see you, and feel you, with a more feminine shape above the waist.”

He had touched one of Anne’s sore spots, and he knew it, but he didn’t know it was sorer now than ever. Anne would have thought it glorious to have real “moobs,” real breasts, if God had given them to her. It hurt her heart to think of gynecomastic men, who did have such lovely gifts from God, being insulted and abused for them, and deciding they must throw them away by getting surgery from Richard. But Anne still thought a doctor should devote himself to saving life and health, not to flattering vanity by either shrinking or enlarging breasts.

So Anne had long thought, before she had ever known Richard, much less known that male breast reduction surgery was to be Richard’s specialty—but now there were new, more painful thoughts as well. Richard had prodded her to inflate her flat chest with hormones, to seem to have a mother’s lovely breasts, only seconds after he had shattered her hope of motherhood forever! Anne could bear much from Richard—she had borne much, and no doubt would bear much more—but this she could not bear.

“Richard,” Anne said, more coldly than she had ever spoken to him before, “we’ve been through all this before. I’ve considered it fully and fairly, and it

just wouldn't work. We need to drop the subject. It's not something that should come between us."

Anne feared Richard would take it as a slap in the face, or worse, to hear her using his exact words against him like this. He took it as worse. She could see outrage leaping from his eyes like fire from a gun barrel. Soon, however, he forced himself under control and spoke almost calmly: "Very well, then. We won't discuss it any more. It must not come between us. There's something far bigger than either of us at stake here." He meant the need to defeat Initiative 491, of course.

"Let's both cool off," Richard said, letting Anne go and arising at once. "We need it."

About that, at least, Richard was surely right. Anne, though trembling so hard with anger that she feared her knees would buckle beneath her, arose and made her way back to her study. There, at once, she returned to her book about widowhood.

## Chapter 2

"O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come," Anne sang with the congregation and the choir at the conclusion of the church service, "our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home!"

It was a glorious Sunday, with sunlight turning the stained-glass windows into many-splendored gates of Heaven. The grand old hymn lifted Anne's thoughts to Heaven too. She was glad St. Austin's had kept so many of the old traditions, while modifying them somewhat in the matter of marriage.

She and Richard walked out of the church hand-in-hand, smiling and waving at other parishioners, approaching the waiting photographer. Next to the photographer stood the well-known David Cognosco, president of the Pacificum Society for the Defense of Marriage, the leader of the campaign to defeat Initiative 491 and protect same-sex marriage.

"Richard, congratulations; it's great to see you," said David, shaking Richard's hand. "Anne, congratulations; I'm so glad to see you." He shook her hand

too. "You two could really turn out to make the difference between success and failure in this all-important campaign."

"I sure hope we'll make a positive difference," Richard said, "and I know Anne does too." Anne smiled and said nothing.

"OK, let's see you over here in front of the church," David said. "Terry," he told the photographer, "let's have a choice of plenty of shots of this happily married church-going couple, and make sure it's obvious that they just came out of church. Anne, keep that straw hat just where you've got it; it's perfect. That dress with the big, bright-colored flowers is perfect, too; you're looking absolutely lovely. Now get close together and give us your greatest smiles."

Anne and Richard complied. The photographer took what seemed to be a great many pictures—of course no more suggestive of gay sex than the Anne books were suggestive of the marital intimacy presumably enjoyed by Anne and Gilbert after their marriage—before David told him to stop. "OK, now," said David, "we'll go over these ASAP and pick the very best. We want to get these pictures out in front of the undecided voters as soon as we can."

"Great," said Richard. "Let us know if you want us to speak or anything too. We'll go all out for the future of marriage in Pacificum." He had not consulted Anne before volunteering her to speak with him, but she hoped perhaps she would not really be called upon.

"That's exactly what I like to hear," David said. "I'll be in touch." He shook Richard's and Anne's hands again before departing with the photographer.

"Wow, congratulations," Jeannette said after David left and Anne told her what the photos were for. "That's quite an honor, isn't it?" Vickie, holding Jeannette's hand, looked up at Anne and said nothing.

"Much more to Richard than to me, I'm sure," said Anne. "He's the famous doctor; I'm just the nice-looking stay-at-home wife."

"That's not what people will think after they hear Anne speak, I bet," Richard said to Jeannette. "She's

got brains, and she knows how to use them. I can hardly wait to hear her speak out against Initiative 491.” Anne was thinking he would wait much longer than expected, but she made no reply.

“I’m afraid my husband Andrew would have spoken out in *favor* of it, if he were—uh—still here,” Jeannette admitted. “He was really shocked when he first found out they were going to have same-sex marriages in the Episcopal church here. The Anglicans didn’t have that where he came from. He came from one of the leading families in Jamaica; they always insisted that everything had to be done with strict propriety, and that meant no same-sex marriages.”

“Well, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*,” said Richard. “That’s Latin for ‘if you can’t say anything good about dead people, don’t say anything.’”

Jeannette’s jaw dropped, although she lifted it almost at once. Anne’s jaw did not drop, because she was clenching her teeth. Richard had shocked her again, this time with his tastelessness and thoughtlessness in suggesting that nothing good could be said about a dead man who would have supported Initiative 491 had he still been alive.

“I’m sure there are many good things to say about Andrew,” Anne said with a bit less gentleness than was her custom, “even if he wouldn’t have agreed with us about everything.”

“Oh, yes, he was a—a wonderful husband, even if he was pretty old-fashioned in some ways,” Jeannette said, seeming a bit afraid of Richard. Vickie looked up at Richard and frowned; then she looked back to her mother.

Richard took a deep breath, which obviously would have been a yawn if he had not wished to seem polite, and let it out silently. “Well,” he said, “why don’t you and Anne say some good things about him to each other, then, and I’ll relax for a bit. We’re going to be extra busy until the election, and I want to go at it refreshed.”

“All right, you get some nice rest while Jeannette and I go for a picnic lunch in the park,” Anne

promptly said. She didn't ask him if he was sure he didn't want to come along.

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“Jeannette, please let me apologize for Richard's thoughtless words to you,” Anne said almost as soon as they had sat down at a picnic table and begun their lunch. Vickie, pleasingly plump like Jeannette, seemed at first to give her whole attention to maintaining her plumpness by way of her lunch. Winston, modestly covered by a shawl, received his own lunch from Jeannette's ample breast.

“Richard,” Anne said, “is getting too carried away with this Initiative 491 business. It was completely unacceptable to suggest that nothing good could be said about your Andrew because he would have supported 491.”

“Oh! Well...” Jeannette groped for words. “I'm sure Richard meant well. I mean, I know it's very important to you and Richard to defeat 491.”

“Much more important to Richard than to me, I'm sure,” Anne said at once. As soon as the words were out, Anne herself was shocked at them. She feared they suggested a lamentable lack of devotion to her marriage to Richard—or even worse, far worse, a desire for unfaithfulness.

Anne pursed her lips in shame. Her heart had begun to beat too hard for Jeannette again. Beneath her skirt, that which modesty so primly concealed was again increasing in length and warmth, just as if she were fully bisexual indeed. Her mind, too, was becoming fully erect with a totally unacceptable but frighteningly attractive thought: if Initiative 491 were to pass, her marriage to Richard would have no further legal validity—and she would never be satisfied with a mere “homosexual service contract,” any more than the real Anne would have accepted a mere “heterosexual service contract” with Gilbert! Her marriage to Richard would end! She would then be free to marry Jeannette someday, if ever Jeannette would have her. Vickie and Winston could be Anne's children too, and Anne would be delighted to have them.

“Oh!” Jeannette exclaimed. “My goodness! I didn’t know, uh, you and Richard disagreed about that!”

“It isn’t easy to tell,” Anne acknowledged, “when Richard says everything and I don’t say anything.”

Jeannette stared in silence. “It sounds as if you and Richard have some things you need to work out in your marriage,” she said at last. “Do you think it might help to talk about them?”

Anne could not speak. Fear gripped her heart. That way, she knew full well, might lie unfaithfulness. Her heart and her hidden elongation would conspire to overthrow her. This, as everyone knew or *should* know, was how unfaithfulness often got started. A kind, considerate, sympathetic friend would listen to complaints about a spouse, under pretext of helpfulness. Too soon, too often, the friend would turn into more than a friend, an illicit lover and breaker of marriage vows. Still, Anne could not imagine Jeannette as a marriage-wrecker—and it would be so comforting to have someone to confide in!

She would do it, she decided. She *must* do it. She had suffered alone for too long, with little or no hope that her marriage might improve. If there was any chance that Jeannette could help, Anne must seize that chance—and modesty must work overtime at concealment.

“Yes, I do,” Anne said. “It may take a while. I hope you won’t mind.”

“I’ll be glad to listen for as long as you need to talk.” Jeannette’s eyes met Anne’s, and her heart spoke straight to Anne’s heart without another word. Anne gave thanks to God for such a friend, though not for the improper hardening of her elongation beneath her skirt. Vickie’s attention, too, no longer even seemed to be entirely on her lunch. Anne hoped it would not be harmful for Vickie to hear what she was about to say.

“I guess I’d better start from the beginning,” said Anne. “Of course I was always taught that people should decide for themselves how to live their lives, and not bow down to other people’s rules and notions

about whether they should be gay or straight, or do so-called men's jobs or women's jobs, and all that."

"Oh, of course," said Jeannette. "Um, did you grow up here on Queen's Bluff?"

Anne did not think the question a non-sequitur, as someone unaware of the reputation of Queen's Bluff might have done. "Yes," she said, "and St. Austin's is the only church I've ever belonged to. It was always known as a hotbed of liberalism, even when same-sex marriage was only a pipedream." Anne tried to smile, but she wasn't sure the smile wasn't coming out as a grimace.

"Anyway, I discovered *Anne of Green Gables* when I was 11, the same age as Anne at the beginning of the book. I was a skinny, homely, lonely, red-haired kid like her, and I loved her. If there had been a real girl like Anne, I would have loved her too—even if she'd given me as hard a time as Anne gave Gilbert in the first three books, until the end of the third."

Jeannette smiled. "He was so devoted to her," she said, "even when she was—um—pretty obnoxious to him."

"Well, yes," Anne acknowledged.

"But I guess you didn't find a real girl like Anne, did you?"

"No—except for myself, if you can count me. I secretly pretended I was Anne for years." She didn't think she needed to burden Jeannette with the whole truth: she had desperately escaped into the imaginary world of Anne for years, in hope of grasping some flimsy shreds of happiness while her parents were destroying their marriage. "In high school," she said, "I gradually started 'coming out' as Anne, letting my hair grow long and even wearing it in braids, although I didn't dare wear girls' clothes to school. Everyone thought I was gay anyway."

"Um—were you, uh, always gay?"

Anne glanced at Jeannette's shy but eager eyes and looked away. This way lay danger, she feared, but she must tell the truth. "Well, I used to think I was bisexual," Anne admitted. "I did feel attracted to

girls sometimes.” *And I still do—right now!* her racing heart, her hot face, and her well-concealed elongation cried out in unison, though Anne sternly suppressed their cry. “But I felt attracted to boys and men too. The more I came out as Anne, the more attracted to them I felt—especially when they were attracted to *me*, which the girls never were.”

“What if they’d *both* been attracted to you?” Jeannette’s words were so soft that Anne could hardly hear them. She was blushing as she spoke, and her eyes were fixed on her hands clasped in her lap.

Anne’s heart leapt like a hard-bucking horse. She dared not believe, she dared not even imagine, what Jeannette might mean by this—for, if she did dare, she would imagine it meant Jeannette herself was attracted to her.

“Well,” said Anne, “I certainly wouldn’t have married a woman and then cheated with a man, or married a man and then cheated with a woman!”

“Oh, certainly not! How dreadful!” Jeannette affirmed.

“Actually, I was embarrassed, and even offended, at the thought of being bisexual,” said Anne, “because I thought it *must* mean cheating, one way or the other, if I actually, um, expressed my bisexuality in both ways.”

“Well, yes, you’d certainly have to make a choice, not to do one or the other.”

“Yes, indeed! So I did make a choice. The more feminine I became, the more I naturally felt attracted to men—and I certainly knew men were more attracted to me than women were, when I was being as feminine as the real Anne. (I think of her as the *real* Anne, you know, even though she’s only a fictional character.) And so I dreamed, more and more, of being faithful to a gay husband for life, even though same-sex marriages weren’t recognized back then.”

“I can certainly understand that,” Jeannette said softly. “I’m sure I—well, I probably would have wanted a same-sex marriage too, if I’d been more attracted to women than to men.”

“Because you would have hated cheating, and promiscuity, and all that sort of thing as much as I do.” Anne had to insist out loud, to Jeannette and to herself, that she would never cheat with her—no matter how much her feelings of attraction might tend to overwhelm her, as indeed they were tending to do right now.

“Anyway, so I followed my dream until it came true,” Anne quickly went on. “As soon as I escaped from high school and from my parents’ house—or my *mom’s* house, they were divorced by then—I went all out to look like Anne, or what I imagined Anne would look like nowadays. I wore pretty ladies’ clothes and everything, and wore my hair in braids like now. I studied English in college, and then I got a job on the office staff of the General Hospital. Before long I attracted the attention of a rising young star among the doctors, *you know who*. He secretly revealed that he was gay, and he asked me for dates, and was always very sweet and considerate and patient.” Anne omitted to mention that Richard, though considerate and patient indeed, had then been rather too eager to reveal to her that which modesty conceals. Neither did she disclose to Jeannette that she had fully succumbed to Richard’s gay entreaties while yet unmarried to him—for there had been, as yet, no prospect of same-sex marriage for a virtuous young gay transvestite maiden to wait for.

“Well, I just thought that was obviously divine providence at work,” Anne said. “In the books, Anne would have called it predestination, but she was a Presbyterian and I’ve always been an Episcopalian. I lost my heart completely to Richard, and he said he was in love with me, and we pledged our mutual fidelity forever even though we couldn’t legally get married yet. Then, when we could, we were one of the first same-sex couples to be married in the State of Pacificum, and I think the very first at St. Austin’s.”

Anne looked at Jeannette, whose eyes were fixed on her. “Do you think it really was divine providence?” Jeannette softly asked.

It was a question that Anne had never successfully answered, no matter how hard she tried, ever since she first started to question whether it really was. She told Jeannette just that.



“When did you start to question it, and why?” Jeannette asked even more softly.

*Why do you ask?* Anne thought. *What does it matter? We're married now, and that's that!* She did not speak the words. She would try to answer Jeannette's question, and she could not honestly say she didn't know the answer.

“I think it was when I first suspected that Richard might have been lying to me about wanting to adopt children,” Anne said. “I've always loved children, as the real Anne did.” She gave a little laugh and glanced at Vickie, who was looking straight at her. “And I've always wanted to adopt children when it was possible, since I couldn't have any myself in a same-sex marriage. At first Richard led me to believe he wanted to adopt children too, as soon as we had enough money—but before too long we had plenty of money, and he still didn't want to adopt.”

“That must have been terribly sad for you,” said Jeannette.

“Yes.” Anne could say no more, lest she defame Richard.

Jeannette's tender heart, and her deep sympathy for Anne, showed plainly in her moist brown eyes. “Then,” she said in obvious pain, “you don't think there's any hope of working things out, and maybe changing his mind about that?”

Anne hesitated long, though she knew the answer full well. The dreadful answer had power to change the whole course of her future life, and the change might easily be for the worse. Still, she had tried for far too long to avoid staring the answer straight in its ugly face, and she had failed. “No,” she said at last.

Jeannette's affectionate heart must needs show itself in a tender touch upon Anne's slender shoulder. “Oh, Anne, I'm so sorry for you!” she said. “I wish I could help! I'll pray for you every day, and for Richard too!”

“Thank you, Jeannette,” Anne said. “You're so kind; you're such a good friend.” She dared not throw herself into Jeannette's arms and seek solace, for that might well be the start of a short, straight road to

infidelity. She could only cover her face with her hands, and moisten her hands with tears, and soon start sobbing until she felt her heart would break.

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“Mommy,” Vickie said when the picnic had ended and her little fatherless family had gone home, “is Mrs. Oglestone a boy or a girl?”

“Well,” Jeannette said slowly, “that’s a very good question.” She had a vague, uneasy feeling that Vickie already knew the answer and was asking for some other purpose than to find out the answer, but she would give the answer anyway. “Mrs. Oglestone is a man, but we call her *she* and *her* and *Mrs.* because she looks like a woman and she’s married to a man.”

“If she’s really a man, Daddy would say she can’t *really* be married to another man.”

“Yes, honey, I know Daddy would say that.”

“Well, was he right?”

Jeannette wished Anne were still here to help her give the best answer. Anne and Vickie had hit it off well right away, and Anne was at least as bright as Vickie, which Jeannette feared she herself was not. In Anne’s absence, Jeannette would simply have to grope for an unsatisfactory answer, and in the end admit she didn’t really know.

“Well, that’s another very good question,” she said. “It’s one that a lot of grown-ups don’t agree with each other about. You know how grown-ups sometimes go to vote in elections.”

“Yes. I don’t think it’s fair to have to be a grown-up. I want to vote too, and I can’t.”

Jeannette smiled. “Maybe it isn’t fair, Vickie. You could probably do at least as good a job of voting as some grown-ups who do vote, but that’s how it is. Anyway, grown-ups are going to vote pretty soon about whether or not a man can marry another man, and a woman can marry another woman, and it looks

like about half of them will vote one way and half of them will vote the other way, because so many grown-ups don't agree about it."

Vickie looked puzzled. "But I want to know which ones are *right*," she patiently explained.

"Well, sweetie, one reason why grown-ups have elections is that they don't agree about who's right and who's wrong, so they decide by letting the bigger number of people have their way—even if it isn't a *much* bigger number, like people think it won't be in this close election."

Incomprehension and outrage vied for the mastery of Vickie's facial expression, and the outcome was in serious doubt. The bright little girl was struggling with all her might to think the thing through, and she wasn't finding it easy. "You mean," she said at last, "if a hundred people vote that a man can marry a man, and a hundred other people vote that a man *can't* marry a man, and there's one person left, then the one person gets to say 'nyaah, nyaah, a man can marry a man' or 'nyaah, nyaah, a man *can't* marry a man'—and it doesn't matter if the one person is right or wrong?"

