

Share Time



Rae Johansen

A "Her TV" Novel



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Share Time

By Rae Johansen

A simple request for some more share time has led to some rather profound changes in my life. My name is Erik, and I make a living running my own floral arranging business.

Let me take you back a few years. I met my wife, Laurie, during our first year at a local junior college. We both had graduated early from high school at seventeen and were out to get started on our careers.

My dream had been for years to start my own flower shop, to design and create beautiful arrangements for weddings, banquets, graduations, holiday specials and so on.

Laurie aspired to master the world of computers.

We met in an English class and conversation came easy between us. What often seemed like minutes were actually hours spent together. Soon, we were sharing school events together, like concerts and

sporting events, that led to a mutual agreement that togetherness was great.

We often shared opinions and critiqued each other's work. She never belittled my love for flowers and I found her strength in business skills appealing

To look at Laurie's physical beauty, one would never suspect she was such a business dynamo. She had a luxuriant mane of thick dark hair that bounced across the middle of her back. Her figure was voluptuous and carried well on her five-foot six-inch frame. Then again, her eyes and face were that of an Irish angel.

By now you must have gathered that in my opinion, she was one very gorgeous woman.

Now, as for myself, I would have said that I could never have been taken as an awesome dude. I was a thin, five-foot eight-inch male with delicate, feminine features. I was not well kept, as I would let my hair reach well below my shoulders before I would even consider getting it cut.

My hands were often commented on by my fellow classmates in Floral Arrangement because I had long, narrow fingers that loved to handle even the most delicate materials.

In the beginning of our relationship, I thought it would never last all that long, for Laurie had many a guy seeking her time and attention. She told me often that our time together was special and that she found my kind and tender ways very comforting.

Near the end of our first school year, as we were lying in the grass listening to a tape, an unexpected event took place in my life.

Laurie asked, "Would you consider making our relationship a 'steady' one?"

With a shaky and excited gasp, I replied, "Sure."

Then, she reached into her purse to take out two rings. After placing one on my left ring finger, she put the other on hers. A smile followed her words, "Now it's official."

After that, we started to share even more time together.

Shopping trips together became a regular event. She sought, my opinion on her many purchases, from summer dresses, sandals, jewelry, to her new car.

We spent many hours at a nearby lake, just lying around in the sand, swimming in the moonlight, playing beach volleyball with the locals.

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One day as we were playing volleyball on the beach Laurie noticed that my hair was getting in my face and distracting me. She called time out as she reached for my hand and pulled me over to our towels. Reaching into her purse she pulled out her brush and a tie.

A few minutes later I was back playing with my hair in a ponytail when I caught her looking at me with a grin as she reached back to her own long flowing ponytail, and pointed towards me. I could read her lips as she whispered, "I like it."

On the way home that night she had me pull over at a drug store near her house. She hopped out and was back in just a short while.

When we arrived at her place I parked in the driveway, and leaned over for a good night kiss. She told me after a passionate kiss that she didn't want me to go yet. We walked to the door hand in hand.

As she unlocked the door she said, "I'm home Mom, Erik's with me."

Laurie had lived alone with her mother for nearly ten years.

I asked if I could call my Grandma and let her know I would be home a little later. When my parents were killed in an accident four years ago my grandparents took me into their home. Last year Grandpa died, and now it was just Grandma and myself in her big old Victorian home.

When I came back from making the call Laurie told me that she noticed my hair was in sorrowful need of conditioning. So she handed me one of her terry cloth robes and told me to get into the shower and wash my hair. I felt silly carrying her aqua blue robe with me, but off I went.

As I came back into her bedroom she motioned me over to her desk chair. With a comb and brush she disentangled my hair and told me from now on she wanted me to use a conditioner after I washed my hair. She took scissors and trimmed a little from the ends of my near shoulder length hair.

Then she left room only to return with a pan of warm something or another. Her hands massaged it into my scalp and spread it throughout my hair. I was told it was a hot oil treatment. She wrapped my head in a towel, and commented that we had to let it set for thirty minutes or so. Taking my hand she led me over to her bed to talk.

The conversation led to our career dreams. She told me about her plan to set up a computer records service for small businesses. Sort of an efficiency plan to keep records of customers, costs, referrals...sounded good to me!

I shared with her my hope to someday own my own small floral shop.

We both seemed to thrive on each other's encouragement. When we both said at the same time, "You'll do it!"

Laughter bounced off the walls.

When Laurie's Mom knocked and poked her head into room she gave us a quizzical look as she saw me lying on the bed wearing her daughter's robe.

