

## *Chapter 3*

"I remember a little girl, once. She was ten years old, I think, and she lived with her Grandma and Grandpa on a small farm in the hills of northeastern Alabama."

"Was that little girl you?" he asked me.

"No," I said, then continued.

"The night was sweltering hot—at least ninety degrees and probably over ninety percent humidity. Living at night was miserably hard, and clothes seemed determined to stick to your body in the most uncomfortable ways. The little girl was in the kitchen pouring glasses of cold Coke for her Grandma and herself.

"All the windows were wide open, as was the kitchen door, and the buzzing sounds of the cicadas and the chirruping of the crickets were a familiar drone in the background. The screens in the kitchen windows and on the kitchen door were nearly new, and they did a passable job of keeping the mosquitoes and other bugs out of the house. Now and then a bigger bug would fly—crash!—into a screen with a buzzing crunch, then buzz away again, angrily.

"All the lights in the kitchen were off, and the little girl stood looking out into the back yard at the curving tracks of the fireflies as they looked for their mates in the hot, thick, night air.

"Grandma called to her, 'Where's my Coke-Cola?' Grandma's teeth were out, and her words were hard to understand."

He was writing on his tablet, but he said nothing about the story, so far. I took a sip of my coffee, and continued.

"'Comin' Grandma,' said the little girl, but there was little enthusiasm in her reply. She picked up the slippery, sweating glasses—souvenirs of a vacation to the Great Smoky Mountains—and took Grandma's and her Coke to the living room.

"'Thank ye, honey chile,' Grandma said to the little girl. Grandma

liked those 'homey' types of endearments, though the little girl really didn't care for them very much. Grandma just wanted the little girl to know that she loved her, and wasn't afraid of sounding a little corny in the process."

Scribble, scribble. The angle of the light obscured his eyes, hidden as they were behind his glasses. I adjusted my own.

"The little girl mumbled something under her breath, complaining about the way Grandma addressed her, but Grandma just smiled, chuckled to cover her own embarrassment, and allowed the little girl to walk back into the kitchen, to resume her solemn vigil at the window.

"Outside, the fireflies were writing their flashing green poetry in the still, warm, sultry night air.

"It was clearly *too* hot and *too* humid to wear much in the way of clothing. As a five- or six-year-old the little girl had used to parade around in only her underpants, but in the last couple of years she had discovered her new 'female identity,' and had chosen to cover up a little more. Grandma was sometimes a little senile, and forgot that the little girl was maturing, and so she often suggested that the little girl undress down to her underwear, so she could be a little cooler. The little girl wouldn't do it, though, when anyone else was around. Instead, that night she wore a sleeveless, cotton print blouse and an old pair of jeans, cut off very short. She rarely wore any kind of shoes at home, especially in the summer, and with her long, strawberry blond hair wound up and pinned on top her head, she was just barely uncovered enough for the heat to be tolerable."

"She has the same color hair you do," remarked my therapist, tapping his pencil on the edge of his tablet. He smiled, then. "Go on."

"The little girl—"

"—What's her name?" He asked, interrupting.

"I don't know," I said, irritated, "Cindy, or Mandy, or Linda, or something."

"OK," he said.

"OK," I said. "Anyway, *Cindy* had begun to develop breasts about two or three months ago."

"How old was she?" He asked me.

"Ten, I think. Does it matter?"

"I don't know. Does it?" He smiled, looked at me in that therapist way. I don't think he expected an answer—or maybe he did. I didn't care, either way. When he didn't press me, I went on.

"Anyway, *Cindy* had these *breasts*. She still hadn't convinced Grandma she needed a bra, but she also knew it wouldn't be very long before her blouses wouldn't fit her right, and of course in the fall the

school wouldn't let her in without the proper clothing—especially the bra—since her boy classmates simply could not be *allowed* to see uncovered bosoms. The little girl's—Cindy's—nipples were quite swollen then, and they hurt a lot. Her breasts had begun to puff out very noticeably, and she could see she was actually starting to have some real cleavage.

“As she wiped the sweat from around her neck, she accidentally brushed her arm against her tender nipple. The pain it gave her caused her breath to suck in through clenched teeth, and she swore quietly. ‘These bosoms better stop hurting soon,’ she thought, ‘or I don’t know what I’m gonna do.’ They were so sore and tender she felt she could almost feel them growing, and their stretching against her blouse was a constant, throbbing irritation. ‘Maybe I just ought to take my blouse off,’ she considered. ‘Lord knows, Grandma wouldn’t mind. It’s dark, and besides, Grandma don’t see that good anyway.’

“A slight breeze blew up just then, and she moved to the screen door to feel more of it. It wasn’t enough, so she opened the screen door and stepped outside. The old concrete stoop was about two feet by four feet—just big enough to stand on—and over the door was a dim, yellow ‘bug light,’ which Cindy turned off just before she let the screen door bang closed.

“The breeze felt deliciously good against her sweat-glistened skin, and she felt the urge once more to remove her blouse. She looked around. Not a soul in sight—even the dog was too hot to get up—so one-by-one she plucked at the buttons on her blouse.”

“You have good imagery,” he commented.

“Thanks,” I said, and went on.

“Once all the buttons were undone, she gingerly pulled the damp fabric away from her chest. She removed the blouse completely, and it was dropped, forgotten, to the stoop. It was fairly dark, and she was hard-pressed to see much about her in the dim glow from the three-quarter moon standing midway up from the southeastern horizon. Cindy noticed the shine from the sweat on her bare skin, and suddenly felt, though she didn’t completely understand it, that she was a child at home in nature, and had been freed to roam the night. ‘The natural child must roam totally free.’ And that meant *naked*, so she decided she was going to take off *all* her clothes so she could roam the dark, damp woods totally naked and free.”

“That’s interesting,” he interjected, “where do you think she got that idea?”

It took me quite awhile to think of an answer. I couldn’t. “I don’t

know.”

He accepted it with an OK and went back to his scribbling. It took me a moment to resume.

“Cindy feared nothing in the woods—she had been in them so many times, also at night—and she wanted to feel the cooling night breeze on her totally bare skin.

“In expectancy and innocence,” he raised his eyebrows at that, but I forged on, “she stepped off the stoop and walked out into the yard, unzipping her shorts as she went. The shorts came off quickly, and they were soon followed by her sweaty underpants, leaving her completely naked. She could feel that her hips seemed a little wider, surely a change toward future womanhood, but her smooth vagina was still young and completely hairless, so she indeed felt like a little child again.”

But I got no reaction to my comments about the girl’s vagina, which I had expected from him.

“She walked to the edge of the cleared area of the yard, and unerringly found the path entrance into the woods. Dry, dead leaves crackled under her feet, but otherwise the woods were fairly quiet and richly redolent of earthy humus and perfumy flowers.”

I paused to take a sip from my coffee, and to allow him to comment. He was silent; I went on.

“Cindy walked a long way. The path she followed descended gradually toward a small creek about three quarters of a mile from the house, and in several minutes of walking she came to the three foot high, steeply angled bank.

“She heard a frog plop into the water somewhere in front of her, and she heard the faint sound of water gurgling around a large rock. That would be the ‘crossing rock’ she knew, and she worked her way over until she could just see its outline in the near total blackness. She thought she had judged the distance correctly, but when she jumped out toward it, her foot hit the angled, wet, mossy side of the rock, so she skidded past it and landed in the water.

“Cindy floundered briefly in the cold, pitch-black water, but it wasn’t more than two feet deep and she was on her feet quickly. She stood a moment, coughing up water and checking herself for injuries. She searched in the obsidian blackness, and in a moment or two found the side of the rock. Balancing carefully, lest she should fall again, she boosted herself onto it.

“The top of the rock was fortunately much warmer than the water, so she sat there a few minutes to calm down and dry off, a little. Her legs and arms were covered with mud and leaves, and she dipped her hands into

the quietly flowing water to wash herself off. As she dried, she actually shivered in the barely moving breeze. Her hair hadn't gotten very wet, though, and was still mostly in place on top her head, so after a pause to catch her breath and collect her wits, she stood up carefully and stepped off the rock onto the opposite bank of the creek."

I took another sip of my cooling coffee. I decided to tease him, a little. "Does this story excite you?" I asked him.

He shook his head. "No. Does it excite you?" I had expected his answer to be another question, and it was.

"Parts do," I sipped, "but parts *don't*." He nodded, like he knew, and scribbled. I went on.

"Cindy knew she was now on someone else's property, and just then she got a sudden urge then to find their house and spy on them. She had completely forgotten she was naked, and started off rapidly away from the creek in the direction of the neighbor's house. She wasn't too sure, but she seemed to remember it was about a half mile uphill and angled off to the right. She covered the distance at a brisk trot, still shivering a little now and then, but by the time she could see the house she was nearly dry in the warm, moist, almost still night air."

"You should write these things down," he suggested.

"Think so?" I was flattered. "Am I that good?"

"I mean," he corrected, "in your journal."

"But my journal's supposed to be about me."

"So it is." He regarded me dryly, wryly, from over the rims of his glasses.

I decided to let that remark pass. I wanted to go on, but our time was close to being over for the evening, so I told him I'd have to continue next time.

"Why don't you write the rest down in your journal. I think it's an interesting story, and I want you to finish it before you come back for your next session." He concluded his scribbling.

"Sure," I agreed, "but why?"

"Well," he looked up at me, "why, then, are you telling me this?"

He had me there. "Touché." I stood up. "Maybe I'll finish it for you in my journal, maybe not. I don't know."

"Do us both a favor," he stood up, too. "Finish it for *yourself*."

"OK," I nodded. He gave me a hug around the shoulders, which I've always liked, and our session was over.

Kerry Lynn could see the glow from another yellow bug light as she came to the clearing around the house. There seemed to be people home,

and she moved carefully to her left, skirting the clearing so she could get a better look, but not be seen herself. The neighbors' dog, she knew, had been killed by another neighbor a few weeks ago when it had gotten into their chickens, so she felt that if she were careful enough, no one would hear her approach the house.

Kerry Lynn came up to the house from the left, and crouched behind a long, low chicken coop not very far from the back door. Through the screen she could see a man. He was standing with his back to the door, was rather fat, and was also bare from the waist up. He wore only a pair of holey, baggy underpants, and she had to suppress a giggle when he reached inside them and began to do something to himself. She wasn't sure what he was doing, then, but actually he was masturbating. In his other hand he held what appeared to be a beer bottle, and she watched him quickly down it, and move away from the door momentarily—probably to get another. In a moment or two, he reappeared in the doorway.

The chickens were still sleeping, and Kerry Lynn still crouched behind the coop. The man could not see Kerry Lynn watching him as he resumed his masturbation rather disinterestedly. It both disgusted and aroused her in a way she did not quite understand. She didn't know where or when, but she had seen it before. And something about it definitely did arouse her.

The man was fat, and hairy, and he had a large beer belly that looked very much to Kerry Lynn like two watermelons fighting under a shaggy rug, since it jiggled and bounced as he stroked his penis. She couldn't see his penis, or much of anything else, and she wished he would take his underpants off and turn around so she could see what his 'thing' looked like. She had heard about 'things,' and was very curious. While the man stroked himself, Kerry Lynn absently touched her fingers to her vagina. That was what men and women did, together. The man put his 'thing' into the woman's 'thing,' and then he shot stuff into the woman. Kerry Lynn didn't either know why she knew that, or why she was so oddly excited by it. She wasn't even sure what her 'excitement' was, just that it gave her a *very strange feeling* inside.

Grandma's story about a stork and a cabbage patch being required to make a baby, she knew, wasn't the *real* truth, but she wasn't really clear if any of this was related to the 'fuck' thing she'd also heard about from her friends at school. It seemed as though it might be, from the various descriptions she'd heard. Fuck. That was an interesting word Kerry Lynn had heard Grandpa say when he had used to get really riled up. Grandma had always called him down with, "Joseph Earl Potter! God should strike

you!" And they would go on talking as if nothing out of the ordinary had been said. Interesting.

Kerry Lynn had been so intent on studying the man's masturbation that she didn't hear the approach of another man. He startled her tremendously when he yelled at her from behind, in the darkness, "Hey there, you! What you doin' out here?" He sounded really angry. Her heart leapt to her throat, pounding madly very suddenly, and she stood up and spun around to face her discoverer. She was much too afraid of having been discovered to say anything.

"I said, what you doin' here?" He pointed to her crotch, puzzled. "Yer a girl. An' yer nekkid. What you doin' *nekkid* out here?"

Kerry Lynn stammered, "I w-was j-just out t-takin' a w-w-walk." She always stuttered when she was upset or scared, and she was *really* scared, then.

He seemed to consider her explanation very briefly. "Yer that Potter girl." The man had recognized her. "Yer a crazy little bitch, all right! Hidin' out here watchin' m'brother do hisself 'cause he so lonely since his wife die." He was telling her their whole life story, it seemed. "An' yer *buck nekkid* to boot!"

The look in the man's eyes sent urgent danger signals to Kerry Lynn. She wanted *really badly* to run away. The man sounded much too interested in her nakedness, and she knew she should be fearful of her safety. She backed away, making as if to run for it, but the man was too quick to react, and grabbed her by the arm to keep her from escaping.

"Hey, Billy Joe!" He called loudly up to the house. "Lookit what we got *here!*" He shook Kerry Lynn, her feet barely touching the ground. Her hair, so carefully wound up and pinned, began to come loose, and hung in her face, making it difficult to see whatever she *could* see.