Jeannette tried to see if there was a fault in Vickie's logic, but she couldn't find one. "Yes, I'm afraid that's right," she said.

Outrage had gained the upper hand in Vickie's face. "No, that's *wrong!*" she insisted. "It does too matter! Which one do *you* think is right?"

Jeannette sighed and wished again for Anne's help. Vickie had surely inherited her father's strong will and his impatience with evasive answers. "Honey, I'm afraid I don't know," she said. "I guess I'm like the one person left. I've tried to see which one I think is right, but it wasn't easy."

Vickie frowned and was silent for a moment. Her next words seemed to be a complete change of subject, until Jeannette recalled that Vickie's entire inquiry had begun with Mrs. Oglestone. "Why was Mrs. Oglestone crying?" Vickie asked.

"Well, honey," Jeannette tried to explain, "this is a secret, so please don't tell anyone, but Mrs.

Oglestone was crying because she loves children, and her husband, Dr. Oglestone, doesn't ever want to adopt any children. And of course they couldn't have any children if they didn't adopt them, because two men who are married to each other can't have children without adopting them; only a man and a woman can." Jeannette hoped Vickie wouldn't demand details about why that was so until she was at least a bit older. Fortunately she didn't; it would have been a distraction from her real train of thought, which was rushing toward its destination at full speed.

"If a man couldn't really marry another man, like Daddy said," Vickie inquired, "and Mrs. Oglestone is really a man and Dr. Oglestone's a man too, then Mrs. Oglestone wouldn't really be married to Dr. Oglestone, would she?"

"Um—no, that's true, she wouldn't."

"So then she could marry a *woman*, couldn't she?"

Jeannette stared at her daughter, but quickly forced her eyes away. Now at last she saw, with a sudden shock, the reason why Vickie was asking these questions about Mrs. Oglestone—the reason that Vickie herself, no doubt, had seen from the first. Still, Jeannette had to answer the question truthfully. "Yes, if—well—yes, then she could."

Vickie moved in for the *coup de grâce*. "Since Daddy's in Heaven now," she asked, "then could Mrs. Oglestone marry *you* on earth?"

Jeannette's lips kept silence, though her heart did not, for as long as she dared. "Well," she then said, "since Daddy's in Heaven, it would be possible for me to marry somebody else on earth. That's because people aren't married to each other any more when they're in Heaven, or when one of them is in Heaven and the other one is still on earth. But—" She was about to say she couldn't really marry Mrs. Oglestone, but she stopped. Vickie had worked out the logic for her, step by step. If a man could no longer marry another man, then Jeannette could marry Anne, who was really a man. She might even think it a very good idea, in some ways at least, and her hard-beating heart might find it eminently satisfactory.

She looked at Vickie. Her daughter's eyes were closed and her hands were clasped, as if she were praying to God to let Mommy marry Mrs. Oglestone.

"Vickie, honey, come here and give me a big hug," Jeannette said when Vickie's prayer was done. Vickie eagerly complied.

"Would you be glad if I could marry Mrs. Oglestone?" she asked, knowing the answer already.

"Yes!" Vickie exclaimed. "I love Mrs. Oglestone!"

"I love her too," Jeannette acknowledged. "I'm very glad she's my friend, *our* friend. I don't know if I'll ever marry her or not; that's all up to God. But I can promise you this much: I'll vote that a man can't marry a man, as Daddy would want me to."

"Oh, thank you, Mommy!" Vickie gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"Now please get a book and read it quietly for a while. Mommy has to think about some things by herself." Vickie pulled out *Arthur Ropestraw's Busiest Universe Ever*, a vividly illustrated storybook that showed animals in spaceships meeting strange creatures in outer space, and began to read it quietly as requested.

Jeannette went to sit by the kitchen window, much smaller and less impressive than Anne's big bay window, and with an inferior view. True, she could see all the way to University Hill, but then she only felt the aching hollow in her heart more acutely when she thought of Andrew, who had gone to work at the University so many times. Closer to home, she could see the magnificent State Capitol at the summit of the Capitoline Hill—but then she had to think of Anne, who would be married to Richard or not, depending on the whims of voters who would change the law or not, at their pleasure. Jeannette had to wonder if her own vote was being affected by pleasure rather than principle, by love of Anne and of Vickie rather than love of justice—but she could see no justice in forcing Anne to remain in a loveless, childless marriage, which her beloved Andrew would have said was no marriage at all.

Far to the right in her field of vision, Jeannette could barely see Maple Mound, where she grew up. There was not much point in seeing it now, anyway, because she could not return home there. Her brothers and sisters, all older than she, were long gone; her parents had sold their home and moved to a private retirement community in California, where same-sex and opposite-sex old couples lived in perfect, childless equality, without regard to what California law might or might not prescribe about marriage.

Jeannette's eyes drew back from the great, repellent valley of depression known simply as "the District," closer to her than the University, stretching between the Capitoline Hill on her left and the Mounds on her right. The District, she had learned from an early age, was a place where no decent person would wish to live. Drug addicts, prostitutes, thieves, and low-life criminals of every kind were crowded into the District, along with decent people who could not afford to live anywhere else. The District could not be seen from Anne's house on the seaward side of Queen's Bluff, the more expensive side, but it could be seen all too well from Jeannette's house. If you simply went straight downhill from there, you would end up in the District.

Jeannette begged her Heavenly Father to keep her and her little family safe from sliding downhill into the District. So long as Andrew was alive, Jeannette had stayed with the children; they had not been wealthy by any means, but they had made ends meet. Now she had only Andrew's life insurance and his modest University pension, not Andrew himself. She would have to work. She did not know what she would do with the children. She did not know what she would do with her own heart, still bleeding from the dreadful death of the man she had loved more than anyone else but God.

Andrew was in Heaven, and no one on earth but Anne had promised to help Jeannette in every possible way. Jeannette wondered if Anne was a saint, a gay transvestite saint, or if she just hadn't thought of how great the burden of helping Jeannette might be. Jeannette would try hard not to be too much of a burden, she resolved, and yet she must depend on Anne; there was no way around it now.

At least she would try hard to see how she could help Anne too, as Anne had been sure she could. Right or wrong, she would cast her vote to help Anne be free from a marriage that had died, if it ever was a marriage. Beyond that, she would open her heart and her home to Anne, to help her find what she could never find with Richard.

Someday, perhaps, Jeannette even began to think...if her heart ever healed enough for her to think about marrying again...*oh, dear!* Waves of vivid imaginings began to surge through her soul, imaginings of what it might be like to be married to Anne, to give herself fully and share her whole life with Anne, as she had done with Andrew, and even to have Anne's children.

The waves rose high and higher, but in the end they all broke upon the same sharp, hard, unmoving rock: Anne was gay. She was more attracted to men than to women; she had been faithful to a man for years; she would be a dear, kind friend to Jeannette, but never anything more. Jeannette swallowed hard, and tried to force herself to face reality.

### Chapter 3

"God damn it, Anne! I thought I could count on you!" Richard's eyes were spurting fire again. "We were *both* going to speak out against 491! Now you're backing out! Why?"

*Because I love Jeannette, and I don't want to be married to you any more!* Anne could not deny to herself that this was her heart's deepest, truest answer, though it must never escape her lips in Richard's hearing. She knew Jeannette must loathe unfaithfulness as much as she herself did—but, if there was no marriage, there would be no unfaithfulness in leaving Richard for Jeannette.

"You didn't ask me whether I wanted to speak against 491," Anne correctly pointed out. "You just assumed I did, when I hadn't decided for myself." This was true, though not the whole truth. Anne had now decided for herself that she was *not* going to speak against 491 at any time, and indeed she was going to vote in favor of it, in hope that her marriage

to Richard would simply go away. Anne had detested divorce even before her parents got one, and she would never initiate one herself, no matter what—but she would be more than willing to accept an annulment from the people of Pacificum, should they choose to grant her one.

Richard sighed or snorted, Anne could not tell which. “That’s because I thought you were already committed to equality—and to our *marriage*,” he said. “Well, if you haven’t decided whether to speak, here’s something that will help you decide. The first great debate on 491 is coming up really soon. If you don’t want to speak, you can watch. After you’ve seen Bob Stimson IV speaking in favor of 491, I bet you’ll be eager enough to speak against it!”

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Hand-in-hand, Anne and Richard made their way through the crowd in front of the “Big Black Block”—the Magnum Supreme Building, the tallest building in downtown Pacific Heights. Here, in the huge Magnum Supreme Auditorium, the great debate was to take place. On one side of the walkway, a line of police officers held back the crowd of opponents of Initiative 491, many of them holding signs showing pictures of Anne and Richard above the slogan “DON’T BREAK UP THIS HAPPY MARRIAGE!” A great roar of applause arose from this side when Anne and Richard in person waved at the crowd.

“*Burn in hell, faggots!*” a male voice screamed from the other side. Anne reluctantly turned to look. She was glad to see another line of police officers holding back the supporters of 491. Their signs did not show any happily married couples. Rather, they bore slogans such as “1 MAN + 1 WOMAN = 0 GAYS” and “What God has NOT joined together, let 1 MAN and 1 WOMAN put asunder!” A few of them even proclaimed, “I get my blow jobs from my WIFE, not from a QUEER!”

Anne and Richard entered the building, arose to the auditorium level on a long escalator, and walked toward the front of the auditorium. There a long line of tables awaited them on an elevated platform, beyond which was a big banner bearing the words “THE

GREAT INITIATIVE 491 DEBATES.” After going backstage and visiting their respective restrooms, Anne and Richard emerged and ascended to the platform. Richard took his seat next to the moderator’s empty seat in the middle of the platform; Anne sat in the next chair over, a little distance away.

On the other side of the moderator’s seat was a short man with short light brown hair, and with cold blue eyes behind small eyeglasses. Anne figured he must be Bob Stimson IV. Beyond him was a plump woman with dark, carefully styled hair and an angry frown on her face. This, Anne inferred, must be Bob Stimson’s wife. She wondered whether the Stimsons’ marriage was any happier than her own, and she doubted it.

A very tall, lean, handsome man ascended the platform and sat in the moderator’s seat. After a minute or two, a woman standing among the cameras and microphones facing the platform gave him a gesture with her arms, and he began to speak.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen; ladies and ladies; gentlemen and gentlemen,” the tall man said. “Welcome to the first in the series of the Great Initiative 491 Debates. I’m Dan Stanniman, editor-in-chief of the *Pacific Heights Informer*, and I’ll be the moderator of this evening’s debate. On my right, here to speak against Initiative 491, is the well-known local physician Dr. Richard Oglestone, who writes a weekly column for the *Informer* on medical and social issues; next to him is his gay wife of seven years, Anne Oglestone. On my left, to speak in favor of Initiative 491, is Dr. Bob Stimson IV, professor of cultural pathology at Bob Stimson Christian University, who also writes a weekly column for the *Informer*, on issues of religion and society. Next to Dr. Stimson is his, er, non-gay wife of 15 years, Sierra Stimson. We’ll allow Dr. Stimson to speak first, since he has the burden of proving to you, if he can, that our established laws in favor of marriage equality should be scrapped.”

Dr. Stimson arose. Many people applauded loudly; others booed, hissed, and even shouted “Fuck you!” Dan Stanniman stood up and banged a gong; then he grabbed the microphone. “This is going to be a debate, not a riot!” he shouted. “If you don’t want to sit

down, be quiet, and listen, then you can leave *now*, with or without the assistance of the police!”

The crowd gradually quieted down, and Dr. Stimson spoke. “Those of you who know me,” he said, “know that I’m usually a polite, mild-mannered university professor—but there comes a time when politeness must be cast aside in favor of forthright presentation of the truth! You have heard what the opponents of Initiative 491 have to say: they say ‘*fuck you!*’ They *mean* it! The acceptance of same-sex marriage is a continuous cry of ‘*fuck you!*’ to every Christian married couple on earth! We are now met on a great cultural battlefield in a matter of cosmic significance, between two irreconcilable sets of principles: on the one hand, *Biblical* principles; on the other hand, *rectal* principles!”

The crowd was in an uproar. On Dr. Stimson’s side, many people stood up and applauded loudly. On Richard’s side, many stood up and booed, or cried “Shut up! Fuck you!” Long lines of police officers stood ready for action, but did nothing. Dan Stanniman did nothing either, except to contribute to the noise by banging the gong.

“Yes, *rectal principles*, I say,” Dr. Stimson shouted when he could be heard, “for the very essence of so-called same-sex marriage is to degrade the lawful, divinely ordained marriage act of one man and one woman to the same abysmal level as a most grave abomination in the sight of the Lord, an act of rectal copulation between two men! This is no marriage in reality, as more and more people, especially young people fleeing from the slavery of sin, are coming to realize! The heroic State of Oologonqua has recently become, I can confidently say, the first of many states to issue decrees of automatic annulment, enforceable in every state under the Full Faith and Credit Clause of the United States Constitution, upon request to any participant in a so-called same-sex marriage who resides in that fair State for one week or more! In the coming election, with the help of many people who have seen the evils of same-sex marriage at first hand, and above all with the divine assistance of Almighty God, we will join Oologonqua in freeing the captives of same-sex marriage from their sinful slavery!”

The applauding, shouting, and gonging broke out again. Anne barely listened to it, or to Dr. Stimson's subsequent raving. Her mind was fixed on Oologonqua. She did not really want to go to that mediocre midwestern state, 2000 miles away, much less to live there—but might it not be worth it for a week, to get rid of her unwanted marriage to Richard if 491 did not pass?

After the raving was done, Richard rose and spoke. His speech was in the greatest contrast imaginable to Dr. Stimson's fervid denunciation of "rectal principles." He was not wearing a white coat now, as he did in the "Moob Doc" commercial, but still he was the great, wise doctor who could cure society of the diseases of irrational prejudice and inequality, as surely as he cured men with "moobs" of the supposed disease of gynecomastia. His actual words were not as striking and memorable as Dr. Stimson's worst words, but his maximum medical authority filled the auditorium like a noble gas. On hearing him, Anne began to be afraid he was thinking of running for governor or some such thing. If he did, it would presumably leave him with little or no time to excise men's "moobs," but other than that she could think of nothing good about it.

The debate went on and on; Richard seemed to be getting by far the better of it, with a great deal of help from Dr. Stimson in portraying the supporters of 491 (most notably himself) as bigoted fanatics. By the end, Anne still did not know for sure who was in the right and who was in the wrong. She knew only that she was still going to vote for 491, for love of Jeanette, and she was going to think seriously about going to Oologonqua if 491 did not pass.

"Well, now you've seen him in action," Richard said as he and Anne walked out hand in hand, with cameras focused on them all around. "Is he appalling enough for you?"

"Yes, at least," said Anne. "He could hardly have been more so if someone had paid him to be appalling."

If there was any hint of an ironic suggestion in Anne's words—to the effect that people did pay Dr. Stimson to be appalling, and indeed made him famous for being so—it was lost on Richard. "Well," he

said, “are you ready now to speak out against him, and against 491?”

“I’ll see if I can think of something to say,” Anne promised, neatly avoiding a direct answer to Richard’s question.

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“Anne,” Richard said softly when they were at home in their master bedroom, “I really need to apologize to you. I’m afraid I’ve been letting our love life slide, getting too wrapped up in other things. I’d like to try to make it up to you.”

Anne was in her nightie on the bed. Richard sat down next to her and put his arm around her. She could not speak. Her heart was no longer fully with him, as in the early days of their marriage—but she was still his wife, with all the duties of a wife, and it had indeed been far too long since they united. If Richard wanted her, she would do her best for him—even if she had to think of Jeannette to get excited for him!

“We’ll do it with dignity,” he murmured, “for your sake.” This was a code expression between them, meaning a style of nuptial intercourse most nearly like what Anne imagined (of course with absolutely no help from the books) that the real Anne must have done with her husband Gilbert. At the very least, it was not nearly so unlike it as Richard’s favorite style of carnal connection, which Anne designated in Roman numerals as “LXIX.” More times than she could remember, Anne’s small mouth had stretched wide to try to engulf Richard’s massive nectarine-like bulb, while his big mouth had easily swallowed up her slender elongation. Tonight, at least, he was being considerate enough to refrain from doing *that*. Once upon a time, Anne blushed to think, she had eagerly submitted to “LXIX” with Richard, but she did not think that time would ever come again.

“Thank you, Richard,” she said, beginning to go through the motions with him. She did think of Jeannette, but she hoped not inordinately so. She was still capable of becoming at least excited enough with

Richard to pretend, for a little while, that she did not wish to leave him for a woman.

They kissed, and Anne caressed him, dutifully playing the loving, eager wife. Soon she lay down for him and he mounted her—though, of course not in accordance with “rectal principles,” which Anne and Richard had always eschewed. Anne lay flat on her back, with her knees raised but her feet firmly on the bed, and slipped her elongation into hiding between her legs; then Richard slipped one leg between them and pressed his massive member tightly between her elongation and one of her thighs. After that, Anne had only to clasp him with her arms and legs, while making little ladylike pumping movements with her hips. Richard, moaning and thrusting hard, did all the work of bringing them both to climax. At last, detecting that Richard was wild with orgasmic frenzy, Anne gasped and gushed herself.

That was all. They did not speak. Their spurted sperm united on the bed between them and quickly grew cold. Anne could feel her once-ardent love for Richard growing even colder—cold as death.

## Chapter 4

“Mrs. Oglestone! Yay!” Vickie cried out, rushing into Anne’s arms.

“Vickie! Please be quiet! Don’t wake Winston!” Jeannette softly commanded. Winston closed his eyes tight and frowned, firmly rejecting any suggestion that it might be time to wake up.

“Anne, please sit down,” said Jeannette. “I’m so glad you came. We have so much to talk about.”

“Yes, we have,” Anne affirmed. “Maybe even more than you think.”

Jeannette opened her eyes wide and fixed them on Anne. Anne’s own eyes were gazing straight back at her. Jeannette’s heart leaped at the thought, the unthinkable thought, of what this might mean and yet could not, must not, mean.

“Um—Anne, what do you mean?” Jeannette asked.

