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I welcome all comments from readers (wiseguy35@hotmail.com).

Hole In My Soul

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Take a walk outside your mind
Tell me how it feels to be
The one who turns the knife inside of me
Take a look and you will find
There's nothing there girl yeah I swear
I'm telling you girl, yeah,
'Cause there's a hole in my soul
That's been killing me forever
It's a place where the garden never grows ...
- Aerosmith, "Hole In My Soul" (Nine Lives)

I stood alone by the window, staring out. As usual, I wasn't looking at anything in particular; just doing that unfocused, absent-minded stare that seemed to come to naturally to me during those days.

My eyes were looking out the window but my thoughts were exactly 17.3 miles away. On the house that I pay for, but can't live in; on the woman I loved for a dozen years, but who no longer loves me; on the daughter I used to drop off at school each morning, who now sees me every other weekend and no more.

Each morning I woke up with the same thought: this was a terrible mistake. I'd somehow ended up living the wrong life -- somebody else's life. My name was on the lease for this fourth-floor apartment in an aging brownstone, but it wasn't home; I'd paid for the simple, no-frills furniture that was strewn around it, but it wasn't mine. My home and my things were 17.3 miles away. And I wasn't welcome there, for reasons I still didn't entirely know.

The radio station ended its commercial break and started yet another tender, romantic love song. I'd have walked over and smacked it if I'd had the energy; instead, I simply cursed it. Cursed the radio, and the singer, and the whole sadistic concept of Valentine's Day. I used to like the day, back when I had a lover to share it with. When you're alone and don't want to be, Valentine's Day is like a grand party where everyone in the world is invited except you.

It would have been some consolation, I suppose, to think that Gloria was also home alone. But I doubted it. When I'd picked up Katie for my most recent weekend visit, she'd been bubbling over with excitement over how Mommy's new friend Roger had taken her to see *Lord of the Rings* and bought her popcorn and a Frodo doll. My first thought was unprintable, because I'd told Gloria I was planning to take Katie to that movie during our weekend; my second was that it hadn't taken my wife-going-on-ex-wife long to start lining up suitors.

That thought was interrupted when a white Mustang pulled in and parked in front of the building. I recognized it immediately as Holly's car, and sure enough Holly got out of it and walked toward the building.

Holly was a good friend of mine and of Gloria's, although the latter relationship had seen a lot of strain since our marital troubles became known. Holly had been my entire support network: a shoulder to cry on when I needed to, a hand to shake me out of the depths of depression on occasion, and a brain to remind me that like it or not, I still had a life to live. She was also a veteran of the divorce wars herself, having married Mr. Right only to have him turn into Mr. Wrong -- an obsessive control freak whose idea of a good time was to drug Holly and let his buddies take turns having their fun with her while he captured the scene on video.

I walked over to the intercom and hit the buzzer as soon as it sounded. Then I pulled the door ajar and did a quick pick-up on the living room. It didn't need much -- when most of your time is spent staring out the window nursing your emotional wounds, housekeeping isn't that tough.

Holly came in just as I was fluffing the couch cushions where she usually likes to sit. "Good evening," she sang, bumping the door closed with her butt. She wore denim coveralls and a white turtleneck, and carried a white shopping bag and a brown paper grocery bag, and had an oversized purse slung over one shoulder. I was a little slow to take the hint; she had to wiggle the bag a bit to get my attention.

"Hi, Holly," I finally said, coming forward. I held my arms out for the grocery bag because it looked heavy, but she handed me the white bag instead.

"This is for you," she said. "And these," she added, hefting the grocery bag, "are for both of us."

Inside the shopping bag was a bottle of wine and a carefully-wrapped flower arrangement. I took the flowers out and set them in the middle of the folding card table that served as my dining table. "Nice," I remarked, taking an exaggerated whiff of the flowers.

"I know you're not a big flower guy," she said, smiling, "but this place needs some color, and some life." Opening the refrigerator, she grimaced and gave me a scolding look. "It also needs some food. What have you been eating, Doug?"

I shrugged. "Wheaties, mostly."

Her eyebrow shot upward. "Without any milk?"

"What can I say? Shopping requires motivation, and eating requires an appetite. I haven't had much of either lately."

Holly's shoulders dropped, and she looked at me with sympathy in her face. "I know," she said. "But you have to take care of yourself. Katie still needs you."

