

## Executive Assistant (part4 of 4)

by: [Jacki Pett](#) -

AI Art by Redryder

### Part 4

Funny that the first thought that came to mind was what would I wear. I had an idea what would be appropriate. Maybe I was fortunate that I let the girls talk me into some of the clothes they had the day before.

"Do you have golf shoes?" She asked.

"No." Mine were in my golf bag in my bedroom up North.

"We'll stop and get you a pair."

"Could we run by home first?" I didn't want to go into a store dressed in my new white dress. It just didn't seem proper for shopping.

It didn't seem right to ask Virginia to wait downstairs while I went up to the apartment to get something to wear. I would have liked a moment alone with Connie to talk but it would have to wait.

I was disappointed to find she wasn't there. In the kitchen I found evidence that she had not had breakfast alone. "Connie went out early." I remarked. "I wanted to show her my new dress."

"She'll see it another time Honey." Virginia assured me.

While I was there, I poured myself a glass of juice and took my vitamins.

"You take all those every day?" Virginia asked, seeing me lay out the five different pills I took.

"Every day." I said proudly.

I decided to buy myself, at the first opportunity, a small pill container so I would always have a supply of my vitamins with me in my purse.

I hadn't taken anything I bought out of the bags. I wasn't even sure where the things were I was looking for.

Virginia enjoyed seeing everything I bought. "You picked this all out yourself?"

"Christy and a couple of our friends went shopping with me, they helped."

"I don't know why I didn't think to get you any casual wear. I don't know what I was thinking of." She chastised herself.

"I have plenty Aunt Virginia." I insisted but she just smiled at me. I knew what she was thinking.

I finally found the tan shorts I had been looking for. Next I wanted the new tee shirt I found. I continued rummaging through the bags.

"This would go really well with your shorts." Virginia remarked. She picked up the pale yellow tank top that Christy had picked out for me, from the bed.

"Really, you think?" It was snug fitting. Christy had insisted I buy it, and a few other things like it.

"Absolutely."

I grabbed the bag with the sneakers I bought and got out my new white Keds.

Virginia was rooting through my dresser drawer. She brought out a pair of socks. "Here, I knew you had a pair that nearly match that top." She held up a pair of pale yellow cotton socks.

"You can change at my house. We really have to get going if we're going to be able to meet them on the tee."

It didn't take us ten minutes, on our way to the golf course, to pick up new golf shoes. I was floored by the price on the box. I wasn't about to argue with Virginia when she took out her checkbook.

My game had suffered a little in the year and a half since I'd played but not too badly. I wasn't able to drive the ball as far as I was used to. Maybe it was the strange clubs, they were women's?

I didn't realize how much muscle I'd lost over the past months. My arms, as wiry as they were to start with, were even thinner and weaker than they used to be. I didn't know if the hormones had affected my muscle tissue.



I felt funny going out on the course in the figure hugging spandex tank top. It fit so tightly over my chest that it showed off the outline of my breasts. It made them look bigger and I had to wonder if they were still growing. I had seemed lately that my bras had to have shrunk in the wash, or

had they? My soft fleshy breasts more than filled the small cups of my bras.

Still, I had a good time playing. The two women we played with were good company and not bad golfers. We were all pretty evenly matched and that helped.

We were followed by a foursome of men. Two were young, about my age, and two older. They looked like a pair of fathers and sons.

The group in front of us was very slow and several times the men caught up with us at the tee. They made casual conversation. The older men spoke more with the others. The younger pair opted to pass the time with me, although I would have preferred they leave me alone but I didn't want to appear rude in front of Virginia and the others.

I felt very conspicuous in the tank top with them standing so close and staring at me.

They talked about our golf games after introducing themselves. "You have a very nice stroke Jennifer." The blond one, Craig, remarked. "I was watching you tee off."

I smiled a casual smile. "Thanks", was my only reply.

"I saw that chip shot onto number four. That was great." Jack added. "You look like you've been playing a while." He sat on the bench next to me.

"About six years." I told him. Jack was the better looking of the two. He reminded me of Mel Gibson.

They continued to make conversation as we waited to tee off. I smiled when it was appropriate. I didn't enjoy it but I also didn't let it show.

"So what do you do Jennifer?" Craig asked.

"I work for an advertising agency. I'm the executive assistant to the head of the division." I told them proudly.

"So you're a secretary?" Jack asked, apparently trying to clarify.

It wasn't the way he said it, his words didn't sound sarcastic, it was just that he made it seem demeaning, 'just a secretary.' I was proud of the work that I did. I may have started out as a secretary but I was much more than that now.

My reply was with a sarcastic undertone. "I'm not just a secretary. I report directly to one of the vice presidents of the company." I was so flustered at his comment that it didn't come out as strongly as I intended.

The two guys just looked at each other. I saw the faint smile they exchanged. I resented them taking me so lightly. It was one of my first experiences with the bias that so many women had to endure.

Fortunately for them, or maybe me, it was time to tee off. I hit my tee shot in the same direction as Virginias and we walked from the tee side by side, pulling our handcarts.

"Craig was cute. What were you three talking about?"

She thought he was cute. "He's a jerk." I told Virginia the comment he made and their reaction to my remark.

"Honey, you've got a lot to learn about men." She said in a motherly tone. "Most are like children who don't think before they open their mouths. Just be patient with them."

"I'll try." It sounded as if she thought I had an interest in men. Hadn't I just had the same conversation with Connie, I asked myself? There wasn't time then to correct her mistaken impression. There was almost no opportunity to talk to her without the others overhearing.

They caught up to us again on number eleven tee. If my sarcasm earlier had offended them, it didn't show.

Craig asked, "Your husband doesn't golf?"

"I'm not married." His question would have been humorous if I didn't recognize it as a ploy to find out if I was single.

Jack followed up his question with one of his own. "Engaged?"

They weren't subtle at all. "No."

"Maybe you'd allow us to buy you a drink at the nineteenth hole if you and your friends are planning to stop off after your game?" Craig offered.

I had no idea if Virginia and her friends planned on having a drink

after but I definitely wasn't interested in their offer. "I don't think we're stopping for one."

I just wanted them to leave me alone.

A little later it occurred to me that I should have responded to their rude questions with a few of my own. I should have asked if they were married and why their wives or girlfriends didn't golf with them. I had simply been too nervous to think of things like that at the time.

They were right behind us on eighteen. By then I just wanted to finish and get out of there. I didn't ask Virginia if she was planning on stopping off for one. I should have, explaining to her why, but I waited too long.

"You don't have to have a drink. You can just order a soda." She suggested when I told her I wasn't interested in going into the small bar.

Virginia and her friend wanted to discuss the game they just finished. From the small table we shared, I watched out the window, looking toward the eighteenth green. I hoped they wouldn't stop. Maybe they hadn't seen us come into the bar?

I finally spotted the four men as they rounded the back side of the green. All hope disappeared as they made a direct line toward the clubhouse and the bar. I had no doubt they planned on coming in. I turned my attention back to my companions. I would ignore them.

"So how did you do?" Jack asked over my shoulder.

So much for them leaving me alone. "I ended up with a 78." He looked surprised. I had the feeling he didn't do as well. It was my turn to have a little fun. "How did you do?"

"An eighty one." He said sheepishly.

Craig came up behind him. "How did you do?"

He didn't look any better than Jack when he heard my score.

"Would you let me buy you a drink?" Jack asked.

I was about to say no.

"Go ahead Dear. We'll be right here."

I turned to Virginia in surprise. I hadn't expected her to encourage me. Jack had his hand on the back of my chair, ready to pull it out for me. "I don't know."

"Go on Honey, I'm fine." Virginia insisted.

Again she pressed me to go. "Just a coke." I told the two as I got up from the chair. We didn't sit with the two older men. The tables were too small to hold five people.

Craig held my chair for me as I sat. They made small talk. They stayed away from the topic of work, asking where I came from up North. My accent certainly wasn't southern.

They asked who Virginia was and I told them, "She's my Aunt."

"So you're just visiting?"

"I've just moved down."

"And you're staying with your Aunt?" Jack asked.

"No, I live with a friend."

Craig was blunt, "A girlfriend?"

"My adopted Mom." I answered. That was essentially true.

Jack asked, "So you haven't had a chance yet to see much of Atlanta?"

The small talk was becoming boring. "No. I work most of the time."

"You should get out and see more." Craig suggested.

I knew what was coming. "When I get some time to myself." I wasn't about to give them an easy opening. I wondered which of them was going to get to it first. It didn't matter, of course, I wasn't about to accept an invitation to go out from either one.

I thought to myself, if I really were a woman, Jack would be my preference to go out with.

I had been impatiently waiting for Virginia and her friends to finish their drinks so we could go. They finally pushed their chairs out from the table.

"Well, it's time for me to go." I announced to the pair. They had missed their chance, I laughed to my self.

I was wrong. Jack was the one who spoke up as I pushed my chair away from the table. "Some friends and I have tickets to the benefit concert next weekend, I was wondering if you'd like to go." He looked very nervous.

I remembered the times I had asked a girl to go out in almost the same way. I was always nervous, afraid she'd say no and be rejected. I always hated that moment of truth.

Craig looked dejected. He was probably angry with his friend that Jack had asked first. I could imagine the conversation they'd have when I left.

No way was I going to accept Jack's offer. "I'm afraid I'm probably going to have to work next weekend. We have a magazine shoot scheduled." It was a lie, of course.

Jack looked the way I had anticipated he would, dejected. His friend almost appeared to cheer up, given the small grin on his face. I could imagine what he was thinking. If he couldn't score, at least Jack didn't either.

"Well if you change your mind," He fished his wallet out of his back pocket and pulled out a business card. "The concert's Saturday night." He handed me his card. "Give me a call. My beeper number's there too." He added,

It was a fancy card with gold embossed lettering. I tucked it in my pocket with every intention of throwing it away later. I smiled across the table as they stood up with me. "I don't think I'll be able to get away but thanks for asking anyway."

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"If you'll let me have your number I could call and we could do something another time?"

That I didn't expect. I didn't want him to call. I had to admit, he was persistent. "I don't usually give it out. I have your card. I'll call you." On a cold day in hell, I thought to myself.

As we walked out the door, I remembered my first encounter with men as Jennifer, what seemed so long ago. I remembered how terrified I'd been, with my palms sweating and my knees shaking. Sure, I was still nervous about meeting men but I wasn't nearly as terrified as that first time. I thought I handled myself quite well.

"What was it he handed you?" Virginia asked as we put our golf clubs in her trunk.

"His business card."

She smiled at me, asking eagerly, "Did he ask you out."

I really had to have that talk with her. "Yes."

"That's wonderful. He's very handsome. Where's he taking you?"

Did she actually think I had accepted his invitation? I was amazed. "I told him I couldn't go, that I had to work."

"That's a shame Honey."

A shame?

Her friends, who parked their car right next to Virginia's, prepared to leave.

"We had fun. It was very nice to meet you Jennifer. You play a good game. We need to get together for another soon."

I smiled sweetly. "It was a pleasure meeting you too and I'd love to play with you again. I enjoyed it." I did enjoy the game.

When Virginia and I got in the car, I continued the earlier conversation. "Aunt Virginia, I don't really have to work next weekend. I just didn't want to go out with him."

She looked at me, puzzled, for an instant. "Well, you'll meet someone nice that you like. You just need to be patient Honey. The right man will come along."

She thought she understood. She didn't. Virginia was too much. I didn't want to get into it then and there. I was too tired from walking eighteen holes.

It was almost six when we got back to her house. Neither of us had a desire to go out eat. I helped Virginia in the kitchen. We threw together a light dinner.

The wine tasted good with the pasta. "May I ask you a favor?" I asked across the table.

"What is it Honey?"

My thoughts went back to the hot rollers upstairs. My curiosity was peaked. I was anxious to try them. "Would you show me how to use the rollers in the bedroom?" I knew how to roll my hair in them but I had no idea what combination of the different sizes to use or how to arrange them in my hair.

"I'd be happy to Honey." She was thrilled that I asked for her help. "Right after dinner."

It didn't take us any time to clean up. I needed a shower, besides, Virginia said they worked best when your hair was wet.

Among the clothes in the closet was a pink nylon robe. It wasn't any shorter than mine at home but it was much nicer. I recognized the Liz Clayborn emblem embossed on the front. Wearing only clean panties, I slipped it on and sat at the vanity table where we plugged in the rollers to heat up.