The other man, Billy Joe, turned to face the back door, and let go of himself. The man holding Kerry Lynn gave her a hard shake, as if to assure himself that she was really there, and caused more hair to cascade into her eyes.

"What the *fuck* is goin' on out there?" Billy Joe, angry, burst through the doorway and onto the back porch.

"Billy Joe! Lookit what we got here!" he repeated, practically hissing as he dragged Kerry Lynn forcibly from behind the chicken coop and into the dim glow of the yellow bug light near the porch. "This the little Potter bitch, Billy Joe. She out here spyin' on us!" Another shake of the arm, and harder. Kerry Lynn thought her arm would pull from the socket. "C'n you believe it!?" He seemed about ready to pee his pants with glee.

"The *hell* you say!" Billy Joe's belly jiggled grossly in the ocher light.

"What's *that* little slut doin' here ...?" He then noticed she was nude. Completely 'nekkid'. "She-*it!* Goddamn! What you take 'er clothes off fer?"

"Hell, she come here just buck nekkid like you see 'er!" He seemed to prance, so villainously gleeful was he with his discovery. "Fuck! I ain't *never* seen nothin' like it!" He sniffed, and she could hear air drawing in through thick snot.

Billy Joe began to stand court on the porch. He paced back and forth, not saying anything, his hugely bulging belly bouncing obscenely with each step. He put his hand to his chin, turned around, pointed his finger. "What yer name?"

Kerry Lynn was totally, absolutely petrified with fear. She wished with all her might she had not been discovered, and that both these men were part of some very, very bad nightmare. She closed her eyes tightly and wished, and hoped, and prayed, but when she opened them again they were both still there. And Billy Joe, the older and fatter one, was giving her a cold, close appraisal.

"*Ah said*, slut, what yer name?"

"K-K ... K-Kerry L-L-Lynn." She stammered badly, heart thumping wildly in her ears.

Vaguely, as if from a distance, she heard the other man say, "It the Potter bitch, all right!" But Kerry Lynn's attention was riveted on the man on the porch, who pinned her with his eyes, a malevolent, evil stare that froze her blood cold in her veins.

"That's right," he said, his voice deepening and becoming more predatory, "I know who you is. You one crazy fuckin' bitch, all right." He licked his lips.

"Billy Joe! You think we oughta teach 'er a lesson?" The other man curled his words in an evil, lascivious manner, almost whispering.

Billy Joe grinned, showing dirty, crooked teeth. "What kinda lesson, Bobby Lee?"

Bobby Lee, the other man—the one holding Kerry Lynn—jerked her around to face the blackness of the back yard. "Maybe we oughta feed 'er to the *hawgs!*" And he shoved Kerry Lynn forward toward the pitch-black darkness. She could hear the rustles and snorts of pigs. "Maybe," he moved close to her ear, and she felt his tongue slide into it, blocking her hearing and filling her ear with slimy, foul saliva, "maybe we oughta show this slut-faced little cunt what she *missin'* by *watchin'* instead of *doin'!*" And it wasn't a question.

She couldn't see Billy Joe, the older man, but she heard him snort. It was a sound not at all unlike the real pigs.

Neither man spoke for about a minute. Kerry Lynn began to sob. Small, repressed whimpers she fought to keep silent.

Finally, Billy Joe broke the silence with, "Bring 'er here, Bobby Lee."

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When I got up the next morning and went out to the kitchen to make coffee, Kerry was still on the couch, asleep, right where I had put her to bed the night before. She had wound herself up in the blanket I had given her, and was lying on her stomach, sleeping quietly and soundly. Her long, red-gold hair was splayed all about her, almost completely obscuring her head and shoulders, and she had her face buried in the couch cushion she had been using as a pillow. While I waited for the coffee to finish brewing, I watched her sleep. She moved a couple of times—obviously still alive—and twisted the blanket even more tightly around her body. It wasn't very cold in the apartment, so I knew she had to be pretty warm. She had taken off the jacket, and her shoes and socks, too, before getting situated, and I could see the pink soles of her small, bare feet sticking out. Oddly, I found them pretty. And endearing.

When I had gotten my first cup of coffee poured, I went over to the couch. By that time she was on her side, but she faced the back of the couch, her arm draped over it. I noticed a steady, deep, and even rise of her chest as she slept. I watched her while I sipped my coffee, and even had the urge to wake her, but I didn't. It was much better just to let her sleep.

I think it was watching her sleep, and seeing how relaxed and comfortable she looked, that gave me the first indication of something more with this girl than just a brief encounter. I felt warmed by her, akin to her. But after a few minutes, though, I left her. I had to take a shower. As I washed my hair I thought how much I might like—and need—to be warmed even further by her. She was so pretty, so vulnerable and fragile, so mistreated and abused that I felt a very strong urge to stay and hold her. Keep her and protect her.

But I had some place I had to go.

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I don't remember much about the night I left the apartment, and Danny Golden, for good. I mean, by the time Marc arrived, I was pretty smashed. Getting drunk was almost all I could have done, at the time. Though I remember how much he had insisted upon coming in, and that he stayed after he saw how bad a shape I was in, most of the rest of that night is lost to me, forever.

I don't think I really want to remember. I can ask Marc, again, but he just says there's not much to tell. I am just glad that it happened *at all*.

I think I slept a long time that first night in Marc's apartment. I woke up, finally, around one o'clock in the afternoon, feeling reasonably rested, but with a monstrous hangover from all the scotch I'd drunk the night before. Since I had apparently blacked out sometime shortly after Marc arrived at my apartment, and don't remember anything at all after that point, when I awoke on his couch I was, needless to say, *very* surprised. It took me a long time to figure out where I was, and even longer to figure out *why*. But I knew the 'why,' really. I just couldn't quite admit it.

I remembered my 'date' with Marc Huffman. I remembered I'd let him in the apartment, and I remembered drinking lots of booze—*lots* of booze—and then nothing more. I must be in *his* apartment, then. Had I just come to his place for the night, or had I really, *really* left? Without remembering it specifically, I felt the latter was much more likely the truth. I had wanted—*so badly*—to leave Danny and my former life. I knew my 'date' with Marc Huffman was clearly a conscious attempt to carry it off, though I had tried to pretend otherwise. Without really admitting it to myself, it had been my goal all along.

So I *had* left, then. Left for good.

I sat up on the couch, unwinding the blanket from around me, and looked around the place without moving from my spot. It was a very nice apartment, almost as nice as the one I'd left, and it had the unmistakable look of a bachelor's place to it. It was clean, though, and I was mildly surprised to notice it. It had all the comforts—and more—than I could ask for. I found the TV and stereo remote control, and turned the TV on. I didn't really want to watch anything, I just needed the noise to help drown out the sounds of all my insecure, scared and panicky thoughts. All talking at once.

I was scared, at first. Danny would surely be missing me by now, and if he had any way of discovering my whereabouts, then he would surely be coming to look for me. If he had been hiding outside my apartment the night before, he may even now know where I was, and for sure he would try to get me back. Since I remembered nothing about leaving, I couldn't possibly say if I had been seen or not, but there was no use, now, in

worrying about something I could do absolutely nothing about.

Feeling strangely elated, but still somewhat fatalistic and resigned, I got up to explore the place a little. First I had to find the bathroom, and I did. It was large, and was entered off the single large bedroom. As I went into the bathroom to tend to nature's call, I noticed that his queen-sized bed was rumpled and unmade. And it looked soft and *very* comfortable.

The bathroom was large and very spacious. Once I clicked on the light, I found it was also very bright and cheery, and immediately felt very much at ease and at home there. After I relieved myself (the first necessary thing), I simply *had* to find some aspirin, or something. I perused the medicine cabinet, finding some Tylenol. He had only a single plastic cup in the bathroom, but I used it anyway to wash down about four of the painkillers. I drank several glasses of water after that, and hoped that the combination of the water and the Tylenol wouldn't make me too sick. I didn't think it would.

The entire end of the bathroom, next to the door, was mirrored, making the room seem absolutely huge, not merely large, and as I passed by the mirror I looked myself over in its reflection. Still dressed. Of course, I couldn't know if I had redressed afterward, or not ... so I studied myself with the practiced brevity of the professional. My face, though, was horrible—a completely battered mess. My lower lip on the left side was swollen to nearly twice its normal size, and my right eye was definitely blackened, swollen half shut. The lower lid was puffed up nastily, and a dark purple-black crescent surrounded it. I could still see out of that eye, so there was probably no permanent damage to my vision, but the red blood that filled the lower half didn't look very good, at all. Not a very attractive feature, to be sure. My face and neck were covered with bruises, easily inventoried, so I carefully unbuttoned my blouse to survey the rest of me. I was almost afraid what I might find.

There was a large bruise on the left side of my ribcage, and it hurt mightily when I probed it, even lightly. I could move and breathe reasonably well, so there were probably no ribs broken. At least I didn't think so. I removed the blouse and turned around to check out my back. Nothing much there except old news. Good. Next I unfastened my jeans and carefully worked them down. There was a bruise on the right cheek of my ass, but it was more of an annoyance than a problem. So, that seemed to be the extent of my injuries, then.

I appraised myself in the mirror as I stood there in my bra and panties. Despite my cuts and bruises, I was *still* a pretty girl. I've always liked my face, especially when it's not bruised and beaten, and my long, wavy, strawberry blond hair still has to be one of my most favorite

physical attributes. I was a mess, true, but I could really be beautiful again if I were just given half a chance.

I was a little thin, though. I had worked so hard to keep thin for Danny and his clients. Since then I've gained some weight, and I think I like myself much better with the additional ten or fifteen pounds. I think my ribs showed too plainly, and my hips were little too bony for my personal tastes. My boobs are larger, now, too, but even then they were pretty nice and full. I was just past a perfect 'C' cup, but since, I've grown to almost overfill a 'D'.

I unfastened my bra, and critiqued my bare boobs in the mirror. Next to my face and hair, I like my boobs the best. I've been very lucky to be given ample, womanly proportions, though they've been much used and abused over the years. I want to be proud of myself, and to have someone be proud of me, too. As I looked myself over, I wasn't proud, or happy with what I saw, though I was determined to change things. I didn't know who this Marc Huffman person really was, but my first impressions were good, and I was hopeful things would develop.

They did, and they have.

After checking myself over thoroughly, I went next to the shower. It was separate from the tub, surrounded by six-foot-tall frosted glass walls. I felt I needed a shower badly, and turned on the water to let it warm up. In a few moments it was ready, so I pulled my panties off and stepped inside.

The water was very hot, but the spray was soothing and relaxing as I stood there, getting thoroughly wet. I put my head under the spray, and when my hair was fully wetted, I squirted some of his shampoo into the palm of my hand and worked it into a lather on my head.

It felt so good to be in this place. It was bright and warm, and smelled invitingly of a man's deodorant and after-shave. The aromas of his presence were strong, and it excited me to think of the clean, manly strength they represented. I definitely didn't miss my old apartment, or my old life, at all. The memories, the feelings it engendered were much too painful and difficult to deal with, so the sooner it could be left behind, the better.

I spent a long time in the shower. I think I soaped myself off at least three times, and maybe by the third time felt clean enough to get out. I had neglected to find a towel before I got in the shower, so once again was forced to use something of his.

I turned the water off and opened the shower door. His towel was hanging on a rack next to the shower, and I pulled it off. It had just a hint of moistness to it, probably from his shower that morning, but I used it

anyway, and dried myself off. Once mostly dry, except for my hair, I wrapped the towel around me and tucked the end in between my boobs. It felt so good to be clean, again. I found another towel in a small linen closet next to his large, walk-in clothes closet, and used the second towel to work on my hair. After I dried it as well as I could, I found his hairbrush and spent several minutes working out the tangles. My hair was fairly long, then, falling about a third of the way down my back, and I was careful to remove all my long, reddish hairs from his brush. Once my hair was brushed out decently, I wound the second towel around my hair and left the bathroom.

For the next hour or so I sat in front of the TV, in nothing but a damp towel, letting my hair dry, and trying to let the Tylenol finish working on my hangover.



I had a very busy day at the office that day, and believe it or not, I'd almost completely forgotten I'd left someone alone at the apartment. I remember as I left the office that afternoon I was all set to grab a beer, my tennis racket and a change of clothes, and hit the courts for a good, sweaty hour of tennis. I was most surprised, then, when I opened the door and found both the lights *and* the stereo on, and Kerry in the kitchen.

I had to take a mental step back. Oh, *yes!* I remember! (How could I have forgotten?) One Kerry MacDonald was staying with me, and there she was at the kitchen counter, getting ready to add a scoop of ice cream to the contents of a blender. And seeing her there, I jettisoned most of my earlier fears. My worries about her ripping me off and taking off seemed to have been completely unfounded, and I felt a warm rush of relief that *she*, this person who affected me so—*unusually*—was not only still here, but was at home in my home. The feeling of relief it gave me was recognized, and welcomed. My overall mood shot up about two-hundred percent in a matter of a few seconds.

"Hey!" I called out to her as I tossed my car keys on the counter by the phone.

Kerry's movements were slow and measured as she turned toward me. She looked as though she had taken a shower and cleaned up. Her hair was pulled back into a long, straight ponytail and her face had a clean, uncluttered look that was very pretty. It struck me again. She was very pretty! And she smiled so slowly and so nicely that I felt physically

weakened by the depths to which it pierced me. She had on a pair of jeans, but no shoes or socks, and had evidently scrounged in my closet for one of my old flannel shirts, a red and black plaid that was easily two sizes too big for her. She had rolled the sleeves up to keep from getting them in the ice cream, but her small frame swam in the shirt despite the appealing bulge of her breasts.