"I know she needs me," I snapped back. "Some days that's the only thing that keeps me from canceling my insurance and jumping out the window. That, and the perverse need not to make it easy for Gloria."

"But you are making it easy for her," she retorted, her voice still calm and compassionate. "Look at you: you're working too much, not eating right, not sleeping well either, from the looks of you. Doug, you seem like you've aged ten years in the last two months. If there were a custody hearing tomorrow, it wouldn't last five minutes."

She was right, and I knew it. I'd been wallowing in self-pity since the day I'd moved out of my own home, climbing out of the pit just enough to put on a good show for Katie on my precious alternate weekends. In between those weekends, I was barely functional. I'd go days without eating or sleeping and spend countless extra hours at my desk staring into space, pretending to be working, just to avoid coming back to this bare, soulless apartment. But knowing that was one thing, and doing something about it was another; the first casualty of depression is the will to fight it.

My mouth opened, with every intention of saying as much, but nothing came out. I dropped back onto the couch and started to cry. A pair of warm, loving arms encircled me and I felt soft cotton and denim against my face.

"I know, honey," she said softly, holding me to her. "It's hard when there's so much pain. It doesn't feel like it now, but trust me, you will get through this and you will be okay. I don't know how long it will take, but you will."

"I wish I was as sure of that as you are. I just feel so empty ..."

She held me for a long time, letting me quietly sob into her chest. I hadn't had that kind of human contact in a very long time. It felt good.

Finally, I pulled away. "Ugh," I said, seeing the size of the wet spot I'd left on the front of her turtleneck.

She looked down and shrugged. "It'll dry. You were there for me when my life turned to shit, Doug; cry on my shirt all you need to, if it helps."

"It did."

Holly nodded toward the kitchen. "Ready to eat something?"

I didn't really feel hungry, but it had been something like 36 hours since my last meal, so I lied. "Sure."

We went back to the kitchen and Holly unveiled the contents of the grocery bag: a precooked rotisserie chicken, some cole slaw, and a package of ready-to-bake biscuits. The chicken needed a little warming up, and the biscuits needed 20 minutes to bake, so I flipped on the oven and then poured wine for both of us while we waited.

I ate gingerly at first, the taste of decent food having been a rare sensation of late. As we sat there, Holly kept up a stream of sane, normal-seeming small talk that was first mystifying, then mildly irritating. I tried smiling and nodding pleasantly, hoping she'd take the hint. When that didn't work, I started responding to her in short phrases: "Sure, okay" ... "I can see that" ... "Then what?" Slowly, without entirely realizing it, I found myself taking on my share of the conversation.

I was in the middle of a story about a trip to the zoo I'd taken with Katie a few weeks back, when I noticed Holly sitting there staring into my eyes with the most satisfied grin on her face I'd seen in ages. I interrupted my story. "What's with you?"

"Not me," she said, grinning even wider. "You. You're animated, you're smiling, and there's a glimmer of life in your eye again. I've missed you, Doug; it's good to see that you're still in there."

That's when it hit me. "That's what this was all about," I said. "You've been trying to draw me out."

"Guilty," she admitted, holding out her hand. "You can smack me if you want."

Instead, I took her hand and kissed it. "Thank you," I told her. "For everything. I don't know where I'd be without you."

"The same place I'd be without you, maybe," she said. "Which reminds me. I saw Martha Cooper today, and she asked about you."

I found myself shrinking back a little. Holly had set me up for a session with Martha when it was obvious I wasn't doing well at handling the stress at home. I was skeptical about how a hypnotherapist was going to help me fix my marriage, but I went to one session out of respect for Holly. I remembered sitting in a recliner in her office, counting down from 500 while she told me how sleepy I felt, feeling like a complete idiot. I felt a little bit better for a day or two after, but then things went completely to hell and I agreed to move out so Katie wouldn't have to witness Gloria trying to disembowel me at every meal. I'd told myself I was doing the right thing, sparing Katie's feelings, but inside I felt like a complete loser. That was when the depression set in.

Holly was still speaking. "Martha mentioned that you had to cancel your second appointment and never called back to reschedule. She

wondered if you were working with someone else, and how you were doing.”

“What did you tell her?”