Anne took a deep breath and clasped her thin hands. “Well,” she said, “last night I went to a debate about Proposition 491, between Richard and Dr. Bob Stimson IV.”

“Oh! Uh—how did it go?”

“Well, I think many people thought Richard got the better of it, and Dr. Stimson spoke in a rather offensive manner. But he said one thing that meant a great deal to me.”

Anne’s hands were clasped even tighter, and she was blushing. Jeannette did not want to be too pushy about finding out what Anne meant, and yet she could hardly bear to wait. It could not be—she dared not hope that it was—but neither did she dare to fail to find out, if it really was something that might make Anne free from Richard.

“Yes?” Jeannette whispered at last. “Um—what did he say?”

“It was about a way to get the—the beneficial effects of Proposition 491, even if it doesn’t pass.”

Jeannette gasped. It was indeed, it was what she had not dared to hope! But how could this be?

She felt herself blushing as hotly as Anne. “Oh!” she exclaimed. “But—what? How? When?”

“Dr. Stimson said,” Anne explained, “that, if you live in the State of Oologonqua for one week or more, you can get a decree of automatic annulment of a same-sex marriage, which has to be recognized in every state under the Full Faith and Credit Clause of the United States Constitution.”

*Oh, Anne! Yes! Yes!* Jeannette’s heart cried out, though her lips were silent. Only through her shining eyes did she dare let Anne see her joy, and not for long even so.

“Oh, my goodness!” said Jeannette, forcing herself to look down and away. “So—uh—if you decided your

marriage to Richard needed to be annulled, you could get it done in Oologonqua.”

“I *have* decided,” Anne declared.

Jeannette breathed deeply in silence. It was far too soon to think of marrying again, of course. But still, when it was *not* too soon any more, how delightful it would be to think of marrying Anne, and even to do much more than think of it—if only Anne were not gay!

“Mommy,” Vickie asked, “what does ‘annulment of a same-sex marriage’ mean?”

“Well,” Jeannette ventured to say, “it means that a man isn’t really married to a man, or a woman isn’t really married to a woman.”

“Just like Daddy said!” Vickie was beaming with delight.

“Well, yes,” Jeannette acknowledged. “But, Anne, are you sure it would work? What if they refused to recognize the annulment here? Shouldn’t you talk to an attorney about it?”

“I will,” Anne assured her, “if it comes to that. But first, let’s wait and see if Proposition 491 passes.”

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As it turned out, Anne did not wait and see if 491 passed. A small, inconspicuous notice on St. Austin’s bulletin board drew her attention and held it. The notice said that Professor David Roundstone of the Pacific Heights University Law School, a St. Austin’s parishioner and a leading scholar on family law and constitutional law, was going to give a talk in the church basement, entitled “Is Proposition 491 Rational? One Traditional Episcopalian’s View.”

Here was her chance, Anne thought, to talk with a lawyer about Oologonqua, and to inquire whether her decision to vote for 491 might be supported by anything more than desire for Jeannette and rising revulsion for Richard. Out of Richard’s sight and hearing, she quietly drew Jeannette’s attention to the

notice. Jeannette was interested at once. By the evening of the professor's talk she had arranged for a babysitter for Vickie and Winston, and she was ready promptly when Anne came to pick her up.

The talk was sparsely attended, as Anne had expected, for few people at St. Austin's wished to hear anything that might turn out to be in favor of 491. Anne and Jeannette sat near the front of the open area in the basement, filled with at least 10 times as many folding chairs as people. Professor Roundstone, a white-bearded man with sharp-looking but jovial blue eyes, looked about his small audience and began to speak.

"I must thank the good people here at St. Austin's," he said, "for giving me an opportunity to say something that so few of them wish to hear." A murmur of soft laughter passed through the audience.

"According to them, this is supposed to be just one traditional Episcopalian's view," he went on, "but of course, in reality, it's far more than that. I dare say what I'm going to tell you has been the view of a great many people throughout history, including some highly rational and intelligent ones—although most of them had never heard of same-sex marriage, much less of Proposition 491."

The professor soon got to the point. "Most people understand, at least vaguely, that the special status traditionally given to marriage between a man and a woman has something to do with having babies—that is, with the protection of procreation. Some people don't approve of procreation; some think it should go on without benefit of matrimony; some think adoption is just as good, without regard to the origin of the children to be adopted; but many people can understand that at least it's rational to protect procreation by way of marriage between one man and one woman." He looked about the room, and seemed to be paying special attention to Anne. She wondered if it was because she had grimaced when he said "some think adoption is just as good."

"What many people find harder to understand," he went on, "is why the special recognition of marriage should be limited to *opposite-sex* couples when there are not stricter limits as well, more narrowly focused upon actual procreation. If the point is to protect pro-

creation as such, why don't we have fertility tests or age limits for marriage? Indeed, why not grant marriage licenses only to those who have already proven their fertility by impregnation?" Various noises, only some of which were laughs, rippled through the audience.

"The 'anti-491' argument on this point, so to speak," the professor said, "is that the protection of procreation isn't the *only* purpose of legally recognized marriage, and so therefore you've got to recognize same-sex marriages on equal terms, otherwise you're irrationally favoring inequality for some motive other than the protection of procreation. The opposing argument, which I think is sound, arises from the principle that the protection of procreation is the *primary and essential* purpose, though not the *only* purpose, for the legal recognition of marriage. You can acknowledge secondary purposes, which may be quite similar to the purposes for which some people want same-sex marriage, so long as you don't willfully negate the primary and essential purpose." Again the professor seemed to be paying special attention to Anne. Now she wondered whether it was because he recognized her as half of the "happily married couple" on the anti-491 posters.

"This being so," Professor Roundstone went on, "it's rational to draw the line of legal recognition to include all relationships of a kind that can *sometimes* result in procreation, and to exclude all those of a kind that *never* can. You needn't, and shouldn't, invade a couple's privacy or deprive them of the benefits of marriage merely because they can't, or even won't, have children; you can and should draw the line as liberally as possible, but only so long as the relationship is of the same kind as one in which procreation can take place."

Anne felt a thrill of wonder. Was this really true? Was there a good reason for invalidating same-sex marriages, totally unconnected with fanatical raving about "Biblical principles" and "rectal principles"? And, if there was, then wouldn't Anne be justified in invalidating her unhappy same-sex marriage by any means necessary, even if the majority of the people of Pacificum didn't agree with her?

"In other words, there comes a point," the professor interrupted her thoughts, "when you have to

draw the line between a marriage and, say, a basketball team—or a gay sex team.” Anne softly laughed, and her eyes opened wide. “Frankly, even at best, homosexual activity doesn’t have any more to do with the primary and essential purpose of legally recognized marriage, as traditionally understood throughout the world and throughout the centuries, than basketball does. Of course, neither does activity between a man and a woman that’s functionally *equivalent* to homosexual activity—but you can’t presume, or invade their privacy to find out, that that’s all the sexual activity they ever engage in. You can readily infer that it is, in the case of two men or two women. And that’s one reason why the line should logically be drawn, and traditionally has been drawn, to include opposite-sex couples but to exclude same-sex couples.”

Anne felt the professor deserved applause for saying so, and she applauded. Jeannette did too, and so did several people behind them. The professor said more, but Anne felt that he had already gotten to the heart of his message. Now she was impatient to speak with him about Oologonqua.

Her chance came before too long. After the talk, Anne stepped right up and introduced herself and Jeannette. Professor Roundstone introduced his wife Irene, a white-haired, red-faced, eminently grandmotherly-looking woman.

“So you’re the famous Anne Oglestone, are you?” the professor then said, raising his eyebrows. “You’re the one on those posters that say ‘don’t break up this happy marriage!’”

“Well, yes,” Anne admitted, “but frankly, it’s not nearly as happy as the posters make it seem. In fact—well, I’m voting for 491, and I’m also looking into getting the marriage annulled if 491 doesn’t pass.”

The professor raised his eyebrows higher and stared at her, a faint smile playing around his lips. “How do you plan to do *that*?” he asked.

“Well, I’ve heard that automatic annulments of same-sex marriages are granted in Oologonqua if you live there for a week or more.”

The professor frowned. "That's their plan, all right," he said, "but I wouldn't be surprised if states like Pacificum set out to annul the annulments. You see, these same-sex annulments are not like quickie divorces in Nevada or some such place, which have to be given full faith and credit in other states. Oologonqua *only* annuls *same-sex* marriages, not other-sex marriages, if you live there for a week. The argument would be that this is a denial of equal protection, and invalidates the decree of nullity. Of course, that probably wouldn't matter to you if you stayed in Oologonqua, where the courts most likely wouldn't buy that argument—but if you returned to Pacificum, you couldn't count on having the Oologonqua decree recognized. In fact, if you then entered into an other-sex marriage"—he glanced at Jeannette—"you just might find yourself charged with bigamy."

Anne felt her eyes flashing with anger. "I see," she said. "Well, then, I certainly hope 491 will pass."

"So do I," said the professor, while his wife nodded vigorous agreement. "But, even if it doesn't, Oologonqua isn't necessarily your only hope, or your best hope. Why not just get a divorce right here in Pacificum?"

"I hate divorce," Anne said at once. "I've seen what it does to people."

"Oh, dear!" Mrs. Roundstone spoke up. "People very close to you?"

Anne pursed her lips and nodded in the affirmative. "Very close indeed," she had to admit. "My own parents."

"Well, I've seen what divorce can do to people too," said the professor. "It can be a terrible thing, and it should only be a last resort, but on occasion it can actually be beneficial—especially for someone who's trapped in an unhappy same-sex marriage, which I do think should be treated as no marriage at all."

"Oh, so do I!" Anne fervently agreed. "I want it annulled! But—well, somehow divorce seems different, and nastier. It seems like deliberately breaking my own promise, instead of being released from the promise because it was never valid to begin with. And

then there's all the—ugly, hateful fighting that goes with divorce." She didn't want to cry in front of the Roundstones, but she couldn't help shedding a tear or two at the dreadful memories.

The professor gave a sympathetic nod, and Mrs. Roundstone gave a more fervent one. They put their arms around each other. "Well, I see you know what you're talking about," the professor said. "Let's hope it doesn't come to that—and it won't, if 491 passes." He gave Anne his business card in case she wanted to contact him; then he and Mrs. Roundstone shook hands with Anne and Jeannette, and said good-night.

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"I never imagined," Anne said in the cool evening air outside the church after the talk, "I might think of breaking a promise of marriage, 'until death do us part'.

"No," Jeannette said simply. She glanced up at Anne and forced herself to look away.

"But if it wasn't really a marriage at all," Anne went on, "and I was just mistaken in thinking it was—well, then everything would be different."

"Yes." Jeannette could say no more.

"If that were true," Anne mused aloud, "then someday—well—Jeannette, just tell me this is nonsense, if it is—but I might even hope to have a *real* marriage someday, with someone I've been—coming to love more deeply every day!"

Jeannette forced herself not to gasp out loud. Instead she softly took in a long, deep breath, and tried to let it out as silently as possible. "It's not nonsense, Anne," she murmured when she could breathe again. "It's—very far from nonsense."

She touched Anne's shoulder tenderly, reassuringly. She did not expect Anne to enfold her in her slender arms, but Anne did just that. "Oh, Jeannette, I hope I'm not doing wrong, or deceiving myself," Anne softly said, now holding her close and gazing

steadfastly into her eyes. “Am I just imagining things, just lying to myself, desperately trying to convince myself my so-called marriage to Richard isn’t real—because of my feelings for you?”

Jeannette shook her head in silence. “I hope not,” she said. “Anyway, it won’t be real any more if 491 passes, even if it was real before.”

“No.” For a moment Anne seemed deep in thought. “I wonder,” she then said, “if I might do something to help 491 pass, beyond voting for it.”

“Oh, what?” Jeannette’s heart started to gallop at the thought. She hoped Anne wasn’t going to do something foolish or dangerous.

“Well, you know, the *Informer* is always looking for big, sensational stories to sell newspapers. I wonder if Dan Stanniman might be interested in a story about how I’m voting for 491 because my marriage to Richard isn’t nearly as happy as the posters make it seem.”

“Oh! But—wouldn’t Richard get mad?”

“I’m sure he would.” Anne looked away from Jeannette, up toward where the stars would have appeared if the clouds had allowed them. “The course of my future life,” she announced, “will not be determined by what Richard will or won’t get mad about.”

“Oh, Anne, please be careful!” Jeannette begged. She did not quite know how it had happened, but now she was embracing Anne as tightly as Anne was embracing her.

“I will,” Anne assured Jeannette, who tried hard to be convinced.

“And as for the course of your future life,” Jeannette dared to say, “well—I’ll pray for you every day to be free from Richard, one way or another, whatever is the right way for it to happen.” Her heart was overflowing with love for Anne—so much, she feared, that she hardly cared about Anne’s promise to be faithful to Richard until death. The next moment she did not care about it at all, for the flood-tide was bursting all bounds and carrying her away.

“Oh, Anne!” she murmured, pressing her breasts as close to Anne’s heart as she could. “You know I’m not ready yet to get married again, and I know you’ll be patient with me, until I *am* ready—but I’m ready right now for *this!*”

She looked up at Anne and raised her lips to Anne’s. Anne responded at once. Their lips met, and then their tongues delicately touched. Anne did not pull away when Jeannette let her tongue slip deeper into Anne’s mouth. She only pressed Jeannette even closer to her heart, and her tongue responded in kind.

Jeannette was thrilled straight through to know that Anne was not too gay to kiss her long and lovingly, to caress her most tenderly, to show her love at least as fully as could decently be done in public, if not more so. Jeannette would have been most embarrassed if she had thought anyone was observing the kiss, for she was losing almost all restraint in the use of her tongue, and in receiving Anne’s tongue deep into her mouth. More embarrassing still, Anne’s hands had slipped down to Jeannette’s big buttocks, and Jeannette’s hands to Anne’s slender hips. Anne even dared to touch Jeannette’s breast with her hand, and Jeannette firmly kept Anne’s hand there with her own.

*I must stop!* Jeannette almost frantically demanded of herself. She really must, lest she be fully carried away right here in the open air. The telltale signs of approaching desire for climax were already starting to come upon her, just as they had done so often when Andrew was alive: the heat and moisture and swelling between her thighs, the hardness of her big nipples, the urgent desire to grip Anne’s hips and pump her own. Barely in time she ripped her mouth away from Anne’s.

“Oh, Anne, that’s enough!” she gasped. “That’s *more* than enough! We’d better not do that again for quite a while!”

“I guess not,” Anne agreed, though she was obviously reluctant to stop.

“I’m glad we did, though,” Jeannette assured her. “You’ve—um—you’ve let me know you’re not too gay

to—to marry a woman after all, when the right time comes, and you're free to get married.”

Anne took a long, deep breath and let it out loudly. “Oh, dear!” she acknowledged, with a little laugh. “No, I see I'm not too gay at all—to say the least!”

## Chapter 5

“Well, never let it be said that the *Informer* shied away from controversy,” Dan Stanniman proclaimed from his editorial throne behind his immense and imposing desk. Anne had gained an audience with him with surprising ease; her fame as half of the “happy marriage” on the posters had stood her in good stead.

Anne smiled her prettiest smile. “I don't think it ever has been said, or ever will be,” she agreed. “The Pope would publicly renounce the Catholic faith before the *Informer* would shy away from controversy.”

“I like to think that's true,” said Stanniman. “Well, this is big. This is really big, and I think we can work it for all it's worth, on *both* sides of the question. I don't get a chance to write many articles any more, but I'll write this one myself to get this big ball rolling fast. Just give me some details, and we'll need to get some photos of you; the smiling ones from the posters obviously wouldn't work for this.”

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“Anne,” Richard said with obviously intense self-restraint, holding the *Informer* at arm's length next morning at breakfast, “would you mind telling me what—what the *fuck* is going on?”

He dropped the paper on the breakfast table. Anne, still wearing a pretty, modest flowered nightie, picked up the paper and tried to remain as cool and calm as possible, though she knew Richard was outraged; he hardly ever said “*fuck*” except when he was. The front-page headline, neither cool nor calm, screamed at the reader: “*DO break up this UNhappy marriage, says poster gay.*” Underneath the headline

were pictures reminiscent of the “happy marriage” poster, but greatly altered. Richard was still smiling, but the poster seemed to be ripped in half; on the other side, Anne was frowning and looking directly away from Richard. In the poster caption, the letters “NT” had been erased from “DON’T”; in their place, the letters “un” had been written in by hand, circled, and connected with an insertion symbol to the beginning of the word “HAPPY,” so the caption now read “DO BREAK UP THIS unHAPPY MARRIAGE.”

“Well, I haven’t read the article yet,” Anne said, trying to force her voice not to shake more than slightly. “Let me read it.”

She began to read it. “The latest twist in the big, hot fight over same-sex marriage in Pacificum,” it began, “may seem too bizarre to believe, and yet it’s all too true. Gay advocate Dr. Richard Oglestone and his gay spouse Anne have become familiar to everyone as the poster couple for the campaign to defeat Initiative 491 and keep Pacificum’s laws on same-sex marriage intact. Now Anne Oglestone—a gay male in reality, despite ‘her’ feminine looks and name—has declared that ‘she’ will vote in favor of 491, in hope of invalidating ‘her’ own same-sex marriage and many more.”

Richard did not wait patiently for Anne to finish the article. “It’s all true, isn’t it?” he demanded to know.

“I don’t know,” Anne said. “I haven’t finished the article.”

She continued to read. It was all true, though not all portrayed in the same light as Anne would have wished to see it. She read about how she had started to doubt the validity of her same-sex marriage after failing to reach agreement with Richard about adopting children, and she had thought Professor Roundstone’s ideas made sense. She had tried hard to keep Jeannette out of it, even when Stanniman had asked her point-blank about her plans for the future if 491 passed. She had also tried to make it clear that she did not accept Bob Stimson’s raving about “Biblical principles” versus “rectal principles,” but that part did not get into the article.

“Yes,” Anne had to admit at last, “it’s all true, as far as it goes.”

