

Karen Bender

from *Eternal Love*

AFTER LENA AND BOB were married in the Chapel of Eternal Love, Ella told them that new husbands and wives were not allowed to share a hotel bedroom. Married couples, she told her retarded daughter, learned to be married slowly, in separate rooms. For the first two days of the honeymoon, Ella shared her room at the El Tropicale with Lena, while her husband, Lou, slept in the other room with Bob. The four of them elbowed their way to the two-fifty, ninety-seven-item buffet table, piling their plates with fat-laced barbecue ribs; they lay, sun-doped, on a sparkling swatch of concrete by a pale blue swimming pool. The sounds of the pool echoed, amplified by the water; even the children's shrieks were transformed into the caws of aroused, hysterical birds. Ella could pretend she didn't hear at first when Lena said very softly that she wanted to share a room with Bob.

“This story began when I was young and unmarried and wondered how to get there myself—I put myself in Las Vegas with Lena and Bob and hoped that they would teach me.”



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