"Hey, buddy," she said, and smiled. Cheerful enough.

I had an opportunity to survey her a little more closely. The right eye was purple, black, blue, and a couple of other shades in between. Not a pretty sight. The swelling on her lip was thankfully subsiding, I thought, but I could see a bruise on her chin and along the left side of her neck. I was hurt over her injuries. It was painful even to see them. It wasn't right, and it wasn't fair. But I must have taken too long in my observations, because she asked me what was wrong. Maybe my expression showed my anger and hurt. Maybe she thought it was directed toward her.

"How are you feeling?" I asked, but I must have been frowning.

Instead of answering, her face scrunched into a look of concern.

"What's wrong?"

"Wrong?" I was fine. "I'm fine. It's that ... ah ... your eye ... ah ..."

Damn it all! I could hardly get it out. "You don't ... look ... so good." I was embarrassed to have said it.

She hesitated in her response, seemed to consider it, but shrugged instead, turning away and going back to filling the blender with ice cream. She sighed, then. "I'll be fine. You don't need to worry about me. I'm OK." She seemed to be pushing me away. I didn't want to be pushed away.

"I'm really sorry, Kerry. This shouldn't happen. No one should be hit, like that. It isn't right."

"Yeah?" she said, back to me, irony heavy in her voice, "But it happens." She dropped a scoop-full, plop! into the blender. Milk splashed out onto the counter.

I have to admit in that moment I had absolutely no idea how to proceed with *the girl*. I couldn't get close enough—when it was important—to find out what was going on with her. And when she *did* smile and seemed OK—the vibes she generated took me apart.

I was, once again, completely out of my element. I wanted to get closer—I felt I *had* to get closer—but any time and every time I tried she found a reason and a need to push me away. What had happened from the time I walked in the door and we said 'hi,' to the time she noticed that I noticed the bruises on her face? I didn't have a clue, and it was beginning to drive me crazy.

I walked around the counter so I could be next to her. My excuse (if

asked) would be that I wanted to observe the ritual of 'the making of the milkshake,' but I knew what I really wanted. *The Touch*. And sure enough, as I neared her it was like I walked into a very strong magnetic field. It was as if my hair stood on end, or something. Whoof! It felt weird, and very otherworldly. It was all I could do to keep my voice under control when I finally collected enough energy to speak.

"Looks good," I said, referring to the milkshake on-the-make. "Can I have some, too?"

She eyed me, acknowledging that I had probably changed the subject. She smiled slightly, but sadly. "Sure." Her black eye was very swollen, and looked painful.

I changed the subject, again. "I'm really glad you're here."

She dropped another scoop in the blender. She hesitated, but didn't look at me. "Me, too," she said, but her smile faded as she considered what she was about to say. "You didn't have to do it."

I knew to what she referred. "Yes I did."

She rounded on me. "Well, I never fuckin' asked you!" And bang! she was angry, just like that.

I was taken aback by her sudden blowup. "Whoa, take it easy! I'm not here to hassle you. Really! Just take it easy." I almost put my hand on her shoulder. I wanted to, but I hesitated, unsure of how she'd react—how *I'd* react.

It took about a minute for her to calm down. If this hair-trigger emotional outburst sort of thing continued, I knew with certainty we were headed for big trouble. Probably my level stare said something to that effect, or at least I hoped it did.

"I'm sorry," she apologized, "you're right. It's not your fault. None of it. It's *my* fucking problem." She pointed to herself. "It's *my* fucking fault!" She seemed to be still pretty upset. I could guess why.

"I can't believe it could be your fault," I said. "I can't believe how it could be *anyone's* fault that they've been the victim of violence. **Of abuse!**" The idea of physical abuse, of this person especially, made me sick.

"Well, you don't know *shit*, Johnny." It was naked hostility, and I guess she wanted me to stand there and take it. I wasn't sure about that.

"Don't think I'm trying to patronize you. I don't have the time or the energy to waste." I folded my arms, tightly. Unfolded them. "I *just* wanted to know how you were. I wanted to see how you were feeling."

"Well, I don't want to know how I am. I don't want to see how I'm feeling. **So just lay off!**" She threw the ice cream scoop toward the sink. With a skip off the counter, it caromed off the far edge of the sink and spun away, landing on the floor about eight feet away, almost in the living

room. Thank God the scoop was plastic.

I took a step back, and a deep breath. "Hold it! *Time out.*" I made my hands into a T, my voice quiet, calm. "I can just look at you and know how hurt you are. *Believe me*, I can. And I don't want to pry into your life or analyze you in any way, but you *have* to meet me halfway or this whole thing will be over even before it starts."

"What *whole* thing?" She was pretty sharp to pick up on my words so quickly.

"I don't know ..." I wasn't sure what I meant "... but well ... for one thing, we seem to be sharing living quarters, at the moment. That's something. Then there is this thing about the date we were supposed to have. That could be something, too." I paused, starting to get on a roll. "Then there is the fact that whenever I'm around you *I can't think straight!* And I can assure you that that *is* something."

"Hmmm ..." was all she said in response.

"You're hurting," I continued, "and it sounds like you're trying to hurt me in return. I guess I can understand that, and I'll try to accept it, for now. But please, try to ease up a little on the naked hostility. That can be a little hard to take."

"Hmmm ..."

"And another thing," I grinned, breaking the tension, "what in the hell are you doing putting *five* scoops of ice cream in that milkshake?" I was joking, and she knew it.

"I like ice cream," she said, and grinned back.

"And get the damn scoop off the floor!"

She retrieved the scoop, ran the blender, and as we were sitting down on the couch together with our milkshakes, she said, "Tell me. What's this about you not thinking straight around me?"

• • •

I don't remember exactly when things between Danny Golden and me started to change. From the beginning he was always touching me, putting his arm around my shoulders, patting me on the rear, massaging my neck. He hugged me a lot, kissed me continually while we were in public, (something that took some getting used to) and then at times he would ask me to remove parts of my clothing.

I hadn't had any 'real' experiences with men before, and Danny was generally gentle, and oh-so attentive. So I was uncertain and unprepared

when he first asked me to take something off. First it was my panties, then my blouse, (I always got to keep my jacket or my coat on) and even once or twice—my jeans, too. Even though I worried about being exposed in public, and never got used to it completely, his requests also excited me. I'm ashamed to say I may even have looked forward to it.

The one time I took the initiative, though, and decided to show up for our date minus some 'necessary' piece of clothing, he only got angry and made me go back inside and 'get dressed'. He *wasn't* into having me be in control, and that was pretty obvious. But, that aside, I think I actually enjoyed the risk and danger my dates with Danny entailed.

After any episode of my partial disrobing in public, Danny was always very excited, keyed-up, and ready for sex. I don't remember ever actually having had sex in public, but once I was without some important, protective item, he would be all over me even more than usual. We got many stares from people in restaurants, movie theaters and bars. Restaurants were usually the safest for me, since we were always in danger of being thrown out if he got too intimate or if too much of my skin were to show. Movie theaters, on the other hand, were pretty private. Most of the time, the only way we could be discovered was if I made any noise. And I don't have to tell you that a moan of pleasure *will* get you some attention in a crowded movie theater.

Bars, though, were our most common hangouts. Almost every time we went out we ended up in a bar, somewhere, or back at the club—Danny's club. In bars most of the clientele are drunk. They don't notice very much, and besides, it's dark. You can moan, you can wriggle if he has you near coming, and you can even risk showing a boob or such without much undue attention. But a bar also attracts a certain type that scares the shit out of me, too. These guys just look at you, and you *know* you've been raped. Their eyes say that if they ever got the chance, or maybe just the excuse, you'd be dead meat. And it's those guys that made me the most nervous and worried whenever Danny asked me to take something off in a bar.

Being scared of the crazies removed most of the excitement partial disrobing held for me. Danny's excitement, however, seemed to be enhanced, so despite my reservations, we seemed to be doing the sly peepshow more and more often. His satisfaction seemed to be the important thing, and for a while our little game seemed to satisfy his urges. And it also goes without saying that when we finally got into bed afterward, he was *always* satisfying me.

I was getting hooked on Danny's physical attention. On his 'love'. He pleased me so much during our first few months, eventually I had little or

no resistance to *anything* he asked me to do. Since he never used violence or coercion on me, I had every reason to trust him. When we were together I turned my brain off—and gladly—and I didn't turn it back on until I was by myself again. Truthfully, I didn't see how things could get any better.

Then Danny began to turn up the heat. No longer was it to be just one piece of clothing. It had escalated to two, at least. He orchestrated my wardrobe more, and insisted I never wear bras or panties anymore on dates. That was fine with me, since when I was naked underneath, he was even more rabidly after my body. But my nervousness and unease went up hugely in proportion to my level of undress. With nothing on underneath, if he asked me to remove anything else it meant I was *really* exposed, and there were times I got the evil eye from guys who couldn't have helped seeing my bare pubes.

That *really* scared me. Danny's gentleness and firmness had led me into a position I didn't know how to get out of. I found I started to wear *more* things on dates—even without a bra or panties on underneath—and my need to cover myself when he didn't want me to be covered started causing friction between us. I wanted to please him, I wanted to trust him, but something just wouldn't let me do it, I guess. Not willingly, at least.

I first noticed things weren't the same anymore when he hit me the first time. I thought it was an entirely peaceful, innocent conversation we were having, when in response to something I said he hauled off and slapped me across the face. He used the back of his hand—which was hard!—and instantly I was stunned and bleeding from my lip. We weren't at home alone, though, and I noticed the uneasy looks from the customers around us. We were on Danny's home turf, the club, ironically the place I had always felt the safest.

I was too shocked and amazed to cry, or even speak. I was too stunned—in disbelief—to think he had even meant it. Surely he hadn't meant to hit me. It *must* have been a mistake. I must have misread something. *Anything*. We stared at each other. My eyes must have been as large as moons, so shocked and amazed I was. I searched his face for the explanation.

He provided it, "Don't smart mouth off to me, again, girl."

"I wasn't 'smart mouthing off'!" I countered, "Christ! I was just talking!" My tone obviously wasn't what he expected, because he hit me again. This time I knew it wasn't a mistake. I was starting to catch on, but I was still incredulous. "What did you hit me for?" I pleaded, ears ringing. Then I couldn't help it anymore, and the tears started to fall.

"It's all *your* fault," he offered. "No girl talks back to me."

"I didn't think I was 'just some girl,' to you."

"I never said you was 'just some girl'. *No girl* will *ever* talk back to me. And that includes you, sugar." He poked me, hard, right between the boobs. It hurt a lot, almost more than my split lip.

I couldn't possibly fight him. He was too strong, and too quick, and I knew from the expression on his face that if I continued the way I was going, he was going to make it much worse than it had already been.

We just stared at each other a minute or two, the teardrops falling down the front of my dress. His hard expression softened, gradually, and as it did I began to relax a little.

"If you're sorry," he told me, smiling, "we can forget the whole thing."

So I apologized. Just like that.

That seemed to calm him. But I was still in a state of shock and disbelief, though. We had been seeing each other socially for about four months and he had hardly said an angry word to me that whole time. Despite the smile returning to his face, I felt *much* worse.

Several minutes went by, during which he seemed to be back to his jovial self again. And even I began to think the two slaps had been only in my imagination. I put my hand on his leg, and tickled the inside of his thigh, something I did all the time.

His expression never changed, and he kept looking away from me. "Are you ready to make up for making me hit you?"

"Sure," I said, thinking he meant 'make up,' as in 'they kissed and made up'. I ignored the part where he said I'd *made* him do it.

"OK," he said, still not looking at me, "I want you to put on a show for the customers."

Show? I was confused. "What do you mean?" I asked him.

"I want you to show me how much you love me." He leaned back, but still did not look at me. "I want to see how much you love me. I want to see it, right here, right now." He didn't sound *nice* to me.

I still didn't understand, and I told him so.

"I don't want to have to explain it to you. You're supposed to be so fuckin' smart, I think you should figure it out. I want you to *show me* how much you love me. What do you think that means?" I was afraid to guess. I said nothing, just stared at the side of his face in the dim light. He pressed, "I'm waitin', sugar."

I was becoming very, very afraid. I didn't know what I was afraid of, exactly, but his tone of voice and cryptic request both told me that something wasn't quite right, and the 'not quite right' part of it spelled trouble for me. The fact that he had slapped me over something I had said

in innocence, something he obviously hadn't liked, or had thought was the wrong thing to say, kept me from pressing very hard to find out what it was he was asking me to do.

'Put on a show ...' 'I want to see how much you love me ...' Those things circled in my head. They were the keys, but to what? I couldn't guess. He had me silent with the threat of another hit. And he was becoming angry with me, again.

"Look, bitch," he said. He *never* used that term around me. "I'm asking you to please me. Show me how you love me." He waited for some reply. None came. "You don't understand, do you?"

"I already told you I didn't," I pleaded, and *wham!* he hit me on the face with the palm of his hand. Most of the force caught my cheek, but the heel of his hand whacked me squarely on the nose.