"*Why?*" Richard's eyes were bulging with outrage as he leaned heavily on the table and stared at Anne. "God damn it, Anne, you could have just decided to vote for 491 and shut up about it, if you insisted, and no one would ever have known why. But *this—shit!* This is *vicious!* This is a *betrayal!* This is *open war!*"

Anne was trembling too much to speak. She had known Richard would respond like this, and yet she had not known how violently her emotions would grip her and shake her when he did. Worst of all, she felt sickening fear at the thought that Richard might be right. Why hadn't she just shut up? Why had she provoked Richard to even fiercer anger than he had already shown? Was she really moved, not by principle and desire to do the right thing, but by vicious hatred of Richard, and by urgent desire for full unfaithfulness with Jeannette?

"That little floozy with the dead anti-gay husband is behind this, isn't she?" Richard inquired, stabbing far too close to home. "I thought she was just a fool and a nobody, but maybe I was wrong. I bet she's been feeding you anti-gay shit about how marriage is nothing if you don't act like a breeding animal, and you've been swallowing it whole, because she's got her claws into you. Isn't that true?"

Anne clenched her fists and tried to gain control of herself. She knew Richard's anger was getting the best of him, and it might be well to say as little as possible until he cooled down. She had become quite expert at helping Richard to cool down over the years, whenever he had become too angry about this or that. Perhaps she could do it again, and she certainly *should* do it again—but she could not stay silent and let him speak about Jeannette like that, no matter what.

"Jeannette isn't a floozy," she insisted. She felt tears beginning to emerge from her eyes. "I can't believe you would insult her like that, no matter how angry you are."

"No matter how naive *you* are," Richard shot back—"and you've always been mighty naive, Anne—I can't believe you don't see what's going on here. I bet that babe is so hot she makes you feel bisexual, and you're itching to screw her as soon as you dump me. That's all there really is to your new

so-called *principles* against same-sex marriage, isn't that right?"

Anne swallowed hard. Tears were streaming down her face. She wished she could just turn away and say no more, but Richard would take it as an admission. There was only one way forward now: to tell the truth.

"No, it's not," Anne said. "But I love Jeannette, and I want to marry her and adopt her children, and give her more children of our own!" She tried to keep from sobbing, but she failed.

"Well, this really sucks," Richard said, not waiting for her to stop sobbing. "I never imagined *you*, of all people, would end up treating your husband like trash because of some idiotic infatuation with a female. But if you think this is going to get 491 passed, you're dead wrong. This is just one more example of how personal motives make people totally blind when it comes to justice and equality. You asked for it, Anne. That floozy is getting in the news, and there's going to be a big scandal when the public finds out your *real* motives for flipping on 491!"

Anne felt shocked and afraid for Jeannette, but she tried to look on the bright side: at least no one would find out about their passionate kiss in the church parking lot. She would remain true to their friendship, even truer than before, but they would be perfectly circumspect, not even touching each other or entering any secluded locations, until after the election.

"And let me tell you one more little thing," Richard went on, losing almost all control of his outrage. "I'm not seeing a lot of *gratitude* from you for everything I've given you, but we'll see how you feel when you have to do without it. Let me tell you, if 491 does pass, you're going to be out of here on your pretty little butt the morning after, and then you can see how you like living on that floozy's earnings down in the District!"

Anne clenched her teeth, but her sobbing did not stop—far from it. This was the final breaking point. Despite his noteworthy concern for *justice* and *equality*, Richard had uttered the loathsome, horribly false suggestion that Jeannette would prostitute herself

for low-life scum, and that Anne would share fully in her degradation. True, Richard might try to take back his words when he cooled off—but it would be too late. Blinded by tears and barely breathing through her sobs, Anne arose and fled from the room, waving her arms wildly to keep from crashing into anything.

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Richard had gone to the office without even saying good-bye, much less giving Anne a kiss—not that she would have wanted one now. Her eyes were dry at last, her breathing normal, but she did not think she would ever kiss Richard again.

She finished her breakfast alone, made a second cup of tea, and sipped it slowly, not from one of Richard's cups with the gold roses, but from a plain old white one that Anne had kept since she was single. On her tablet she was re-reading Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. She wished in vain that she had seen through Richard long ago, as Fanny Price in the book saw through Henry Crawford and dared to refuse to marry him, though she dared not say *why* she refused. True, Richard had never given any hint of interest in actual unfaithfulness, as Crawford had—but there must have been *something* to tip Anne off that she shouldn't marry Richard, though she racked her brains in vain to think what it was.

Before she finished her tea, the phone rang—not Anne's cell phone, but the landline listed in the phone book and on the Moob Doc website as Dr. Oglestone's residence phone. Anne dutifully answered it, though she had no idea why anyone would be calling for Richard at home during his normal office hours.

"Hello, is this Anne Oglestone?" said the voice on the other end. It sounded disturbingly familiar. Anne was afraid it was the voice of Bob Stimson IV.

"May I ask who's calling?" said Anne.

"This is Dr. Bob Stimson IV!" said the bright, cheery voice. "I'm calling for Anne Oglestone."

“This is Anne Oglestone,” Anne reluctantly admitted.

“Great!” said Dr. Stimson. “I saw the wonderful news about you in the paper this morning, and I’m calling to follow up on it.”

“Um—how do you wish to follow up on it?”

“Well, I’d like to invite you to my office to discuss it, and we can go over the whole plan here.”

Anne was speechless for a moment. She was not at all sure she wished to fit into any “whole plan” devised by Dr. Stimson. “Well,” she said, “actually, I think it would be best if you explained the whole plan to me on the phone.”

“Sure, if you prefer. The basic idea is that we’ve got to get you in front of the undecided voters as much as possible, to help them see that same-sex marriage leads to disaster. You’ve given it a fair try, and it didn’t work. That’s true, right?”

“Well—yes, that’s true.”

“That’s exactly what they need to hear: it didn’t work, and it *can’t* work, because it’s contrary to Biblical principles.”

Anne frowned. “Well, there are many different interpretations of the Bible,” she said, “and the reason why my same-sex marriage didn’t work is *not* because it was contrary to your interpretation of the Bible.” This actually rendered Dr. Stimson speechless for a second, and Anne filled the gap at once. “I must say, too,” she said, “I found it quite offensive and inaccurate to hear you speaking about ‘rectal principles’ as the basis of same-sex marriage. In fairness to my husband, I must say he has never had any interest in ‘rectal principles,’ and neither have I. The same is true, I believe, of many other same-sex couples.”

“Excuse me, but I don’t think you quite understand the depth of the problem,” said Dr. Stimson. “The undecided voters don’t need to hear any quibbles about different interpretations of the Bible, and they *certainly* don’t need to hear anything that would minimize the filth, degradation, and disease involved in same-sex sin. What they need is the strongest pos-

sible motivation to do the right thing, to vote for Proposition 491, and to get more undecided voters to vote for it too. They need to hear you speaking out *loud and clear* about this decisive battle between absolute, Biblical good and Satanic evil. They need to see you *totally transformed* from a weak, effeminate homosexual in women's clothing to a strong, totally manly Christian man. And they need to see and hear this happening *soon*, because there isn't that much time before the election."

Again Anne was speechless, this time for more than a moment. She was actually thinking about whether she should comply, or try to comply, with Stimson's demands. Might it all be worth it, if only 491 would pass and she would be free to marry Jeanette?

She tried to envision herself doing the deed. She was already a Christian, though not Stimson's kind of Christian; she was not so weak as he seemed to imagine, and she might even succeed in adopting a manly appearance for a while, though not with skill or delight. Only when she tried to imagine herself preaching about support for 491 as "absolute, Biblical good," and about opposition to 491 as "Satanic evil," did she utterly fail.

The thing could not be done, because she did not believe it, and she would not even try to pretend she did believe it. She recognized that a rational person, not devoted to Satan's service, might favor same-sex marriage, as she herself had done for so long. She only wished the opponents of 491, such as Richard, would grant the same recognition to those who favored 491. Their blithe assumption, that ignorance, prejudice, and irrationality were the only possible motives for opposing same-sex marriage, now seemed to her an exact mirror image of Stimson's view that "rectal principles" and "Satanic evil" were the only possible motives for favoring it. Having only now escaped from the one extreme, she would not proceed to plunge headlong into the other.

"Dr. Stimson," Anne said, weighing her words, "I really don't think I would be able to fit into your plan. I think the question of same-sex marriage should be one for rational discussion on the basis of mutual respect, with no demonization of opponents on either side. I could no more speak as you do, about 'rectal

principles' and 'Satanic evil,' than I could portray *you* as a purveyor of Satanic evil merely because you oppose same-sex marriage."

"You would throw this election to the forces of evil," Stimson charged, "rather than abandon your incredibly naive and unworkable faith in 'rational discussion on the basis of mutual respect'! When, in the history of this country, has an election ever been won through rational discussion on the basis of mutual respect? *Never*—because elections are won by appealing to undecided, uncommitted, largely unthinking voters, and those voters *yawn and don't vote* when they hear rational discussion on the basis of mutual respect! This is a fight to the death between good and evil, not a high-school debating club, and there is no excuse for sitting back and letting evil triumph!"

Anne stared at the phone in horror, as if it had become a conduit for the voice of the Evil One. "Where have I heard this before?" she wondered out loud. "*You're* not really a purveyor of Satanic evil, are you? Why are you trying to get me to say what I don't believe is true? Didn't Satan tempt Our Lord to think there was no excuse for letting evil triumph, when He could get all the power in the world from the Father of Lies?"

That was it, of course, Anne thought: Satan had offered Our Lord all the kingdoms of this world, and Satan was no fool. Crowns and wealth and fame, he knew, meant nothing to Our Lord, but the opportunity to use all the power in this world for the triumph of good and the defeat of evil, merely by disregarding the truth—that was a temptation fully worthy of the Prince of Peace!

It was more than worthy of Anne Oglestone. She wished she dared to accept it, to do Stimson's bidding, to do all she could for the passage of 491, including lying, and then to be free from Richard at once. Nothing held her back but Our Lord's example, and His still, small voice whispering within her: "The truth shall make you free."

"The truth," she echoed Him, "is what will make people free. Not lies about 'rectal principles' and 'Satanic evil,' any more than lies about 'ignorance' and 'prejudice.'"

"I can see," Stimson shot back, "that you have a long way to go in understanding the *truth!* The Lord Jesus Himself teaches that good fruit comes only from a good tree, and bad fruit from a bad tree. The good fruit of success for 491 can come only from the good tree of truth; the bad fruit of defeat for 491 would come only from the bad tree of falsehood. To say that success for 491 could come from falsehood, or defeat for 491 could come from truth, would be to call the Lord Himself a liar."

"*What?* So whatever will get people to vote for 491 is true, just because it will get them to vote for 491?"

"No, it will get them to vote for 491 *because* it is true, not the other way around. Only the *opponents* of 491 define truth in terms of whatever will advance their agenda. But if you are still confused about such a basic point as that, I can see that it will be a long time before you are ready to stand up forthrightly for the truth, and I don't have a long time to waste. May the Lord have mercy on you for failing to do His will in this most critical time. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

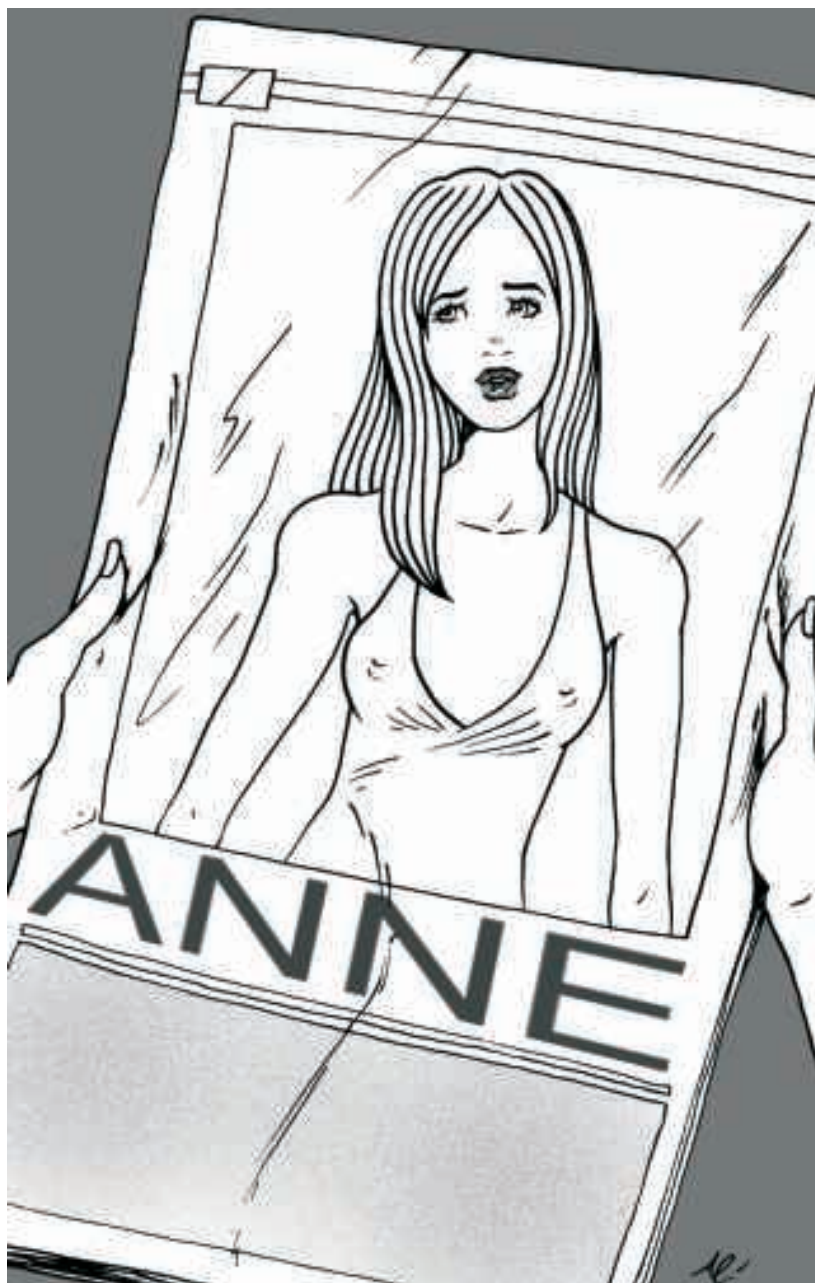
That was the end. Stimson had hung up. Anne interrupted her reading of *Mansfield Park* to look up the relevant passage in the Bible: "Then the devil left him; and behold, angels came and ministered to him."

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"Mommy, why is our picture in the paper?" Vickie demanded to know.

"*What?*" Jeannette felt a sudden shock of fear. She had come to Farquhar's, the local supermarket, to buy only needed groceries, not a newspaper. She quickly changed her mind when she saw what Vickie saw. Sure enough, Jeannette, Vickie, and Winston were shown on the front page of the *Informer*.

"Well, let's find out," Jeannette said, grabbing the paper and putting it in the shopping cart with the groceries. When she paid for the items, she tried to fold the paper over so the picture wasn't visible, but it didn't work. The clerk unfolded it, saw the picture,



and tried not to seem too obvious about recognizing that it showed Jeannette and her children.

“We’ll read the paper when we get home,” Jeannette insisted to Vickie, who was trying to grab it and read it at once. They walked the five and a half blocks downhill from Queen’s Boulevard to their little house, largely in silence.

“Now first we’ll put the groceries away, and then we’ll read the paper,” Jeannette said when they were home. The groceries were quickly put away. Jeannette sat down at the dining table and spread out the paper on it, with Vickie close beside her; Winston remained asleep in the stroller.

“*Pro-491 spouse wants woman, not justice, says gay doc,*” read the front-page headline. Next to the picture of Jeannette and her children, there was a picture of Anne’s husband Richard. The article below quoted Richard extensively, to the effect that Anne had turned out to be bisexual and her motives for favoring Initiative 491 were purely personal, having to do with her desire for infidelity—yes, *infidelity*—with Jeannette!

“Anne promised me seven years ago, at our wedding in church,” Richard was quoted as saying, “that she would be faithful to me until death do us part. Now she wants to renege on that promise—not because of any newfound principles against same-sex marriage, but because she has succumbed to the lure of a red-hot female, and she wants to cheat while pretending she isn’t cheating! This is no reasoned decision in favor of 491; this is a cheap, deceptive ploy to ruin our marriage, and many other marriages too, rather than admit the truth and do the right thing!”

Jeannette blushed deeply, the more so when she looked carefully at the picture. It looked like the one from the most recent church directory, taken when Andrew was still alive, but with Andrew excised—and that was not all. The picture had been altered to make her look more like a “red-hot female” than she really did. Her lips had been made to look even fuller and hotter than they did in reality. Worse yet, her nipples plainly appeared to be protruding beneath a flimsy bra, although she knew her real bras were sturdy and her nipples had been quite invisible in the real picture. The nipples in the picture did not even

look like hers; they were too small and not the right shape, although they looked quite convincing enough to deceive anyone who had never seen her bare breasts.

Jeannette felt disappointed with Anne, for this would never have happened if Anne had not gone to the *Informer* first. Still, she could not blame Anne, who had done her best to keep Jeannette out of it. No, but she could and did blame Richard, as well as the scandal-seeking staff of the *Informer!*

“Mommy, why is our picture in the paper?” Vickie asked again.

“Well, honey, it’s hard to explain,” said Jeannette. “Yesterday, Mrs. Oglestone told me, *her* picture was in the paper, along with an article about how she decided to vote for Proposition 491, which says a man can’t marry a man and a woman can’t marry a woman. Now today, it looks like they wanted an article about Dr. Oglestone, who wants people to vote *against* 491, so a man *can* marry a man and a woman can marry a woman.”

“OK, there’s Dr. Oglestone,” Vickie observed, “but why are *we* in there?”

“Well,” Jeannette reluctantly explained, “it’s because Dr. Oglestone said the reason why Mrs. Oglestone wants to vote for 491 is so she can marry *me*.” This was an oversimplification, of course, but Jeannette thought it wise to say no more.

“Oh, good! What’s wrong with that?”

“Well, nothing.” Jeannette fervently hoped, at least, that this was true. “But Dr. Oglestone says there *is* something wrong with it. You see—well, you remember I told you that, when Daddy and I got married, we promised to stay married to each other until death do us part.”