Laurie was first to reply, "We are conditioning Erik's hair."

And then explained as to why all the laughter.

A short while later the towel was removed and my hair was brushed out.

I was given a kiss on cheek as she ran her fingers through my hair, saying to me, "Much better!"

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Our summer came to an end and once again we were back in the classroom. We had a history class and a required speech class together.

One day while we were studying Chinese civilization Laurie pointed to a picture of a Chinese man with a long pigtail, and kiddingly said, "Maybe we should let your hair grow that long someday."

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Our hours together continued as our education progressed. The weekends became excursions together as we discovered each other's likes and, shared those we had in common. Musicals we attended, dinner shows we went to, shopping for clothes, and so on. Laurie accompanied me to flower shows while I tagged along on computer programs.

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During break just before the start of spring trimester and what was to be our final semester before graduation a quirk shopping spree occurred. We were out shopping for some new spring fashions for Laurie when she came across some floral print slacks in the women's department.

She smiled and said that they would be great for me to wear in floral arrangement classes.

We left with four pair, two for me and two for her. That day I found out that I wore a size 10-12.

Spring semester started and we both delved deeply into our majors.

A couple weeks into the semester Laurie made the comment that I hadn't worn the pretty new slacks to school.

I told her, "I am little embarrassed by the fact that they're women's slacks,"

She just came back with, "Come on, they are great! They even have fly fronts and look just like a man's summer styled tailored pants. You wear yours tomorrow and I'll wear mine!"

I must admit they were light and comfortable, and I wore them the next day with a loose T-shirt. To be frank the only problem I experienced was that the pants were quite tight at the waist and a bit baggy in the rear.

A week later Laurie called to talk to me about an assignment, and as we were saying our sweet good nights she told me, "Wear your other pair of flowered slacks to school tomorrow, and I'll match you."

So as I went to bed I laid them out on end of my bed to wear them the next day.

I met her in the parking lot next morning. As we were standing and talking a spring shower came out of nowhere. Off we both dashed to our classes. She headed for a business management class while I darted for my Floral class. When I arrived I was dripping wet.

When I sat down at my design table my hair was dripping.

My partner Allison had grabbed a towel from the P.E. department and was patting her hair dry. Her hair was about the same length as mine, an inch or two below her shoulders. With a smile she giggled softly and said, "Caught you too?"

Then she cracked a wise comment with, "Someone up above must have thought your slacks needed water."

We both did a belly laugh.

A brush and a tie soon had her hair in a braid and out of the way to dry. She offered of some help and soon my hair was also drying in a braid as we worked on our project together.

The class was two hours long and as I broke for lunch to go meet Laurie, I had forgotten what I'd done. I was used to ponytails by now, but as we met and hugged near the lunch line Laurie felt the braid.

She let out a gasp and said, "Erik turn around! Let me see this! Who... how...did you do this?"

I started laughing and then went on to explain, "Allison did it for me just to get my wet hair out of the way of my face and to dry. Sooo, you like uh?"

"Hmmm.... well, yes. Yes I do!"

She grabbed my hand and as we went to have lunch we kept on talking.

We ate lunch and time went by oh so quickly so back to classes we both went. Since we didn't have any classes together this day I agreed to meet her at a spot in the field behind the parking lot at the end of the school day.

The time went by quickly and a couple hours later I left class. Allison and I walked together to the parking lot discussing tomorrow's flower arrangement that we needed to complete. Then I headed for the field to meet Laurie.

As I walked along through the green grass, shrubs, and flowers the scent of spring was filling my nostrils with the sweet aroma of a romantic spring.

When I arrived at our spot, a blanket was all spread out grass. A familiar hand patted the blanket, inviting me to join her. We cuddled on the blanket together gazing at the white fluffy clouds in the clear blue sky. Affectionately our fingers were stroking and fondling each other. The tie that held my braid was removed and her fingers ran through my hair and stroked my temples as I did the same to her. The

more we touched each other the more my skin seemed to tingle.

Her hand teasingly stroked up and down the flowers on my thighs.

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As the semester went on and the days of warm spring continued we found ourselves enjoying to more afternoons in the field together. Near the end of our school year and graduation our talks more and more often included the thought of sharing a life together.

Then a week before graduation somehow I found the courage to bring up the subject of marriage. To my surprise she was delightfully enthusiastic about my proposal. When? Where?

Now our talks centered around the subject of where we would like to live. Where would we like to work. Would we have a family.