"Can you make my hair look like hers?" I asked, showing Virginia the picture I had been carrying around in my purse for several days. I had seen it in one of Connie's magazines and had cut it out.

The girl with bangs, like I had now, had a head full of soft curls. Her hair was a little longer than mine, down to her breasts, but I hoped mine was long enough. My hair seemed to grow fast and I hoped it wouldn't take too long for it to grow to that length.

"I think we can do that." Virginia agreed.

I watched closely as she separated my hair just so and wound it on the hot rollers.

"There's lots of hair styling magazines that would show you how to do this and give you hints on different styles for your hair."

"I've seen them on the magazine racks." I just never picked one up to look at. Guys don't pick up that kind of magazine, much less buy them. There was no reason I shouldn't now. I would get some the next time Connie and I went food shopping.

"Are rollers like these very expensive?" I asked as she continued to set my hair.

"Just take these home with you. I bought them for you."

"I wouldn't feel right taking them."

"Nonsense. They're yours, just like your clothes in the closet." She reminded me. "All I ask is that you leave a few things here to wear for when we decide to go out and you need a change of clothes."

It was all mine. To do with as I pleased? It didn't seem right somehow, the idea of taking the clothes home with me.

Not that I didn't want to. Virginia had exquisite taste in clothes and she bought only the best labels. Most girls would envy my wardrobe and it was growing all the time. I was really pretty lucky, I remember thinking to myself.

"There, all done." She finished putting in the last roller. "I think that's going to look just wonderful."

"How long do I need to leave them in?" I had no idea.

"Well, you could use your hair drier and we could take them out in about a half hour or just leave them on overnight and take them out in the morning."

"I have a hair drier?" I hadn't seen one.

"It's right here." She went to my closet and took the box off the shelf. I hadn't even noticed it there. I had been too busy looking at the clothes below.

"Let's get you set up." She took it out of the box.

I sat there at the dressing table while my hair dried. Virginia brought me a magazine to read and left me alone. We couldn't talk very well over the noise it made.

I remember thinking what a weekend it had been. Getting my hair done, shopping and finding all the clothes I bought. Then discovering everything Virginia had gotten me.

I had been disappointed about Christy and I was still hurt but Connie had helped me put some of that hurt aside. I really enjoyed dinner and the play with Connie and Virginia. I thought about the woman at the play wearing their beautiful dresses and again my curiosity was piqued about how I might look wearing an evening gown.

I was a little nervous at church but the way Virginia's friends accepted me put me at ease. I even got a kick out of the looks from the women's husbands. The white dress I wore was so pretty and feminine. It was almost a shame that it was too dressy for work. I could just imagine how my friends would react to seeing me in it.

Playing golf was fun. Being flirted with, now that it was over, had been fun too, in a way. I remembered Jack's business card in the pocket of my shorts over on the bed. Maybe I would just keep it, just for fun. To remind me of the experience.

"You should be dry by now." Virginia said, coming up from behind me. I hadn't heard her come in over the noise of the hair drier. She had showered and changed.

My hair looked so strange when she took the rollers out, before she brushed it out. Again, I paid close attention to the way Virginia styled it. She showed me how to give it volume and get it to lay just so. I was delighted with the way it took shape.

It wasn't exactly like the picture, but close. My hair did need to get a little longer but it looked great anyway.

"I love it." I said, looking in the mirror, turning my head this way and that. Big full waves cascaded down from the top of my head to below my shoulder. My bangs were pulled off to one side. The words sensual and sexy had never crept into my vocabulary until that moment.

"It's very pretty Jennifer. You have beautiful thick hair. I still can't get over how pretty it looks with the highlights."

I was more than satisfied. "Do you think I could do this myself, in the morning?"

"I'm sure you could but it would be easier if you go to bed with it set." She told me. "You can pick up some inexpensive plastic rollers or, better yet, some of those soft foam ones. They're much easier to sleep in."

I wondered what it was like to sleep in rollers? It had to be uncomfortable. "Do you sleep in rollers?" Virginia had beautiful curly hair.

"Sometimes."

If she could do it, I could get used to it. I would give it a try, but not tonight, I told myself.

"I should really get home." It was after nine. I was anxious to see Connie and have her see what I did with my hair. The other reason I wanted to get home early was that I hadn't forgotten Connie's look when she left the night before and I wanted to have some time with her before we had to go to bed.

"You should wear one of your new dresses home. This peach one would look really pretty with your hair that way."

The peach dress was sleeveless with a softly scooped low neckline that let my hair lay against my skin. Its skirt was long, longer than any dress I had worn, almost to my calves. It was full and flowing. It, with my hair styled the way it was, gave me a soft feminine look that I liked. Who could possibly mistake me for a man?

There were peach pumps to match. I wore my pearls but we both agreed that the dress would have looked better with gold. I wondered what Virginia was thinking and was anxious to see what jewelry she was going to buy me next.

There were so many new experiences I was learning to enjoy.

I was packing up to go, putting my shorts, top and socks in a bag to carry it home. My outfit, that I wore there Saturday night, was already on hangers and ready to go.

"Would it be alright if I take the white dress to show Connie?" I asked.



"Of course Honey. I told you. They're your things to do with what you wish." Virginia fetched it from the closet. She didn't let me leave without putting the curlers in my bag too.

"It's getting late. You be careful driving home and lock your doors. It's not safe for a girl your age to be out alone. Not even in her car." She told me at the front door.

As Jeffrey, that was something I never bothered to worry about. I was only learning to adjust my thinking. It wasn't safe for a girl alone to be out so late. For an instant I imagined what a rapist's reaction would be after accosting me. Then I thought, I wasn't as strong as I used to be. It could be a very unpleasant, if not dangerous experience. I felt a new level of empathy for women. I locked the car door after sliding into the front seat.

All in all, it was a great weekend. It left me feeling both attractive and with a new sense of confidence.

I received a pleasant greeting from both Carl the valet and the doorman, Lester. The looks that accompanied their greetings reinforced my excitement over how good I looked.

It was ten o'clock and Connie wasn't home yet. I was a little worried about her. It appeared that she hadn't been home all day, by the way the apartment looked. Nothing had been moved since I was there in the morning. Not even the vitamins I left on the kitchen counter.

I knew she might still be out with her 'friend' and I shouldn't worry but there wasn't a note where she'd gone or any message from her on the machine.

There was a message for me though. Christy called around six looking for me. She wanted me to call if I didn't get in too late. I decided not to call her. After what she did to me, I thought I'd just let her wonder where I was.

The oddest thought suddenly struck me. I had a way of getting back at her. Maybe I would tell her I had a date, a date with a guy. That would drive her nuts, I was sure of it.

She would ask who and I would tell her "Jack." I would show her his card and tell her how we met and what a great guy he was. I could make up something about him taking me out to dinner and the theater. I wanted her to be jealous. I wanted her to want me the way I wanted her. But no. I couldn't

do that, could I?

I thought of Tina. I hadn't called her that weekend, as I had each Sunday. I almost regretted giving her Connie's number. What if she called and Connie answered the phone. The message on the machine was Connie's. I wondered how Tina would react to my living with a woman?

I felt a little funny, sitting there in my pretty dress in my heels with my hair looking prettier than I ever remembered hers looking. In fact, when I thought about it, overall, I looked prettier than she did. What would she say if she could see me?

I almost hung up the phone after dialing her. "Hi Tina."

She told me about her week and I told her about mine. It was getting difficult to have that kind of conversation with her, I had to twist around and change my recount of the week so much.

She sounded so lonely. "I miss you so much."

Did I miss her the same way? "I miss you too Tina."

"I was talking to my folks and they thought it would be all right if I came down to visit since you have so much trouble getting time off to come up."

That came as a shock. "I don't know if now's a good time Tina." I tried not to sound panicked but I wasn't very successful, given her reaction.

"Why not!?" She asked with concern. "What's wrong?"

I took a deep breath to calm myself. "Nothing's wrong. It's just not a good time. I'm working constantly and I wouldn't have much time for you."

"You're working nights and weekends?" She asked sounding a little peeved.

"Just about." I lied.

"Did you work this weekend, today?"

"All day. I got in about eight."

"Who works with you?" She asked.

This was the jealous side of Tina that I knew. She had no reason to be jealous in the past but that hadn't stopped her when I made plans that didn't include her. "There's a couple of us that work the photo shoots, and the models, of course."

I could have kicked myself for saying that. I had been downplaying the fact that I worked with models because I knew she didn't like that. I screwed up and mentioned them at the worst possible moment.

"Jeffrey, are you seeing someone down there?" Tina had a habit of being direct.

"No!" I insisted. Considering the way Christy was treating me it wasn't really a lie. That was nonsense. Of course I was cheating on Tina and I felt like dirt because of it. On the other hand, if Tina were to walk in and see me, see how I had changed, she would turn right around and walk out on me.

"What about the models?" She asked.

"Honest Tina, I'm not seeing anyone." What would she had said if I told her two guys were coming on to me that day and one asked me out? "I've been asked but I've said no."

She seemed to calm down a little. "Well you better not. I'd be down there so fast your head would spin."

"I believe you." It probably wasn't a good time to suggest to her that maybe we should start seeing other people, as I had planned to tell her the next time we talked.

I had no plans on going back north to live and work. I couldn't even imagine making a trip up to visit. How could I? No, my life was in Atlanta now, or at least till I found a cure for my problem.

"Well if I don't come down, then I expect you to come up for your birthday." She insisted.

My birthday was only a little over a month away. I had to tell her something or she'd be down for sure. "I'll be there, I promise."

"You better. I really miss you Jeffrey." She said again.

"I miss you too. I'll talk to you next week. Take care of yourself."

"I love you!" Her tone was familiar. She expected a reply.

"I love you too." I couldn't muster the same enthusiasm but I tried to sound convincing.

A lot of the exhilaration I had felt that weekend left me after talking to Tina. I went in my bedroom and started cutting off tags and putting my new things away. I waited and waited for Connie, putting off undressing. I so wanted her to see me looking so pretty.

I watched the eleven o'clock news. I didn't even take off my shoes for fear she'd walk in any moment. As the news went off I finally turned off the TV. I was ready to give up and go to bed. My finger was on the light switch when I heard the key in the lock. I turned as the front door opened and rushed toward the foyer to greet her. I found there, to my surprise, a man holding Connie in his arms, kissing her.

I felt so embarrassed. They both turned at the sound of my approach. "I'm so sorry. I didn't mean . . ."

"Hi Sweetheart." Connie said over the man's shoulder.

"Hi . . ." I answered meekly, almost calling her mom. I decided I better not, at least not in front of the man.

He was big, at least six foot two or three. He wasn't a young man. He had to be at least fifty but he looked to be in great shape for his age. He had salt and pepper hair and a kind face. He could have been the president of a company with his polished appearance. He was very handsome.

"Jennifer, I would like you to meet Kevin, Kevin Donaldson."

He extended his hand to me. "It's very nice to meet you Jennifer. Connie's told me so much about you. Actually, there's little else she talks about these days. You're certainly as beautiful as she's told me."

He was very flattering. "It's very nice to meet you too." My small hand was lost in his big paw. He had a great smile. It was the kind that made you like someone the instant you met them.

I couldn't help but notice the faint, pale ring on his ring finger when his hand closed around mine. It was unmistakable.

"I didn't mean to interrupt you two. I was just on my way to bed." I started to back off from the two.

"I was just going." He told me. Once more he kissed Connie. Not as passionately, but with tenderness, barely brushing her lips. "It was wonderful." He told her, looking into her eyes.

I had never seen Connie look that way. For the first time, she was not the self-assured, always in control of the situation woman I knew. She was simply a woman who appeared to melt in the arms of a man. It was nice to see her in that light.

He turned back to me. "It was a pleasure Jennifer. I hope next time we meet we can get to know each other a little."

I began to understand what Connie found so attractive about the man. "I hope so too." His smile seemed to melt you.

With that he was gone. "I like him." I told Connie as she just stood there at the door for a moment. My words seemed to startle her.

"So do I, so do I."

It was cute, seeing her this way.

"Let me look at you."

I was beginning to wonder if she was going to notice.

"I love that dress and your hair. Did Virginia help you do that?"

"Tonight, after dinner. We were experimenting." I was glad she liked it.