Our eyes met and locked together. “That as far as I know you aren’t seeing anyone for help. That I’m worried about you, because you seem like you’ve given up. That it hurts to see you like that because I care about you so much. And that I have dreams about you drowning in a huge, icy, filthy swimming pool, being pulled down by a monster you can’t seem to fight, and even though I’m right there by the pool and I want to dive in and help you, I can’t for fear that the monster will get me, too.”

I could see the dismay in her eyes, and the helplessness, and the image of her nightmare came across to me in terrifying detail. Despair, dread, that overwhelming sense of paralysis – I knew them all. In the depths of my imagination I recreated her scene from my angle, but I saw Katie with Holly on the side of the pool, screaming and pointing to my sinking form, while from the other side Gloria watched and smirked in silent triumph.

I shivered. “Hell of an image you’ve drawn there, Holly. I’d be afraid, too. Am afraid.” Then I squeezed her hand again.

“You don’t have to be,” she insisted. “Do you remember your finger ring?”

It took me a second, but I remembered: in my session with Martha, she’d told me that any time I felt angry or afraid or sad, I could make a ring with my thumb and forefinger; a deep breath then would draw all the tension and frustration and anger into the ring, and when I let the breath go all those things would be blown away into space, to be replaced by focus and calm and peace.

“I remember,” I said. I also remembered thinking there was no way a simple gesture like that could draw out so much emotional poison.

“Try using it. Do it now.”

There was such a seriousness, a barely-controlled urgency in Holly’s voice, that it suddenly didn’t seem nearly so far-fetched an idea. Still looking deeply into her eyes, I touched my thumb and forefinger together and rubbed the tips against each other in a small, slow circle. An odd, tingling sensation ran down my arm, as if a static charge were flowing down into

the circle formed by my thumb and finger and building there, while I drew in a slow breath.

"That's it," Holly urged, sensing what I was feeling. "Feel it all collecting, concentrating inside the circle. And when you're ready, just blow it all out and let it go."

I pursed my lips and blew the air out of my lungs; as I did, my finger and thumb separated and I felt that odd static charge drain away and leave me. My next breath in brought warmth and peace, filling the holes left by what I'd just jettisoned. Another breath and the feeling grew stronger, the warmth spreading through my system like a mug of hot soup on a cold afternoon.

Holly watched all of this play over my face and held my gaze. "Again."

I nodded and made my finger ring again, feeling the tingle as I drew in another breath, followed by the sense of release as I breathed out. Another wave of contentment rolled in with the next breath of air, leaving my entire body abuzz with a kind of energy that I hadn't experienced in a very long time.

"How do you feel?"

It was not an idle question, and I found myself thinking seriously about the answer. I looked down at my hand, then out into space, then back to Holly. "Good," I replied, more than a little surprised to be saying it. "I feel ... good."

Her smile made the feeling all that much stronger. "I wish you could see yourself," she said. "You look a lot better than when I first came in."

I looked at my hand, half expecting it to seem different somehow, but it didn't. "I think I owe Martha an apology."

Holly beamed at me. "I'm sure she'd love to hear it-- in person. But in the meantime, I have something else from her for you. Are you interested?"

I made the finger ring again, marveling at the effectiveness of it. "After this, how could I not be?"

"Great. You do the dishes while I set up a few things in the living room."

So I did the dishes -- not exactly a major chore, as all I'd had in the apartment were paper plates and disposable plastic knives and forks. I put the leftover food in the refrigerator, the wine glasses and the cookie sheet from the biscuits in the dishwasher, and threw away everything else. "All done."

In the living room, Holly was standing by the battered easy chair I'd picked up from a yard sale for fifteen bucks. She had a bunch of cords and electronic-looking gear in her hands. "Have a seat," she directed. "I'm just about ready for you."

"What's all the hardware?" I asked as I settled myself into the chair. It was ugly as dirt, that chair, but still reasonably comfortable.

"This," she said, pointing to a flat black box she'd set on the end table next to me, "is a light and sound machine. Martha loaned it to us for tonight; she uses it with a lot of her patients, including me. It's a great way to go into trance." She handed what looked like a pair of mirrored sunglasses, but there were LED's on the backs of the lenses. "You put these on and keep your eyes closed," she explained. "The LED's create light patterns that put you into trance and keep you there while Martha makes suggestions. In this case, the suggestions will be from a tape she made for you." She held up a cassette tape, then put it into a Walkman that was connected to the other box by a cord.