It was instant, blinding pain, and I didn't even realize I had fallen off my chair—backward—and hit the floor. I don't think my head hit the floor, but my neck had been snapped back pretty hard. I literally saw stars a few seconds before my vision cleared. Then dimly, I saw a man standing over me, but it wasn't Danny. The man held out his hand to help me up, but I distinctly heard Danny tell him to 'get the fuck outta here, asshole!' and in a few seconds the guy was gone, to be replaced by Danny who roughly and immediately pulled me to my feet.

I stood there, wobbly, dazed and dizzy, and put my hand to my nose, which hurt like seventeen hells and one motherfucker. I noticed, then, it was bleeding, and quite a lot, and I couldn't think of anything else but to get to the ladies' restroom to get a paper towel. That's where I went, and as fast as I could.

I was a bloody mess. My outfit was ruined, blood spattered all down the front of me, and though I did my best not to make a mess, there was a thickening pool of blood in front of the mirror where I had gone to survey the damage. I guess I was fortunate, since the bleeding did stop pretty quickly and easily, so I spent some time in the safety of the restroom trying to calm down, relax, and wipe as much of the blood off me as I could.

I definitely *did not* want to leave the safety of the restroom. Tammy, one of the waitresses I knew, had seen me get my clock cleaned, and she came in while I was washing my face with cold water.

"My God, Kerry! What the hell'd you say to him to make him hit you like that?" She stood behind me, a pretty face and two bare boobs in the mirror, and seemed about to piss herself. I said nothing immediately, being more interested in keeping my nose from bleeding again than I was in talking. She continued, "I never seen Danny Golden hit a girl that hard.

You musta pissed him off somethin' fierce!" Her eyes were large, round, and very blue in the mirror.

I didn't know whether to cry or be angry. I guess I should have seen it coming, but he reacted so quickly and all ... so I started crying again. In sympathy, Tammy started to cry, too, and we hugged each other and bawled. In the process I got blood all over her front, though, so once we stopped our crying pity-party she had to wash off in the sink. Then she said she had to get back to the customers, so she pecked me on the cheek and left. I think ten minutes had probably gone by since getting socked.

I was afraid to go back outside, where I was sure Danny waited. I heard Tammy exchange a few words with someone outside the door, and I was pretty sure it was Danny who cross-examined her. Their voices were hushed, quiet, so I didn't think he was planning to come in after me. I needed time to think. It was the most difficult period of decision-making I had ever experienced, and I wanted it to be right.

I had to decide whether to cut and run, or go back out there and face Danny Golden. I was confused by all the events of the evening, and though I was scared of Danny (who wouldn't have been?), I was more scared of *not* going back out to him. I felt like he thought he owned me, and if I tried to get away he would find me, and claim me. And I definitely didn't want to be the butt of his anger then.

I cooled it in the restroom. Time was something I seemed to have, since he hadn't come in after me, and had not sent anyone else in after me, either, so I used it to calm down and to try to understand what had happened. So I waited. And I thought. And waited. And thought. Fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, twenty-five minutes. No Danny, and no one but the occasional customer who needed to 'powder her nose'.

Well, finally I had waited enough. I told myself it must have been my fault, and if I tried harder to be what he wanted, I wouldn't get hit again. He was *really* a nice guy, I told myself, and I must have done or said something wrong to make him hit me like that.

With that closing thought, the last real one for a long, long time, I went back out to Danny Golden.

He accepted my apology. He apologized, himself, for hitting my nose and making me bleed all over the place. I cried, yet again, and he kissed me all over to get me to stop, and we left the place. Back at the apartment, and despite the fact my nose was probably broken and hurt like all hell, he took me into the bedroom and fairly ripped my clothes off. In his passion he did some things to me that no one had ever done before, and in all my orgasms and sexual ecstasy I almost forgot about the whole incident.

Until, of course, the next time it happened.



Later that night, after our milkshakes and our dinner, it was becoming time for us to talk. Kerry didn't level any more outbursts of anger or hostility at me, but until the time we took cozy spots on the couch, we hadn't broached any sensitive subjects, either.

Seeing her black eye and bruised face made me unbelievably angry, but I did my best to keep calm and collected, not letting her see how much I *hated* the guy who'd beaten her up. Kerry was a very beautiful woman, sharp and aware, and the pain of seeing her in that condition hurt me almost as much as her injuries seemed to hurt her. That's not quite right—I realize now that although I could see her bruises, I had no idea at all of the depth and extent of her hurt. None at all.

We sat close to each other. I became nervous and slightly unhinged whenever I got within five feet of her, and the two of us together on the same couch was as strong a test of my strength of resistance as I'd faced yet.

I had no idea what to think. I mean, about Kerry MacDonald. I was attracted to her, but I found I was afraid to think of what she thought about me, or felt about me. I didn't consider at all that she could be as attracted to me as I was to her, and the strength of my attraction to her was making me unable to think about much of anything else. I think I didn't know what to think. I think. But in the middle of my muddle of thought, Kerry rescued me. She seemed to have an idea of my problem, and was calm and smiling, warm and friendly, and sighed as she leaned against me. I dared to put my arm around her. And I was *terrified*.

"Relax, buddy," she squeezed the hand that rested tentatively against her arm. She let go.

I let out a ragged breath. I felt a little calmer. But only a little. "OK," I said. I think I kept my voice from wavering, much.

"You told me before, I think, but I still don't understand why you're so nervous around me."

"I don't understand it either." But I *was* calming down, some. "Whenever I get near you it's like some force comes over me, and I *completely* lose my cool."

"That's weird."

I considered it. "Probably. Have you *ever* had this effect on anyone else?"

She shook her head. "Nope. At least, not that I know about. You're the first." She snaked her arm around behind me. It seemed like the right

thing. "But you seem to be calming down nicely, now."

"Yes," I agreed, and paused, waiting.

Some time passed, and we simply sat there, arms around each other, neither saying anything. But eventually I had to break the silence, golden though it may have been.

"I don't get it." That was true; I certainly didn't get it.

"What's there to get?" Kerry asked.

"I don't know. I simply don't get it."

"You said that already. What *do* it mean, *kemo sabe?*"

I gestured. "This." Meaning us, together, her black eye, the blanket folded on the back of the couch. Especially the blanket and the girl *living* here with me, however temporarily.

Without my having to actually say it, I think she got it. "I think I get it," she said.

"You do?" I said.

"Sure." She nodded, slowly. I waited, and the wait became long. "You want to know what this all means, am I right?" She sat up, and my hand moved to the back of her neck. I mumbled something like, yes, or something. She answered her own question. "This is our *real* first date. That's all."

I frowned. "Maybe so. But you ..."

"What *about* me?" She sounded suspicious.

"I can't believe this is happening."

"What do you mean? What's there not to believe?" She turned to look at me, sideways.

"I can't believe you're here. I mean ..." I fumbled for the words, "Who are you? Why did you get beat up last night? Why did you tell me to go away? How did you get *here?*"

She smiled, wryly, "You brought me here, I think. But ..." she hesitated, losing the smile instantly "... that's still a lot of questions." She turned away. "Too many. And I *don't* think I can answer them."

"None of them?" I felt I deserved *some* explanation. After all, I was involved now, and I felt I needed to know what was going on. At the least. "At least tell me *something* about yourself."

Well, to that she reluctantly agreed. I listened to her tell a very abridged and mostly inaccurate story of her life. At the time I thought it was largely the truth, but she had so many things in her life that she wouldn't—or couldn't—admit, that the version I got that night on the couch could just as likely have been scenes from someone else's life.

I did find out she was nineteen and from Alabama, and that she had been living on her own since she was seventeen. She told me how she'd

graduated high school two years earlier than her classmates had, at fifteen, and how tough it had been to get the money to attend college. I had to admire her effort, anyway. She shrugged it off with a self put-down. She said she had lived in Atlanta for the past two and a half years, and had worked a while in a topless place. I was surprised to hear it, but she assured me that she'd never been a nude dancer or a waitress there, either. I'm not sure I believed it immediately, but really, why not believe her?

I tried, again, to find out the circumstances surrounding how I had found her the night before, but she absolutely *did not* want to talk about it. I also tried to get her to talk about me, in a rather roundabout way, but on that subject she was a bit more obliging.

"What do you want to know?" She seemed much happier to be talking about something (or someone) besides herself, for a change.

"Oh, like maybe ..." I was embarrassed to say it "... like maybe why you gave me your phone number."

"That's easy," she said, grinning. "I thought you were cute."

"You thought I was cute?"

"Yeah. You *are* cute, you know, in a guy sorta way, of course."

"Is that all?" I asked.

"Isn't that enough?" But she went on, hurriedly, "No, I also could see that you really had a thing for me, even after only a couple of minutes."

"Don't flatter yourself," I countered.

She laughed, and assured me it wasn't self-flattery. "Call me a liar if you dare!" she squeezed my knee, making me jump, "But I believe I distinctly heard you say that you have a hard time thinking straight whenever you get near me. Did I not?"

I had to agree, I *had* said that. And it was true, but I told her she didn't have to make such a big thing of it.

"I'm not," she said. Her eyes, suddenly larger, twinkled as she regarded me, "I kinda feel the same way about you."

"Oh," was all I said, heart suddenly pounding in my ears.

She sat back then, snuggled in close, and positioned her face mere inches away from mine. I was engulfed again in her most wondrous green eyes, the brilliant color of which I had just noticed anew, and she was acting very much like she wanted to be kissed. So what else could I do? I kissed her. Once. I tried to be very gentle, but her lip was too sore, and she pulled away abruptly, wincing. It wasn't going to work—the kissing.

"I'm sorry," she said, and put her hand to her mouth. "Don't be mad, but it hurts too much to kiss you."

"Be mad?" I couldn't possibly have reacted that way. "Don't

apologize for having a sore lip. If it hurts, well then, I guess we'll have to think of something else."

"Yeah? Like what?" She moved back within kissing distance, but no kissing ensued. "You wanna rub noses, or something?"

"Tell me what the 'or something' is, first."

She touched the tip of her nose to mine. "I don't think I know you well enough, but you seem like a pretty nice guy. A nice guy who doesn't do 'something' with just anybody off the street."

"But *you're* off the street."

Ah, but no! She *didn't like* that comment. At all. It was, once again, like someone flipped a switch, and she was instantly, hugely angry. What a thin line lay between her sweetness and anger! We had only known each other a very short while, and already I was worrying about what I could and could not say to her in conversation. And already it was a drag.

"What are you angry about?" I was afraid to move.

"I'm *not* just some fuckin' whore off the street!"

Jesus, she jumped to the strangest conclusions. "I never said you were! Christ Almighty, did you think I thought you were a whore? Whatever gave you *that* idea?"

"You said I came in off the street. What do you think that means?"

"Not what *you* think it does." I was more than a little exasperated with her explosions of anger. "I meant, that in a manner of speaking, you just came in here 'off the street'—from someplace else. I think much more highly of you than that. I don't know who's called you a whore, but that isn't *at all* what I meant. Christ, Kerry! Don't go flying off the handle like that every time I say something to you that could be the least bit ambiguous. It's not fair, and it's *very* hard to take."

My words seemed to quell her anger, or maybe simply suppress it. She thought a few moments about what I'd said, then slowly and carefully allowed herself to be held once more. She never said exactly why she thought I'd called her a whore. And I never asked her.

We sat like that, arms around each other, awhile longer. We tried to act like we were comfortable holding each other, but really I think we'd had about as much of each other as we could take, so after a little while we disentangled ourselves and said goodnight. It felt very awkward, and the atmosphere seemed strained and stiff, but she smiled anyway and said goodnight to me, and I left her in the living room to put herself to bed.

I laid in bed a long time, reading. It was really too early to be going to sleep, not even ten-thirty yet, and I found I was really very angry over how things had evolved.

Not long after I climbed into bed I heard the TV come on in the living

room, and then I heard sounds like the refrigerator opening and closing, and the cap being twisted off a bottle of beer. Neither of us had drunk anything earlier, and though I was perturbed by her sudden bouts of anger, I didn't mind her having a beer. I wanted her to relax and cool off, and anything that would help was all right with me.

Once or twice I had the urge to go out to her. I really wanted us to make up and spend some more time together—without fighting or arguing—but I didn't have the guts to do it. Maybe it's some stupid male thing about not appearing to give in, or something, I don't know. But I never went out there. I don't remember exactly when I fell asleep, but I do remember dozing to the muffled sounds of some old movie on the TV.

She was asleep, still, the next morning when I got up to make coffee, and once again I let her stay that way.

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Bobby Lee, the man holding little Kerry Lynn by the arm and ruthlessly shaking her, dragged her mercilessly into the house. Once inside, Kerry Lynn was shoved roughly into the middle of the one large room, and both men immediately circled her, like large, hungry wolves closing in on some helpless animal. Bobby Lee was wearing bib overalls, and Kerry Lynn soon saw it was *only* bib overalls as he quickly stripped them off to become just as naked as she was. The other man, Billy Joe, still kept his sagging underwear on, but his erection was beginning to make a sizable tent in front of them.

Kerry Lynn was thoroughly terrified of the naked man standing in front of her. His penis seemed huge and it was sticking out from his body like a pole. It was hairy and dirty, and she shuddered when he put his hand around it and pointed it up at her, shaking it evilly. Entirely helpless, and fully realizing it, finally, she began to cry. She couldn't stop it, though she tried mightily, her fear and anguish came out in the form of stiffly repressed sobs, as she really didn't want to provoke them or increase their anger and apparent gleeful indignation in any way.

Bobby Lee laughed. It sounded more like an insane cackle. "Don't cry, little girl! We ain't gonna hurt you any." He cackled again. "Are we, Billy Joe?"