She touched my curls then the strap of my dress. "Sweetheart, you look lovely. I can't get over how much the change in your hair has done for you."

"Really?" I was thrilled that she liked it so much.

"Really!"

I remembered the dress that now hung in the closet. "I just have to

show you the way that white dress looks on me."

"All right," She said with a smile. "Go put it on."

I all but ran to the bedroom. I changed quickly. Fortunately, I had a pair of white heels in the closet because I forgot the new ones at Virginia's.

"Oh my, that is lovely." Connie told me when I made an entrance into the living room. "I'll bet you got a lot of compliments from Virginia's friends at church?"

"Everyone loved it. I can't tell you how wonderful I felt wearing it." It didn't even feel odd to say that.

Connie smiled again and there was just a touch of condescendence in her voice. "I think I can imagine."

How stupid could I be? The new experiences I'd been having, the feelings I was discovering, were feelings that Connie, like most women, discovered when they were children. At times, I must have seemed like a child to Connie and Virginia.

"I'm being silly?"

"Not at all. It's only natural for you to feel that way. I'm just so glad that you're adjusting so beautifully." The condescending tone was gone from her voice, replaced with the motherly tone I found so reassuring. "Don't you think you should get ready for bed now? It's late and we have work in the morning."

I was keyed up. "I don't think I can sleep."

I hung up and put my things away with care. After finishing in the bathroom and moisturizing, I went straight to the dresser drawer that held the nighties Connie and Virginia bought me. I found the one I was looking for under the white pajamas. It was red and delicately trimmed in lace on the neckline, hem and narrow straps, just like the one I left at Virginia's.

I found a clean pair of red panties in the other drawer and put them on. I really like the way it looked on me in my mirror. It made me feel much the way the beige dress did when I wore it, soft and feminine. I was beginning to savor the feeling.

I sat on the edge of my bed, contemplating. I made up my mind, got

up and went to Connie's room.

Her door wasn't closed all the way. "Mom?"

"What is it honey?"

I pushed the door open. Connie was standing there in just her underwear.

I felt a little ashamed for intruding. I had never seen her that way. "I'm sorry." I started to back out of the room.

"Don't be silly honey, come in."

I did as she said but took care not to stare.

"That looks nice on you." She commented about the nightie. "It looks comfortable."

"It is, very." I kept my eyes everywhere but on her. She sensed I was uncomfortable.

"Since when can't a mother and daughter see each other in their underwear?"

Sweet, I thought. Too bad I wasn't as comfortable with it as she was. Her reference to our being mother and daughter wasn't in jest. There was none of the humor in her voice that normally went with our kidding about our situation. It was an arrangement I was comfortable with now. In fact, I enjoyed it. It made me feel closer to her.

"What's up?" She asked giving me her full attention.

"There's just something . . ."

Connie seemed to read me like a book. Sitting on the edge of her bed, she called me to her side. "Come here Honey."

I sat down next to her. I didn't know where to start.

"Tell me what's bothering you."

"I was just worrying about something."

"Something about Jennifer?"

Jennifer was just fine at the moment. Quite content in fact. "No, I'm all right. I was worried about you."

I looked up and saw her smiling. "You're worried about me? I'm all right Sweetheart."

"Remember, over at Virginia's last night? When she showed me the room she fixed up for me."

"Of course."

"Well, you seemed upset somehow."

"No Honey. I wasn't upset. I was happy for you." She insisted.

"You looked hurt." I went on. I knew I wasn't mistaken about what I saw.

When she didn't respond, I knew I was right.

"I just wanted you to know that no matter what Virginia does for me, or what she gives me, nothing is as important to me as you are." I wasn't sure I said it right, the way I had intended for it to come out. It seemed inadequate to express how I felt about her.

She still said nothing.

"She's like an Aunt to me and I appreciate all she's done but I don't feel about her the way I feel about you."

Connie's eyes filled with tears as I spoke. The two of us seemed to cry together all the time lately. "What I'm trying to say is that I love you and nothing will ever change that."

She wrapped her arms around me and hugged me tight. "Oh Jennifer. How did I ever get so lucky to find you? You are the dearest thing. I love you so much. I have since I first saw you. You've become the daughter I never had and I adore you."

My tears came quickly and seemed to just flow in torrents. I held her as tightly as she held me. "I've never been happier." I told her.

Virginia had been right about it taking too long to set my hair wet in the morning. I was glad I tried setting it dry and slept in the curlers. It looked so nice Sunday night that I just had to wear it the same way Monday.

Monday held no surprises for me. I got a lot of complements on my new skirt and jacket and especially my hair.

Each day seemed to get better and better. Since the incident with Ginny the week before, everyone was very nice to me. It didn't take an Einstein to deduce that no one wanted to have to confront Connie as a result of harassing me. It did leave me wondering who was being nice to me because of that and who was really my friend. Carol and the others who stood up for me I was sure of. There were a number of others who were nice to me before the incident. I couldn't waste my time worrying about the rest.

Tuesday morning held a surprise for me.

Connie called me into her office around mid morning. "We had a call from Curlins. They've decided to start running a full page color ad and they want to discuss a possible layout."

I recognized the name. I had seen their stores in a few of the malls I'd been in. It was a small local chain of clothing stores. I didn't know why she was telling me this?

"They've asked that we give them a presentation, show them what we can do for them."

"Do you need me to put the usual portfolio together for you?"

"You'll need to do that, yes, but I won't be presenting it." She leaned back in her chair.

"Who's going to do it?" There was no one else available. The other sales people were all out of town.

Connie grinned. "You are."

"Me!?" She surprised me. "I'm not ready to . . ."

"Don't be silly. Of course you are." Her look turned serious. "You've helped me put together a dozen complex presentations. You know the pricing, the presentation techniques and what we can do for them. There's no one better qualified to do it. You've even directed photo sessions on your

own. You're better qualified than ninety percent of our sales people."

Modesty aside, that was all true but I'd never done a presentation on my own. Not the least of my worries were that I'd be making the presentation alone, as Jennifer, in a strange place, in front of strangers. "Are you sure?"

Connie sat up straight and smiled at me. "Positive."

I parked my car in one of their visitor's spots. I checked my hair and makeup. I had been dressing that morning when Connie came in and suggested I wear one of my suit outfits this morning. I had planned on wearing slacks but I took her suggestion without giving it much thought. It was a linen outfit, a pale gray window pane plaid and it looked very crisp and smart. I had liked the silk shells that hung in my closet but hadn't had an occasion to wear them. The white one looked very nice under the collarless jacket.

I understood why she wanted me to wear the outfit now. I waited for my knees to stop shaking before I stepped from the car. Straightening my skirt, I walked carefully down the sidewalk to the front door.

I presented myself to the receptionist. "Good morning." I said to the girl, struggling to appear calm and cheerful. "My name is Jennifer. I'm here to see Mr. Brooks."

I was scared to death but tried hard not to let it show. I had this picture of having to stand up in front of a room full of men and give my pitch. It wasn't anything like what I thought it would be.



Mr. Brooks, a very polite and cordial middle aged man, came out to greet me. He escorted me to his office where I met two of his associates. They were all very pleasant, very polite to me. It helped calm some of my fears. There was always the nagging thought in the back of my mind that someone, somewhere, would recognize me for what I was, but this wasn't the time or the place.

Mr. Brooks associates, who I'd be making my pitch to, were a young man and a middle aged woman. It wasn't as formal a thing as I anticipated. We simply sat around a table and I fed them the facts and figures. I told them why our firm could represent their interests better than any of the other firms in town.

My palms sweated, my knees shook and, at times, when they threw questions at me one after another, I thought I might lose it. I didn't forget, for a second, who I was or the part I was playing.

There was none of the behavior, the harassment as I came to recognize it, that was exhibited by Mike Parks. The men were very professional and listened intently to my pitch. It helped when I realized I didn't have to contend with Parks kind bigotry.

The woman was equally considerate. She didn't have a clue that she was dealing with a man and I did nothing to make her doubt for a second that I was a woman, even when it came to accompanying her to the ladies' room during a short break.

I had little trouble remembering how to act, sitting there with a man on either side of me and the woman across the table. I tried not to fidget too much, sitting up straight, only occasionally tugging my dress down to cover my legs. I was glad I had a lot of practice and it helped me to get through it.

I didn't try to give them a hard sell, that wasn't my way. I was honest with them and it worked. To my amazement, I won the account. It was a great feeling.

I almost goofed when I had the contract in front of me to sign. I almost started to sign it 'Jeffrey', but caught myself. With a flair, I wrote out 'Jennifer'. Connie had empowered me to sign for the firm should the deal go through.

With the signed contract in hand, I walked out their front door and

wanted to shout for joy.

I knew it was just a little account. It was only a small, local chain of stores but I rode back to the office on cloud nine.

Connie wasn't as surprised as I was. "I knew you could do it." She said smiling, congratulating me.

"Yes you did!" I said, giving her a hug, right there in the office. We never did that sort of thing in the office but I couldn't help it.

I stayed on that cloud the rest of the day. I called Virginia at her office. She was thrilled for me. I tracked down Christy at a shoot and I found Trish at home to tell them the great news. I temporarily forgot that I was angry with Christy.

"The account's all yours Jen. Run with it" Connie told me when I calmed down and sat with her late in the day.

That was fine with me, but a little scary.

Wednesday was anticlimactic after the excitement of the day before. I was back at my desk, doing all the usual tasks that filled my days, but in addition, I met with the art department, scheduled three shoots, talked to the printer and spent an hour and a half on the phone with Carolyn Rogers, the woman at the presentation the previous day.

Patty called from La. It was great talking to her. I told her my good news and she was very happy for me.

I crossed my 'T's and dotted my 'I's. Connie and I sat down at five and discussed my plans. I was determined not to miss anything.

"I sounds as if you have it covered." She told me when I finished telling her what I had done so far.

Wednesday was almost as hectic and I loved it. The week was over before I knew it. The first shoot for Curlins was scheduled for Monday and I had everything covered by the time we were ready to leave the office on Friday night. I was proud of myself.

"I thought we'd have a little celebration dinner." Connie suggested as we packed up to go.

I wasn't about to argue with that. While neither of us had plans for the evening, I didn't relish the thought of going home to cook.

Christy had asked me to come over for dinner but I put her off. I still wasn't over the hurt I felt from last week and it was the only way I had of getting back at her. I couldn't tell her I was jealous and hurt.

"Great! Where are we going?" I asked as we headed for our cars. As long as I was with Connie, I was fine, I could handle being out in public.

"I thought we'd have a drink at Bristols then decide."

I was surprised she'd forgotten. "I can't go out for a drink."

"Of course you can." She insisted. Then she remembered. "Oh, here." She opened her purse and took out a folded piece of paper.

"What's this?" I took it from her.

"Open it and see." She waited anxiously for me to look.

I unfolded it and almost dropped the plastic coated card on the ground that was wrapped in the paper. It was a social security card with the name 'Jennifer Sackett' typed on it.

"Where did you get this?" I asked, surprised. It looked so real.

"I told you I'd take care of it. Don't you remember?"

Since she mentioned it, I did remember giving her my birth certificate. I looked at the paper the card was folded into. It was a new birth certificate and it was Jennifer's. It had the same birth date and place of birth as my original only it showed me, Jennifer Sackett, as being 'female'.

"Sackett?" I questioned. She gave me her name instead of my own, Mitchell.

"I didn't think you'd want anything to tie you back to Jeffrey Mitchell. That's all right, isn't it?"

"Sure, that's fine." It didn't make much difference. It was only a fake.

"How did you manage this?"

"I have friends." She said smiling. "Now you don't have anything to worry about."

"What happened to my old certificate?"

"I put it away in my safety deposit box, for safe keeping. You don't want to leave those things lying around."

I couldn't argue with that. Her voice or maybe her expression seemed a little odd when she said it but I didn't read anything into it.

"Here, let me hang onto that one for you too." She reached out and I handed it to her. "If you need it tonight, we'll have it. You should put your social security card in your wallet."

It was a comfort to have it. Now if I had a problem, I didn't have to worry. I just hoped no one would realize they were fakes. They shouldn't though, they looked very real.

"Now you can get yourself a new driver's license." She suggested.

