



Gene Ziegler

Octogenarian Time Capsule

Second Avenue

A Flame to keep you warm

Rain in November in central Tennessee has a chilling effect on everyone but lovers. People come and go in sparse numbers on the first cold Sunday afternoon of the season, even on Nashville's Second Avenue with all of its persistent attractions. Music is in the distant air as it always is in Music City. Our lovers drift from store to store, arm in arm, gaze in gaze, oblivious of the rain, looking for souvenirs to remember the day. Their eyes pass over the endless collections of tourist trinkets looking for something special because their day is special, and their newfound love is special.



Disappointed and ready to give up, they are attracted to a store across the street, "Agora" reads the sign over the door, a few doors from the famous Wild Horse Saloon. The store is brightly lit, inviting and something more, it glistens in the darkening afternoon rain. It is not the ceiling lights, but reflections from display cases and the promise of treasures for sale within. They hurry across the street and step inside the shop out of the cold damp day

and into the magic world of wall hangings, shelf art, and semiprecious gems set in an endless variety of bracelets, pendants and rings. This is more like it. They are welcomed by the store's mistress and encouraged to browse and explore.

They are drawn to a butterfly encased in glass, and a conversation with the proprietress on the artist's technique ensues as the new lovers circle the display cases and each other. Their dance seems random, casual, curious and innocent, but nothing could be farther from the truth. As they search the cases for the perfect memento, they are searching each other's eyes for a clue as to what their choice will mean to them. Broaches are lovely but less intimate than either of them feels. A pendant is intimate without making too bold a statement. Blue topaz is close to her

birthstone color, so he has the owner pull the topaz pendants out of the case, and while she is at it, how about that small tray of topaz rings in antique-like settings, they are beautiful.

She touches the pendants, but she can't take her eyes off the rings. She tries one on at the shopkeeper's encouragement; her hand is shaking as she slides it off to try a smaller size. Is he offering the ring? Will she take it? *Which do you want?* he asks. And in that moment, she knows what he is offering and what she wants, and she is overcome with her own emotions. She points helplessly to the ring, unable to speak, and he hands it to her. The storekeeper concludes the sale and he places the ring on her finger.



*He held her hand and kissed her, and when they looked around,
the room was singing love songs and dancing up and down.*

They leave quietly and happily and disappear into the now-dark evening rain.

Gene Ziegler for Lynn Hand with love, November 3, 2002