“Yes.” Vickie blinked her eyes and looked down. “And you did.”

“Yes, we did. Well, Mrs. Oglestone made the same promise to Dr. Oglestone, and now he says Mrs. Oglestone should keep the promise, but he says she

wants to break the promise because she's in love with me."

Vickie frowned, and her eyes flashed with anger. "No," she said, seeming deep in thought. "No, she should *not* keep that bad promise."

She closed her eyes and clenched her fists. After a few moments of silence, she got up and rushed to a shelf where her children's books were kept. Shoving irrelevant ones aside, she pulled out a picture book of Bible stories, found the page she wanted, and brought it to Jeannette.

"Look," she said. Jeannette looked. The page displayed a picture, not very gory as such things go, but unmistakably showing the severed head of St. John the Baptist on a platter. A pretty teen-age girl was presenting it to an older woman, evidently her mother, whose face showed evil satisfaction. In the corner of the picture a man, no doubt King Herod, was looking miserable and staring straight away from the head on the platter.

"There's King Herod," Vickie instructed Jeannette, "and he promised that girl he would give her anything she wanted. Her mom hated John the Baptist and said she should ask for his head on a platter, so the girl did, and Herod gave it to her. It was a bad promise, and he shouldn't have kept it. Right?"

"Well, that's right," Jeannette acknowledged.

"Just like when Mrs. Oglestone promised to stay married to Dr. Oglestone, it was a bad promise, and she shouldn't have to keep it. Right?"

"Well—I certainly *hope* that's right." Jeannette admired Vickie's directness and forcefulness, even though she lacked them herself. She had to smile at the thought of Vickie as a little girl knight in shining armor, riding out to do battle with the giant Dr. Oglestone for the hand of the fair Anne.

"Do you think it *is* right?" Vickie demanded to know.

Jeannette sighed. "Yes," she said. "Yes, I do—even if it wasn't as bad a promise as the one King Herod

made. I mean, Anne—Mrs. Oglestone—didn't promise to have anyone *killed*."

"But she promised never to have any children of her own, so long as Dr. Oglestone was alive, because two men can't. That was *bad!*"

Jeannette tried to think the thing through, though she couldn't hope to get rapid results as Vickie did. Refusing to have children wasn't like killing people, to be sure, except in the end result: *nobody home*. Or was there more to it than that? Was rejecting the gift of life more like destroying the gift of life than it might seem, because they both showed contempt, in different ways, for the Creator of life?

These were deep waters of thought, and Jeannette was not confident that she could cross them. She waded back to the shallows, trying to stay close to what she could know for sure. "Yes, honey, it was a bad promise, and she shouldn't have to keep it," Jeannette affirmed. "We'll pray to God that she won't have to keep it. OK?"

"Yes!" Vickie eagerly agreed. "And then you can marry Mrs. Oglestone and have her babies!"

## Chapter 6

The fateful evening had come. The pro-491 and anti-491 forces had done their best or worst to sway the faceless, if not mindless, mass of undecided voters. Richard was at the Defense of Marriage headquarters, watching the election returns come in. Anne sat at home in front of her computer, watching the returns on the *Informer's* website, waiting for the changing numbers to add up to victory or defeat. There were candidates on the ballot, running for sheriff, city council seats, school board positions, and more, but Anne paid little attention to them. What mattered was 491, and the outcome looked to be in doubt far into the night.

The polls were closed, and Anne knew she would accomplish nothing by watching the numbers adding up, but still she could hardly rip her eyes away from the numbers. They had been close from the beginning of the evening, and now they were closer still.

The percentage in favor of 491 rose slightly above 50 on occasion, but more often hovered around 48 or 49.

At last Anne looked away from the numbers, and started to look up information about Oologonqua. Unlike Pacificum, it did not seem to be among the most beautiful, unusual, and fascinating states in the Union, to say the least. She yawned; she pushed the keyboard out of the way; she rested her head on her arms.

When she awoke, she saw the news, which was no news at all: everything was still the same. "491 DEFEATED," screamed the *Informer's* headline, and a smaller headline stated the obvious: "Same-sex marriage remains the law in Pacificum." She had to look carefully in smaller text for the final percentages, but she found them: 51.2 percent against 491, and 48.8 percent in favor.

Anne sighed and shed a tear, but she could not regard the outcome as the worst of tragedies, as no doubt Bob Stimson did. It would make it harder for Anne to break free from Richard, and someday to marry Jeannette—but Anne and Jeannette would prevail, even if they had to live in Oologonqua for the rest of their lives. And, even if they could somehow stay in Pacificum, their marriage would not really be infected by "rectal principles" merely because same-sex couples could get married too.

Anne arose and quickly prepared for bed. It would not do to be awake and encounter Richard when he returned, even though Richard's gloating would no doubt be less offensive than Stimson's would have been if 491 had passed. Anne's marriage to Richard had died, without regard to 491. Before confronting Richard, she must visit Jeannette in the morning, and they must try to envision their future life together.

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"Oh, Anne, come in!" Jeannette said when Anne arrived. "I'm so sad that 491 didn't pass, but we did the best we could!"

“Yes, we did,” Anne affirmed. “Well, on the bright side, Richard hasn’t dumped me out on my ‘pretty little butt,’ as he said he would if 491 did pass.”

“That *is* a bright side of it,” Jeannette said. “You do have a very nice house, and a lot of nice things.”

“I’ll give them all up for you, my love,” said Anne. “Just tell me when you’re ready to move to Oologonqua.”

Jeannette laughed, louder and longer than if she had not been speechless. Anne was in love with her, she would give up everything for her, and someday she would surely marry her! There could be no doubt about it any more. Her heart erupted in a silent, but most fervent, prayer of thanksgiving.

“I’m afraid it will take a while to get ready,” she said. “I don’t even know anyone in Oologonqua.”

“Neither do I. Well, I’m sure it will be no worse than Columbus not knowing anyone in America, which he didn’t even know *was* America—or Abraham not knowing anyone in the Promised Land.”

Jeannette laughed again, though she was no longer speechless. “Anne, you really do know how to look on the bright side of things, don’t you?”

“Well, it’s much more pleasant than looking on the dim, dark, or ugly side, so I strongly prefer it when I have a choice.” Anne’s soft blue eyes sparkled, and her pretty, girlish face broke into a smile so sweet that Jeannette might almost have imagined she was the “real” Anne come to life, saying something exactly like what the real Anne would have said.

“Mommy, where’s Oologonqua?” Vickie asked. Winston, oblivious to Oologonqua but not to Mommy, looked on from his high chair.

“Oologonqua,” said Jeannette, “is about 2000 miles away from here.” She pointed it out on the aging wall map of the United States, next to the equally old and larger-scale map of Jamaica.

“Are we going to move there?”

“Well, maybe sometime.”

“Why?”

“Well, honey, it’s because in Oologonqua they say a man can’t marry a man and a woman can’t marry a woman, just like Daddy said. If Mrs. Oglestone went to live in Oologonqua for a week, they’d give her a legal document saying she wasn’t married to Dr. Oglestone any more, and then—uh—if she wanted to marry a woman, she could.”

“Can’t she get un-married to Dr. Oglestone in Oologonqua, and then come back here to live?”

“Well, yes, she could—but there might be a problem. Here in Pacificum, they still say a man *can* marry a man, and a woman can marry a woman, and they don’t like it when Oologonqua says they can’t. So, if Mrs. Oglestone came back here, they might say she was still married to Dr. Oglestone after all. And then, if she married a woman, she could get sent to prison for bigamy.”

Vickie frowned. She had some idea what “prison” meant, but she asked, “What’s bigamy?”

“It’s being married to two people at once.”

“*What?* I remember when you read to me about King Solomon. He was married to 700 wives at once, and *he* didn’t have to go to prison.”

“Well, no, but he would have if he’d lived in Pacificum.” Jeannette smiled at the thought of King Solomon being arrested and charged with 699 counts of bigamy in the Seaview County Superior Court.

Vickie looked at Anne. “But if Mrs. Oglestone lived in Oologonqua, and she married you, she *wouldn’t* have to go to prison.”

“That’s right.”

Vickie grinned. “Let’s move to Oologonqua!” she cried, grabbing hold of Anne’s arm, as if to pull her to Oologonqua where she could marry Mommy without going to prison.

“Well, it might not be so easy to do that,” Jeannette explained. “But, if that’s what it takes, then that’s what we’ll do.”

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“Anne?” Richard called out when he arrived home from the office.

“Yes, I’m here,” said Anne. She did not get up to greet him, much less to kiss him.

Richard entered Anne’s study. “Well, I’m glad *that’s* over,” he announced. “That campaign has cured me of any interest I might have had in politics.”

Anne had to smile, at least a little. “That’s good,” she said. “I was beginning to be afraid you were going to run for governor or something.”

“Not a chance, after this. It’s too time-consuming, too exhausting, and it tends to make you lose your perspective on things.” He looked at Anne as if he wished to apologize for something, or maybe for many things. “You get too caught up in it, and—maybe say and do things you shouldn’t have said and done.”

“Yes, I can understand that.” She waited for Richard to say more.

He sat down near her, though not touching her. “Say, Anne,” he said, “I’m sorry if there’s anything I shouldn’t have said or done during the campaign. Maybe we can wash all that out and make a fresh start, now that it’s over.”

“I’ll be glad if we can wash it all out,” she said, “but I’m not so sure about making a fresh start. I think some things have come up that we’re not going to resolve. I know you don’t want children, and I do. And there’s really no way to compromise about that; you either have them or you don’t.” She thought again of King Solomon, but now of his wisdom, not of his 700 wives.

Richard was silent for a long time. “Well, we don’t need to pretend to be the perfect poster couple any

more," he said at last, "which didn't work, anyway. Why don't you move to Oologonqua, then? That would be the easiest way out. I'll help you out with the expenses, of course." He frowned and looked away. "All I ask," he said, "is that you *stay* there. I'm not sure those Oologonqua annulments wouldn't be regarded as bogus in Pacificum, and you don't want to take any risk of ever being charged with bigamy."

"No, I certainly don't." She bit her lip and fought to avoid shedding any tears over what seemed the plain meaning of Richard's words: *I never want to see you again. I want you to move far away, 2000 miles from the only place you've ever called home, and never come back—or else I will see you put in prison if you do!*

There was no reason why Richard should want to see her again, she tried to tell herself. From his point of view, she was guilty of little less than full infidelity. Indeed, he must think this was far worse than any fleeting gay infidelity, for this was a total repudiation of their marriage vows forever.

"I'll certainly look into it," Anne assured him. "I think it might be best for all concerned. But really, I hardly know anything yet about Oologonqua. I hope you'll be patient and put up with me for a little while longer."

"That's only fair," said Richard. "And of course I'll be on the lookout for your replacement, since it seems you've already found *my* replacement."

Anne swallowed hard. Of course that was how Richard would see it, she thought, and she supposed he had every right—at least from his point of view. "Yes," she told him softly. "Of course. That's only fair."

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The more Anne learned about Oologonqua, the more she wished to defer her departure from Pacificum. Even the scenery, such as it was, would be hard to get used to: flat, bland, and nearly uniform, with never a mountain or even a steep high hill in sight, much less the ocean. More difficult still, she

thought, would be the people. Even Meridian City, the capital and largest city, appeared to be dominated by mediocrity and conventionality, with the craze for spectator sports producing near-religious enthusiasm even more there than elsewhere in America. There seemed to be little tolerance for cross-dressing in public, and much presumption that a male in female's clothes must be a sex-crazed "shemale." But still, Anne fancied, there was something more, something that had been with her all her life, that made her loathe to leave Pacific Heights for far-off parts unknown.

Long ago, as a lonely teen-ager with no car, Anne had ridden the buses and light-rail trains to almost every accessible corner of Greater Pacific Heights, and even as far as Quoheemish; then she had walked through quiet neighborhoods for hours, in search of her house of dreams. Now she already knew where her house of dreams was—it was Jeannette's house—but still she took to riding and walking again, in hope of bringing many memories of home with her into exile in Oologonqua. Every now and then Richard asked her how the plans for the move were coming along; she hoped it wasn't exactly lying to say she was still accumulating information. She was, really, only much of the information wasn't about Oologonqua.

Besides, winter was coming on. Surely she couldn't be expected to move to the Midwest in winter, when there would be snow and ice in abundance, and she would long for the milder winters of Pacific Heights while shivering far from home. She assured Richard that she would be ready to move by spring, though she feared the assurance was false and she would never really be ready to move at all.

## Chapter 7

Spring arrived in full bloom, in Pacificum and presumably in Oologonqua. Snow and ice no longer provided an excuse for failing to move. The fateful day drew near.

Anne's plans were made. She would take the train to Meridian City, and there reside at the Heartland Residence Inn, a fine old lodging-place in an historic

neighborhood. She would begin to look for work as soon as she could, wearing men's clothes and keeping her hair in a comparatively inconspicuous ponytail, so as to accommodate the sensibilities of the natives so far as reasonably possible. After a week, she would take her proof of residence, her Pacificum marriage certificate, and other necessary documents to the city-county government headquarters; there she would file a petition for automatic annulment, pay the requisite fee, and obtain a declaration of nullity. Then, at the right time, Jeannette would follow with her children; they would marry (Anne hoped) at St. Bede's, an historic Episcopal church favored by more or less traditional Anglicans; and they would begin their new life together as Oologonquans. Anne sighed at the thought, but it would all be worth it for the bright hope of marrying Jeannette.

First, though—almost as soon as the week of waiting was over—Richard would marry Ruby Gillis. That wasn't her real name, of course; presumably her real name was some boring male cognomen, since she was a "shemale," and a hot one too. She called herself Beatrice Wrigley, but Anne had thought of her as Ruby Gillis ever since their first meeting, months ago now. Beatrice perfectly fit the description of Ruby in *Anne of Green Gables*, with long blond hair, big bright blue eyes, a brilliant complexion, and even a "plump showy figure"—obviously enhanced by hormones, as her low necklines made all too obvious. She had Ruby's constant extreme fascination with "beaux," too, and she was dead set on marrying the handsome, wealthy, highly desirable Richard.

Richard made it no secret that Ruby—Beatrice, rather—was to be Anne's replacement, as soon as legally possible. Anne had no basis for complaining, even when Richard ejected Anne from the bedroom in order to have sex with Beatrice rather than with no one. He probably figured this behavior would be so repellent to Anne that she would be eager to move to Oologonqua, and he was right—so far as anything could ever make her eager to move there, but nothing really could. If only she could marry Jeannette right here at home, Anne was sure, she would hardly ever think of Oologonqua again.



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"I'll keep in touch every day," Anne assured Jeannette, waiting at the station in the cool early morning air for Anne to board the train. "And I'll send for you as soon as I've got a job."

"Oh, I hope that will be soon!" Anne's heart beat hard at the knowledge of why Jeannette hoped so. Of course it would be improper for Anne to ask Jeannette to marry her until her purported marriage with Richard was annulled—but, if she asked soon after that, Jeannette had given her every reason to hope for a favorable answer.

"Are you going to marry Mommy soon, Mrs. Oglestone?" Vickie asked impatiently.

Anne smiled. "We'll see," she said. "But, if I do, you won't be able to call me Mrs. Oglestone any more, because I'll change my last name to Hearthward."

Vickie stared. "But I can't call you Mrs. *Hearthward*," she protested, "because that's *Mommy*."

"Why don't you just call me Anne, as Mommy does?" Anne asked. "You're eight years old now; that's pretty grown up. Would you like to call me Anne?"

Vickie's eyes opened wide and she stood as tall as she could, trying to appear grown up. "Yes!" she exclaimed. "I will—*Anne!*" She gave Anne a big hug before relinquishing her to Jeannette, who gave her an equally big and longer-lasting one. Then Anne, feeling homesick already though she was still in Pacific Heights, boarded the train for the long journey to parts almost unknown.

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Memories of the beginning of the long train trip were already beginning to fade by the time Anne emerged at the end, on shaky legs, at Meridian City. She vaguely remembered the ascent into the mountains from Pacific Heights, the darkness of an ex-

tremely long tunnel, and the descent into the Eastern Uplands. There, she recalled, fruitful-looking orchards gradually gave way to level fields of wheat and corn, and to green pastures occupied by horses, cattle, and hogs. The scenery there was much like what she expected to see in Oologonqua, though she had not yet left Pacificum.

After this there were more and higher mountains, with some views that Anne recalled as breathtaking, though few of their details came to mind. Then came the long, wearying descent into the Great Plains, and into darkness as night fell. Richard had generously paid for Anne to occupy a sleeping car, and she took full advantage of it.

Next day, after many more hours of prairie tedium, the train entered Oologonqua at last. Anne sat up and tried to take notice of her new home state. Sure enough, there were wheat, corn, horses, cattle, hogs, and many more indicia of agriculture; no mountains, no high hills, no bodies of water larger than rivers and small lakes. Anne sighed and longed for home, but tried to set her mind to the task at hand.

Evening was well advanced by the time the train pulled into Meridian City and Anne emerged—looking not far different from any other slender, flat-chested, ponytailed person in men's clothes, except that her face was prettier and her lips more womanly than those of the average man. Anne gathered her luggage and decided to take a cab, not a bus, to save time. Soon the cab deposited her at the Heartland Residence Inn, where she was efficiently installed as a resident.

She called Jeannette, assured her that she had arrived safely, outlined her plans for the morrow, and gave her love to Vickie and Winston as well as Jeannette. Then she prepared for bed, and tested the residence inn's wireless Internet connection on her tablet. It worked well; she quickly checked her e-mail, and wondered if she should send a message to anyone.

Bob Stimson IV was not among those she would have been inclined to think of, but she reluctantly thought of him anyway. After all, she considered, she most likely would never have thought of starting a new life in Oologonqua with Jeannette and her family

if not for Stimson. She owed him a debt of gratitude, and the least she could do would be to thank him by e-mail.

Fortunately, despite Stimson's notoriety, the website of Bob Stimson Christian University listed his e-mail address along with those of the other faculty members. She quickly composed a message to him.