That was a scary thought, going the Motor Vehicle office as Jennifer Sackett and admitting I used to be Jeffrey, Jeffrey Mitchell, a man. I would have to turn in my old license. If I didn't, they would check through my social security number and learn the truth. It would be so embarrassing but it might just be worth it. It would be a comfort to have a driver's license that had Jennifer's picture on it. Could I suffer the brief embarrassment was my only concern?

I followed Connie to Bristols. I had never been to the place but I'd heard of it from the girls at work. It was supposed to be a very classy lounge. A place where The yuppie, white collar crowd went on Friday nights. It was in the middle of the downtown business district where Virginia and I had strolled that Sunday a few weeks ago.

I was dressed for it. I still hadn't run out of new outfits to wear and I hadn't brought any of the outfits home from Virginia's yet. I had on my red print dress and black heels. I really liked the way it looked on me. One of the girls at the office told me I look 'classy' in it.

My hair still looked good. It held it's set all day and it still looked like it had that morning when I brushed it out. Sleeping in rollers was going to take me some getting use to, but the results were well worth some minor

discomfort. The soft plastic ones I bought on Monday were better than the stiff hot rollers.

Finding a parking spot wasn't easy. We finally had to leave our cars in a parking garage and walk a block and a half. I wished I'd brought a jacket. My dress was short sleeved and it was cooling off.

The place was packed when we walked in. We had to squeeze past people to get to the bar. I rubbed by more than one person on my way to get a drink. It seemed that women tried to get out of the way as much as they could but the men seemed to enjoy making me squeeze by. I found myself face to face with a few guys in those cramped quarters. They just smiled at me and said 'hello' as I brushed by. I offered them no encouragement.



I was almost disappointed that I wasn't asked for my ID. The bartender was terribly busy and Connie ordered for us both.

"Let's see if we can find a place to sit." Connie said in my ear. She pointed toward the back of the lounge.

I led the way, squeezing past the throng of people that crowded the length of the bar. It was no better in back. There was no place to sit.

"Let's try upstairs." Connie suggested, taking over the lead.

The lounge had a second floor. A wide balcony ran completely around the place. I knew from the girls that there were bars up there too.

The only place that wasn't crowded was the stairs. The upstairs was as bad as down below. Still, I followed Connie. She must have spotted a place to sit, I didn't see one.

It wasn't till we were almost upon them that I spotted the group of people that had taken over a table on the far wall, right next to the balcony.

"Surprise!" They yelled.

Trish, Kim, Judy and Gloria were there. Carol from accounting, along with Pam, Linda and Gwen, were yelling as loud as the others. Barbara, from the art department, held up a drink in salute to me. I was surprised and delighted to find Virginia there too, laughing and drinking with my friends.

I looked at Connie and she was grinning like the Cheshire cat. "Surprise?"

"You planned this." I said, sounding like I was scolding when I was actually delighted.

"We had to have a party, to celebrate your getting the contract." She said meekly.

We partied hard. We ate and drank, we had a ball. More than once, the topic of conversation was me and how well I had adapted to my new life but not a derogatory word was said. I had a great time.

I was talking to Linda and Pam. "Do you play tennis?" They asked me. I had heard them, a number of times, talking over lunch about how they

played all the time.

Tennis was another of the sports I tried to do well at in high school but I never won any notoriety for my game. My father didn't give me much credit for my efforts, as hard as I tried.

"I've played a little." I told them.

"You've got to come play with us sometime." Pam insisted.

"There's about six of us from work. We play on Thursday nights. You should come."

It was really nice of them to invite me. "I'd like that." I just had to figure out what I would wear. I had this picture in my mind of me serving in a tennis skirt. No, shorts would do when the time came.

As afternoon turned to evening, a band started to play downstairs. It wasn't long till Kim and Linda dragged me down to the dance floor. Most of the others followed. I felt funny at first, dancing with them, but they wouldn't let me go back upstairs. I was feeling the effects of the wine I'd been sipping and after the second or third song, with them all encouraging me, I started letting myself go and followed their lead, dancing like them. I really had fun.

I did worry that some guy might come up and ask me to dance. While some of my friends were asked, no one hit on me, to my relief. Deep down, I was a little jealous. I knew I wasn't beautiful like my friends but it would have been nice to be asked at least.

The party finally broke up around eight. The only ones left at the end were Connie, Virginia, Trish, Gwen and myself.

I had watched my drinking, restricting myself to only a few glasses of wine. I was worried that I might have lost my tolerance for alcohol and was afraid of getting drunk and making a mistake that could expose me. I was alright to drive myself home.

"Did you have a good time?" Connie asked when we got back to the apartment.

"I really did." I appreciated her setting it all up, getting everyone to come.

"I was watching you out there dancing. You did really well. I was impressed."

I reminded her, "We danced quite a bit that night Pat and I went out. I was still a little nervous though."

"You seemed to get over it." She said smiling.

I knew she was referring to the way I danced, just like the other girls. "I felt a little silly. I didn't know you were watching." Not that it would have mattered.

"You didn't look silly. Besides, all the girls dance that way. You fit right in."

Neither of us were hungry. We had nibbled on enough hors d'oeuvres to make up for dinner. I was a little tired. I was content to change and get comfortable in front of the TV.

I did wonder what Christy was doing that night? I wondered if she was sitting home, alone? Or was she out with a date? I was a little annoyed with myself for handling things the way I did. I had no right to get angry and feel jealous. I shouldn't have played games and lied to her about being busy. I thought about calling her then and there but I didn't. I was afraid I'd find out my concerns were justified. I decided I'd wait till Saturday and call her then.

Of course, that was before I learned that Connie had other plans for us Saturday. "I was wondering Jen,"

Connie had been referring to me as 'Jen', off and on for a few days. I didn't mind the nickname. The familiar was kind of nice, not so formal.

"I was wondering if you'd like to get out and take a ride tomorrow? We could go north and I could show you the mountains?"

I was actually thinking of going into the office in the morning, to try to get ahead a little, but it wasn't something I had to do.

All that I'd seen so far of Georgia was the city. "That sounds nice." I agreed, work could wait.

We got an early start. We drove North out of the city, toward Stone Mountain. It was only a little more than an hour's drive. It was wonderfully

relaxing to get away from everything.

Stone Mountain was definitely an impressive sight but there were too many tourists. We didn't stay more than an hour and headed North again.

I was born and raised in the city. Tall buildings were my mountains. My mother and father took few vacations and when they did they were content to stay close to home. I had seen mountains, of course, mostly in New Jersey, but they weren't anything like the ones I saw that Saturday.

I suppose I needed to get away from everything for a day because it felt wonderful to drive aimlessly, just enjoying the views with Connie. We had lunch in a small, quaint roadside restaurant outside of Gillsville. I don't think I once gave a thought to 'Jeffrey' that whole day.

We talked about her for a change. Connie told me more about her life that day than she had since I'd known her. I never knew she had been married once, when she was very young. I was shocked to learn that she had a baby by the man and he forced her to give the infant girl up for adoption. I couldn't fathom any man having enough influence over Connie to make her do something like that but, as she said, she was very young.

I imagined I was beginning to understand a little better why our relationship had blossomed. I was, in a way, filling the role of the daughter she had lost so many years ago. Judging by how old she said she was when she had the baby, her daughter would have to be close to my age.

The information, unconsciously, cemented my position with this woman. Now that she had found the daughter she had lost, how was I ever going to live with taking her daughter away from her again? I wondered for a second, what she'd named the baby?

We continued our trip, swinging East through the mountains, talking through the afternoon.

Shortly after the adoption of her daughter, Connie's husband left her for another woman. She was bitter, so bitter. His reasons for her giving up the baby were obvious. He wanted no permanent ties to bind them. It was obvious by her tone that she still loathed the man.

The experience hardened her for years. She redirected her energies toward her career and ended up where she was that day, a very successful business woman who would never allow another man to make a single decision for her. Her life was consumed by her work, leaving little time for

anything else.

There were a few affairs over the years but she never let herself get too close to another man. She satisfied herself with married men. It was then that I understood about Kevin Donaldson. She still didn't trust men, even after all those years.

We turned South, down Route 17, passing through deep valleys and rustic small towns. The sky was clear all afternoon, only beginning to turn cloudy around five.

We took Interstate 20 back into Atlanta, stopping about forty miles out at a Pizza Hut for dinner. I was stuffed when we climbed back in the car around seven.

I felt much closer to Connie after our day together, with all she shared with me. She came into my room as I was getting ready for bed. She didn't say anything, she came up to me as I sat on the bed, rubbing my lotion on my legs. She sat beside me. I stopped what I was doing and just looked at her. "What is it?" I asked.

"I just need a hug." She told me.

I wrapped my arms around her and hugged her tight. I whispered, "I love you Mom." Emotion welled up inside me, as it did so often these days. I owed this woman so much for her loving support. She didn't treat me as some sort of freak.

She held me even tighter. "I love you too Jennifer."

She let me go eventually. She didn't get up and leave right away. She looked at me curiously. "How are you doing?"

I didn't understand. "What do you mean?"

She pointed to her chest. "You feel as though you've gotten bigger Honey."

I had. There was no doubt about it. "The medication's not working." I admitted. I tried to kid myself but it was useless.

"May I see?" She asked sweetly.

Why not? I lifted my nightie.

"Oh Jen. Why didn't you say something?" She asked. "Those hormones the doctor gave you haven't helped at all. You're almost twice as big as you were."

"I take the pills every day. He said it might take time."

"What about the rest of you?"

I knew what she meant. Connie had never seen what had happened to my scrotum. "It's worse."

"Let me see."

I reluctantly pulled down my underwear.

I read concern on her face. "Oh honey. We've got to get you back to the doctor."

I pulled up my panties. "I don't want to go back to him." I told her.

"Why not?" She asked with concern.

"I'm embarrassed." I admitted. "They all know I'm a man there."

"We've got to do something Honey." She thought a moment. "Would you go to a different doctor, if I went with you?"

I thought a moment. It would be embarrassing, no matter where I went. "I suppose." I had to do something. I couldn't just keep putting it off. I was only kidding myself that my condition would correct itself somehow.

"Leave it to me Honey." She said with determination.

Once again, I put my complete trust in her. "All right."

We both went to church with Virginia on Sunday. I was thrilled that Connie joined us on the golf course too. She was a terrific golfer, much better than me.

There was no repeat of the previous Sunday's events and I was grateful. I did wonder about Jack, did he go to the benefit concert with his friends? Silly thought, I decided.

We stopped at Virginia's and I picked up a half dozen of the new outfits from the bedroom closet. There were still a dozen that remained.

"I've picked out some new things but they haven't delivered them yet." She informed me.

I couldn't wait to see what she had bought. We didn't stay there long.

Virginia followed us back to Connie's and we ate dinner there. It was a nice change, having her there at my place.

Carolyn Rogers and a Peter Boyle arrived at the office bright and early to oversee the shoot. I was at my peak and everything went perfectly. They were very impressed with the proofs I took to Curlins to show them on Wednesday. With their approval, the first spread would appear in Sunday's paper. They were very pleased with my work, as was I.

The pebble silk double breasted blazer and skirt that had been hanging in my closet untouched, came out Thursday morning. I wore my cream colored silk shell under the jacket. After putting it on I decided nothing felt as nice as silk.

I didn't know why Connie hadn't told me earlier. She waited until we were on our way to work. "I called my doctor and explained your problem. She suggested that we come in and see her before referring you to anyone else. She's going to see us this morning."

"A woman?" I said apprehensively.

"Don't worry Honey. She's very good and who better is there to go to than a woman who specializes in hormonal problems?"

That made sense. "What kind of a doctor is she?"

"She's a gynecologist." Connie told me casually.

"A female doctor!? I can't go into a gynecologist's office."

"Why not?" Connie just looked at me in wonder.

I realized how silly my objections sounded. Calmly, I asked, "What name is my appointment under?"

"I thought it might be easier if I made the appointment under Jennifer

Sackett. Doctor Winter didn't mind and thought it might make it easier for you."

I received more than a few compliments on my smart outfit. It occurred to me that I dressed quite well for a secretary, thanks to Connie and Virginia. I felt a little guilty that I had nicer clothes than most of the women in the office.

We worked till ten and then left for my appointment. I should have kicked myself for doubting Connie, even for a moment. I should have known better. To the receptionist, I was just another female patient. Only the doctor would know. Better it be a woman doctor than a man and Connie was there with me.