Billy Joe snorted, and Kerry Lynn whirled, afraid of attack from behind. As she turned to face him, he spoke, "*Fuck* no!" placing emphasis

on the word 'fuck'. "C'mere, you little cunt-faced whore. Let ole Billy Joe show you what you been wantin' t'see."

He pulled the front of his underpants down, exposing his red, swollen and impossibly large penis. She had thought that Billy Joe possessed the largest 'thing' she'd ever seen, but this man had exposed something that defied her wildest imagination. She feared greatly what it would do to her if he put it in her. She was *sure* that she couldn't hold it all, and that he would hurt her terribly with it. But even more, she feared he might *really* hurt her if she didn't let him do it to her.

"D-D-don't h-h-hurt m-me!" she spoke in a hushed tremble. "Y-You c-can make a baby with m-me ..." she didn't want to use the 'fuck' word, and she couldn't think of any other words to use "... if y-you d-d-don't h-h-hurt m-me." She was petrified, and her stutter was very bad. And her inability to speak was also making her more afraid. She didn't think she could say the word 'no' if her very life depended on it.

Bobby Lee hissed, "Lissen to that, Billy Joe! She *askin'* fer it!" Kerry Lynn spun again, this time to face Bobby Lee. "Lemme go *first!*" he said, lips curled back from his dirty, uneven teeth in a lecherous snarl.

Bobby Lee lunged toward her, and she jumped back, feeling something large and hot hit her square in the small of the back. A huge, hammy arm swung around from her right and clamped onto her sore, tender left breast, and Kerry Lynn was pinned fast against the hot thing behind her, unable to get away.

Billy Joe's left arm went out, and hit Bobby Lee square in the chest with enough force to knock him back a foot or two. The voice behind her snarled, "Fergit it, you asshole. She *askin' me* t'do it with her." He coughed, and laughed. "Can't cha see that?"

Bobby Lee's face held a momentarily stunned and hateful look about it, but it quickly turned to disappointment. He submitted to his older brother, but he *didn't* like it. Not one bit.

Billy Joe, holding Kerry Lynn from behind, crooned to her, "C'mon, little girl, let ole Billy Joe show you some *fun*."

She felt she had no choice, so she decided to go ahead with what he was asking. Maybe if she let him do whatever he wanted, he wouldn't hurt her, and when he was finished he would let her go. She was still terrified of him—both of them—but she tried to relax in his grasp, just a little. He sensed it.

"That's good," he brought his other arm around in front of her, and slid his hand down her smooth, flat belly toward her crotch. His hand felt grimy and hardly callused, and she tensed when she felt his fingers slide roughly over her vagina. "Yes, that's right, just relax." She tried to, but it

was impossible. "You be good to ole Billy Joe. He won't hurt you. But if you don't be good, he gonna give ya to Bobby Lee, here." He chuckled, "You won't like Bobby Lee, honey. *He'll* hurt yer little pussy fer sure!" Kerry Lynn stifled a gulp. "See, Bobby Lee here don't b'lieve in lettin' his women wet up," he belched, sending a cloud of stale beer breath washing over her, foul and nauseating, "afore he fucks 'em. Now onna other hand, you don't needa worry 'bout ole Billy Joe ... I wet you up *real good*. You gonna like it, I bet!"

Kerry Lynn felt a finger push toward the slit between her legs. It was rough, and scratched—and *hurt*—but she only whimpered as he searched for the opening. She heard the man behind her utter a low, satisfied grunt as he found her and shoved his finger deeply into her vagina. She was wet, but for reasons she couldn't understand then, and she felt fortunate his finger didn't hurt very much. There was also something else about it, almost familiar, but she couldn't quite grasp it.

"You ain't a virgin, are you?"

Kerry Lynn wasn't immediately aware he was speaking to her, so she didn't answer.

He repeated, "**Ah said**, you ain't a virgin!" This time, it was not spoken as a question. Kerry Lynn didn't know what he was talking about, so she couldn't answer. All she could do was whimper. But Billy Joe did realize, then, that she *didn't* know what he was talking about, and promptly abandoned his question. Instead, he resumed his chosen pursuit of finger fucking her.

He lightened the grip he had on her with his other arm. His right hand began to move around, rubbing and massaging her budding, sore breasts, making Kerry Lynn squirm and yelp at his harsh treatment.

"Whassa matter?"

"They hurt!" she bawled, "**Oww!**" she yelped. "You gotta be easy with me."

"Ain't *nothin'* easy 'bout it! Yer a fuckin' little slut bitch, and there ain't nothin' *easy* 'bout what I'm gonna do to you!" His hand in her crotch rammed her hard, and she was picked up off the floor with its strength. As she went up, she felt his huge, hot thing slide down the crack of her behind and then push under her so she seemed to be straddling his monstrous, burning hot penis. His arm crushed her to his soft, bloated belly, and she dangled there, her feet hanging several inches off the floor.

Fear overcame Kerry Lynn. Anything she had said about 'going along' with the man evaporated as she felt his huge size and massive strength completely for the first time. She wanted him to be gentle, but he wasn't, and she was afraid, then, of what he was going to do to her.

She struggled in his grasp, and tried to twist away—anything to get down—and he increased the force of his hold to keep her from getting away. She doubled her efforts at escape, becoming panicky and more determined to avoid him. Her wiry, twisting maneuvers must have caught him by surprise even so, because she managed to work free of his hold, suddenly, and hitting the floor and scrambling to her feet, made a desperate break for the door.

But Bobby Lee stepped in just then, and grabbed her before she could get completely clear. Billy Joe, snarling like the animal he was, snatched her back and spun her around to face him. His arm came up and he hit her. She only looked up at him, blankly. Then he continued, slamming her brutally and repeatedly on the sides of the face, snapping her head from side to side, and dazing her so that she couldn't carry on with her resistance. Stunned and dizzy, then, Kerry Lynn simply slumped to her knees.

She kept her eyes closed against the pain and terror. Her mind was reeling, and any thought of resistance she might have had was completely drained away as she decided to give in and give up. And in giving up, she also accepted responsibility for what was about to happen.

Her mouth, her cheeks bruised and bleeding a little from his blows, was forced open by someone's huge, hot penis. The head, alone, was bigger than she thought her mouth could hold, but she had no resistance left, nothing left to fight for, and she struggled to put her mouth over it. She engulfed it, and it was rammed into her. As it hit the back of her throat, she gagged and coughed, in itself nearly impossible, and was overwhelmed with the sensation of choking. She felt she couldn't breathe, and her eyes came open as she pushed in a blind panic against the man's legs, to try to keep from asphyxiating.

He seemed to see that she was indeed choking, and allowed her to pull back from the end of his penis, some. When she felt she was no longer choking, she again stopped her resistance and accepted that she was going to have to suck the man's thing. It was very strong smelling, almost sickening, and tasted of salty sweat and a deep, dank musk that was very oddly familiar. Then, with sudden recall she remembered something that horrified her even more completely.

It *was* familiar, and she couldn't hold back the flood of panic and shame that accompanied her long repressed and forgotten memory. It had happened before, more than once, and she had put it from her mind so completely that it took the horrible smell of the thing in her mouth to bring it back. She couldn't handle the impact of everything around her and also the force of her memories, so she thankfully, blissfully, blacked

out, never to know what happened.

I did talk to my therapist about the memories of being raped at ten years old. When I finished writing the remainder of the incident in my journal, I showed it to him and we talked about it.

I don't remember anything else about it. I'm not sure why I even remember as much as I do, but ... there it is. I remember it, and I'm pretty sure it happened to me, but somehow it *feels* like it really happened to someone else. That's the reason I don't say 'I,' and 'me,' and so on. I *know* it's real—**it happened**—but it seems so distant and remote to me that if I had dreamt it, imagined it, it would seem just as real. But I know—I'm certain—I definitely *did not* dream it. I rarely remember my dreams, but even the most horrible ones don't compare.

In some small way I'm thankfully being protected from the memory of what happened that night after I blacked out. I can't imagine what they did to me, or why I've blocked it out, but even with the total blank in my memory, I also have this awful feeling that some day I *will* remember. Just the chance that I might some day recall what was done to me that night scares the living *shit* out of me now. If it's something so horrible, so unimaginably terrifying that my mind has sealed it off forever, then what's going to happen to me if it ever gets out?

It's the getting out that scares me. A hideous monster is trapped in my mind, somewhere, chained and hidden away from the rest of me. If that monster ever gets free, he might destroy me with his pain and his rage, and his blinding, stultifying, terrible memories. For now, I can write what I remember, and hope that if I ever remember the rest, I can live with what I find out.

**Oh God, Marc!** I love you so much. Can you *ever* forgive me?

## *Chapter 4*

I called the apartment during the day, a Friday, around lunchtime. I figured Kerry would be up by then, and I thought I should let her know that I'd been invited to a party. Since she was staying with me, I thought I would invite her to come with me. I wasn't sure she would accept, since she was still bruised and had a black eye, but it sounded like it could be a pretty good time, and it *was* better than sitting at home.

I hoped she'd answer the phone when I called. I knew the answering machine was on, but I really didn't want to just leave her a message. But the phone rang the requisite five times and then the machine answered. I listened to my own recorded spiel, 'I'm not available right now ... blah, blah, et cetera, et cetera ...' and when it concluded, I spoke, hoping she was right there and would pick up.

"Kerry, this is Marc. You know, that guy you met the other night. Well, anyway, please pick up the phone if you're there." I waited, but no Kerry. "Anyway," I went on, "I've been invited to a party tonight, and I thought it might be fun. You, of course, are invited, too, as my guest ... well, if you want to go, that is. I need to let them know pretty soon, so call me back at the office," and I gave her my number. I hung up, and went back to whatever I had been working on. At the time, it didn't occur to me that if she hadn't heard the phone ring she might not think to cycle the machine and pick up the message. Had I thought about it at all, it would have seemed very unlikely that she would take it upon herself to listen to my phone messages for *any* reason. Regardless, I went back to work, hoping to hear from her soon. And about a half hour later, I did. She called.

"Did you listen to my phone message, or were you there when I called?" I asked her.

"I was there," was all she said.

"Why didn't you pick up the phone?"

"I was taking a shower at the time," she explained. "I heard the phone ring. I figured it was probably you. It took me a couple minutes to get out of the shower and get to the phone. I got there just as you were leaving your number."

"Why didn't you pick up the phone?"

"You asked me that, already," she seemed puzzled.

"I wanted to talk to you, not the machine."

"You did very well." She coughed. "Besides, I was dripping wet and I still had the shower running. You left your number on the machine, so I went back and finished my shower, and then called you back, just like you asked."

"So what do you think?" I asked, moving on to the next subject.

"About what?" she played dumb.

"You know, what I called you about—the party tonight. I've been invited, but I told them I might bring someone. Everyone is looking forward to meeting you."

"What am I, *news*?" She seemed suspicious. "Did you tell them I was just some girl staying at your apartment?"

What? "No," I said, "I didn't tell anyone that you were 'just some girl'. Besides, it's none of their business, anyway. I just said that I'd met someone very nice that I wanted to bring to the party. That's all. Are you interested in going to a party tonight?"

She thought only a moment. "Yes, and no."

"Which is it?"

"Well, I'd like to go out some place with you, don't misunderstand, but I still don't look very good. I wouldn't want anyone to think ..."

"Think what?" But she didn't say. Then I heard sounds like eating in the background. "What're you eating?"

"I dunno. Some cereal." More crunching, munching sounds. "You don't have that much to eat around here."

"Why didn't you say something? I could have stopped off and picked up some groceries."

"That's OK. Maybe I didn't want to impose on you." I heard a spoon clink on the side of a bowl. She sounded disappointed, though. "But, I don't think I'm very presentable in the shape I'm in ... Really, I ought to stay here."

"Speaking of you, how do you feel?" I was ashamed I hadn't asked her up to that point.

"Pretty good," she sighed, "considering. My lip doesn't hurt anymore nearly as much as it did. But it's still pretty puffed up, though. Not very attractive, I'm afraid. My eye, however, is truly hideous looking. It's

turning *mauve*. It's not a black eye, it's a mauve eye."

"Wonderful." I recognized her attempt at being funny. "You have a great sense of 'black' humor."

"*Hah, hah,*" she said, and then she laughed.

"Are you *sure* you don't want to go?" I pressed.

"Oh, I *want* to go, all right," she took another bite of cereal, "but no, I really don't think I should." Crunch, crunch.

I wanted to object, tell her she was wrong, but the definite sound of her refusal stopped me. "Well, then I won't go, either."

"No! You go. Don't stop your life just on account of me. Really, I'll be fine. Just as long as you get me some damn food!" and she giggled.

Damn, I want to go to this party, and I *really* want Kerry to go with me. I guess I figured she could put on makeup, or something, to cover up her black eye and assorted bruises, but I was sure she would have thought of it before I did, and if she wouldn't propose it as a solution, I felt pretty stupid mentioning it to her. But I did, anyway.

"Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke. Put on makeup, or something, and if anyone asks, tell them you ran into a door, or something. I don't know. I really want to go to this party with you. We'll have a good time, and I think you'll really like these people. They're a lot of fun, and they *don't* spend a lot of time prying into other people's business." I concluded my plea, "What do you say?"

"I don't know," she said, but she seemed to be reconsidering. "I do feel *a lot* better than I did the other night. Your place is real cozy, and *you've* been really excellent company." She thought some more. "OK, it's a deal. What time do we have to be at this place?"

