

# Assiduity Nineteen

by J. Mykell Collinz

The back area of the house receives the morning sun, including a large room adjacent to the kitchen which my wife used as her workshop. I keep the room neat and clean now that she's gone yet I rarely use it. All of her tools are placed in their proper locations as she would have left them when finishing a project. She was very meticulous in that regard. All of her work tables are cleared and ready for a new project to begin. Her cupboards, drawers, and shelves remain well stocked with various materials. On one side of the room she has her paints, brushes, canvas, and paper. On the other she has her fabrics, leathers, beads, feathers, furs, dried skins, and bones.

Uzma and her two year old daughter, Luv, awaken for their first morning in the house. Luv walks around touching everything with her little hands. Uzma follows behind her, talking sweetly, saying:

"This is going to be your new home for a while, darling."

When I enter the sunny back room to join them, Uzma is standing barefoot by the windows drenched in morning sunlight, wearing a thin white cotton tank top and tight blue jeans, her walnut blond hair tied in a loose bun. She moves her bare arms, neck, and shoulders gracefully as she talks and I'm compelled to glance at her breast with nipples clearly visible beneath the tight fabric.

"Do you mind, John, if Luv draws in one of your art pads?" she says.

"No, go right ahead," I reply: "She can fill the whole pad with her drawings, paint on canvas if she wants. Here's a traditional Japanese table she can use. It's low to the floor, fits her perfectly."

I'm captivated by Luv. She has her mother's good looks, along with her walnut blond hair, greenish blue eyes, and fair, pinkish complexion. She seems quite interested in me also, giving me long serious stares, as if she's unsure I belong there.

"It's such a different feeling," Uzma remarks: "Out here as compared to in the city."

"And once you get accustomed to it, you can't go back," I reply.

"That's what I'm afraid of, John, I need to go back. The commune depends on me to make things work."

"Communism doesn't work," I say, surprising even myself with the confrontational attitude.

"Theoretically, it does work," she says.

"In a theoretical world," I retort.

"That shouldn't stop us from trying."

"Trying what?" I say: "As a practical, political, ideology, it doesn't work."

"Can you tell me why it doesn't work?"

"Human nature," I say: "Everybody's too different."

"We all have the same basic needs.," she says: "And, at the top of the list, we need to put an end to greedy profiteering. It's depleting our supply of essential resources, leaving nothing for the future."

"How are you going to put an end to greedy profiteering?"

"Through class action. As people understand who they are and what is happening to them they will begin to realize the need for working together with others around them to find common solutions. That's what happened in our neighborhood, resulting in a cooperative community."

"And look what's happening there now."

"What's happening there now, John, is a result of the corporate controlled government's actions, intentionally creating the impression there's a crisis looming just around the corner, and they are the ones steering us towards the crisis."

"I can't argue with that, Uzma. What to do about it is where we differ."

"I feel like I'm running away. I should go back and deal with the situation."

"No, you did the right thing, Uzma, especially for Luv's sake, but also for yourself. Give it a break. Follow events from here. You don't know what's going to happen down there next."

She's still thinking in term of her parents' older worldview, I believe, and I see her potential to achieve their goals through other, more realistic means in today's world. Yet I'm reluctant to continue the conversation at the moment beyond what I've already said.

"Put some warm clothes on and let's go for a walk outside," I say: "The enchanted forest is always enchanting but especially after a recent snowfall. I'll carry Luv."

Snow is beginning to fall again as we step through the kitchen door onto the brick patio, which I had shoveled earlier in the morning. Brilliant sunlight radiates through openings in the slowly drifting cloud bank as we climb the sloping path from the house to the treeline, a distance of around a hundred and fifty yards. I'm carrying Luv in my arms rather than strapping her into a harness on my back. She'll get to know me better face to face, and I'll be able to watch as she reacts to the new world around her.

We stop at the treeline and turn to look back over the downward sloping hillock towards the southeast, a topography created fourteen thousand years ago by receding glaciers.

"How far does your property extend?" Uzma says.

"I own a number of local properties," I reply: "Along with the house, there's sixty acres here, mostly wooded. I've made bids on adjacent wooded areas but the owners are holding out for more money. I'll get some of them eventually. Plus, I own six hundred acres of cultivated bottom land down there which I lease to local farmers."

"How did you become the farmer's landlord?"

"Through a real estate investment. The opportunity was there to buy at a good price. It allows me to think like I'm a farmer. Without having to do any of the dirty work. I go to farmer's association meetings, other events, just to stay in touch with current farming issues."

"You own all this along with your housing and commercial development in the city, what else do you own?"

"It's a long list. No big money makers. Also, no losers."

Luv is getting antsy in my arms from all the talk and she's straining to look behind me indicating she wants to continue in our previous direction.

As we turn to enter the dense forest, Uzma says:

"I didn't know trees this big were still growing anywhere near here. What are they?"

"Eastern white pine dominates. They're the biggest by far. Mixed with various hardwoods here and there, including birch, beech, maple, oak, hickory, black walnut."

"This isn't virgin forest, is it? It can't be."

"It's old," I say: "Part of a relatively untouched stretch of land. It's in an out of the way location. Other than those cultivated fields, in that bottom patch of muck, there's been little development. And most of the people who own land around here are like me, they don't want to draw attention and be mapped as someplace special."

We're standing in a cathedral like hollow beneath the tall trees and, with her head thrown back, Uzma extends her arms skyward.

"I love this place," she shouts.

"I love this place," Luv mimics, clapping her little mitten covered hands.