I was a little uneasy, sitting in the waiting room waiting for them to call us. Connie and I filled out the doctor's forms together. "You can't do that." I said quietly when Connie checked off 'female' on the sheet of paper.

"You don't want the doctor's receptionist or his nurse to know, do you?"

"No, but can't we get in trouble for doing that?"

"I already cleared it with the doctor. It's alright."

"Well, if the doctor said so."

"Miss Sackett," the receptionist called us and took the completed form. We were escorted to an examining room where the nurse handed me a gown, "if you'll undress and slip this on I'll be back in a moment."

The nurse asked Connie to wait outside in the waiting room but Connie set her straight, insisting she was staying with me.

I changed in a hurry. I didn't want anyone walking in on me despite the fact that I left my panties on and they would have had a very difficult time telling I was a man with them on.

The nurse was back in a few minutes and took three vials of blood from my arm as I sat on the edge of the table. She weighed me and I was hardly surprised to see that I weighed only 112 pounds. My blood pressure was a little high but that was probably because I was so nervous.

"The doctor will be with you in a moment." She told us and left us

alone.

"I feel so silly." I told Connie.

"She doesn't need to know any more than she does." Connie remarked. "If the tests come back the way your last ones did, she probably wouldn't even be able to tell by the results that she'd been duped."

Connie had a point.

"Good morning." The doctor said, closing the door behind her. She did look surprised at the sight of me.

She was younger than I expected. She appeared only about thirty five, no older, and she was not unattractive.

"Good morning Carol." Connie replied. "Jennifer, this is Doctor Winter. Doctor, meet Jennifer."

I was tongue tied.

She smiled pleasantly as she addressed me. "I'm a little surprised, Connie explained your situation. She tried to tell me what to expect but . . ."

Her reaction was understandable.

"Which would you prefer? Jeffrey or Jennifer?" The doctor asked me.

The latter would probably be less confusing. "Jennifer's fine." What else could I say, I was so nervous."

She grinned. "Charming." She turned to Connie. "You didn't lie. He's delightful and very pretty."

I was sure she meant it to be a compliment. I certainly wouldn't have minded being thought of as handsome again. But then, when I thought about it, I was never handsome.

"Let's have a look at you Jennifer." The doctor suggested when the kidding was over. "Please lift your gown for me."

It was embarrassing, of course, to expose myself to this stranger, wearing woman's panties, but better her, than a man.

"I'm just going to pull these down for a second and peak." She told me. She had them down off my hips before I knew what was happening.

"Mmmmm. Jennifer, you certainly have suffered some changes." It was weird for her to touch me there. She pushed and probed a little but didn't hurt me. "All right, you can pull them up now."

I didn't waste a second getting them up.

The doctor was very business like. "Now we'll just examine your chest. Lift please."

It felt very strange but I followed her direction and raised the gown again.

She touched. She poked. She squeezed. "All right, you can put the gown down now."

She offered nothing. The expression on her face did not betray what she was thinking.

"What was your normal weight before you began noticing any changes?"

I gave her all the details of everything I'd experience in the past months. She wrote it all down, thoughtfully.

"Do you have the results of the last tests that were run on you? I'd like to have them to compare to today's test results come back."

I didn't know to bring them.

"Here they are Carol." Connie withdrew the documents from her purse.

I thought I left them in the bedroom. Another of Connie's devious little tricks to help me from feeling nervous before it was necessary. Like not mentioning the appointment until she had to.

She scanned the tests from early July. They were a month and a half old.

"You've been on hormone therapy since these were taken?"

"Yes, faithfully."

Again Connie went into her purse. She handed the doctor the brown bottle that I thought I left in the kitchen cabinet that morning. "Every day." Connie reinforced.

She looked at the prescription and handed the bottle back to Connie.

After looking the readout over she said, "Alright Jennifer, you can get dressed now." She looked up from her clipboard. "When you're dressed, come next door to my office." She turned to Connie. "May I talk to you for a moment while Jennifer's getting dressed?"

"Of course."

"We'll just be next door." The doctor told me and she and Connie left me to dress.

I was very curious about what she was saying next door to Connie. I didn't waste any time.

"I was just asking Connie if you were undergoing therapy of any kind." Doctor Winter explained as I came in and sat in the chair next to Connie.

"Therapy? No, why?"

"Well, you've apparently undergone quite a transformation and I was curious how you're adjusting. You've obviously decided to adapt your lifestyle to accommodate the changes in your body. I'm simply concerned with the psychological effects."

"I feel fine." I assured her. I didn't want any part of going to a therapist, exposing my dilemma to anyone I didn't need to.

"Jennifer's very well adjusted." Connie assured her.

"I can see that." She said looking me over again. "By the way Jennifer, I love that outfit."

"Thank you." I responded smiling. I loved the way it looked on me.

She looked at me thoughtfully for a moment, smiling, then directed her attention back to my folder on her desk. "Given the information here, and

my brief examination, I have to believe we're dealing with two unique problems Jennifer. First, your body is, for some unexplained reason, producing high levels of female hormones. While the male metabolism is normally capable of producing these hormones, and it is very normal for it to do so, the levels in your system are very high. They are even a little high for the average woman."

"The second half of the equation is even more complex. The male hormones that your body should be producing are not in evidence, according to your last test results. Something has caused your body to stop producing them and seems to be combating the medication you've been taking."

She closed the folder and looked directly at me. "It's this half of the problem that most concerns me."

She continued, "Jennifer, I'm a specialist in hormone therapy and I have to admit that I've never seen a case like yours. There is virtually no history, to my knowledge, of a case where the male metabolism simply quit producing hormones without some type of trauma or medication. There is no precedence."

She confused me. "So what do I do?"

"For right now, nothing. Let's wait until your tests come back and I can confirm the results. They should be back no later than Tuesday. After that we'll set up a strategy to attack this problem. It will require close monitoring. I'll need to see you at least once a week for tests. We'll watch your progress very closely. I'll call you on Tuesday with the test results. We'll set up your next appointment then."

I assumed an easy answer would be found to my problem. The disappointment must have been evident in my tone. "Should I keep taking the prescription?"

She looked at me curiously, "It hasn't seemed to have any effect so far but yes, you should. There are a number of other things we can try but what you've been taking should have worked. We'll decide on Tuesday, what we're going to do." She stood up, indicating the appointment was concluded.

Connie and I thanked the doctor. "We'll do anything it takes, Carol. I'll personally make sure Jennifer keeps her . . . his appointments and faithfully takes the medication."

And Connie would. Of that I was confident.

As Connie and I rose, Doctor Winter added. "I think you should seriously consider some therapy Jennifer, to help you through this difficult time." She took a notebook out of her desk and flipped through it till she found what she was looking for. "This is the number of a highly respected specialist you should call."

She jotted the name and number on a piece of paper and handed it to me.

Connie glanced at the name, "What's her speciality?"

"Gender disorders."

I didn't like the sound of that. I put the card in my purse.

Coming out of her office, I didn't feel reassured. "What were you two talking about while I was getting dressed?"

"She was concerned about your mental condition with everything that's happened to you and with you trying to live as a woman." Connie explained as we walked to the car.

"My mental condition?"

"She was just worried that you might be having emotional problems with pretending to be a woman. She didn't understand that there wasn't a problem. I told her you were quite well adjusted and happy." Connie said, trying to reassure me.

I wondered if I shouldn't have been more honest with Connie and told her how insecure I was at times. It would serve no purpose now, I decided. I did ask, "Do you think I should see her specialist?"

She turned to me. "I think we should wait and see what the tests show. If you feel the need after that, we can make an appointment. I think your doing fine though."

Connie was right. I was fine. I didn't like the thought of someone trying to probe my psyche, delving into my past. I was well adjusted, I didn't need therapy. I didn't consider for a second that my problem wasn't curable.

Friday was busy at work but not uneventful. A little after lunch,

Cindy from payroll came around with the checks. "Here you go Jennifer." She said, handing me Connie's and my checks with a smile. She also had a sheaf of papers for me.

"Thanks Cindy." I remember thinking her smile was a little odd as I took the envelopes and papers from her hand. "You need to get those filled out and return them to me as soon as you can. Ok?"

I agreed to do it before I knew what I was agreeing to.

I didn't realize why she looked that way until a little later when I opened my envelope and saw the name printed on the check, 'Jennifer Sackett'. The papers she gave me were all the forms for a new hire.

"What's going on?" I asked Connie, showing her my check and the papers Cindy had given me.

"She looked at the name and then at me, smiling. "It's great isn't it?"

"But doesn't this mean that Jeffrey's been replaced with Jennifer?"

"Of course." Connie still didn't seem to understand my anxiousness. "I guess I should have told you. They figured that it would be easier when your name was changed to let Jeffrey go and show Jennifer Sackett as hired to take his place. It was simpler that way and I knew it would be easier on you."

I didn't get it. "Who?"

"The lawyers in the legal department Honey."

I was shocked. "You mean that birth certificate you got me is real, it's not a fake?"

"Of course it's real." She didn't seem to comprehend why I was excited.

"My name's been legally changed to Jennifer Sackett?" I was having trouble accepting it.

"Isn't that what you wanted?" Connie looked surprised.

I wanted an ID that would allow me to function normally, sure. I just never imagined that Connie would go this far to get it. I didn't want to hurt

her feelings. She must have gone to a lot of trouble to do this thing for me. She was waiting for me to say something. "Yes, of course I'm thrilled." I wasn't sure what I felt. "I'm just a little surprised."

Connie's apprehensive look changed to a smile. "I'm so glad. I thought you were angry for a second."

"No, not at all. It's wonderful."

"Good. It's better this way. There's no trail back to Jeffrey that could cause you any embarrassment." She thought for a moment. "How about we take off a few minutes early and swing by Motor Vehicle on our way home. We really should get your old licence replaced with a Georgia licence for Jennifer."

I was extremely nervous about doing that. For the first time, I would have to admit to someone that I was a guy, dressed up as a girl. I could just imagine the looks I'd get.

"I'm scared." I admitted to Connie.

"Don't be. I'll be right there with you."

"That will help but it wouldn't stop them from looking at me like I'm some kind a freak."

"We'll be in and out of there in ten minutes. I'll be with you. You'll be fine."

It wasn't all that simple. We were there for half an hour and I felt I was the center of attention as I stood up at the counter as the woman did the paperwork that resulted in my new licence. I was very nervous as they took my photo for the ID.

Connie stayed right at my side, as promised. I just couldn't relax while they took my picture for the license. When I looked at the licence outside, I thought the picture looked terrible.

It was the most embarrassing half hour I ever spent and I was so relieved to get out of there. As Connie drove us home, I tucked the new licence in the window of my wallet. It made everything seem so final. I had a new name, it was all very legal. I was a completely new person in every way.

I finally called Christy on Saturday. I told myself I had to stop being

childish. I didn't even know for sure she was seeing someone else.

We went out for dinner, just the two of us.

"I've really missed you." Christy said, as she drove us to the restaurant.

"I've missed you too." I admitted.

"Were you angry with me?" She asked.

It was only a matter of time before the conversation would finally come around to what had been bothering me. I wasn't sure how to tell her. "I was hurt."

"What did I say?"

She really didn't know? I doubted myself even more. "It was nothing." I wished I hadn't said anything.

"No, something's bothering you. Tell me." Christy was adamant that I tell her.

She wasn't going to let it go. I might as well just say it and have it done with. "Remember two weeks ago, when we went shopping?"

"Sure I do. I had a blast."

"Well when we got home, I just assumed we would spend the evening together."

"And I had another commitment." She said with understanding.

"All I could imagine was you going out with someone else. I was hurt."

"Jennifer, you should have said something."

"You didn't have another date?" I asked.

Christy hesitated answering for a few seconds. "I did." She admitted. She looked embarrassed.

My heart sunk in my chest. I felt betrayed. "Who was he?"

"No one you might know, just a friend."

"Just a friend?"

"Jennifer, I don't know what kind of relationship we have." Christy started to sound defensive. "We hardly ever get to see each other. You almost never call me and when I call you, you seem to always have other plans. You have time for Trish and your other friends. This girl that came to visit, Pat, was more important to you than me. You were hurt!? I feel like you only see me when no one else is around." Christy took a breath. "I didn't have a date that night. I only told you that to try to make you jealous. I've been angry with myself ever since."

I was dumbstruck. I hadn't dreamed she felt that way toward me. What she said was essentially true. I couldn't remember how many times I said no to a date with her.