"Dear Dr. Stimson," she wrote, "I really must thank you for mentioning that the State of Oologonqua offers automatic annulments of same-sex marriages after one week of residence. I am now in Oologonqua, and I will be seeking an annulment of my same-sex marriage to Dr. Richard Oglestone at the end of one week. If not for you, I might never have heard of this possibility." She wondered if that was enough, but she figured she really ought to say a little more. "Despite our differences of opinion on certain matters," she wrote, "I do pray that God will bless your efforts to do the right thing in helping people to be free from unwanted same-sex marriages, without the terribly painful hostility of divorce. Sincerely, Anne Oglestone."

She looked the message over and sent it. Then, tired and yet eager to move on beyond the unhappy past, she prepared for bed and lay down for a good night's sleep.

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The week of waiting passed pleasantly enough, and Anne even began to think Oologonqua might not be such a bad place to live after all—at least for native Oologonquans. She didn't have a job yet, but Richard had provided her with plenty of money to live on for a while. His generosity wasn't selfless, of course, since Anne's annulment in Oologonqua was a prerequisite to Richard's marriage to Beatrice in Pacificum; his worries that the Oologonqua decree might be deemed bogus had now vanished, and he was proceeding full speed ahead. A bit of money to help Anne get started in her new home was a small price to pay for him to install Anne's replacement rapidly in his old home.

When the week was over, Anne rode the bus into downtown Meridian City—not a clean, quiet trolley-bus like the ones that traversed Queen’s Boulevard back home, but a noisy, smelly old diesel bus. There she found the city-county government headquarters and, within it, the Meridian City-County Bureau of Vital Statistics. In the office, she approached a window behind which stood a young lady—a real one, no doubt, not a “shemale,” but one who reminded her of Ruby Gillis almost as much as Beatrice did.

“Hi, can I help you?” said the young lady.

“Yes, I’m here for an automatic annulment,” said Anne. She presented her petition, along with the certificate of the same-sex marriage to be annulled.

The young lady stared blankly at the documents for a moment; then she turned to the tall, slightly older lady at the next window. “Hey, Tina,” she said, “I’ve never done one of these. Can you show me how?”

The older lady, not very reminiscent of anyone in the Anne books, came to look. “Oh, yeah, this is same-sex,” she said, glancing at Anne. “It’s pretty simple. You just create a file, verify the documentation and the ID, collect the fee, and enter all the information into the system; then you print out three copies of the certificate and send them over for Judge Arkwright to rubber-stamp. When you get them back, you seal them, send one to the other party, give one to the applicant, and put the third one in the file for the case.” This she proceeded to do, showing the younger lady the steps, up to the point of sending the copies to the judge. “You and the other party should get your certificates in the mail within a few days,” she then assured Anne, who thanked the ladies and departed.

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Sure enough, Anne’s certificate arrived three days afterward. She opened the envelope and gazed upon the golden-sealed certificate. “DECLARATION OF NULLITY,” it was entitled, and underneath it read: “Know all men by these presents, that a putative marriage having been contracted on [date] in the City

of Pacific Heights, State of Pacificum, between Richard Ernest Oglestone and Andrew a/k/a Anne Loyall Oglestone f/k/a Andrew Loyall Hardart, the latter being now a resident of the State of Oologonqua, County of Meridian, said putative marriage is hereby declared to be null and void under the laws of the State of Oologonqua, being a putative marriage of a male to another male such as is prohibited and made null and void under said laws. DONE this [date] in the City and County of Meridian, State of Oologonqua, by the Honorable Donald C. Arkwright, Judge of the Superior Court of the County of Meridian, State of Oologonqua.”

It certainly looked authentic, and by Oologonqua’s standards it was, but Anne had to wonder whether it would have any more value in Pacificum than Confederate money. She certainly hoped it would—not for her own sake, since she wasn’t going to return to Pacificum, but for Richard’s. She knew Richard was going to rely on it in order to marry Beatrice, and he was going to do it soon. Already, on the day she filed the petition, Anne had e-mailed Richard saying the certificate was supposed to arrive in a few days, and he had e-mailed back saying, “Great! Then I’ll get married in just a few days more!”

All should be well, Anne thought and hoped—at least as well as possible under the circumstances. Richard had consulted his attorney, who assured him that the Oologonqua decree could not be challenged as violating *Anne’s* right to equal protection because she was the one who was obtaining it, and Richard would be waiving any claim that it violated his *own* right to equal protection by relying on it for the purpose of marrying Beatrice. *God’s in his Heaven*, Anne thought again, though she still could not bring herself to go on, “all’s right with the world!”

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Two weeks after Anne arrived in Oologonqua, she still didn’t have a job, but she had plenty of pictures of Richard’s wedding to Beatrice, sent as attachments to an e-mail message of monstrous size. Dr. Greatorex, the rector of St. Austin’s, had waived all requirements that might have delayed the wedding of such a notable contributor as Dr. Oglestone. “Wish

you were here!” Richard had gleefully told her in the body of the message. Anne was glad she wasn’t, even though she did start to wonder whether she might be able to return to Pacificum and rely on the annulment as Richard had done.

Next night, when Anne was almost asleep, her cell phone rang. She wanted to let the call go to voicemail, but she figured she should at least grab the phone and see if she recognized the caller’s number. She did. It was Richard’s.

*Oh, no, she thought. I don’t want this. What does he think he’s doing, calling so I can listen in while he has sex with Beatrice?*

She wanted to make Richard wait until morning at least, but she had to wonder if he might be calling about something really important. She couldn’t imagine what it might be, but she knew she would want *him* to answer if *she* was calling about something important. She answered the phone on the off chance that it might be so.

“Anne!” Richard said, sounding almost desperate to speak with her. “I’m so glad to talk to you! This is Richard.”

“Uh, yes, I know,” Anne said. “Why, how *are* you, Richard?”

“Bad. *Really* bad. I’ve been charged with bigamy.”

“*What?*” She almost laughed or cried or both at once, but she tried to speak instead. “But I thought you talked with your attorney, and he said—”

“Yeah. Well, it didn’t turn out that way. I’m out on bond, but I’m in big trouble. Look, Anne, I know I’m not in the best position to beg you for help, but I’m going to do it anyway. Please come back here and get divorced from me, the right way, the unquestionably legal way. My attorney thinks he can work out a good deal for me when that happens. I know you can’t stand divorce, but this will be a whole lot different from what you’re thinking of. It will be totally friendly, by mutual consent, and you’ll be well provided for, even if you—uh—get married again. I admit I was hoping the annulment would turn out to be the

cheapest way out for me in the long run, but it didn't turn out that way. You'll help me, won't you, Anne?"

Anne was silent. She had vowed to herself many years ago that she would never take part in a divorce, just as she had later vowed to stay married to Richard "until death do us part." Now she could feel the earlier vow being sucked out of herself and down the drain, just as the later one had been. She was too weak to resist. Here was her chance to return home, to marry Jeannette and live in her little house of dreams, to be well provided for as she would not have been in Oologonqua—and to help Richard, whom she still cared about in spite of everything.

"Yes," said Anne. "I'll help—and I want to come home!"

"That's my Anne-girl," Richard said, permitting an inference that he not only was not engaged in sex with Beatrice, but was not in her hearing. Anne saw no need to remind him that she was no longer *his* Anne-girl.

"Can you take a plane back here tomorrow morning?" he asked.

"Well—uh—I guess so," she said. Like the real Anne, she had never been on an airplane in her life, and she did not especially want to; she and Richard had always taken a train or car on their occasional trips out of town. To help Richard, though, and above all to come home as soon as possible, she would do it.

"Great," he said. "I'll e-mail you the info on the flight that looks like the best bet. It's actually a non-stop from Meridian City to Pacific Heights, believe it or not, probably the only flight on any airline where you don't have to wait and change at least once. Is it OK if I make the reservation and pay for the ticket for you, so all you have to do is show up at the airport with your luggage?"

"Uh, sure," Anne said, grateful that she didn't have to find out how to do those things for herself.

"OK, then. Hey, Anne, this is great. Thanks a whole lot. You'll be really glad you did this."

"Yes," Anne responded. "Yes, I'm pretty sure I will."

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The plane was rolling onto the runway. Anne and the other passengers were strapped into their seats. It was too late to get off. If the plane crashed, they would die. Anne raised up a fervent prayer for a safe journey, and another, in thanksgiving, for the hope of going home.

She was wearing ladies' clothes again at last, for the first time since she set foot in Oologonqua. Her dress was the same bright flowered one she had worn in the anti-491 posters, she thought with an ironic little smile. No one on the airplane seemed to take any notice of her, much less to care whether Oologonquans might think she wasn't entitled to wear ladies' clothes.

The plane began to accelerate with great noise and power, going frighteningly fast on the ground, then tilting Anne backward as it rose into the air. She tried to remind herself that hundreds of airplanes did the same thing every day and didn't crash, but the thought did little to settle her stomach. She had a window seat, but she leaned back and did not look out the window. She feared she would get sick if she saw the things of earth vanishing in the distance beneath her.

After a long time she did dare to look out the window. There was no great noise any more, only a soft whirring sound, and the plane felt almost motionless. The window revealed a vision of unearthly loveliness. White clouds, turned golden in the sunlight, slowly proceeded backward beneath the aircraft in the bright blue sky, while endless farmlands could be glimpsed far below them. The clouds grew thicker until they hid the earth entirely, but not the sky. Anne seemed almost to have entered Heaven—where God still was, as always.

Anne smiled in delight, and yet she could not exclude ironic thoughts entirely. Up here, she fancied, she might almost imagine that all was right with the world—since she couldn't see it!

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After only a few hours at full altitude, the plane began to descend above the mountains of Pacificum. The sky was unusually clear for Greater Pacific Heights; as the plane turned toward the airport, Anne could see almost the entire city in miniature. There was the University, the dome of the Capitol, the Big Black Block, and much more; Anne even glimpsed the spire of St. Austin's on Queen's Bluff. At that, she gave a deep sigh of relief. She would be home soon—if only the plane didn't crash instead of landing safely!

As it turned out, it didn't. The landing was only slightly bumpy; the plane bounced up once or twice before staying on the ground. The engines made great noise again, this time to slow the plane down. Soon the plane was rolling toward the terminal at a very moderate speed, and Anne gave a bigger sigh of relief.

Richard and Ruby, that is Beatrice, were waiting for Anne at the gate. Anne courteously shook hands with them both, but that wasn't enough for the vivacious Beatrice, who reached out and hugged Anne. "Anne, thank you so much—for everything," she effused. "You've been absolutely wonderful, with no hard feelings at all."

Anne wasn't quite sure about "no hard feelings," but she guessed it was actually close enough to pass for truth. Any hard feelings she did still have were surprisingly mild, and she was sure they would pass away soon. Providence was at work in full force, she fancied, giving both her and Richard truly suitable spouses instead of each other. "It's my pleasure," Anne graciously responded, though Beatrice didn't understand what she meant because Beatrice didn't know Jeannette.

Richard then re-introduced his attorney, Bruce Farquhar of Farquhar, Hardart & Frick, whom Anne had met once or twice before. "I'm glad to see you again," said Mr. Farquhar, a tall, lean gentleman slightly resembling Dan Stanniman in looks, though more dignified in demeanor. "Richard has told me about your present legal needs, as well as his own, of course. Our firm doesn't specialize in either family

law or criminal cases, but we're the ones to go to for all kinds of money and property matters; we should be able to handle an uncontested dissolution pretty well. Have you got an attorney representing you?"

"Uh, no," Anne admitted.

"Might be wise, just to make sure your interests are fairly represented."

"Well, all right, I'll see if I can get one."

"Try to do it soon, OK, Anne?" Richard begged.

"I'll see what I can do." She did not want to seem too nosy, but she did want to know about Richard's case. "Um, how soon is anything more going to happen in your case?" she asked.

"As soon as the divorce goes through, I hope. Nothing's likely to happen in my favor without that. The prosecutor on my case is a guy named Roland Bulgur-Frick, a gung-ho hate-crime prosecutor, and he regards it as a hate crime for anyone to get an Oologonqua same-sex annulment or rely on one."

"Oh! But—it isn't really, is it, even in Pacificum?"

"Not yet. It will be if people like him get their way with the legislature, though."

"Are you serious?"

"I'm afraid so. Bob Stimson IV and his ilk aren't the only fanatics on the subject of same-sex marriage."

Anne was glad to note that Richard himself was no longer a fanatic on that subject—but the mention of Stimson brought a horrid, almost unbelievable thought to Anne's mind. She wondered, and felt sick to wonder..."Um, how did this prosecutor first find out you were relying on the Oologonqua annulment, anyway?" she asked.

"I don't know. I got the marriage license with no problem, which I don't think I would have if they'd thought the annulment was no good. I find it hard to believe that even Bulgur-Frick searches all the marriage license applications in the county recorder's office and then investigates whether any of the appli-

cants got an annulment in Oologonqua. But not that many other people knew about it, and I don't think any of them would have told. I mean, *you* sure didn't tell the police or the prosecutor's office about it, did you?"

"No, I certainly didn't." *But I'm afraid I know who did!* her mind cried out, in shame and disgust at herself for having trusted Stimson to know about the annulment. The dreadful logic of the thing was all too clear. Stimson still hated Richard from the 491 campaign; after Anne told him about the annulment, he found out Richard was marrying Beatrice, and figured he was relying on the annulment; Stimson then disregarded his own professed principles in favor of annulling same-sex marriages, and called in a tip that led to a bigamy investigation.

"Anyway," Richard said, "it's too late to prevent it now. We've got to solve the problem, that's all. If I get the divorce, and then I remarry Beatrice without reliance on the annulment, Mr. Farquhar thinks he may be able to make a plea deal that will keep me out of prison, and even get me convicted of a misdemeanor instead of a felony."

"The big unanswered question," Mr. Farquhar said, "is whether Mr. Bulgur-Frick has enough sense of fair play to recognize Dr. Oglestone's remorse and willingness to correct his mistake. I did once advise Dr. Oglestone that it *wasn't* a mistake, legally speaking, but we're beyond that now. And even if Bulgur-Frick won't agree to a decent deal, I'm not above going over his head. So I think we should be in good shape, all things considered, once the earlier marriage is dissolved in accordance with Pacificum law."

"All right, then," Anne said. "I'll see about getting an attorney and going through with it as soon as I can."

## Chapter 8

"Sure, my daughter Rose could handle that for you if you like," said Professor Roundstone. He was the only lawyer Anne knew, other than Mr. Farquhar, and Anne had called him as soon as she could. "Rose

actually practices family law, which I don't any more, and haven't for a long time. The legal issues have always fascinated me, but a few years of actually dealing with couples fighting over everything imaginable, long ago, was quite enough for me." He gave Rose's contact information to Anne, and she thanked him.

"Now, what about this bigamy matter?" he asked. "I knew Roland Bulgur-Frick was out to make a big name for himself as a hate-crime prosecutor, but I'm surprised that even *he* would be so hateful about a little same-sex annulment that both parties accepted as beneficial. Maybe he figured this was too great a chance for big publicity to pass up, even if his case was weak."

"I don't know," said Anne. "All I know is that Richard's attorney is hoping for a deal that will keep Richard out of prison, after our divorce goes through."

"Hmm," said the professor. "A plea deal, where Richard would plead guilty to bigamy and get a lenient sentence with no prison time?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Hmm. I wonder if that's really in his best interest, or anyone's. The conviction might affect his professional standing, even if he didn't go to prison. Who's Richard's attorney?"

"Bruce Farquhar, of Farquhar, Hardart & Frick."

"I've met him, and I know his reputation. Good man in his field, I believe, but he'd be no match for Bulgur-Frick in a criminal case, or a constitutional dispute either. I wonder if he'd like a bit of assistance in whipping Bulgur-Frick rather than bowing down to him."

Anne almost laughed out loud. "Well, I don't know," she said, "but I suppose he might."

"I'll find out. Meanwhile, I'd recommend that you go ahead with the divorce as planned. I'm pretty sure that will be in *your* best interest, even if it turns out that you and Richard both could have relied on the annulment after all. After the divorce goes through, I'll see if I can come up with a pleasant little surprise

for Richard, and an unpleasant one (the same one) for Bulgur-Frick.”

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Jeannette sat on the sofa with Vickie, reading *Anne of Green Gables* out loud. Vickie was fascinated by the book that had led Mrs. Oglestone to adopt the name and looks of Anne. She loved the “real” Anne too—especially now that they had read about Anne saving little Minnie May Barry’s life, and so restoring herself to Mrs. Barry’s good graces after the disaster of getting Diana Barry drunk on currant wine. Now they were reading about Anne’s report to Marilla that she was now a perfectly happy person, and about Anne’s dignified speech: “I have no hard feelings for you, Mrs. Barry. I assure you once and for all that I did not mean to intoxicate Diana and henceforth I shall cover the past with the mantle of oblivion.”

“What’s the mantle of oblivion, Mommy?” Vickie asked.

Jeannette’s eyes darted toward Winston, as they so often had to do now that he could walk and investigate things unsuitable for investigation. “It’s what Winston will cover himself with if he pulls his high chair over on top of himself,” she said, rising at once to avert that imminent disaster. She picked Winston up, strapped him into the high chair despite his cries for freedom, and gave him a bottle of water, which turned out to be of sufficient interest to keep him quiet.

“All right,” Jeannette said, returning to sit next to Vickie. “The mantle of oblivion—well, that’s Anne’s fancy way of saying she won’t think about it any more.”

“Did Mrs. Oglestone—I mean Anne, *our* Anne—cover up her fake marriage to Dr. Oglestone with the mantle of oblivion?”

Jeannette laughed. “Well, yes, I guess she did,” she said. “That’s why she went to Oologonqua. But she came back this morning, you know. She’s coming over here this afternoon.”

“Really?” Vickie bounced up and down on the sofa. “Is she coming back to stay after all?”

“Yes, I think so.” Jeannette, perhaps, would have bounced up and down too, had she been as young and vigorous as Vickie.

In due time, before long, Jeannette’s prediction was fulfilled. Anne knocked. Jeannette answered. Vickie cried out, “Anne!” and rushed to hug her, but could not crowd out her mother. Winston welcomed her too from the high chair, though the closest he could come to saying “Anne” was “Ack!”

“Anne, are you going to marry Mommy now?” the indefatigable Vickie insisted on asking without delay.