She encouraged me to think of starting my own floral shop and I insisted with her knowledge and ideas she could manage a major company. We were good for each others' confidence, and felt that we would always share in each others lives.

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Graduation day arrived with great excitement on my part. However, it was an unusually hot day for early June with the temperature near ninety. I met Laurie in the morning at the gymnasium with great big bear hug and a smile as we picked up our caps and gowns.

She had to head off to another part of the campus to find her place with the business graduates, and I headed off towards the horticulture building.

When I arrived a familiar face greeted me. For the past two years Allison and I had shared many classes together. There were nineteen of us getting a degree in Floral Design with the numbers heavily leaning towards the women's side. Sixteen women and three men succeeded in passing the design test. Smiling and kidding nervously we all expressed our dreams of where we wanted our degree to take us. Some declared they already had positions in large design shops, department stores, accounts with boutiques.

Allison and I looked at each other and shrugged our shoulders.

As we continued to talk I wished that I had put my hair up in a ponytail rather than let it down for the day. Once when I was lifting the hair off my neck Allison took note that I was uncomfortable.

Her words, "Getting hot, huh?"

Brought a quick response of, "Yeah. Real hot."

She pointed out that many of the women had put their hair up for the day, and turned around to show me her hair. Off to a corner of the floral shop we went, and I did not notice her grab some baby's breath along the way. She brushed my hair, put it in a tie, wound it in a circle, and pinned it. She didn't mention that she had added some baby's breath and a daisy, but just said, "Chignon's are great on hot days like this!".

I never had a chance to catch a look in a mirror for we were called to get in line for our procession.

When graduation was over Allison and I, amid joyful tears cried, " We made it!"

Exchanging addresses and phone numbers, we promised to keep in touch and let each other know where we were working. We continued to talk as we headed back to the gymnasium to return our caps and gowns.

The moment I spotted Laurie and her eyes caught mine it was a race to embrace. As we were hugging her hands went to stroke my hair, and she pushed me back to look.

"You didn't let someone cut your beautiful hair did you?" she asked.

Allison walked up about that time and heard her. She explained to her, "I had just helped give him more of a cool style for this hot day."

Laurie shook her head, smiled and said, "Well , very nice! The flowers suite you just fine."

I reached back to feel, and by the texture and size I knew what Allison had so deftly woven in. Grinning at her I came with, "Think so?"

"Yes," she echoed back to me with a comment of, "maybe Allison could do it again for you on our wedding day."

My eyes opened wide and unexpectedly I replied, "Really? Never in our talks had we ever set a date. It was just a someday assumption."

"When?" asked Allison.

"This summer, maybe August," was the reply from Laurie.

So the plans were set in motion, and the discussions settled with Laurie's Mom and my Grandmother.

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When the subject of our marriage was brought up with Grandma she was elated. We were invited to live with her, for she could not imagine living alone in her big old five bedroom Victorian home all alone.

She also brought up the idea of my having my own Floral Shop. At the end of our driveway there was a garage and an old carriage house with a loft above. She must have given the idea much thought for she mentioned how we could convert it into a quaint little Floral Shop.

Then her eyes twinkled when she suggested that the loft be used for Laurie to set up computers. The computer could be used as a home base for Laurie's business; and, be of help with the accounting and paper work of the floral shop.

My young world was filled with excitement and change as the carriage house was being worked on. Electricians, carpenters, plumbers, all came and went busily. Very quickly a dream was coming true. I did not allow Laurie to see the loft as it was being worked on.

Grandma had arranged with the bank for a home improvement loan which was to be paid back by the business.

The coolers, the counters, the work benches all just seemed to materialize, and when the store front bay window went in the carriage house began taking on the look of a story book house in the woods. The loft had hardwood floors that shone, desks, cabinets,

computer desk tops, printers, and really was the epitome of efficiency.

It seemed as though Laurie was always out promoting her plan as manager of many small businesses through her computer base. She knew how to program her accounts so that she could work on them at the loft or on location.

Well, one day when she stopped by to talk to me about our wedding and my business.

I told her to close her eyes as I led her up the stairs into the loft. "Open your eyes!" I cried out.

Like a child at Christmas she gleamed with surprise.

With tears in her eyes she hugged me and whispered in my ear the sweet words of, "I love you."

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Our wedding day and my opening day were both approaching rapidly. It was only a week after our wedding that the floral shop would be ready to open, so we decided to have the reception at the shop.

After all arrangements were made there were only to be about thirty people at our wedding. Some of our old high school friends and classmates from college. And then of course, our family: Grandma and Laurie's mom.