"You talk about commitment. I need more than you seem to want to give." She told me.

"I've just been so mixed up lately."

"You don't ask me for help? You know I care deeply for you."

"There's just so much that frightens me."

"What? Tell me?"

Wasn't it obvious? "I've been trying so hard to be something I'm not. I've done all that I can to please everyone."

"What about you Jennifer. What do you want?"

That wasn't so easy to sort out either. "I don't know." I had Connie, a loving, doting mother that I adored. I had to wonder if Connie would still be there for me when I was cured.

Virginia stood behind everything I did and was ever encouraging. I had to wonder the same thing about her. She seemed to love me as much as Connie but would she feel the same about Jeffrey? I didn't think so.

I had been more successful in my career as Jennifer than I could have hoped for. Jeffrey's was going nowhere. Would I have to give it all up as

Jeffrey?

Then there was Christy, beautiful, sweet Christy. Who did she love? It was pretty obvious to me that it wasn't Jeffrey.

"I just want some normalcy in my life. I want the emotional roller coaster to slow down."

As we sat in the restaurant parking lot, Christy reached over and put her arms around me. "Let me help Jennifer. I don't want to see other people. You're all I want. Let's be more honest and open with each other from now on." That was all ever I wanted. When we both composed ourselves, we went in and had dinner.

We went back to Christy's apartment after dinner and we made passionate love. We asked each other no more questions that night.

Sunday was hardly uneventful. I came home from Virginia's with my back seat covered with new outfits. Virginia's idea of casual clothes was a little different from what I imagined. Each article carried a brand name label and was the type of attire designed to thrill the rich, preppy style young woman. They were nothing like the things I had bought myself in the discount stores. My closet at home was stuffed and the one at Virginia's was filling up fast.

Virginia had also seen fit to accessorize me to match the new outfits. She had bought me a dozen new pieces of jewelry, all beautiful and expensive. I had new scarves, belts and shoes to go with everything.

It seemed that Virginia was more aware of the changes in me than I was. Everything fit perfectly despite the weight I had lost. Even the jeans. Some of the new clothes included what she referred to as 'some of my fall wardrobe'. I couldn't imagine what was to come next.

The next week was a blur. I was swamped at work and my relationship with Christy blossomed. All in all, I was happier than I'd been in a very long time.

Dr. Winter called on Tuesday with the test results. She wasn't very optimistic. "There are a number of new medications on the market that I want to try."

The results showed that the male hormone supplements were having absolutely no effect and she was convinced that continued use of them would

gain me nothing. "We'll find a way to help you." She insisted. "Remember, this thing could reverse itself just as suddenly as it started." She said, trying to encourage me.

Deep down, I already knew that's what she'd say. I knew what she was doing, just trying to keep my hopes up. "Isn't there something else I could do?"

"I think you should call Dr. Yates now." Was all she suggested. "And I want to start seeing you twice a week, starting tomorrow."

Twice a week!?

Somewhere deep down inside me I was thrilled. At the conscious level it was terrible news. This Doctor was as much as telling me I was condemned to live the rest of my life as a freak. Suspended between man and woman. Not complete in either role. It was the first time I gave serious thought to my options.

Work was my saving grace. The days raced by. Work gave me little time to dwell on the changes in my life. I grew more and more accustomed to living and working as Jennifer. Less and less frequently did Connie, Virginia, Christy and the others have to remind me how to act, how to behave like a young lady. Most of the things they had taught me came naturally to me now.

Still, if it hadn't been for Virginia's insisting and that Connie and Christy would be there with me, I would probably never have agreed to attend the Heart Association's annual garden party with Virginia.

It was held at the home of one of the local doctor's. I was told he was some kind of famous specialist. That was apparent when I saw his huge, beautiful home. It was much larger than even Virginia's, with more property too. The inside, what little we saw, was lavish. The backyard was equally beautiful. The yard was enormous with beautifully manicured lawns and gardens. There wasn't a weed in sight or a branch of a tree or bush that didn't look as though it had been sculpted by an artist.

Connie and Virginia were busy mixing with the guests. Christy and I stood apart from most of the men and women who ate, drank and made idle conversation.

I felt good about the way I looked in my new print dress. The nice part was that I picked it out for the occasion. I no longer felt that I had to rely

on someone else's opinion on how to dress. It was rayon and felt so light and delicate. It flowed with each step I took. It was short sleeved with a scoop front adorned with a wide band of lace. The skirt wafted in the breeze, brushing my legs. The dress's waist was fitted to my slender figure, it fit beautifully. My figure wasn't perfect, like Christy's, but I was happy with it. I wished I could just lose a few more pounds but at 112 I was almost at the perfect weight for my size. The only thing that bothered me about the dress was the way the neckline was cut so low. It let the tops of my breasts show and that made me feel just a little uncomfortable. I'd had to go out and buy myself all new bras. I could no longer squeeze myself into an a cup. I had become more full figured and, in an odd sort of way, that pleased me. My clothes certainly looked and fit better.



Christy helped me with my hair. I had never worn it up and it looked really nice when she was done fixing it for me. I picked out my earrings, my favorite blue ones looked perfect with the dress.

"They're watching us." Christy said softly, turning toward me.

"Who?" I asked, curiously, looking around.

Christy turned completely around to face me, I assumed so no one could see her excitement. "Those two guys!"

I glanced over her shoulder, looking. "Where?"

"Don't be so obvious." She scolded me in play. "The two who just came out the door, over my left shoulder, but don't stare."

I swept the back of the huge house with a casual glance. When I spotted the pair by the door, I was surprised. "That's Jack!" I looked away quickly. "Oh God, it's the guy I told you about." I was flustered. I turned away, putting my back to the pair. I didn't recognize the man with Jack. It wasn't his friend, Greg.

"What guy?" Christy asked.

"From the golf course! Remember, I told you, the one that asked me to go to a concert with him. I hope he doesn't recognize me."

"So what if he does." Christy said, now curious. She turned to get a better look at the men. "Which one is he?" She asked.

She was making me nervous. "The one on the left. Don't stare." I pleaded.

"I'm not staring." She said with a smile. "He's cute."

"I suppose." He was a good looking guy but I didn't think of him as 'cute'.

"He's got a great tush." Christy gave him the once over. "The other one's not bad either."

I wasn't sure if she was toying with me or not. I tried to appear casual as I glanced back their way. What I was afraid would happen, did. He happened to be looking my way as I turned to look. The smile that appeared

on his face said it all. He recognized me. He waved. There was little I could do but wave back. My wave, unlike his, lacked enthusiasm. Jack and his friend headed straight for us.

"Oh Shit!" I said softly.

"Just relax." Christy told me. "This could be fun. Just go along with me."

I didn't see how it could be 'fun'.

"Hi Jennifer. How've you been?" He said with a smile.

I returned his smile. "Fine thanks, and you?"

"Great. You missed a wonderful concert."

I may have. "This is my friend Christy." I hoped to divert his attention.

"Hi Christy. It's nice to meet you." Jack responded, taking her hand.

It's not like I didn't know that Christy was a terrible flirt but I didn't think she'd do it when I was standing right beside her.

Jack introduced his friend, Tom. "Would you ladies care for something cold to drink?" Jack asked politely.

I just wanted to get away from the pair but Christy obviously wasn't ready to. "That would be so nice. We'll go with you."

She slipped her arm into Tom's and glanced at me. She obviously expected me to do the same to Jack. What could I do? If I didn't, they would think there was something wrong and I didn't want that.

I didn't enjoy walking in grass in heels but, picking my steps carefully, my arm in Jack's, we all went to get drinks.

The next hour passed awkwardly for me. Christy seemed to have fun. If there had been a way for me to leave the party, I would have but Virginia had picked us up and brought us.

Jack was very attentive and I was forced to make conversation. Christy passed the afternoon laughing and having a good time with Tom. I

was pretty much left to fend for myself.

I finally couldn't think of anything else to say to the man. "Would you please excuse us?" I asked Jack. "Christy?"

She turned to me. "Did you notice where the powder room was when we came in?" I asked. I knew perfectly well where it was but I just had to talk to her alone.

She understood. "Sure, come with me." To Tom and Jack she said, "Now don't you go anywhere. We'll be right back."

"Why did you tell them that? I want to get away from them." I asked when we were out of hearing range.

"Why, aren't you having a good time? He's really cute and from what I hear he thinks you're something special too." Christy smiled when she said it.

I couldn't help but grin back at her. "That's me, 'special'."

"Tom asked me out." Christy confided in me when we were alone in the bathroom.

"He what?" I said, surprised.

"Yeah, he wanted to know if I wanted to have dinner with him tonight. He's asking Jack, right now, if he and you want to join us."

"I don't want to go out with them." I said flatly.

"Why not? It would be fun." She insisted. "They buy us dinner. Maybe we go out dancing. It'd be fun."

I was shocked. "Maybe you're forgetting something?"

"What can it hurt? Worst that could happen is we have an expensive dinner on them." She got serious. "You've got to learn to relax. This is what girls do Jennifer. We don't go to bed with every guy that buys us a nice dinner. If they want to treat us nice, let them."

That didn't sound so bad. She was right. "Ok, but just dinner. I'm not such a great dancer. I'd be too scared."

"That's not what I've heard."

Jack did ask as soon as we went back and joined them. It wasn't easy, trying to appear enthused about going out with them but I put on the appearance. I was something I'd learned to do quite well. I'd had a lot of practice.

We stayed for about another hour, talking. I wished I could be a funny and easy going as Christy. I tried but it didn't come across the way I thought it should. I wasn't sure if Jack noticed how uneasy I was. If he did, he didn't say anything.

We went and found Connie and Virginia to explain that we were leaving and where we were going. Connie managed not to show her surprise when we introduced Jack and Tom and told them we were going to go out with them. Christy knew Connie's and my situation and wasn't at all surprised when I introduced Connie as my mother. I didn't think twice about it.

Virginia seemed delighted about our having dates but I knew she would. I never did have that conversation with her about how I felt about men.

Connie gave me a kiss on the cheek and whispered, "You have a good time and be careful Sweetheart."

I told her I would.

Jack and Tom escorted us to Jack's car. He drove a Mercedes. Christy and I were both impressed.

It wasn't the first time a man held a car door for me but this was a little different. I suppose I never gave much thought to men's manners but Jack certainly appeared to be a gentleman. I was thankful for that. I hoped it would make the evening easier on me.

Christy and Tom sat in the back seat and I was in front with Jack. It felt funny but it was nothing I couldn't handle. As I sat there and waited for him to come around and get in, I thought to myself that being taken out to dinner by this good looking guy was kind of exciting.

The guys were in sport coats and Christy's and my dress was certainly appropriate for any restaurant they might take us to. As it turned out, the restaurant they picked was rather elegant. When I looked at the menu and

saw the prices I was a little shocked. Well, like Christy said, they were paying.

I actually had a nice time. I had told Christy how uncomfortable I'd been, trying to carry on a conversation with Jack the first time we met but that evening, I found him less intimidating. I was beginning to feel more at ease around men. Of course, conversation was easier when it was the four of us.

Christy was watching me throughout dinner, in case I needed help but I had been well schooled on how to behave like a lady and didn't need any coaching.

I liked Tom. He had a great sense of humor and there was more than one time I found myself laughing out loud at his jokes. He seemed really nice but I did like Jack better. I came to the conclusion that Jack made a better date.

It felt so strange to just sit back and not lift a finger or even suggest helping with the check but I knew that would have been inappropriate.

"How are you doing?" Christy asked when we were alone in the ladies room, fixing our makeup and touching up our lipstick.

It had gone quite well actually. "Not bad. I'm surprised."

"I told you if you'd just relax you'd enjoy yourself."

"I'm actually having a nice time." All I had to do was make pleasant conversation and Jack and I seemed to have a lot in common. He was a sports nut and I'd played so many different sports that we had a lot to talk about. He was impressed that I knew so much about sports.

"He really likes you." Christy commented as she pursed her lips and put on her lipstick.

"No." I insisted as I touched up mine.

"Really! He's done nothing but stare at you all evening. You have him captivated. Feels nice, doesn't it?"

I didn't want to admit it but I had noticed and I was flattered. "We just have a lot in common. That's all." I insisted.

"You're wrong." Christy came back. "You just don't see it."