Intrigued, I closed my eyes and put on the glasses. I thought I could sense the LED's just outside my closed eyelids.

"I borrowed your good headphones," Holly continued. "Gloria didn't seem overly interested in them, and I thought they'd work nicely for this."

I felt the familiar softness of my studio headphones settling over my ears, blocking off almost all background noise. "Now what?" I asked.

"Nothing," came her muffled voice. "Just sit back and enjoy the ride."

In a few seconds, the glasses came to life. White bands of light began to move across my field of vision, interweaving into captivating patterns. At the same time, I became aware of music gently wafting into my head from the headphones. The music and the patterns mixed together, sending me swirling and spinning into the void.

A voice began speaking from somewhere inside my head. "Relax, Doug," it said. "Take a deep breath, and relax. Let the patterns and the

music massage your mind and relax your body, deeply and easily. You don't have to concentrate on anything, do anything, say anything, or think about anything ... just sit back and relax, enjoy the sensation of floating outside your body, while I talk to your subconscious for a few minutes. You don't have to worry about consciously listening to me, because what I have to say is for your subconscious to hear and act upon. Your subconscious is always listening, so your conscious mind can just listen to the music and drift along without worry."

Am I hypnotized? I found myself wondering. My body felt limp and weighed down, as if it were lying under a lead blanket, but my mind felt free and weightless, bobbing in the air, attached to the body only by a thin balloon string. *I must be*, I concluded, and thought no more about it.

Martha's voice washed in and out of my awareness. " ... feeling sad and lonely ... unloved and unlovable ... but it's not true ..."

"... you don't have to be a victim, Doug ... use your finger ring ... will help you to stay focused and see clearly ..."

"... there are other women ... capable of returning your love ... Imagine now, such a woman ..."

The light waves changed color and seemed to recede, and I found myself arm in arm with a beautiful woman in a silky, backless evening gown. We were dancing, slowly and sensuously, to the faintly-heard rhythms of a three-piece band. The warmth of her body moving against mine, and the smell of her perfume, were intoxicating. I tucked my head in next to hers and took in a deep breath, luxuriating in her scent and presence. I heard her sigh contentedly, and felt her fingers gently raking across my back. Her thigh brushed against mine, and I felt the telltale tingling of an erection forming in my pants. She discovered it quickly, and moved in even closer -- so close that every move seemed to end up with part of her body rubbing up against my hard-on and making it worse. I let my hands caress her bare back, sliding over to the sides, letting my thumbs slip inside the edges of the gown to catch the outsides of her breasts.

"Is my darling sleepy?" she whispered hotly into my ear. "Does he want to go to bed?"

"No," I answered, "and yes."

A soft, lusty laugh filled my ear. She spun around and led me out of the ballroom by the hand. "Stay close," she teased over her shoulder. "We wouldn't want to offend any passing Republicans."

I followed her closely down a luxurious hallway to a bank of elevators. One opened for us immediately. I pressed 11 and stepped back to a corner. My companion backed up against me, pressing her backside into my overexcited groin, and practically purred. Since we were alone in the elevator, I slipped my hands inside the gown from the sides and hugged her tightly, then slid my hands up her smooth belly and found her breasts. The nipples were already hard, and by the time we reached the eleventh floor they were much more so. I pulled my hands free just as the doors opened, and not a second too soon -- there was an elderly couple waiting on the other side. We smiled and waved pleasantly as we slunk out of the elevator, me hiding my erection behind my companion while she tried to nonchalantly smooth out her gown.

I slipped my hands inside her gown again while she fumbled in her purse for the room key. She moaned and leaned against me. "Stop," she pleaded unconvincingly. "You're only making it harder to get the door open."

"Delayed gratification," I remarked. "And you're right, something is definitely getting harder."

Somehow she managed to insert the little card in the slot and push the door open. "Let's get inside before someone calls security on us."

Grudgingly, I removed my hands from inside her dress and followed her into the room. No sooner had I shut the door than she was pressing me against it, kissing me feverishly while her hands went to work undressing me. I returned the favor, lifting the neck strap over her head and letting the gown fall to the floor. She wasn't wearing much else -- just a thong and heels -- so I turned my attention to getting myself into a comparable state of undress. Neither one of us was in a mood to be dainty, so in a matter of seconds every stitch either of us had worn was on the floor at our feet. I grabbed her under the bottom, lifted her up, and started walking into the still-dark room. She grabbed the woodwork and squeezed me with her legs. "What do you think you're doing?"