On the wedding day I never saw Laurie till she came walking down the aisle all dressed in white. She wore a white knee length taffeta dress, a white veil with her hair in ringlets and woven in were sprigs of baby's breath and daisies. To me she was more beautiful than any princess in a fairy tale.

I stood there at the end of the aisle as she walked towards me. I was quite unaccustomed to the white tux that I was wearing.

True to her word, Laurie had Allison come over that morning and as once before put my hair up in a chignon with flowers to match hers.

When we returned to the shop I was in for a pleasant surprise. The people whom I had shared hours with in floral classes had somehow found the time to lavishly decorate the shop. Flowers were everywhere. It felt as though I had stepped into a perfect meadow flower land. Happiness filled my world and I looked forward to sharing many hours with Laurie.

In the beginning of our marriage we shared much of our time in loft and shop crossed regularly. We shared in establishing a home, for we painted together, wallpapered together, worked together on many things. We found time for walks at the lake, shopping together for groceries, clothes, and on and on.

My hours in the floral shop went by quickly and often I didn't notice that Laurie was out promoting her service.

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It was in my second month of business that I realized I could not keep up with all the calls and designs. A local funeral home liked my work, churches were making referrals, and so on.

I asked Laurie, "What would you think about me asking Allison to work with me. I need help and I know her real well and I feel we have a great working relationship."

She responded wholeheartedly in favor saying, “Call her and talk it over with her. Maybe if things are in agreement, Allison could start next week. Whatta think?”

“I think I’d better call right away!” I agreed as I went and picked up the phone and dialed her at home.

Allison answered on the second ring. To say she was surprised at both my call and proposal would be an understatement. But she was very receptive to my offer, and then after going back and forth on obvious details of necessity, she would be able to start next week.

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About five months later my wife’s services were also becoming very time consuming. She had secured several businesses by now that were dependent on her efficiency. Many of these firms expressed their gratitude by extending to her various free services as a bonus. For example, there was: an Aerobics center called ‘Heartbeat’ owned by Kathy; a beauty spa called ‘Strictly Feminine’ owned by Vicki; an Obstetrics Clinic, with a Dr. Anna Horvat as head of the clinic; and, a list of others that went on and on.

With Laurie away more and more in the evenings I spent a lot of time discussing business and social events with my Grandma. She helped to fill the empty hours, and then she became ill. Within a week my Grandma passed away leaving me with a great void in my life. I spent extra time on all the floral arrangements for her funeral, and sadly said my last farewell.

At work Allison could tell I missed my Grandma and tried to cheer me up.

One day while we were working on putting a wedding order together I opened up and shared that it wasn't just grandma's death, but that I was missing the time that Laurie and I used to share together. I told her about the many hours that Laurie spent away with clients or using their services.

Allison suggested to me that I speak to Laurie and let her know that I wanted more 'Share Time'.

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That evening, as we shared supper together I expressed my feelings of missing her and the fact that we didn't do as much together any more because she was always on the go.

She listened yet she seemed distant and preoccupied.

After clearing the table of the dishes she leaned over gave me a kiss on cheek and exclaimed, "Gotta go!"

Out the door she went and I heard the car backing out of the driveway. A few minutes later she pulled back in the drive and beeped.

When I stuck my head out in the cold January wind I heard, "Come on!"

I reached for my winter coat, slid it on, pulled up the hood, and dashed for the car.

As we were driving I asked, "Where we were heading to?"

Laurie was looking straight ahead at the road and with a twist of her mouth and her head she said, "Well... Tuesday nights and Thursdays are my Aero-

bic classes. And since you want to have share time, we'll do them together. OK?"

"Sure, I guess," I said unconvincingly.

Upon our arrival Laurie started to head for her locker to change, and realized that I didn't have any clothes to work out in. She found Kathy and asked if she could help me out.

Kathy took me to the counter where they sold workout clothing. She chuckled as she said, "Don't imagine you want pink?"

Then I was handed a pale blue leotard, white anklets, a blue and white striped jogging suit, and she asked to see one of my shoes.

She looked to note the size, 8, then handed me a pair of jogging shoes size 9.

I was told they didn't carry men's shoes and these would fit. I asked her where the men's locker room was and she informed me that they didn't have one. There were a few men that joined their wives in Aerobic classes; but, they came dressed ready to participate. However, she continued to explain, they did have a men's washroom. Thus, I was directed towards the men's washroom.

When I came out Laurie was waiting for me. She had a brush with her and quickly pulled my hair back into a ponytail.