"Why would he be interested in me?" We were alone in the bathroom.

"You're a very pretty girl Jennifer."

"No I'm not." I admonished her. Modesty wouldn't allow me to accept what she was telling me.

"We've all tried to tell you. When are you going to start believing us?" Christy didn't even smile.

They told me all the time but I always used to feel they were just trying to boost my spirits. I looked at my reflection in the mirror. Was it possible that Jack really thought I was pretty? I hoped so.

As I tucked my things away in my purse I asked, "Ok, what now?"

"Let's leave it up to them. See what they come up with." She looked at her watch. "It's almost nine."

Impossible! I looked at mine. Christy was right. "How did it get so late already?"

Christy laughed. "Time flies . . ."

I squeezed her arm playfully. ". . . when you're having fun?"

"I told you. Now, we better not keep our dates waiting too much longer."

'Our dates' sounded so strange.

Jack suggested a movie. Tom like the idea of going to a club and dancing.

When they asked us our opinions Christy answered before I could think what to say. "Whatever you decide will be fine with us." She said sweetly.

All I could do was nod my agreement. The movies would have been my preference. At least in a movie I would be free to just enjoy the movie and not have to talk. Dancing still scared me a little.

I was out of luck.

"Lets go see what's going on at The Lounge." Tom decided for the four of us.

"I've heard they have a really great band." Christy said.

"You like to dance?" Tom asked her.

"We both do." She said.

Speak for yourself, I thought to myself. Last time I danced I had to be a little lit. Could I do it sober? I supposed, if I had to.

With the check taken care of we got up from the table. Jack held my chair for me, of course. That I liked. Tom and Christy started out ahead of us and Tom put out his hand and Christy took it. The two of them seemed to get along quite well.

The next thing I knew Jack's hand was touching mine. He expected me to take it. If I didn't, he would think something was wrong. It was all right for Christy to hold Tom's so what was I supposed to do. His big hand closed around my slender fingers and we walked out of the restaurant. He looked over and smiled adoringly at me. Had I been what he thought I was I suppose I would have been flattered. He was a very handsome man, with a great personality. He was nothing like the kind of guys I always hung around with, back when I used to hang around with guys. He was smooth and sophisticated. Any any girl would have been flattered to get his attention. I was not one of those girls but it was fun to pretend, for a little while at least.



The Lounge was everything I heard it was. The decor was refined and plush. Not like the other clubs I'd been in.

A hostess escorted us to a table and our waiter was there instantly to take our orders. I really wanted a drink to calm my nerves. I would need a few to get out on the dance floor. I ordered a glass of Zinfandel.

Either the band was on break or they hadn't started playing yet. We talked for a while, about two quick glasses of wine worth of conversation.

I didn't know if I had enough when they started to play but the guys wanted to dance to the first song. Christy was no help. She was up like a shot. She loved to dance. Funny, I thought to myself, would I ever get a chance to dance with her in public? Sadly, it didn't look like I would.

The harder I tried, the more awkward I felt. I just couldn't relax. The next time we got up to dance was to a song I'd danced too before. It was a little easier. Also, the wine seemed to be kicking in.

By the third dance I was doing all right and was starting to have some fun. Christy stayed close by, never getting more than a few feet from me. It helped having her close. Most of the time I pretended I was dancing with her.

The song ended and we were going to go back and sit out the next but they started playing a slow song. Jack didn't say anything. He took my hand and with a smile, turned me around and took me back to the dance floor. Tom and Christy followed us.

Jack put his arm around my waist and gently pulled me toward him until our bodies barely touched. He took my hand in his and started to dance.

It wasn't my first time, thank God. I followed his lead and let him hold me and guide me around the floor. We were close, very close and I could smell his cologne. I had smelled it before but couldn't remember the brand. I was almost sure it was a cologne that I used to wear. It smelled really good on him.

It was so strange. As I was trying to place the name of the cologne, I looked up into his handsome face and he said, "I really like the perfume you're wearing."

I don't know if I smiled because of the irony or because I was glad he liked how I smelled. "I'm glad." It was the only response I could think of.

"I'm really glad you agreed to have dinner with me." Jack said in a shy sort of way. "I didn't think I was ever going to see you again after that day on the golf course. I don't think I made a very good first impression."

I had treated him badly. Now that I'd gotten to know Jack a little, I felt badly that I treated him the way I did. "It wasn't you. It was me. I was having a bad day. I'm sorry I was so nasty to you."

Grinning, he replied, "Maybe you'd like to make it up to me and let me take you out again?"

I didn't know what to say. I was flustered and I could feel my cheeks getting warm. I knew I was blushing. Finally, I said, "That'd be nice." I had to be crazy.

We continued to dance. "I've never met anyone quite like you. Perhaps it's your shyness. I certainly enjoy talking with you. We seem to have a lot in common, not like most women I've known. You're so refreshing."

I couldn't quite believe what I was hearing. He was trying to be flattering, I knew that, but why? Was Christy right? Did this man really like me, like Jennifer? What should I do, I asked myself?

I had to say something. "I like you too Jack." I told him. "I usually have a hard time talking with men but not you." That was true, sort of.

He beamed. With a gentle pressure he pulled me closer to him. No longer did our bodies just brush against each other occasionally. My breasts were pressed against his masculine chest. We moved as one. My head rested on his chest we were so close. At least I didn't have to stare into his face any longer.



Nothing was said as we walked back to the table but once we all sat down, conversation resumed as if nothing had happened. I suppose, as far as anyone else was concerned, nothing had. It took a moment and a few more sips of wine before I joined in. I was no longer concerned about drinking too much, I needed the alcohol to relax me.

"Christy, I have to go to the ladies room, come with me?" I had to talk.

"Sure." She had seen my flushed cheeks when we came back from the dance floor.

I noticed the exchange of glances between Tom and Jack as they held our chairs as we got up to go. I knew exactly what they were thinking, 'One has to go to the bathroom and they all go.' How many times had I thought the same thing. Ironic.

"But that's good." Christy replied when I told her what he said and how he held me while we danced.

"Good?" I was both excited and confused, but I had to keep my voice down. The ladies' room was too busy. We talked in the hall outside the door.

"Sure. You want, you need to be accepted as Jennifer. This man sees you as a young, beautiful, interesting woman." Christy sighed. "Jennifer, stop fighting it and go with it. You're so afraid all the time and you have no reason to be. Trust me!"

That was easy for her to say. "What if he tries something? What if he tries to get more personal? What if he tries to kiss me?"

Christy thought for a minute. "If I thought for a moment that you might enjoy it I'd be jealous. But seriously, if he does just turn your head a little and give him a peck on the cheek. He'll get the message. Men understand signals we give them and Jack is too much of a gentleman to press you."

The thought of voluntarily kissing a guy didn't thrill me but a part of me was curious. I hadn't forgotten my experience with Mike Park and didn't want a repeat of that ordeal. Jack wasn't Mike Park though.

I changed the subject. "Tom seems really nice. He's really funny."

"He's all right I guess, but he has wandering eyes. It really annoys me when I'm with a guy and he looks at other girls."

"I noticed that." He took notice of every pretty girl that walked by.

"He's not my type." Christy said with a grin. She innocently touched my arm.

I understood. "You seem to be having an awfully good time with him. I was getting a little worried."

"Jennifer's jealous? I like that."

"You behave yourself." It was my turn to laugh.

Fortunately for me, the band played very few slow dances. I was able to convince Jack to sit out the next couple, saying I was tired from dancing so many fast ones. He accepted my excuses and didn't press.

It was a little awkward being alone with him when Tom and Christy left us to dance on those occasions because the conversation got personal when we were alone. He asked me all sorts of things about myself, where I grew up, my family, the things I liked and the things I didn't like. I made a lot of it up, substituting Connie as my mother and growing up without a father.

When he asked about my career I started when I went to work for Connie and left the rest out. Fortunately he didn't ask about before that.

Ironically, I liked Jack and, as Jeff, would have liked him for a friend. Unfortunately, there was no hope for a relationship between Jack and Jennifer. I knew it was doomed to go nowhere.

I forget what the four of us were talking about when Jack turned to me and said, "Why don't we play some golf Saturday?"

I thought fast. "I can't. I have plans for Saturday." I did actually. "Christy and I are going shopping." I knew I told him I'd like to see him again but I didn't think he'd really ask.

"The four of us could play." Christy shocked me with her statement. "We can go shopping any time." She said smiling at me.

I couldn't believe she was setting me up. She was really making it hard for me to say no to Jack.

"Great," Tom said, enthused.

"I guess we could?" I said hesitantly. I was giving in, against my better judgment. Christy wasn't helping.

"Oh come on. We'll have fun." She insisted.

"Christy's right. You girls can go shopping anytime. We'll play some golf, have a nice dinner. I'll bet I can even get some tickets to the Lauper concert."

"I love Cindy Lauper." Christy exclaimed, excited.

Jack grinned. "Now you have to say yes Jennifer."

Christy didn't give me a chance. "We're going Jennifer!"

I was intrigued at the idea of getting to know Jack better. He wasn't so threatening. "Ok." I said with a smile for Jack. I couldn't wait to have a serious talk with Christy.

"I'll give you a call." He answered. "What's your number?" He started to take a pen out of his jacket p

I hesitated. "I'll call you." I said with a smile. He feigned disappointment, sliding his pen back into his pocket. "You still have my number?"

"At home." I said. I didn't think about it at the time but he must have felt pleased that I had kept it these past weeks. It didn't occur to me that he assumed I was taken with him, having saved his number.

"We're going." Christy whispered, nodding to Jack and smiling at me. The issue was settled and the conversation took a different direction.

It was twelve thirty in the morning when I next looked at my watch. I didn't know how it got so late. I realized it was going to take a cue from Christy or I to bring the evening to an end. I wasn't sure how to do that and Christy didn't seem tired.

I waited till Christy looked my way and the guys' attention was elsewhere. I cocked my head and closed my eyes for a second, telling her I was tired and wanted to go. She nodded that she understood.

Jack insisted that we had to have one more slow dance before leaving and I didn't know how to tell him no. I waited anxiously for the music to slow down. It wasn't till three songs later that the band played another.

He held my hand, as he did now whenever we got up to dance. I would have preferred to dance apart but Jack didn't give me that option, his arm pulled me to him. It was a repeat of what he had so gently done before. My head rested on his chest.

I closed my eyes and tried to pretend I was dancing with Christy but the smell of his cologne wouldn't allow me that escape.

I knew I should have been repulsed and, on the surface, I was. Inside, I felt something else that I didn't want to admit, even to myself. With him holding me the way he did I felt confused. The sensation was so odd. Dancing that way with Jack gave me a felling of contentment, of safety. It was something like I felt when Connie and I were alone together, secure and at peace.

I was relieved when the song finally ended and we picked up our things and left. Should I tell Christy what I had just experienced? Could I? No! Now, I didn't even want to admit to myself that I enjoyed being close to Jack. No! No way!

In the ladies room we had decided that Christy would spend the night at my place. While the drive home was uneventful, just pleasant conversation, I was extremely unsettled over the feelings I was experiencing.

I felt I was sure what would happen as the guys left us at our door and I would handle it just the way Christy suggested, but I was still very nervous.

They escorted us right to our door. I wished our evening had ended out in front of the building.

"I had a good time tonight Jennifer." Jack said to me as the four of us stood out my door. Tom and Christy stood apart from us, a few feet down the hall.

"I did too." I replied appropriately. My palms sweated.

"So we'll pick you and Christy up here about noon Saturday?" He asked.

The man didn't give up easily. It was my own fault for not just saying no.

Christy and Tom were close enough to hear his question. "We'll be ready." She answered for me.

Jack wanted to hear it from me. "Ok?"

I gave in. I gave him my best smile. "Ok, ok. We'll go."

He beamed. "Wonderful! I promise we'll have a good time."

He seemed so confident. Not in an annoying way, he was just self assured. Jack reached out and stroked my bare arms softly with his gentle hands.

This was the moment I dreaded. He leaned forward to kiss me. I tilted my head to kiss him on the cheek. His breath was sweet. there was no trace of alcohol there on his breath at all. He must have used a breath mint but I never saw him put one in his mouth.

I wasn't sure what happened. I did it just the way Christy told me to but the next thing I knew his lips were pressed against mine. I closed my eyes to hide, to deny I was standing there kissing another man. I must have seemed like a cold fish, not kissing him back. Then it was over.