Anne laughed. “Not right now,” she said. “But the thought of asking her to marry me has certainly crossed my mind. I’d have to find out what *she* would think of it, though.”

Jeannette opened her eyes wide and gazed at Anne. Surely, she thought, Anne already knew. “Well,” she said with a big, loving smile, “I’d have to consider the pros and cons, of course—if there *are* any cons.” She laughed for joy. “I certainly wouldn’t hold it against you that you used to be married to a guy. I mean, that wouldn’t be fair at all, because I used to be married to a guy too!” Anne joined in her laughter, loud and long.

“Actually,” Jeannette said, “I asked Dr. Greatorex about that, without mentioning any names, because I wanted to know what he’d say about ‘until death do us part,’ you know. And you know what he said? He said, “Well, we’ve learned over the course of the centuries that this doesn’t necessarily refer to the death of one of the partners to the marriage; it may also refer to the death of the marriage itself!”

“Argh,” said Anne. “You know Dr. Greatorex; he’ll say we’ve learned something over the course of the centuries, even if it’s something somebody made up in the 20th or 21st century and nobody ever heard of it before that—or even if he made it up himself!” Jeannette winced and nodded in agreement.

“Anyway,” Anne said, “even if it did refer to the death of the marriage itself, there was only one thing

that killed my marriage to Richard, if it ever was a marriage. And that's something that would never kill *our* marriage, uh, if we did get married."

"If we did," Jeannette said, in a tone strongly suggesting that they would. "Well, the pros are pretty obvious, but I'm still trying to think if there are any cons. I guess my parents might be shocked, but they live in California so they wouldn't always be around letting us know how shocked they were. And besides, they probably wouldn't be as shocked as they were when they found out I was going to marry Andrew."

"Huh? What's shocking about *that*? He didn't dress or look like *me*!"

"No, he just looked like an ordinary, handsome guy—but a jet-black guy from Jamaica. Not that there was anything wrong with that *as such*, of course, but my parents were really worried about how they thought it would make me *look*. You know, in the eyes of people who, *unlike them*, were *racially prejudiced*."

Anne laughed. "Oh, yes, of course. It would make you look like a floozy from the District or something like that, right?"

"Well, yes."

"Um, but wouldn't you look like a lesbian, to them, if you married me?"

Jeannette giggled, though she tried to stop herself. "Yes, but they probably wouldn't think that was nearly as bad as looking like a floozy from the District. There are some very respectable, high-class lesbians."

"All right, then, we can try to pass ourselves off as respectable, high-class lesbians. And then, if we get married and you get pregnant, your parents can imagine it happened through artificial insemination. All very respectable, you see."

Jeannette barely kept herself from whooping out loud with laughter. "Oh, wow, I'm getting really tempted to try to pull it off," she said. "But I suppose I'll have to tell them the truth instead—which is just that I wouldn't refuse to marry you because of how

you look, any more than I refused to marry Andrew because of how he looked.”

“Would you refuse to marry me for *any* reason?”

Jeannette forced herself not to gasp out loud, but she swallowed hard. This was it. The moment of decision had arrived. She had known it was coming, but she had not known how hard and how suddenly her heart would leap and break into thunder when the moment came.

She took a deep breath and let it out in silence; then she took another and spoke. “I can’t think of any,” she said. “Certainly not because you’re still married to Richard, because you’re not any more—if you ever were.”

“No, I’m not,” said Anne. “And just to make double sure, I’m getting a divorce as well as an annulment. Professor Roundstone advised me to do it, after Richard asked me to, so as to help him with his court case.”

“Oh, yes, I saw that in the paper. They actually charged him with bigamy, and threatened to do the same to anyone else who gets married after getting a same-sex annulment in Oologonqua!”

“Yes, and we certainly wouldn’t want that to happen to anyone *else*.”

“Absolutely not!”

“But it shouldn’t take that long to get the divorce, since it’s uncontested. And after the divorce is done, um, will you marry me?”

Jeannette looked up at Anne’s earnest face, so like a pretty woman’s face that only Anne’s future wife, perhaps, could be fully certain of the difference—but the future wife could, and would, be very certain indeed. “Yes!” she cried out, embracing Anne closely, feeling Anne’s love and hunger as Anne’s slender arms and hands clasped her tightly in response. “Yes, yes, yes! Oh, Anne, you know I will!”

They kissed, but delicately and only for a moment, not as they had done in the church parking lot when Vickie and Winston had not been present. Vickie had

watched the proceedings in total silence, almost unnoticed, but now she made her presence fully known. "Yay!" she shouted, hugging Anne and Jeannette at once, as if to press them together for life.

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Anne stayed on as a guest in the home of Richard and Beatrice, with no opposition from either. Beatrice had taken some getting used to, especially at first when she was nervous and edgy about supplanting Anne, but by now she resembled Ruby Gillis in her friendship with Anne as well as her looks. True, even Ruby would never have shown off her breasts as glaringly as Beatrice did, but perhaps (Anne fancied) Ruby would do it if she were alive today.

One morning soon after Anne returned from Oologonqua, she and Beatrice were sitting at the table after breakfast, reading. Anne, on her tablet, was reading an old book called *Quaint Courtships*; Beatrice was reading the *Informers*.

"Oh, no!" Beatrice exclaimed. "God damn it! That's atrocious! That's totally vicious!" Anne knew she didn't have to ask what was atrocious and totally vicious, because Beatrice would tell her or show her soon enough.

"I usually don't mind getting my weekly dose of appalling lunacy from Stimson," Beatrice said, "but this is going way too far! That monster wacko needs some divine retribution himself!" Beatrice knew how to arouse Anne's curiosity, and also how to make her wait to satisfy it. At last she showed Anne the paper. "Read that," she said, "if you can stand it."

Anne read. Bob Stimson's picture appeared at the head of a column entitled "Swift retribution hits same-sex two-timer." Anne knew almost at once that she had been right in thinking Stimson called in a tip about Richard allegedly committing bigamy, after Anne let Stimson know about her Oologonqua annulment. She felt ashamed again of her foolishness, her idiocy, in letting the untrustworthy Stimson know. She hoped Beatrice would not find out.

Stimson wasted no time in getting to the point. "How have the mighty fallen!" he exulted. "Little more than half a year ago, the infamous Dr. Richard Oglestone was parading his supposedly happy same-sex marriage with an effeminate homosexual on posters, and leading the charge against the righteous opponents of same-sex sin in the Initiative 491 campaign. Today, he has entangled himself in a scandal that could easily destroy his career. He has committed *same-sex bigamy*. For this, he faces a well-deserved term in prison."

"That's pretty vicious, all right," Anne said. "Has Stimson got an explanation of why he suddenly agrees with the hate-crime prosecutor that our annulment wasn't valid, when 'little more than half a year ago' he was proclaiming how great it was that Oologonqua would automatically annul same-sex marriages?"

"Yeah, kind of," Beatrice said. "It's not too convincing, though." Anne could see and feel Beatrice trembling, in outrage and in fear that Richard might really go to prison.

"I didn't imagine it would be."

Anne read on. "Dr. Oglestone," Stimson said, "has engulfed himself in a web of deception too deep and dark for even the ordinary homosexual activist to stomach. Prosecutor Roland Bulgur-Frick, though himself a homosexual activist, has set out to expose and condemn the outrageous truth about Dr. Oglestone's multiple same-sex marriages. Dr. Oglestone deviously relied upon an automatic annulment of his first same-sex marriage, granted by the State of Oologonqua, and perverted it for a purpose totally opposed to Biblical principles and to the wisdom of the good people of Oologonqua. Dr. Oglestone actually dared to use the annulment of his first same-sex marriage, not to become free from same-sex sin as God and Oologonqua intended, but to try to shield himself from the guilt of bigamy when he contracted a *second* same-sex marriage to a *second* effeminate homosexual! In so doing, he forfeited any moral right he may have had to rely upon the annulment—and divine retribution for his crime and sin was swift to come. Hardly one day after his bigamous same-sex ceremony took place, Dr. Oglestone was arrested—and his fate was sealed."

"I'm not so sure Richard's fate is sealed," Anne tried to reassure Beatrice. "I've been talking to a law professor I know, and he's taking an interest in Richard's case. He seems to think there may be a way for Richard to avoid being convicted of bigamy."

Beatrice's eyes bulged. "What? How?" she demanded to know.

"Well, I don't know the details yet," Anne admitted. "But I think he was going to talk with Richard's lawyer about it."

"Who is this professor? Where do you know him from?"

"He's Professor David Roundstone, and I met him at a talk he gave in favor of Initiative 491."

"In *favor* of 491?" Beatrice frowned. "And he wants to help Richard, the famous crusader *against* 491?"

"Well, yes."

Beatrice rolled her eyes and snorted. "That's incredible," she said. "No, wait, it's *not* incredible. I'll believe it. If he can help Richard, who cares what he thought about 491?"

Anne smiled. "That's the spirit," she said. "Now, I'll get ready to go see my lawyer and get going on our divorce, just in case that will help Richard too." She saw no need to add that it would also help herself and Jeannette—not only by allowing them to get married without fear of prosecution for bigamy, but also by ensuring, so far as possible, that they would be well provided for out of Richard's ample income, leaving somewhat less for Beatrice and Richard himself. She did not like to think of Richard as greedy, exactly, but she knew he would be tempted to leave her ill provided-for in the long run, and she wished him to have all needed help in resisting the temptation. She hardly thought of the possibility that Richard's career might be ruined as Stimson predicted, and that Richard would be unable to help her then.

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“Rose Roundstone Mims, Attorney at Law” read the golden letters on the front window of the little storefront office on Queen’s Boulevard. Anne had walked past it many times before with little or no interest, hardly even noticing the attorney’s name. Now she pushed the heavy door open and went in.

“I have an appointment with Ms. Mims,” Anne told the receptionist, a thin, gray-haired, steely-eyed lady. “My name is Anne Oglestone.”

The lady lifted an eyebrow, quickly lowered it again, and relayed this information by telephone. “Yes, Mrs. Mims is expecting you,” the lady said, pronouncing “Mrs.” with two very distinct syllables to inform Anne that it would be a most grievous *faux pas* to call Mrs. Mims “Ms.” She arose from her desk. “Come this way, please,” she instructed Anne.

Anne followed her down an extremely short hallway to an open door. A short, trim-looking woman with dark chin-length hair and light blue eyes, looking no older than Anne, arose and walked up to meet her. “Mrs. Oglestone?” she said. “Is that the correct form of address?”

“Not for much longer, I hope,” said Anne. “I’m here to see about an uncontested divorce.”

“OK, I’m Rose Mims,” Mrs. Mims stated the obvious, “and I should be able to help you. Please have a seat.”

Anne had a seat and glanced around the small office. Aside from diplomas, awards, and a certificate of admission to the bar of the State of Pacificum, the most prominent thing on the office walls was a big photograph of Mrs. Mims with a tall, smiling man and three fairly small children, obviously a family portrait.

“Um, you won’t be surprised,” said Mrs. Mims, “to know that I’ve already received more information about you than I usually have about a client who comes in for the first time. I’m not sure how *reliable* the information is, though, since most of it was in the *Informers*.”

“Well, less than a hundred percent reliable, I’m sure,” Anne affirmed.

“You do want to dissolve a same-sex marriage to Dr. Richard Oglestone, though, is that correct?”

“Yes.”

“You and he have no children who would be affected by the dissolution?”

“No. In fact, that’s what started it all. I wanted to adopt children, and he didn’t.”

“Does he have an attorney who will be representing him?”

“Yes, Bruce Farquhar of Farquhar, Hardart & Frick.”

“Will Mr. Farquhar be drafting a proposed property settlement?”

“Yes, I believe so.”

“All right. Once that’s done, we’ll go over it and see if you find it satisfactory. Mr. Farquhar’s reputation is good, and I wouldn’t expect him to propose anything grossly unfair, but it may take a bit of negotiation to make sure your interests are adequately protected. After that, the dissolution should go through very quickly, since it’s uncontested. My fee will come out of the property settlement, and here’s some information about how it will be calculated, included in a proposed agreement for my services. I’d suggest that you take a few minutes to read it carefully. Then, if you’re satisfied, you can sign it and we’ll get going as soon as possible. Otherwise, you can propose changes, or consult another attorney, or whatever you wish.”

Anne read the proposed agreement, found that it looked all right, said so, and signed it. “All right, then,” said Mrs. Mims. “I’ll give Mr. Farquhar a call today, and we’ll see what we can come up with.”

“Thank you,” said Anne. “I’m certainly not going to be greedy about it. Mostly, I just want this to be as different from my parents’ divorce as possible.”

“I can understand that, if your parents’ divorce was anything like most of them.” Mrs. Mims sighed, and her businesslike façade seemed to slip a bit. “I started practicing family law because I hoped I might actually be able to help families work out their problems and stay together. That actually happens every now and then, but usually not. Most often I’m doing well to keep them from strangling each other while they fight about everything—especially their kids, if they have any. You’re actually fortunate that you and Dr. Oglestone didn’t adopt children and *then* decide to get divorced.”

“Oh! Um—I don’t think that would have happened, though.” So Anne said, but a sudden shock of wonder struck her heart. If Richard had agreed to adopt children, she would surely have stayed with him—and then she could never have hoped to marry Jeannette, and her life would have been the poorer! Was providence at work in Anne’s life, yet again, even in Richard’s decision to accept no children?

“I mean,” Anne said, though it was not her original meaning, “I don’t think he would ever have accepted children, and he made it very clear that he wouldn’t.”

“That’s a shame,” said Mrs. Mims, “but maybe it’s all for the best.”

“Yes,” Anne agreed, “and not just maybe. I’m very sure it is.”

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The very next day, Mrs. Mims called Anne. “Great news,” she said. “This may be the fastest and most painless divorce I’ve ever seen! I called Mr. Farquhar, and he already had the proposed property settlement prepared. It looks very fair to me, and even generous. Dr. Oglestone must be highly motivated to have this marriage dissolved without delay.”

“Yes, he is. He’s hoping it will be very helpful to him in, uh, resolving a related matter. You’ve read about his bigamy case, haven’t you?”

“Yes, I’m afraid I have.”

“Well, he’s hoping the divorce will help him get a favorable resolution of that case.”

Mrs. Mims took a few seconds to get the point. “He’d still be considered guilty of having committed bigamy,” she said, “even if he later dissolved one of the marriages. But you mean he hopes to negotiate a lenient plea agreement after he gets the divorce?”

“Yes.”

“OK, I get it. Well, that’s very fortunate for you. If not for that, the settlement might not have been so generous.”

“No, I don’t think it would have.” Providence, Anne fancied, was popping into her life at every turn now, even making use of the malice of Stimson and Bulgur-Frick, who got Richard in trouble for bigamy.

“All right, then. Please read the proposed settlement carefully, and let me know if you have any problems with it or questions about it. If you don’t, you can sign it, and then your marriage to Dr. Oglestone should be officially dissolved within a very short time, a week or two at most.”

Anne read it and had no problem at all with it. It would provide for her and her family even if she married again, and the terms were generous indeed. She wondered whether the legislature had agreed to make Richard rich beyond his wildest dreams by including MBRS coverage in the state health insurance plan, as he had hoped.

“This looks fine,” Anne said after signing it.

“Very well. We’ll get it filed and approved, and then you’ll be ready to begin your new life.” Mrs. Mims gave Anne a big smile, but not so big as the one Anne gave her in return.

*I’ll be able to marry Jeannette soon!* Anne’s heart exulted. At this rate, she fancied, she might almost start to imagine that all was right with the world. All would be well indeed—if only the bigamy charge did not destroy Richard’s career. She started to worry more about it, but tried hard not to, now that everything was arranged for her future prosperity still to depend so much on Richard’s career.

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“Can I come too?” Vickie begged.

Anne rolled her eyes and frowned. “Courtrooms aren’t for kids,” she said. “Are you sure you don’t want to stay home and help Mommy plan our wedding?”

“Yes. Mommy doesn’t need me to help with that. I want to see what happens in the courtroom.”

“Why? Are you already thinking about being a lawyer when you grow up, or what?”

Anne laughed, but Vickie did not. “Yes, I am,” she said.

Anne looked to Jeannette. “Yes, she is,” Jeannette confirmed. “It all started when she read *Arthur Ropestraw’s Busiest Courthouse Ever*. It shows animals as lawyers, judges, witnesses, and everybody in a courthouse, and she was so fascinated by the animal lawyers proving that animal defendants were guilty or not guilty. Then she wanted to see some lawyers who were people, so we’ve watched some Perry Mason videos. I don’t think she understands everything in them, but she loves it when Perry Mason shows who’s really guilty and who isn’t.”

“Well, you know,” Anne told Vickie, “this isn’t going to be like Arthur Ropestraw, or Perry Mason either. This is just going to be lawyers talking to a judge, and the judge deciding who’s right.”

“Is the judge going to decide if Dr. Oglestone is guilty or not guilty of bigamy?”

“Well, yes, kind of. This is going to be a hearing on a motion to dismiss the charge of bigamy, which means the judge could either decide that Dr. Oglestone is not guilty and that’s the end of it, or he could decide to wait and see if a jury would find Dr. Oglestone guilty or not.”

“I want to see!”

Anne sighed. “Well,” she warned Vickie, “you’re going to have to be really quiet and act really grown up.”

If you don't, we'll both get thrown out of the courtroom." Anne wanted to add, "and that will be the end of your legal career," but she didn't think it would be quite honest.

"I will!" Vickie insisted. "Anne, I bet I can be just as quiet and act just as grown up as you!"

"OK, it's a bet," said Anne. "I certainly hope you win, for both our sakes."

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"Hell, no!" said a short man with curly blond hair and fiery blue eyes, talking in the courthouse hallway with Mr. Farquhar, Professor Roundstone, and Richard as Anne and Vickie approached. "I've offered him the best deal he's going to get, a totally suspended sentence with probation, for a *felony*. It's totally ridiculous to suggest that I'd let him plead to a misdemeanor for this crime. The people of Pacificum have got to see that *nobody* can get away with relying on that Oologonqua anti-gay shit!"

"Very well, then," said the professor. "We'll argue the motion, and see what happens."