As I jumped and bounced next to Laurie on the hardwood floor I looked around at all the others in the class. I seemed to fit right in with all the other bobbing ponytails and leotards.

At break time I was getting warm like many of the others. They were taking off their warm-ups. I took

off my top, but opted to leave on my pants. If I took them off I would have been a little bit embarrassed by the bulge in my leotards that the others did not have. Of course I was lacking in the bulges that they were showing in their leotards, and I was well aware of Kathy's bouncing breasts as she was directing the warm-ups.

At the end of the class I had quite a few women catch me on the way out and mention that it was nice to have me in class. Some of them I recognized as customers whom I had served at our floral shop.

When I came out of the washroom Laurie took my aerobic clothes and put them in her locker. I was told that there was no sense in carrying them back and forth.

On the drive home I shared with her that I had not realized how out of shape I was, and that the aerobics really pushed me!

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On Thursdays as we were rushing to finish up some last minute requests for Friday pick-ups I told Allison that I was still sore from Tuesday night.

“What did you do to get that way?” she asked,

“I am going to Aerobics with Laurie.”

“That's so lovely, at least you're together and 'sharing',” she observed with an amused smile.

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That night Laurie and I ate supper together.

Afterwards we cleared and washed the dishes so that they would not be waiting for us when we returned from Aerobics.

While we were washing them Laurie gave me hug and said, "I just realized that you always did the dishes and cleaned up while I was gone, Honey. I guess I took you for granted."

Just to hear her say those words filled me with warm feelings.

When the dishes were done she went into the bathroom to fix her long hair and get ready for Aerobics. All done with hers she called out to me, "Erik come in here!"

She had taken the time to put her long hair in a French braid. "Do you mind if I braid yours?"

I looked into the mirror and with uncertainty replied, "Guess not."

And soon my hair was in a much shorter French braid.

As we were driving to the Aerobics class I pulled down my hood to feel the tight braid. My vanity even had me look into the make-up mirror on passenger side since Laurie was driving.

Since Laurie insisted I let my hair grow out I had been accustomed to it hanging on my shoulders or in a ponytail; but, this seemed oh, so different.

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Soon the Aerobic classes became an accepted pattern for Tuesdays and Thursdays.

When Kathy saw that I was becoming a regular she handed me another leotard and warm-up, but this one was a purple, or some may even call it lilac.

So I alternated each leotard and warm-up set every other week so that I could wash and clean the other.

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Near the end of February I commented to Laurie as we were washing dishes before we left that I was rather envious of women that stayed after class to sit in the whirlpool.

As we headed out that night for Aerobics I had not noticed that a bag had been put into the car. That night we had attended a late class and thus it was near closing as I headed for the washroom to change, Laurie asked me to wait a minute. She came out of the women's locker room with the bag which she handed to me as she told me to meet her in the whirlpool.

In the washroom I opened the bag to find one of her one-piece swimsuits. A pale green one with a floral pattern on the right bra cup. I thought and thought about it. To say I was hesitant was an understatement. I knew she would be waiting so I put it on and meekly headed for the whirlpool.

The lights were dim when I arrived at the whirlpool, and there was only one other woman besides Laurie in the pool. I am not even sure because of the lighting if she realized that I was Laurie's husband. She left a few minutes later, leaving us all alone.

Laurie informed me that she had made arrangements with Kathy to stay late and take care of some needed entries in the computer. When the last member had left Kathy walked by the whirlpool and with a



warm teasingly way told Laurie to 'lock up' when she was done.

With our bodies melting away the aches and pains of our efforts earlier, the warm water surged about us we looked lovingly towards one another. We kissed each other with a passion that had been missing in our relationship for a while.

Her hand reached for my thigh and gently stroked up my leg till she came to an aroused bulge in my suit. My hand stroked her breast as she deftly freed my pulsating bulge.

That night I felt a new wonderful kind of sharing with her, and I hoped that we would have many more to come.

With all the Aerobics I noticed that I had lost a few pounds that I was not even aware could be worn off, for I was never very heavy. However, it seemed I had trimmed down and became even leaner. Between the busy schedule in the floral shop and workouts I was becoming quite fit.

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The first week in March caught us loaded with floral orders, and because of this, housework took a back seat. Laundry piled up and up. I was looking for a pair of slacks or jeans on a Friday night, but had none.

Laurie was telling me, "Hurry up!"

She had told me to be ready by six thirty, and I had worked in shop till six. She had the evening planned and I could tell I was upsetting the boat.

I explained that I didn't have any clean pants.