"About eight, or so. Whenever." I was very pleased that I'd talked her into it. It'd been a very long time since I'd been out with someone whom I liked and admired as much as I did Kerry. The idea of getting out and socializing, accompanied by such a pretty lady, had been so long ago and was so long overdue, it felt completely new. I also heard her compliment me on being good company. That also pleased me, probably more than anything else. We concluded our conversation, and the rest of the day seemed to go by in a flash.

Kerry called back, though, around four-thirty.

"Hi, Marc. It's me, Kerry MacDonald."

"Who?" I joked.

"You know, the human punching bag?"

I didn't like her characterization. "Oh! *That* Kerry MacDonald." I let it pass, though. "What's up?"

"Ah ... I was looking through my stuff, and I discovered I don't have any makeup."

"I see," I saw. "What does that mean? Do we need to make a stop on the way to the party?"

"Well, we *could*," she seemed not to like the idea, "but it'd be better if I could take a little more time and work on my face, here."

"OK ..." But I was thinking, "You don't have a key, do you?"

"Not unless you gave me one. Did you?"

"No, smart-ass, you know I didn't." I had to think quickly. "I have an extra key on my dresser, I think. It should be the only one there."

"OK, wait a minute while I get it." She put the phone down and I waited—about a minute, as she said. She came back to the phone. "OK, got it."

"Are you sure it's the right one?" I asked, as if she'd know.

"Just so *you* know," she parried, "I already tried it in the door. It works."

"Good. Do you have any money?"

"Nope. Not really. I guess that makes me two-for-two, so far."

"Did you see any money on the dresser?" I wasn't sure, but I thought I had left a couple bills lying there that morning.

"You mean like the two twenties I have in my hand?" she teased.

"If you got them from my dresser, then yes."

"OK, I got the money." She was in a very good mood, it seemed. "If that's all, then, I guess I'd better get busy and do some shopping."

"Do you know where the drug store is?" I was sure she didn't.

"No, of course not," she was matter-of-fact, "but you're gonna tell me, right?"

"Right. It's two blocks south on Peachtree. Peachtree Street is that large street, you know, that runs right by the apartment."

"Oh, you mean the one I can see from the window? The one with all the cars?"

"That's it."

"No *problem*." She paused, and I heard something clatter in the background. I didn't get to find out what it was. She concluded, "I think I got it, now. Thanks."

"My pleasure," I said, but she hung up without another word.

When I got home around six o'clock, Kerry was dressed already, and did she look *good*! She must have gone and dug out one of those obviously expensive dresses from her clothes collection, so when I walked through the door I was totally, absolutely stunned by how much she had improved

her looks.

Kerry's long, lustrous, strawberry blond hair was immaculately groomed, and fell in a light spray around her shoulders. It was a subtle, but beautiful shade of coppery gold that worked to perfection with her sparkling green eyes. At least her sparkling green 'eye'. She had delicate features: a freckled, oval face, high forehead, soft cheekbones, full, pouty lips, and a mischievous, toothy grin. She was a true expert with makeup. When I got up close I could tell that her right eye was still a little swollen, an ugly red smear plainly visible around the cornea, but otherwise I could not tell she was nursing any other injuries.

The dress was teal green, tight, and very short. It looked like it was made out of some kind of clingy, stretchy, spandex-like material, because it fit her curves as if made for them. Which, of course, since she was female and very curvy, it was. The neckline was noticeably low, exposing the top third of her very nicely rounded and even more nicely freckled bust, and around her neck she wore a large—two carat, maybe—blue sapphire pendant that nestled very neatly in the very top of her cleavage.

She had fairly wide, full hips, too. Perhaps a little larger in the butt than she would have liked, maybe, but I found the sweet roundness of her behind quite attractive as she pirouetted before me, showing off her expert preparations. Her legs were long and shapely in proportion to her body, and showed a smooth, athletic strength under sheer, black nylon hose. On her feet, she wore a pair of petite, black satin high heels. And I wondered idly where she had gotten the shoes, since I didn't remember packing anything like them in my haste the other night.

Kerry MacDonald was a true knockout. Without a doubt the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and when she smiled in acknowledgment of my amazed expression, I simply melted into a puddle on the floor.

"What do you think?" she asked, turning again so I could see her from all angles. But she had no angles, only curves.

"I'm stunned," I said, stunned and breathless. "You're the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. Ever."

She liked the compliment, but deflected it. "Sure, buddy. I try, sometimes."

"No!" I redirected, "I'm serious." I surveyed her as closely as I dared. "*You look marvelous!*" It was a cliché, but I delivered it properly.

She couldn't bring herself to say 'thanks'. "Sure," was as close as she could get.

When we arrived at the party, the whole room seemed to turn and

stare at Kerry. All the men, at least. I tried not to look like I had just raided the hen house, but I hardly ever got the chance to get into the spotlight, and it was an interesting, energizing new experience.

My old friend—best friend, for sure—Tom Germaine was there. I hadn't talked to him in a couple weeks, and he immediately snagged me to inform me he had some good news. So after Kerry and I got drinks, he pulled me aside. Kerry followed us.

"Marc," he announced, "I found a guitar player." He had that unmistakable look of glee in his eye that said we were going to get back into the music, again.

That has always sparked my interest, too, so I asked, "Yeah? So who is this guy?" Kerry stood nearby, sipping from her scotch, apparently also very interested in what we were discussing. I continued, "I hope he's not some eighteen-year-old kid who thinks he's God's gift to guitar players." A lot of them in the past had been very young, and not very skilled or reliable.

"Hardly," Tom's smug expression didn't falter. "Have you ever heard of *Breakdown*?" I said that I had. They were a local band that had spent the previous couple of years playing at the top of the local club scene. I hadn't heard anything about them in a while. "Well," Tom went on, "do you know Troy Dancer, their lead guitar player?"

"Not personally. Why?" I wondered, "Did you get him?"

"No, stupid, I got his *mother*." He took a business card out of his shirt pocket. It wasn't Troy Dancer's mother's card. "He came by the studio the other day. Said he was looking for some guys to form another band. Of course, he naturally checked with me to see if I knew anyone." He grinned. Tom was, when he wasn't playing bass guitar in a band in front of me, a topnotch recording engineer, and an unofficial clearinghouse for local talent. It was no large surprise, then, that Troy Dancer, guitar player supreme, had gone to Tom to put out a feeler. Tom showed me the card, "He gave me his card. We can call him if you're interested."

"Then, let's give him a call."

Kerry, who had listened quietly to the whole conversation, piped up just then. "Marc, do you all really play in a band?"

"Not at present," I had to admit. I looked at Tom, then back to Kerry. "But we have, from time to time."

"Wow!" She sounded impressed. "That's really neat. You know, I've always wanted to sing in a band."

"Can you sing?" I asked her.

"Oh, I don't know," she averted her eyes and shrugged, modestly. "Maybe."

"Well," I said, "this guy Dancer is no slouch." That was exactly the wrong thing to say, since it obviously sounded to Kerry like a put-down.

"**Fuck you!**" She pointed her finger at me, "How would *you know* how good I am?"

Jesus! Fucked up, again! "You're right," I apologized, "I'm sorry. You may be quite good. Let me tell you, if you sing even half as good as you look, then we might have something here. And I don't have to tell you that '*you look marvelous!*' "I turned my *faux pas* into a compliment, recovering as best I could.

Kerry raised an eyebrow, hesitating, but smiled anyway, apparently forgiving me. Her expression said she was harboring some secret knowledge of which I could only guess. If I *were* to guess, I'd say she knew she could sing, and that we'd be pretty surprised when we heard her.

Tom had watched and listened to our exchange, and he smiled, too. "This is outstanding! First a great guitar player, and now a female vocalist." He turned to Kerry, and smiled in typical Tom Germaine fashion. "We haven't been introduced. Bozo-brain, here, must think I'm psychic. Hi, there. I'm Tom Germaine, Marc's longtime ex-best friend." He extended his hand, and grinned.

Kerry took it, and executed a slight curtsy, "Pleased to meet you, Tom. I'm Kerry MacDonald. I'm a much more recent *ex-friend* of Marc's." She eyed me, smiling slyly so I'd know she was kidding.

Sheree Germaine, Tom's wife, glided up just then. Sheree is short, petite, and as cute as the proverbial button. I've never quite figured out how a guy like Tom Germaine ever had sense enough to latch onto a cute little spark plug like Sheree. As she leaned back into him, Tom roped her into his arms in the gregarious way he always did, and introduced her to Kerry. They exchanged hellos, and in a few seconds seemed to establish an instant, close friendship. I was frankly amazed at Kerry's sudden acceptance into our 'group'.

Apparently, Sheree had been nearby talking with some of her friends, and when she saw us talking 'shop' she decided to come over, presumably to pull us back into the mainstream of the party. "I figured y'all were probably plotting another band," she said. Sheree knew, as only a longtime groupie of Tom Germaine could, that 'new bands' were our favorite weakness. Well, close, but not quite.

Sheree had also come over to share a little dope with us. She offered the joint to us, already lit and ready to toke. Tom took it without delay and sucked in a large, satisfying hit. Ever the gentleman, he offered it to Kerry, next, as he held his breath. I had no way of knowing if she did marijuana, or not, but she skillfully accepted the joint and took a deep hit,

herself. She held it in, just like a pro, and handed the joint to me. Finally, I took a good long hit myself, and we were all well on our way to having a smashingly good time.

Sheree snagged Kerry (what alliteration) and the two of them went off to find some trouble to get into. That left Tom with me. He followed Kerry's movements briefly with his eyes, and then turned back to look at me with raised eyebrows.

"Your date is really good looking." He sounded almost impressed, which I deemed significant.

I smiled, but I thought perhaps he was understating it, a bit. "Yes, she is."

"Where did you ever find her, anyway? Because, if you don't mind me saying so, you've never been that good at getting the girls." Only Tom could say something like that, and get away with it. "Don't get me wrong," he was saying, "I think you're a nice guy, but you're not my type ... if you know what I mean." I did. "She seems ... Kerry, isn't it? ... Kerry seems like a really nice girl. Almost *too* nice for you!" He looked over to where Sheree, Kerry and a couple other women were joking and passing around another joint. "Sheree's an extremely good judge of character. I mean, just look at who she married!" he crowed. "And she looks like she's already adopted Kerry as one of the gang." Tom proffered the last of the joint we had been toking, already clipped to his 'key' clip. "If Sheree likes her, old buddy, then I'd say you've found a real winner."

I only smiled, and nodded. How odd, Tom and Sheree both approve. *They* think I've found a winner. But I wondered if Kerry would see it that way, or if she'd only put herself down again, and tell them they were wrong. That I felt less than a complete winner, I tried my best to ignore. I wondered, too, what I would say if I were asked the same question. Was I a winner? Would I not also say no? But as I watched Kerry, and as she talked and joked with Sheree and her friends, I felt most strongly the beginnings of a complete and utter, all-consuming attraction toward her, one so powerful it both scared and elated me. If I felt this massively, painfully attracted to her, already—this *quickly*—where would that leave me in the future? How could I ever expect to look at her rationally and reasonably and make the proper decision about her, if I was never to see straight when I was around her? Would there even be any doubt as to the correct decision when the time came? I wondered, but what *excitement* was in store for me in the meantime! I knew, as sure as I knew my own name, that before it was all over things were going to become pretty interesting.

Interesting, indeed.

A little later, Tom and I were sitting with a bunch of guys while a big debate raged over who was the greatest guitar player of all time. Since I was pretty well stoned—feeling *no* pain—and in the middle of that drug-induced clarity marijuana gives you, I was red-eyed and listening to various presentations of ‘great guitar player’ logic. Since I wasn’t a guitar player, I considered myself generally unqualified to render an opinion. But Tom, though, was right in the middle of the debate, agreeing or disagreeing with every point.

Sheree and Kerry rejoined us, Sheree going to Tom, and Kerry coming to me. As she positioned herself precariously on the arm of my chair, I noticed Kerry looked about as stoned as I felt. I tried to find room for her in the chair with me, but it was pretty obvious we wouldn’t both fit. She put her drink down on the table next to us, then calmly laid a wet, ice-cold hand on the back of my neck. I jumped at her frigid touch and she giggled, leaning down so she could say something privately in my ear.

“Hey there, buddy. I’m back,” she purred. Her long hair tickled my neck, and I got a sudden sweet, musky whiff of her perfume. That was the first, and probably one of the most vivid memories I’ve associated with the particular perfume Kerry always wore. I can’t smell it today without remembering that exact moment in precise detail. Back then, however, my head almost spun with the deliciousness of the aroma. She stuck the tip of her wet, warm tongue in my ear, just barely touching it, and then withdrawing. It was incredibly erotic, and if I hadn’t been so stoned, I would have reacted with surprise and amazement. “I’m having a *great* time,” she whispered, and the huskiness of her voice raised the hairs on my scalp, a rushing wave of pleasure. “I’m really glad I came.” She sounded a little drunk, too, but then, so was I. “Thanks, buddy.”

Without thinking about it beforehand, I put my hand on her knee. And I think it was the first time I ever did that. Previously, the closest I’d come to being affectionate or intimate with her was to put my arm around her shoulders. Though several times I had wanted to touch her, something always pulled me back. There, at the party, and with a substantial buzz on, whatever difficulties I normally had were melted by the relaxed, friendly, and unquestionably stoned atmosphere that prevailed.