"Carrying you to the bed so I can ravish you."

"No," she insisted. "Right here. Right now."

"My pleasure." I smiled and turned, putting her beautiful back against the door. Her arms went around my neck and pulled me in for a smoldering kiss. With some of the weight off my hands, I reached inward to see if she was ready for me. She was dripping. I moved her hips, lifted a little, and let my shaft find its intended home. She wiggled and shifted, improving the angle for both of us, and wrapped her legs around me.

"That's it," she moaned into my ear. "Fuck me, Doug. Fuck me hard."

I pushed into her again and again, rattling the door with each thrust. Her moans grew louder and longer, and soon I felt her clenching around me and squealing with delight. I held back until I couldn't possibly contain it any more and then burst with an orgasm that left me weak and shaking. We ended up in a tangled heap on the floor, amidst our own discarded clothing, still coupled while we recovered our breath.

Everything faded to black. It seemed unnervingly quiet, until I realized that the music had stopped. Then I felt the headphones being lifted off my head, and realized I was still in my apartment hooked up to the light and sound machine.

I took off the glasses and opened my eyes slowly. The light flooding in from the room left me feeling dizzy and disoriented. The first thing I focused on was Holly's face, watching mine. "How was it?" she asked.

"I'm not sure," I answered slowly. "I'm a little wonky still. How long?"

"About half an hour. Take your time; I know it always takes me a minute or two to get oriented again."

As I looked around me, taking stock, I felt as though I'd become hyper-aware of my surroundings. Aware of the faint sounds of the central heat kicking in to warm the room; aware of Holly's presence, so close and warm at my side; aware of the wet, sticky feeling in my pants. "What the hell ..."

"Martha said it was a guided imagery exercise," Holly explained. "Apparently, a pretty hot one. You'll have to tell me about it some time."

I looked up at Holly and saw her as if in a new light. Her skin was pink and warm, her eyes held the telltale shine of excitement, and her nostrils flared as she looked down at me. I reached up and touched a hand to her cheek, feeling the heat transfer from her to me. I slid the hand further up, inside her golden hair, and gently pulled her down for a kiss.

We kissed for a long time, tentatively at first and then with growing need. By the time we came up for air, Holly was straddling me in the chair and her coverall straps had fallen aside. I watched her face for any hint of doubt; for answer, she grabbed her turtleneck by the bottom hem, pulled it off and tossed it aside in one smooth motion. She wore a nice off-white bra with translucent cups and thin straps. I admired the view for a moment, then stripped off my polo shirt and undershirt together, discarding them on the floor nearby. My hands explored her upper body, enjoying the feel of smooth skin over muscle and looking for the buttons that would give me more access inside the coveralls. I could feel myself getting harder and harder as Holly's weight shifted, grinding her pelvic region into mine.

"Hold on," I warned her. She encircled my neck with her arms, and I used leverage and strong leg muscles to first slide down into a squat, then stand with Holly firmly held against my upper body. My face was level with her cleavage, which was just fine with me.

Holly squealed gaily as I hefted her in place. "What are you doing?"

"I haven't made love to anyone in five months," I said. "I'm going to do this right." Shifting her a little so I could see enough to navigate, I headed for the back of the apartment, kicked the bedroom door open, and deposited Holly on her back on the modest steel-frame bed.

I stood there admiring her for a few seconds. She gave me a lusty look, arched her back, and reached behind to unhook her bra. I smiled and watched the bra come off while I hastily removed her shoes and socks. Holly's breasts were beautiful: firm and round and just a little paler than the rest of her. The nipples were standing proud, begging me to do something with them.