The courtroom was largely full, and Anne noticed Dan Stanniman himself among the spectators. Soon an officer in uniform called out, "All rise! The Seaview County Superior Court is now in session, the Honorable Ralph M. Philmarillo presiding."

All rose, and a white-haired old gentleman with a hawk-like face swept into the courtroom wearing a black robe. "Thank you, you may be seated," he said. "We're here on the defendant's motion to dismiss in the case of *People of the State of Pacificum v. Richard E. Oglestone*. I'll show Mr. Bulgur-Frick here for the People, Mr. Farquhar for the defendant, and I'll welcome Professor David Roundstone, who has entered his appearance as co-counsel for the defendant. Professor Roundstone, do you wish to argue the motion?"

"Yes, Your Honor," said the professor. "The basis of the defense motion to dismiss is twofold. First, the defense maintains that there was no bigamy as a

matter of law, because Dr. Oglestone's marriage to Anne Oglestone had been validly annulled before his marriage to the present Mrs. Oglestone took place. Second, even if there might be some question about the objective validity of the annulment, the undisputed facts establish that Dr. Oglestone reasonably relied upon the decree of nullity, negating the element of knowledge that he was already married."

"All right. Mr. Bulgur-Frick, what have you got to say about those issues?"

"First, Your Honor," Mr. Bulgur-Frick said, "the purported annulment was invalid as a matter of law, since it arose from a violation of equal protection. Second, the issue of reasonable reliance is one for trial, not for a motion to dismiss."

The judge frowned. "Well, let's take up the issue of reasonable reliance first," he said. "Professor Roundstone, isn't that really an issue for trial?"

"As a general rule, Your Honor, it would be," the professor acknowledged, "but a motion to dismiss may and should be granted when the undisputed facts establish, as a matter of law, that the defendant cannot be convicted. That is true in this case. The facts stated in the affidavit for probable cause, submitted to the court by the People, establish without dispute that Dr. Oglestone did rely upon the decree of nullity from Oologonqua, in that his intention was to marry the present Mrs. Oglestone as soon as possible *after* that decree had been issued, but not *before*. The question whether his reliance was objectively reasonable can be determined by the court as a matter of law."

"Hmm. Mr. Bulgur-Frick, do the People agree that this issue concerns a matter of law for the court to determine?"

"Yes, Your Honor—and the Constitution of the United States mandates that such reliance, on a decree obtained in flagrant violation of equal protection of the law, can never be found objectively reasonable." The judge frowned more fiercely, but Mr. Bulgur-Frick pressed on. "Furthermore, Your Honor," he said, "contrary to the defense claim, there is an issue of fact as to whether the defendant did rely on the Oologonqua decree."

“How so?”

“The People are prepared to present evidence proving that Dr. Oglestone has displayed his own knowledge that the Oologonqua decree was invalid, by agreeing to a valid decree of dissolution, on very generous terms, of the very same marriage that was purportedly annulled!”

“Your Honor!” the professor protested. “That evidence is inadmissible to prove a lack of reliance at the time of Dr. Oglestone’s marriage to the present Mrs. Oglestone, on the same principle that precludes admission of subsequent remedial measures to prove liability in a civil case.”

“But in a *criminal* case,” Mr. Bulgur-Frick shot back, “it’s well known that subsequent actions are admissible to prove *consciousness of guilt!*”

“Not without limitation,” said the judge. “I think Professor Roundstone has a point. Subsequent remedial measures are inadmissible because they have little probative value on the issue of whether the defendant was at fault at the relevant time, and they have a great tendency to prejudice, mislead, or confuse the jury. The same would be true of Dr. Oglestone’s subsequent effort to clarify the situation of the first Mrs. Oglestone by agreeing to a dissolution, which sheds little or no light upon his intentions at the time of his marriage to the second Mrs. Oglestone. I’m not going to admit that evidence. Now, do you have anything else?”

“Yes, Your Honor. As I’ve said, reliance on a decree obtained in violation of equal protection cannot, as a matter of law, be found objectively reasonable.”

“So it appears that we’ve really only got one issue, which is whether the decree was obtained in violation of equal protection.”

“Yes, Your Honor. That is the all-important issue in this case.”

“All right. Professor Roundstone, do you maintain that this decree was *not* obtained in violation of equal protection?”

“Yes, Your Honor. In this case, at least, no one’s right to equal protection has been violated. Certainly not that of the first Mrs. Oglestone, who voluntarily obtained the decree. As to Dr. Oglestone, his undisputed factual reliance upon the decree would constitute a waiver of any claim that the decree was defective.”

“Dr. Oglestone could not waive the right of *all* the people of the State of Pacificum to equal protection!” Mr. Bulgur-Frick cried out, without waiting for the judge to ask him to speak. “This Oologonqua decree is a gross insult to the equality of all citizens before the law!”

“Well, let’s see now,” said the judge. “Presumably there would be no violation of equal protection, at least, if Oologonqua were to annul any and all marriages on request of any party who lives there for a week. So the denial of equal protection is supposed to be that Oologonqua does so only for *same-sex* marriages.”

“Absolutely, Your Honor.”

“And that is because a party to a same-sex marriage, unlike a party to an opposite-sex marriage, is *not protected* against invalidation from afar by an Oologonqua decree obtained by the other party to the same marriage. Right?”

“Yes.”

“But if the party expressed *approval* of the invalidation from afar, and in fact *relied* upon it, the party couldn’t then turn around and complain about it, whether on grounds of equal protection or any other grounds. Isn’t that correct?”

Mr. Bulgur-Frick clenched his fists, but quickly unclenched them. “Your Honor, the point is that the *People* have a right to complain about it in *every* case, because it violates the right of the People themselves to equal protection. The principle is exactly the same as in *Batson* and the other well-known decisions on discrimination in jury selection.”

“Hmm. Professor Roundstone, what do you think of that?”

“The principle is not the same, Your Honor. In the jury-selection cases, *individuals* were adversely affected by discrimination. There were those who didn't have the honor of serving on juries because of discrimination; those who were improperly required to serve on juries because others were discriminated against; and defendants whose trials were infected by discriminatory selection of jurors. Nothing like that is true in the present case. No individual connected with this case has been harmed by Oologonqua's singling out of same-sex marriages from other states for differential treatment. All that has happened is that the prosecution has demanded, for the supposed benefit of people *not* connected with this case, that you should issue a sweeping condemnation of Oologonqua law on the point at issue.”

“Mr. Bulgur-Frick,” said the judge, “it does seem to me that you're asking me to pronounce upon the validity of Oologonqua law, in the absence of any authority for doing so. If the citizens of Pacificum wish to deny that full faith and credit must be given to a decree such as this one, and to dispute the matter before the Supreme Court of the United States, they may do so through their elected legislators and their elected attorney general. That has not occurred, and this court cannot substitute its judgment for theirs. At the time of Dr. Oglestone's marriage to the second Mrs. Oglestone, the decree of nullity was presumptively valid, and the undisputed evidence establishes that he reasonably relied upon that decree. Defendant's motion to dismiss is granted, and this case is dismissed.”

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“God damn it!” Mr. Bulgur-Frick seethed, while Anne and Vickie waited to thank the professor and congratulate Richard. “You can't get away with this outrage! We'll appeal this all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court if we have to!”

“Feel free,” said the Professor with a grin.

Anne saw Dan Stanniman approaching Richard fast. She butted in ahead of him. “Congratulations, Richard,” she said, shaking Richard's hand. “Er—will you and Beatrice be attending our wedding?”

“You bet we will,” Beatrice answered for him from behind Anne’s back. “Wouldn’t miss it for the world—or even for a ringside seat to see Stimson and Bulgur-Frick battling each other in hell!”

“Come now, my dear,” Richard said with a great grin. “Stimson and Bulgur-Frick should be *friends*. They’ve got *common interests*, like in hating their enemies such as me. They should be glad to give each other ‘LXIX’ in hell, if possible!” Beatrice laughed out loud, and Anne laughed too, glad that the responsibility for doing “LXIX” with Richard had passed to Beatrice, not to her. She hoped Vickie wasn’t going to ask what “LXIX” meant, but she would find some way to explain without unacceptable details if she did.

She turned to the professor. “Thank you so much for everything,” she told him. “And thank you, too, of course,” she added to Mr. Farquhar.

“Oh, I didn’t do anything,” Mr. Farquhar said with a polite smile, shaking Anne’s hand.

“Oh, except to arrange for my future with my bride-to-be,” Anne replied with a smile more than merely polite. “Other than that, nothing.”

“I’m really looking forward to your wedding,” the professor said. “It will mean a great deal to me.”

“And to me, for having you and Mrs. Roundstone there,” Anne said. “I’m glad you won’t be repelled by the presence of one or more same-sex married couples, as—er—some people we could name would be.”

“Of course not!” the professor assured her. “And one of many good things about attending your wedding is that I’ll be assured of *not* seeing Bob Stimson IV, any more than I’ll see Roland Bulgur-Frick!”

## Chapter 9

*This is the real thing!* Anne thought, as she began to walk up the aisle at St. Austin’s with Jeannette, accompanied by first-rate organ music played by a friend of the professor’s from the School of Music at the U. Their wedding certainly wouldn’t have *looked* like the real thing, at least in the traditional sense, to

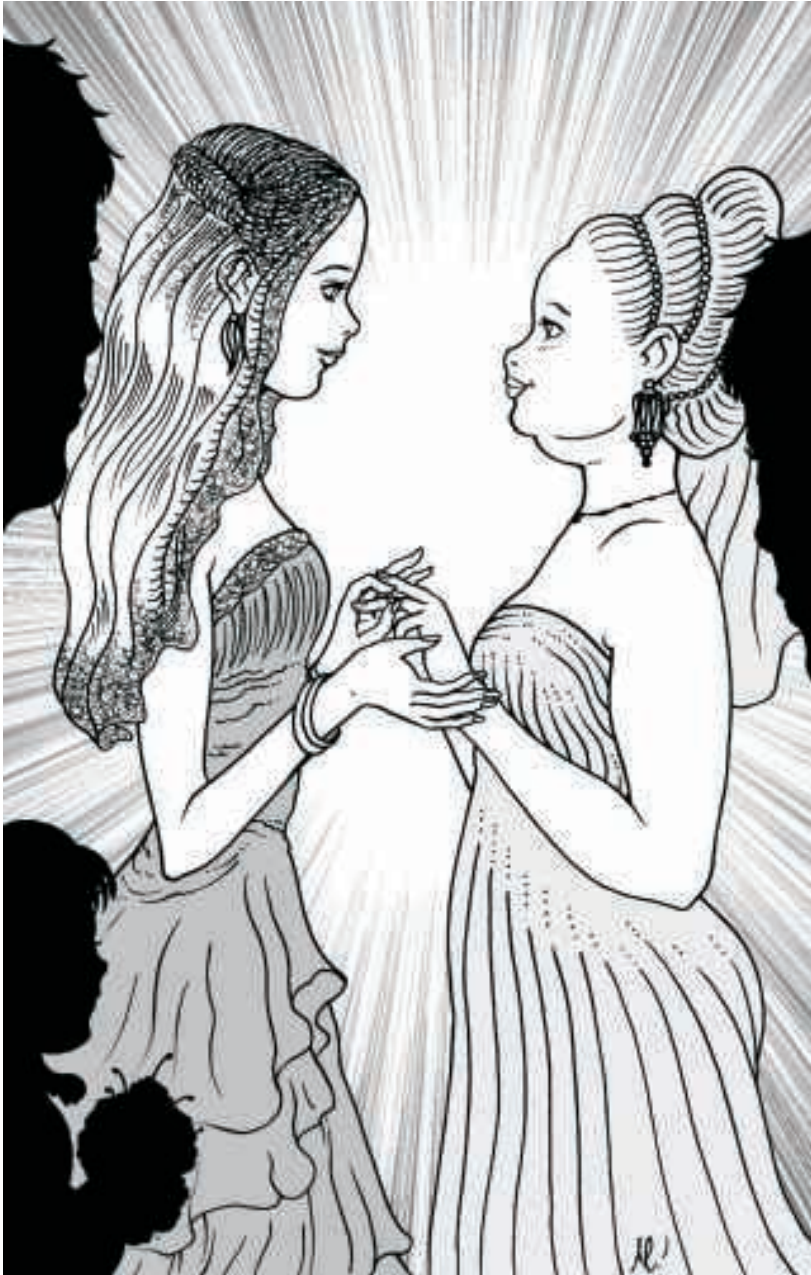
anyone who didn't know who they were. An ignorant observer would have seen what looked quite like a sparsely attended same-sex wedding between two women—a tall, slender redhead in a sky-blue dress, and a short, plump brunette in a pink dress, neither of them in white for virginity—with only two aging attendants and one chocolate-colored flower girl in the procession. An ignorant observer, of course, would have missed the heart of the matter entirely.

Anne paid shockingly little attention to the ceremony, except for the parts that directly involved Jeannette: the exchange of rings; the exchange of vows “until death do us part”; Anne’s fervent, silent prayer, “Dear God, let it be true this time!” In particular, she could not remember one word of Dr. Greatorex’s sermon directly after it was done. But when Dr. Greatorex pronounced them “lawfully wedded spouses” (using the same-sex formula), Anne’s heart exulted: *It’s really true! I’m married to Jeannette! God’s in his Heaven—and a great deal is right with the world!*

Soon the little reception in the church basement, too, was passing by and leaving barely a trace in Anne’s memory. When it was past, she did remember seeing Richard and Beatrice talking at length with Professor and Mrs. Roundstone, in quite a friendly manner, just as if they had never been on opposite sides of the great Initiative 491 battle. Aside from that, she remembered only dancing with Jeannette, caressing her gently, gazing into her eyes and being rewarded with fervent glimpses of endless love.

Now they were home at last, having retrieved Vickie and Winston from the ladies who had kindly agreed to watch them, and having (with some difficulty) put them to bed. Anne and Jeannette were in their nighties. The culminating moment of their wedding day had arrived—but Anne was dismayed.

Anne felt strange, fearful, tired, and old; her elongation had dwindled almost to nothing. She looked at Jeannette. She could not imagine Jeannette getting old, and yet she wondered how their life together would be when she was—when Vickie and Winston were grown up, and so were any children Anne and Jeannette might have together, if they ever did. At least they could still embrace, caress, and kiss—but would anything more ever happen when they did?



“Uh—I guess it’s going to take me a while to get used to this,” Anne mumbled.

“Oh, that’s all right!” Jeannette assured her. “We’ve got all the time in the world!”

Anne laughed and gazed into Jeannette’s shining eyes. “Well, let’s spend it wisely,” she responded.

She thought it might help to kiss Jeannette as she had done in the parking lot after Professor Roundstone’s talk. It did. Jeannette kissed her even more deeply, and caressed her without restraint, pressing her breasts close to Anne’s heart. Soon Anne was touching Jeannette’s breast, rubbing her big, hard nipple and making her breathe more heavily.

It was working. Anne’s elongation had rapidly returned. Now she need only enter Jeannette and give her a climax—if she didn’t get too excited to finish the job!

Anne stripped off Jeannette’s nightie. Jeannette ardently responded by stripping off Anne’s. Awkwardly Anne reached down toward Jeannette’s valley of bliss, feeling the moistness and heat of her entryway, trying to locate her tiny clitoris. Jeannette helped her with her own hand, firmly rubbing Anne’s slender fingers against the little love-button, while her breathing grew ever heavier.

“Are you ready?” Anne begged, fearing she couldn’t hold out much longer.

“Yes! Yes!” Jeannette gasped. “Oh, Anne, I’ve been ready for so *long!*”

Jeannette lay down on the bed and raised her knees. Anne knelt before her, between her plump thighs, and felt the tip of her elongation desperately searching for the entryway, while she feared she was going to spring a gusher before she got in. Jeannette skillfully guided her in—only barely in time.

“Anne! Yes! Yes! *Now!*” Jeannette moaned, bucking her hips and clenching Anne’s elongation with her whole womanly passageway. Anne couldn’t wait. Her climax came upon her at once, while she almost shrieked: “Jeannette! Oh, my God! I love you!” Be-

neath her, Jeannette was quaking so hard that Anne knew she was being fully satisfied.

After the quaking stopped, they lay there united, breathing deeply. Anne's heart felt the most immense relief in her life, far greater than when she first gave herself to Richard, so long ago now. Her love for Jeannette was complete, and no more need be done or said—at least by Anne or Jeannette.

The newly married lovers heard a loud banging on the bedroom door. Fortunately Jeannette had thought to lock it when they entered. "Mommy!" Vickie cried. "Are you all right?"

Jeannette started to laugh, but stopped herself. "Yes, honey, I'm just fine," she said. "Go back to bed."

Vickie was not satisfied. "I heard noises," she complained. "Is *Anne* all right, too?"

"Yes, Anne's just fine too, Vickie. We couldn't be better. Please go back to bed *now*." The silence outside told Anne and Jeannette that Vickie was complying.

Anne tried not to laugh. She wanted to stay inside Jeannette for as long as possible, and laughing wouldn't help. "I can't imagine," she tried to say seriously and softly, so Vickie wouldn't hear, "that the real Anne would ever have had her marital intimacy interrupted in this way—not that the books would ever have mentioned it if it did happen!"

Jeannette did laugh, but clasped Anne more tightly to retain her within. "Oh, *I* can imagine," she said. "I'm sure she would; in fact, I'm sure she *did*."

Anne opened her eyes wide, and saw Jeannette gazing up at her with admiration and delight. "Do you know how I'm sure?" Jeannette asked.

"Um, how?"

"Because *you're* the real Anne." Jeannette pulled Anne's face down to kiss her tenderly.

It was exactly what Anne had needed to hear for more than 20 years now—ever since she discovered Anne Shirley, who became Anne Blythe, in the books.

Always she had been trying to be the *real* Anne, but failing. She had been a mere dream girl, a poster girl for a fantasy, while her life was less real, less valuable than that of a mere fictional girl in a book. Now at last, with Jeannette to love, she had broken through into reality—and she would never go back.

“Thank you so much, Jeannette—for everything,” Anne murmured when their long kiss ended. “Yes, you’re right. I’m the real Anne now—at long last!”

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