My hand rested lightly on her knee. Fingertips on fire, I slid my hand down the inside edge of her thigh just above the knee joint, and dared to caress her. I felt her hand, still on the back of my neck, squeeze and gently massage my neck muscles, and then I knew that with her it was all right.

We sat there a long time, my hand on her knee, and her hand on the back of my neck. I caressed, she massaged, and we both listened to the debate that still raged all around us. Everyone was mostly oblivious to

Kerry and me, and we were almost totally oblivious to all of them.

For the first time in a long time, I started to think about 'later'. It had probably been over two years since I'd made love to a woman. It had been almost four years since I'd had any kind of relationship. I was on a long, dry sabbatical from the opposite sex, and as I sat there with my hand on Kerry's knee I began to fantasize about what might happen once we left the party.

The timing seemed to be right. She seemed receptive to me. I was *definitely* receptive to her. She was feminine and pretty, but still seemed tough and smart—all things I admired—and she was definitely feeling affectionate toward me. I was relaxed with her—becoming more so—and found I could relax and be openly affectionate with her as well. She accepted my affections, weak as they were. Yes, I told myself, the timing seemed to be right.

The party started to break up around one or one-thirty. Sheree and Tom wanted to get something to eat, which made sense since the food had run out, and since we all were very stoned, and had the unrequited 'munchies' pretty bad. As the four of us left the party together, nothing sounded better to me than a cheeseburger or a pizza. Or maybe both.

Kerry was very close. She couldn't seem to function more than two inches away from me, and as we all walked to our cars she made the effort very difficult since she insisted on keeping both arms around me, making me walk almost sideways as she pushed against me. I had my arm around her, as well, and could feel the soft, warm swell of her breast against my hand. She was smiling very sweetly up at me, (since she stood several inches shorter, even in heels) and as we neared the car she pulled my hand around—the one most firmly and conspicuously planted against her rib cage—to more fully and satisfactorily enjoy the tender pleasures of her breast. As I looked at her, and she at me, we shared a moment, and I was certain that we were headed for something quite interesting when we got back to the apartment. In fact, I wasn't too sure she wouldn't just suggest we skip the late night snack, and head directly there. She didn't, though, so the four of us, Tom and Sheree, and Kerry and me, headed off to find a pizza place, or something.

It isn't too easy to find pizza at two in the morning, except for perhaps take-out. I followed Tom in the car, and we stopped at about four places—all closed—before Sheree finally, thankfully, took control of the situation. She got out of their car and came back to mine as we sat in the parking lot of the last, closed pizza place.

"This boy ain't doin' so good." She cocked her head in the direction of Tom, and leaned on her elbows on the top of the passenger's side door, her head just inside the window, which was, of course, down. "You all got any ideas?"

Both Kerry and Sheree looked at me, then, eyebrows raised, but silent.

"How about 'Krystal'," I suggested, "they're always open." Krystal was a 24-hour 'little square burger' place, known mostly for their remarkable ability to inspire vicious late night indigestion.

"*Puh-lease!*" Sheree made a gagging motion, "My stomach can't take Krystals at this time of night. Not, of course, that any other time of the day or night is better." She grinned.

But, we were all out of suggestions, it seemed, so as we fumbled around trying to think of some place else we could go, Tom finally decided he'd waited long enough. He got out of the car and came back to lean through the window on my side.

"What's going on?" he asked. "Can't y'all think of anywhere to go?" No, we couldn't, we all agreed, heads shaking. "Hmmm ... well, I've shot *my wad*. Unless y'all want to go up to our place."

"No way," I shook my head, "you live clear up in Bum-Fuck, Egypt. I mean, it's two in the morning, already. It'd be almost three by the time we got there."

"So what?" he posed. "What difference does it make? I ain't ready to call it a night, yet."

"Well, me either," I agreed, reluctantly, "but I don't want to drive all the way up there—and then back again—tonight. Hell, since we're almost already there, let's go to *my* place. That, at least, is close by." Relatively speaking.

"Fine with me," Tom pulled his head out of the window, and so did Sheree. I threw a look toward Kerry, who'd been sitting silently during the whole conversation, calmly smoking her cigarette.

Kerry looked over at me, and in mock oriental wisdom said, "Ah, but do *we* have anything to eat, there, grasshopper?"

On the way to my apartment Kerry and I stopped and bought a couple of frozen pizzas. (My favorite. What irony!) We tried to buy beer but it was too late at night (bless the Bible belt!), so we decided to take our chances with what we might have in the refrigerator.

Sheree and Tom beat us there, of course. He had already parked on the street, the only place they *could* park, and the two of them were waiting outside the side entrance when I pulled my car into the parking

garage. Giggling and carrying on, they both waved and laughed idiotically as I drove by.

We made a lot of noise getting into the elevator, while in the elevator, and getting out of the elevator. I shushed the three of them, mostly in a losing cause, but they did quiet down, somewhat, as we stumbled down the hall to my apartment. I was getting pretty straight by the time we reached the door, but it still took me more than one try to get the key into the lock and turn it. Finally, the door was open and we surged inside.

Sheree, always quick to get things going, made a beeline to the oven and had it on in a flash. Tom, on the other hand, made himself at home and immediately went to the refrigerator to get us all beers.

"We're in luck," he laughed. "We got a full twelve-pack in here, and it's cold, too! I'm almost amazed you thought that far in advance, Huffman," he said as he handed me a cold one. "It's so unlike you to be prepared."

I didn't think I had been that prepared. But Kerry spoke up, "Uh, Tom, I think *I* should take credit for the beer."

Tom twisted the top off a bottle and presented it to her. "My thanks and admiration are yours, milady." Tom's mock gallantry obviously tickled Kerry. Sheree cleared her throat, obviously feeling left out, and Tom responded by ceremoniously presenting her with a beer, too, thus placing himself back into her good graces.

The oven was almost ready. Sheree wouldn't let any of us interfere with her mission to bake the pizzas, so we all rambled off to find seats in the living room. Tom immediately took the big, overstuffed chair that faced the couch, and as I plopped down into my favorite spot, Kerry kicked her shoes off and oozed into the spot right next to me, almost sitting in my lap. I thought, idly, that the way she was sitting there, knees up and leaning over into my lap, she might be giving Tom a little too good a view, but I decided to trust her judgment and ability to maintain a little decorum. Sheree didn't get 'comfortable' right away. Instead, she perched temporarily on the arm of Tom's chair.

Kerry leaned over to whisper timidly in my ear, "Do you have any ashtrays?"

"Why are you whispering?" I asked her, grinning, but I was surprised she hadn't managed to find them already. "We have no secrets, here," I said, referring to my two closest friends whom by now were both quite comfortably snuggled in the chair opposite us.

"What do you want, babe?" Sheree instantly squirmed out of Tom's arms and jumped up, ready to fetch.

Kerry looked at me, then at Sheree. She thought she needed

permission to ask for an ashtray, of all things. The way I was feeling, whatever was mine—was hers. “Sheree, we need an ashtray.”

“Oh, *no problem*,” She dashed away to the kitchen, where she knew just where I hid the things.

“Hey, ole son,” Tom took a long swig from his beer, “you got any dope around here?”

“Yeah,” I started to get up, “it’s in the bedroom. In my dresser, I think.”

“Hidden under your underwear, no doubt,” Tom smirked.

“I’ll get it!” Sheree called from the kitchen.

“Damn it, Sheree,” I stood up, finally digging myself out from under Kerry’s legs, “sit down. I can do things for myself.” I pointed her back to the chair where Tom sat, beaming back at me.

“Fine,” she said, returning in a mock huff, holding a large glass ashtray that she handed to Kerry.

I got up, went into the bedroom and scrounged through the dresser where I usually kept my stash. It looked like I had about an ounce of dope, complete with a pack of rolling papers, and I brought these two things out to where the party was just getting started again. I tossed the bag and the papers at Tom. He’s more of an expert rolling a joint than I am, so whenever possible he gets the honors. Sheree brought out another ashtray, this one going to the arm of the chair where she shoehorned herself in again, next to Tom. Kerry, still timid for no reason I could fathom, was holding a cigarette and her lighter, and seemed to be waiting for a signal from someone to tell her she could smoke.

I couldn’t resist the urge to tease her, a little. “If you’re waiting for permission,” I kidded, “you won’t get it.” I swear she was almost taken aback by my facetious comment. Taken aback myself by her reaction, I returned hesitantly to my spot on the couch.

Sheree came to her rescue, as she would for anyone who wasn’t quite holding their own. “Go ahead, girl. You ain’t gonna offend any of us. If he doesn’t like it, just tell the son-of-a-bitch to eat shit and die.” She was referring, of course, to me.

Sheree grinned; Kerry relaxed slightly and smiled; Tom was *always* smiling; I made it a foursome. “Where’s that joint?” I asked, smiling.

The pizzas were magnificent. Of course, almost anything short of shit on a stick tastes magnificent when you’ve got a good buzz on. Tom rolled three more joints altogether, and by the time we finished the pizzas, the joints, and the last of the beer, everyone was feeling very stoned again, *very* warm and cozy, and very much ready for a little loving. Well, at least

Sheree and Tom were.

Conversation had died down, and they—Sheree and Tom—were starting into some serious smooching there in the chair, not paying any attention to where they were. Kerry and I were nearly total strangers to each other, however, and though she was warm, and I was warmed by her warmth, the mere presence of Tom and Sheree seemed to be inhibiting us. Well, I *know* it was inhibiting me.

Kerry sat quietly, and smoked yet another cigarette. She had her legs across my lap, and faced me, somewhat, so that every time she exhaled I got part of her smoke. I didn't especially care for it, but it did make me want my own cigarette. I reached over her for the pack lying behind her, and pulled one of her menthols out. She reached behind herself then, too, and retrieved the lighter for me. I lit my own cigarette, and the two of us sat there together silently, and calmly smoked while Sheree and Tom got cozier and cozier.

Kerry and I shared looks over the next two cigarettes, and all the while the two of them were getting steamier and steamier. I think we both wished it could be *us* who were getting steamy, but it seemed neither of us were ready to break that barrier, now, while we had company. Even if that company was about to rip their clothes off.

"Uh, excuse me," I ventured to our 'guests,' "wouldn't you be more comfortable someplace else?"

"Nah," Tom said, not even bothering to stop his kissing on Sheree, "you all take the bedroom." I think he was joking.

"That's not what I meant," I said.

Sheree pulled herself away from the spell she had been under—a spell called Tom Germaine. "He's right, bucko," she told him, "we should be going."

Tom was hot, and ready, and he wasn't *at all* interested in making the long drive home without a little 'relief'. He started to complain, but Sheree, more than a foot shorter and a hundred pounds lighter, put her hand over his mouth and without another word being spoken, got him to agree they had to leave.

It took a few minutes for Tom to cool down enough to stand up without much undue embarrassment, and Sheree had to adjust the top of her outfit, which had ridden up during their necking until the bottom of her bra showed. During much of the time they had been kissing, Tom's hand had pushed her bra up to the point her breast had become uncovered, but she had only calmly and gently pulled it back down so she wouldn't embarrass us too much. I know if Kerry and I had been necking

and feeling each other up the same way they had been, Sheree wouldn't have made any efforts at all to keep things from getting completely out of hand.

Finally, they gathered themselves together, and with a kiss from Sheree, and a wink and a grin from Tom, they closed the door behind them.

Kerry was sitting on the couch sideways, legs up and warming the place where I'd been sitting. Her red, bloodshot eyes peered in my direction, but they were reduced mostly to slits from all the marijuana we'd smoked. A tobacco cigarette was cradled loosely in the fingers of her left hand, forgotten. I stood by the door, tired and red-eyed myself, and tried to judge her mood.

When she saw me studying her, she smiled, and took a long, deep drag on the cigarette. It was only half-smoked, but as she exhaled she reached back for the ashtray and snubbed the thing out. Cigarette now gone, she slowly drew her knees up to her chest, and hugged her arms around them. She let her forehead fall to rest on her knees a moment, but only a moment, and then once again looked up at me.

I glanced at the clock on the kitchen wall. It was almost three forty-five, and it had been a *long* night. I felt relaxed, but strangely excited, too. Her hair shone with a deep red-gold hue in the dim light of the lamp on the table behind her. Her face was mostly hidden in shadow, except that I could catch an occasional glint of reflected light in her eyes as she watched me. I saw her hand come up lazily to smooth down her hair. As she brought her hand down, I saw a particular spark flash in her eyes, surely an optical illusion, and she patted the spot on the couch in front of her.

"C'mere," she called, but barely loud enough to be heard, her voice raspy and hoarse from all the dope and the cigarettes. "Sit with me awhile." She patted the spot again, eyes flashing. "Right here."

"It's late," I motioned to the clock with my head. She only nodded, shrugged. I felt once again as if I were drawn to her by some inexplicable force. Not even if I had wanted, do I think I could have stayed where I was by the door. Her invitation, and the spark of light in her eyes, and something else I couldn't quite define, called me to come to her. And my eyes never left hers as I floated across the room, coming to rest on the couch next to her. She was turned, facing me, and as I sat, she pushed her toes under my leg. I put a hand on her knee, safe territory for the moment.

"I had a *really* good time tonight, buddy." Her voice was low, rough, and sexy as all hell.

"Me, too." I sounded pretty rough, as well.