But first things first. My hands gripped the sides of her coveralls, hooked the waistband of her panties at the same time, and pulled both off together up and over my head, dropping them behind me somewhere. I didn't care where -- I was too interested in the newly-revealed sights before me to pay attention to what landed behind me. Holly's legs were resting on my chest, so I took the left one and kissed the ankle, then an inch further up from the ankle, and an inch further up from that. Holly moaned in appreciation as I inched my way up the inside of her leg, to the thigh, and deeper. I dropped to my knees at mid-thigh and kissed my way all the way to her holy of holies, where a glistening blonde thatch and an intoxicating scent waited to greet me. I nuzzled her mound and

inhaled deeply, memorizing the smell of her, letting it work its way into my system and awaken the animal within. Holly's moans and cries grew more frequent and more breathless as I explored every inch of the new territory, learning through experimentation exactly where and how I could apply a tongue or a kiss to drive her nuts. Her button stood out and begged for my attention, so I gave it plenty, and before long Holly was bucking and squealing and crushing my head between her powerful thighs. Not that I minded -- it was exquisite agony for me, and had me almost ready to come again. I willed myself not to and concentrated on giving Holly the ride of her life. Every time she seemed to be fading, I'd try a different lick or stroke or suck and she'd be galvanized into moaning, gasping action again.

After several climaxes -- or maybe it was just one very long, sustained one -- Holly took charge. She grabbed me by the hair and hauled my face up where she could see me. "That was phenomenal," she said, "but if you keep that up much longer I'm going to pass out before we get to the main event. Help me up." She held out her hands. I took them, stood, and hauled her up into a sitting position. She had my pants and underwear undone and around my ankles in seconds. My cock was at full alert and pointing straight forward. She took it lovingly in her hands and began to caress it. "There it is," she crooned. "This is what I was feeling in that chair. And it's long overdue for some serious stimulation." Her fingers traced the length of my shaft. One hand reached further back and caressed my balls while the other paid careful, loving attention to the most sensitive parts of the head and fuselage. All I could do was stand there and groan in pleasure.

"I think he likes it," she teased, and pulled me closer. "Let's try a little of this." Reaching around, she fondled my balls from behind and let her breasts surround and massage the iron in front. I'd never felt anything like it before: my knees got weak, and there was a sudden surge of pleasure and great urgency in my groin.

"Oh, god," I groaned desperately. "I can't hold it much longer, Holly."

She laughed softly and reclined back on the bed, guiding my aching member toward her center. "Then don't try."

I plunged my raging cock into her, burying it to the hilt, with a guttural moan. The sensation of her tissues clamping down around it, squeezing, was too much -- I exploded into her immediately, desperately grabbing onto the mattress for support as my legs wouldn't hold me any longer. Holly's legs helped to hold me in place while my body clenched and

released, and just as I was about to fall back onto the floor I felt strong arms helping to pull me onto the bed. My mouth found a nipple within reach, so I latched onto it and sucked while I waited for my strength to return.

I was half asleep when I felt Holly stir and start to get up. I threw an arm around her and drew her closer. "I'm sorry," I said.

Holly gave me a sharp look. "Sorry? About what? I haven't been bedded that well in ... well, in ever."

I laughed, which got Holly looking at me strangely. "Gloria," I explained. "Wanted me to go down on her like that, but she has a lot of long, tangly hair down there and it was hard to do without gagging. When I suggested she let me trim it up for her, she took offense -- gave me the cold shoulder for two weeks."

Holly laughed with me. "Poor Gloria doesn't know what she's missing. You can do that for me anytime you want, Doug." Then her face grew serious. "But really, it shouldn't be any time soon."

"I know. Gloria would love to be able to nail me for adultery. Which would be ironic, since she's probably been committing it herself with that ape Roger."

Holly cleared her throat. "More than probably, I'd say. When I stopped by the house to pick up your headphones, she and Roger were there and Katie wasn't. Katie is spending the night at her friend Alexa's."

That hurt, but nowhere near as much as it would have two hours before. I just nodded silently.

Holly's eyes captured mine again, and I saw the deep concern in them. "Are you okay, Doug?"

I thought about it. Things were still pretty much the same as they'd been when Holly arrived: I was still living in a cheap, dingy apartment full of yard-sale furniture, isolated from my family, and looking into the maw of a long, ugly divorce. But something had definitely changed -- the dark void inside me was rapidly closing. "I'm okay," I assured her. "I'm not alone anymore."

"You never were. Not really."

"You're right, of course. But I felt that way -- that is, I let myself feel that way. But not anymore. I have you, and I have Katie, and I have a life that's worth holding on to. Gloria is in for one hell of a fight."

Holly beamed at me, a slight tear in her eye, then pulled me to her for another long, loving kiss. "It's great to have you back, Doug," she told me. "Happy Valentine's Day."

-wg
2/16/02