"But I'm glad they're gone, though," she said, referring to Tom and Sheree, who had just left. She rocked her body backward and forward as she spoke, like a small child sometimes does to calm herself. As she rocked, she talked, "I really like Sheree. She's got a lot on the ball, and she was very nice to me." I only nodded. I knew. Kerry went on, "Of course I didn't know anyone at the party, but she took me around and introduced me to everyone. Tom is a real nice guy, too. I can see why Sheree has such a thing for him." Kerry paused a moment. "How long have you and Tom been friends?"

"Since we were freshmen in high school. We've been playing in the band together since about that time, too." I couldn't hold back a sigh. "We'd get together more often, I suppose, if he didn't live so damned far away." Or if I'd call once in a while, I didn't add.

"Where *do* they live, anyway?"

"Way the hell up north of the city. They have a lakefront home up on Lake Lanier."

"Really?" she sounded impressed. "That's a hell of a drive into town. What's he do?"

"He's a recording engineer at a studio not too far from here. He drives about sixty-five miles—each way—to and from work every day."

"No way I'd do it." She shook her head, "I'd find a job closer to home, or move to town, or something."

"Well, he does want to open his own studio some day," my hands began to knead her knees, "and you can bet that when he does it'll be up in Gainesville, not down here in town." Gainesville, Georgia, was the town nearest to Tom's house.

Kerry seemed very tired. She yawned, closed her eyes. "What's Sheree do?" she asked, between jaw-breaking gapes.

I was pretty tired, too, and couldn't suppress a yawn of my own. "She's a research assistant for a local publisher."

"Oh," came Kerry's soft, tired reply.

Talking quietly with Kerry made me feel very much at ease. It had been so long since I'd been with someone I liked and admired, and could relax with, and who seemed to like me, as well. I felt terribly rusty, almost inexperienced. Maybe even a little nervous. At times, maybe a *lot* nervous. But Kerry seemed to be taking it slow, and I *was* slow, so if we didn't fall asleep first, things just might get around to working out for us.

The conversation had waned, and her forehead had come to rest on her knees, again. I couldn't blame her—I was also tired and sleepy—and I wondered if maybe we should just call it a night. I was a little

disappointed that things seemed to be fizzling, when earlier they had seemed so hot.

Because I liked her, and because I was willing to take my time with her, I bent down and kissed her on the knee. It was a goodnight kiss, and I started to get up from the couch.

"Where are you going?" She sounded suddenly worried, as if I might be angry with her, or something.

"You look really tired, Kerry." I kept my hand on her knee, and brought my face down near hers. "And I'm tired, too. Maybe we should just call it a night."

She looked at me like she thought she had done something wrong, or was letting me down, "No! *Please*, don't go. Stay here with me awhile, OK?"

I wanted to stay, but because I couldn't seem to take matters into my own hands, I was afraid. If I stayed, I might make a bigger fool of myself than I was already.

When I didn't sit down right away, she put her hand on my shoulder. "What's wrong, Marc?"

"Nothing," I said. But nothing wasn't what I was feeling.

"Bullshit. Why won't you sit here with me? What did I say to upset you? What have I done wrong?"

"Nothing." I tried to sound as reassuring as I could. "It's just been ..." I almost couldn't say it "... such a long time. And I'm a little nervous." I stood up. "Actually, I'm also a little afraid."

"Afraid? What have you got to be afraid of? Certainly *not* me. I'm as harmless as a fly, and you can be absolutely certain that if you come here and put your arms around me—and *kiss* me—I *won't* get up and laugh in your face."

"I didn't really think you would laugh in my face—"

"—Look, buddy," she straightened, strength growing, "if you don't take me in your arms *right now* and kiss me, I think I just might go crazy!" And with that, we tumbled together on the couch and became lost in our first very real, and *very* passionate kiss.

Once we broke through the barrier of my inability to get things started, things went *much* better. Kerry seemed to have tremendous pent-up passion and energy, almost as much as I did, and for several minutes we stayed face-to-face, locked in a long, wet, and active kiss. Her tongue met mine, and together we explored each other in a way that only lovers do. My arms were around her, and hers around me, and we kissed, and squeezed, and hugged so tightly I thought neither of us would be able to breathe. But we breathed anyway, and the heat of our breaths on our

necks, and the quickening, hammering beat of our hearts urged us on. Faster and faster.

I was lost in a kiss with by far the most passionate person I have ever experienced. Her lips were full, and wonderfully soft against mine, and she licked at my lips, my face, my eyes, brushing and caressing every inch of me with her lips and tongue. She nuzzled my neck, sending shivers of sweet pleasurable abandon down my spine and onto my scalp. She sucked and nipped at my ear lobe, and her tongue probed more deeply into my ear. I was made alive by her touch, by her lips, by her tongue, and in return for her attentions, I cautiously began to kiss and caress the side of her neck, as she had done to me.

As I moved down to nibble at her neck along her collar bone, moving as close to her sweet breasts as I dared, I received the full measure of her musky, dark, and heady perfume. My mind reeled, my attentions forgotten while I absorbed every essence of the heat, the emotions, and the fragrances of the woman who was purely Kerry. I dove into the tender nape of her neck, and was encouraged and heartened by the gasps and the cooing moans she made in response. I dared to nip at the bottom of her earlobe. It had been pleasurable and exciting for me, but for Kerry it seemed to spark the very erotic height of her passions. She gasped, pushing my head away from her ear.

"Stop!" she panted, holding me at bay, "I can't take it!" She was breathless and gasping. I growled, a virile, determined sound that made her chuckle under her breath. She could hold me back no longer. Released, then, to tantalize her earlobe, I barely touched and teased her, making her pant, "Yes! Oh! YES!"

Suddenly then, she wanted to be rid of her dress. Without waiting for me, she pulled it up toward her head, and when I gave her a little room, snatched it off. Her panty hose were likewise unwanted, and they were swiftly whisked down to her ankles. She frantically pulled them off with her feet, and she was suddenly free.

Kerry lay there, eyes glazed and chest heaving, and as I knelt over her I got my first glimpse of how truly wonderful her body was. She wore no bra under the dress, and for the first time I took in the soft, round, inviting mounds of her bare breasts rising and falling before me. Her delicately pale, pink nipples were alive, impossibly erect, and served as a focal point for her equally delicious, though flushed and swollen areolas. I wanted to touch them, to caress them, and with my tingling fingers trembling from the excitement and delicious anticipation, I gingerly touched her warm, inviting, and incredibly, *excruciatingly* soft left nipple. It was an electric shock of excitement that coursed up my arm and into the center of my

chest. The touch of her heated, silky smooth bare skin thrilled me like nothing else, ever. I felt I was worshipping at the temple, and the gods in attendance were the rising and falling mounds of her abundant breasts. In humble, adoring supplication, I lowered myself to breathe deeply of her intensely seductive, luminous beauty. I was in heaven, oblivious to everything but the softness and the warmth that was Kerry. She crushed herself to me, holding so tightly I thought she wanted to come inside me, to merge with me until we were one. Her kisses were savage and impassioned, with a sense of urgency and almost desperate need that reached down into me and snuffed out any resistance. I responded in kind, losing more and more of myself to every kiss, every caress, every touch of her searing, burning skin against mine.

I had to lose my shirt, then. It was suddenly and completely in the way, and I reluctantly pulled back from her arms to stand, once more, on my knees over her. Its buttons were no match for my insistence, and the shirt was ripped away from my shoulders and thrown to the floor to lay along side her discarded dress.

I dared to look down upon my feverish, flushed, panting and writhing beauty. Her silky soft panties were black, scant, barely seeming to cover her. Her hips were wide, and the base of her pelvis broad and flat, almost more than the taut, inadequate fabric could cover. With a start, I realized I had been looking down at the barely hidden quintessence of Kerry's womanhood, and as I brought my eyes up to meet hers, I saw then what the woman inside the body was thinking. Almost before I realized what was happening, her hands went to the buckle on my belt, and she began to work fiercely and furiously to undo it.

I was amazed with the quickness and skill she displayed as she tore open the belt, and finding that my pants buttoned, undid them without a moment's hesitation, and pulled the zipper down. It had been a very long time since I had last been with a woman—*any* woman—and as she worked my pants down past my hips I found myself thinking it had all been worth the wait. Well worth the wait.

She didn't wait until she had my pants down to deal with my underwear. They were pushed down off my hips with her feet, and in a few seconds I was bared, naked and exposed, my penis erect and achingly swollen, and poking straight out from my abdomen toward her. Kerry touched me with her fingers, slowly, carefully, purposefully. She seemed to admire me, but I was embarrassed to think I could have anything to be admired. She seemed pleased to touch me, to hold me, and without releasing her grip on me, she worked my pants down as far as my bent knees would allow. At that point I had to stand up, or my pants would

not be removed. Once my feet were on the floor, so were my pants, and I resumed my kneeling, reverential place between her thighs, my left knee a mere two inches from contact with her moistening, barely covered womanhood. I was trembling, I was so afraid. She resumed her ministrations on me, more directed and insistent, and I felt at any moment I would explode in painful ecstasy if she didn't stop. In a panic, I pulled her hands away from my throbbing member.

"You've got to stop, or I'll explode!" I panted, the spasms in my abdomen threatening to peak. Kerry made a mischievous, satisfied sound that verbalized perfectly her delight at my predicament. Her eyes were closed to slits, and her triumphant, exultant smile evoked the delicious pleasure she felt at bringing me to the brink. I held the flood back, strained to contain the tide, and in a few seconds the hot, burning urgency seemed to subside to a level I could control. Barely. I ached terribly with the delayed imminence of the orgasm that I had worked so hard to avert.

"Let it come, baby," she whispered, almost a moan, "let it come all over me!" She didn't touch my penis, but cradled my balls in her small, tender hands. "C'mon, baby, let it go." She kneaded my balls, squeezing and urging me, "Let it come, baby! Let it come. C'mon, baby, let it come!" Her voice was a mantra, a hypnotizing chant, and I was transfixed by the sound, compelling me. "I want your come to cover me! Please, *oh please baby! Let it go!!*"

Finally, with her words penetrating me so completely, I could hold it back no longer. With a deep groan that accompanied even stronger, deeper, more violent muscle contractions, my orgasm erupted, and Kerry cried out, "Yes! Yes! YES! OH YES-SS!!" in her ecstasy and elation as I unloaded onto her heaving, sweating breasts and burning hot belly. It seemed to go on and on, draining me, and she gently squeezed and kneaded my balls until every last drop of semen found its way onto her. My knees weakened suddenly, shaking, and I was forced to sit back on my heels to keep from falling on her. And as I panted and waited for the intensity of my orgasm to subside, Kerry began to rub my come all over her flushed and sweating breasts.

It was apparent she wasn't through, yet. Not at all. She was moaning, soft and low, and cooing to herself again as she covered her searing hot skin with my sweet, sticky, teeming come. She worked it into the skin of her milky soft belly, and gradually worked her hand down toward her now soaked panties. She rubbed my come over them, down between her thighs and over her rocking, undulating hips. I watched, ass on heels, as my shaking muscles relaxed. I wanted to help, I wanted to touch her, but I became too preoccupied, fascinated at the accomplished skill she

displayed in caressing her own body. Her hands roamed over her pubis, found the elastic waistband of her filmy black panties. She slid her fingers under it, to push them down into her partially covered, and still mostly unseen vagina. Her knees were wide, back arched, and she began to massage herself under the opaque skin of her wet, come-soaked, and glistening panties. Finally, I could no longer take the teasing or the suspense. Slowly, and with the utmost caution and careful evenness of motion, I moved my hands down the outsides of her thighs, toward the V of her hips. Slowly and with movements fraught with danger and discovery, I pulled down on the elastic sides of her panties, past her hips and down her smooth thighs.

Kerry opened her eyes and looked at me. I don't know what she expected to see, but I'm sure my face was a study in awe. I was completely enmeshed in her building climax, and she gazed at me with a want, a yearning that both melted and broke my heart. She brought her knees together, slightly, so I could remove her panties completely, and once they were discarded to the floor with the rest of our clothes, I beheld the fully exposed nakedness of her raging, demanding body for the first time.

Her fingers were most intent, massaging and stroking the, wet, swollen, and reddened lips of her labia. Her vagina was fully engorged with blood, open like a flower in full bloom before me, and as I stared, she kneaded that small, sensitive spot perched at the top of that most covetous opening. Her motions were intensifying, the rocking undulations of her hips strengthening, and she moaned and cooed and cried out, louder and faster, louder and faster as she brought herself to the brink of orgasm.

When she came in a few moments, I was amazed at how fast she had accomplished it, and at how deep, strong, and satisfying it was for her. In that moment of watching her climax, I felt a kinship, a bond with her that I hoped would last forever. Her act of masturbation was a private, personal one, and I was warmed with the glow of having participated, in however small a role, in its culmination.

A few minutes went by as she lay with her eyes closed, her body glistening, sticky and wet, her chest rising and falling so evenly as she drifted away on fluffy white clouds of pleasure, her mind floating in ecstasy as she simply breathed, and existed. My heartbeat was in tune with hers. My breathing matched hers. My pleasure *was* hers. Where we had each been alone, now we were together, and with that coming together my mind seemed to know hers, we seemed to think as one, exist as one, love as one in the tender warm harmony of the moment. Our hands found each other, and we grasped them together as a pact for the future. As I squeezed her hand within mine, her eyes opened and I

caught, once again, that momentary sparking flash of light in her beautiful green eyes. It was a light and a signal that I would always guide by.