He pulled back, looking at me quizzically, "Do I frighten you?"

I felt embarrassed. "No..." What do I tell him, I remember thinking? "I'm just not used to this on a first date." That was all I could come up with.

He smiled, "I'm a pretty nice guy when you get to know me."

I felt foolish and I guess it showed. I knew I was blushing again.

He leaned forward and gave me a peck on the cheek. "You're adorable Jennifer."

He thought my being shy was endearing.

"Goodnight. I'll talk to you soon." Jack said as he turned to walk away.

"Good night." I said, watching him walk down the hall to the elevator. Christy was watching us. She was apparently done saying goodnight to Tom. Jack stood at the elevator, waiting for Jack.

Christy waved goodbye as they stepped into the elevator. I waved to mimic her.

She turned to me in surprise. "Wow! What got into you?"

I knew what she meant. "I don't know what happened. I did what you said but he seemed to be expecting that. Suddenly he was kissing me."

"He sure was. You should have seen yourself, eyes closed, head back. It looked like you were enjoying it." Christy seemed a little ticked.

"God no. I only closed my eyes so I didn't have to look at him. I didn't kiss him back." I said in my own defense.

That seemed to appease her somewhat.

"You better not have." She said, smiling now. "You and I need to have a little talk about how to handle men."

I loaned Christy one of my nighties. It was two thirty in the morning

when we finally climbed into bed. Christy's education about men was not to take place that night. She had other things on her mind and I was more than willing. We made love till I was exhausted. It was as though I had to prove something to myself.

I was dead on Monday morning. I couldn't believe I got up and made it to work on time. Christy slept in. She had no jobs that morning.

Of course, Connie had something to do with my getting up on time. In fact, she woke me early so I could tell her all about my date the night before. She was thrilled that I had such a good time. I shared with her how scared and confused I felt about being with Jack. She tried to tell me not to worry, everything would work itself out.

I assumed she felt confident that a cure would be found and I wouldn't have to endure for much longer the life I was living. I was encouraged and sympathetic. I knew she would prefer that I remain as Jennifer, her daughter. It convinced me all the more that she was totally unselfish and cared deeply about me.

"Just go with it for now, you're doing beautifully." She told me. It was good advice, considering I had little choice.

Connie sent me out to three possible new accounts that next week and I signed two of them. It was a very exciting and a very busy week.

As busy as I was at work, I spent Tuesday and Wednesday nights at Christy's. We had great sex, at least she did. I felt so inadequate. An erection was out of the question. That didn't mean I couldn't achieve an orgasm but it took Christy a lot of effort to get me there.

She was also true to her word. We had more than one conversation about men. I learned a lot of things I really didn't want to know. My insight was valuable but I learned to see things a lot differently than I used to.

When I went over to her apartment on Tuesday, Debbie and Brook were there. They knew everything. They knew about Sunday and our dates. They were more than willing to impart their wisdom and thoroughly enjoyed educating me. I didn't really want to know how to make a man interested in me or how to flirt the way Christy and my friends did. I certainly didn't want to learn how to please a man. As always, Debbie was a riot and while I wasn't at all anxious to learn, I had a great time.

In bed with Christy, she would pretend she was a man. Some of it

I went along with but not all. She insisted that I had to learn how it felt to be on the receiving end of a man's passion and she had the toys to play the game.

"I can't do that!" I told her when she wanted me pretend to have oral sex with her toy and give it a hand job.

"Silly, of course you can." She was only having fun with me, I knew that.

"It'll never happen!" I finally insisted and she backed off.

"All right, all right."

When my thoughts weren't preoccupied with work or Christy, I struggled with the upcoming problem of my birthday and how I would tell Tina that I wasn't coming north to visit. I kept putting off the call but my birthday was Tuesday of the following week and I had to call her soon. She was expecting me.

As the weekend came closer I had another concern to deal with. I got my first call on Tuesday, from Jack. I had felt so smug, not giving him my phone number but never gave a thought that he might call me at work. Of course, I'd told him where I worked.

He called almost every day, telling me how his day had been going and asking me about mine. It was impossible to discourage him. After a while I didn't mind the brief conversations. He asked if I'd like to go to lunch on Thursday but I told him I was too busy. I couldn't bring myself to go out with him, alone.

I tried more than once to talk Christy out of going Saturday but she insisted that I had to know what it was like, dating men. She said I needed the experience, for perspective if nothing else. "What could happen? I'll be there with you. You'll be fine."

She still didn't know that part of me enjoyed the way Jack made me feel that night. I still couldn't tell her that.

Connie thought it would be fine as long as I didn't get myself backed into a corner, alone with the man. As long as Christy was going she was sure nothing bad could happen.

Virginia thought it was delightful that I was seeing someone. She

would.

Jack and Tom were there Saturday, promptly at noon, to pick us up. I couldn't believe I had agreed to go with him as he loaded my golf clubs in his trunk.

It took me two hours to decide what to wear and that was with Connie's and Christy's help. I insisted it couldn't be anything that he might find too attractive. The more drab the better.

'Drab' wasn't what I ended up wearing. I greeted Jack and Tom at the door wearing white cotton shorts and my iridescent pink tank top. I really liked the outfit but I felt it was too much to wear playing golf. Especially with Jack. The others insisted it was quite appropriate. At least I talked them out of my yellow tank. It looked great in the store but whenever I lifted my arm my bra showed.

He carried my clubs for me. He took charge and drove the cart. He encouraged me whenever I made a 'bad shot'.

I was as good a golfer as Jack and while I couldn't seem to make the distance I used to on my tee shots, I played well. I felt I could have beat him and I while I wanted to, I didn't. Christy made me promise to play the game and let him beat me. Connie agreed. I remembered how she let Park beat her a few weeks ago. It was all to feed their egos and I wasn't used to that.

The girls had schooled me about how to act, how to exhibit bubbly enthusiasm when Jack made a good shot or how to react to his jokes and I tried, God did I try. I still wasn't as good at it as Christy. I could hear her across the fairway, pumping up Tom. Just the same, he seemed to appreciate my flattery.

Christy was great. The only reason she was out with us was for my sake. She really wasn't all that thrilled with Tom.

We had little or no chance to talk through the afternoon. She rode with Tom, of course. We couldn't very well talk at the tees, with the guys so close by.

Jack behaved the whole time. He didn't try to get too close. Except once, when he put his arm around my waist and hugged me. I was just relieved that he didn't do anything else. But the day wasn't over. I was on my guard.

We had a drink at the 'Nineteenth Hole' then they took us back to Connie's while they went to shower and change. Christy brought clothes with that morning when she came over.

"That wasn't so bad." Christy said when we were finally alone.

"I hated letting him beat me." I said.

"No, I mean being with Jack. He didn't try anything. You seemed to have a good time."

"No, he was pretty good. I did enjoy myself. It was great to play again."

"They're going to be back in about an hour and a half. We better get ready." Christy reminded me.

It was barely enough time for me to get ready. I was determined to look my best. We showered together. That didn't help us get ready any faster but it was fun.

I hadn't seen the dress that Christy brought to wear until I came out of the bathroom from fixing my hair. She looked fantastic. The black spandex dress followed her every curve and she had lovely curves. "Wow!"

She turned to me smiling. "You like it. It's new."

I continued to stare. "I like it, very much."

"Good." She went to her bag on my bed. "Here's yours." She pulled another dress from her garment bag and held it up for me to see.

"No way!" I said. It was the same kind of dress, spandex. Where hers was strapless, this one at least had straps. It was so tiny.

"Way!" She insisted. "Try it on."

"I can't!"

"Just try it on."

"I won't wear it!" She could wear a tight dress but I couldn't imagine myself wearing one.

"Alright, alright! Just try it on so we can see how you look in it."

"I'll look terrible." I insisted.

"We'll see." She reached for the collar of my robe.

I had already put on my underwear before going in to do my hair.

Christy was obviously prepared. She had out pantyhose and that spandex slip thing that Connie had bought me weeks ago when she and Virginia went crazy in the mall. The slip was red while the dress was hot pink.

I squeezed into the skimpy dress, feeling foolish as I did. I stood facing Christy, avoiding the mirror intentionally.

It felt so short. I tugged at the hem to pull it down.

"Stop fussing Jen." Christy chided me.

I started to turn to look in the mirror. I knew I'd look terrible. Christy stopped me.

"No, not yet. Finish getting ready first." She held out my robe and I put it on without looking in the mirror. I didn't mind putting off seeing how poorly I'd look.

I had to admit, if only to myself, as I put on my makeup, that I was just a little curious. I thought the dress would feel tight but it was actually comfortable. Christy helped me with my hair, pulling it up on my head. She fussed over it for almost fifteen minutes before she was satisfied. I had a few wispy curls on the sides and the front was teased up. I liked the way it looked.

"Here." Christy handed my pink heels. They were the ones with the two and a half inch heels. I'd never worn them before.

"Come on Christy. This is a waste of time." Even if I looked half way decent, I couldn't go out dressed this way.

She sighed. "Just put them on, for me."

Christy took my robe and I turned to the mirror. I was speechless for a second. Not unlike Christy's dress, mine clung to every curve. My eyes

followed the contours of my chest, past my slender waist, over my hips and on down. Not too bad, I thought to myself.



"Pretty hot." Christy stood behind me smiling.

I looked beyond my reflection and her shape, comparing mine. Christy was just a shade shorter than me. She was a few pounds lighter too but all in all, compared to her, I didn't look too bad. I was actually quite pleased. Still, I wasn't about to give in and wear the dress in public. "I'm too fat." I stated.

"Are you serious? She moved closer, standing beside me. "Your hips are no wider than mine." She turned me sideways. "Look how nice and flat your tummy is. You look great."

Standing there, turned sideways, I couldn't argue the point. I had a really flat stomach. I had worked hard on it the past few weeks to make it that way.

I finally pleaded with her. Logic wasn't going to win. "Christy, I can't go out like this."

"Sure you can. You look terrific."

"I look silly."

She turned me back to the mirror. "Look at your self. You look beautiful."

I wanted to believe her. My other things were fitting me better since I got into shape. My hair never looked better. It had gotten so long in the past few months. Even my face, with the cheekbones that showed now. I just needed all the reassuring I could get. I wished Connie was home to see what she thought. "Are you sure? Really?"

"Trust me Jen. Wait till Jack and Tom get a look at us." Christy said seriously.

That's what worried me.

It was time and they had been punctual up till then. Within five minutes Lester, the doorman, called to let us know they were on their way up. I was so scared.

I jumped when the bell rang. "Just relax. Go let them in." Christy went with me to the door.

"Hi." I had to be calm, I told myself.

"Hi . . . "

I didn't know what his reaction would be but I was quite satisfied with his dumbfounded stare. "What's wrong?" I asked coyly.

"Nothing! You look fantastic?"

I did? I finally breathed.

Tom's reaction toward Christy was a little different. Considering how outgoing and bubbly she was, he didn't seem as shocked. He was true to form and stared at me a little more than I thought he should. Was I that insecure and mousy around them? So much so that they were surprised to see me dressed this way?

I smiled and said, "Thanks. You like it?" I did a turn, just like the models so often did in the studio.

"You look beautiful." He surprised me with a kiss on the cheek. Since I saw it coming, I didn't flinch.

Lester stared at the two of us as we passed out the front door of the building. Carl took great delight in opening the car door for us.

That was the first time I sat in the ultra short dress. It rode so high up. I clamped my legs together. It wouldn't pull down.

I saw Jack stare as he climbed in his side of the car, behind the wheel. Funny, but I felt flattered.

I wasn't ready for the looks we received, walking into the restaurant. Our table wasn't ready so Jack and Tom decided we should wait in the lounge. I carefully climbed up on the stool next to Christy. I showed even more leg. Jack ordered me the wine I had Sunday night. I was surprised he remembered. Tom apparently didn't remember what Christy drank. She gave her order to the bartender. Poor Christy, stuck with somebody she'd rather not be with.

Christy and I continued to draw stares. It was a funny feeling for me. There was no doubt in my mind that everyone saw me as a woman. I was well past that concern. It was nice to realize that they saw me as attractive

too. It boosted my confidence.

It was only a few minutes before we were called for our table. We enjoyed a wonderful meal. I didn't even look at the prices on the menu that time.

I laughed at the right times to please Jack. I was attentive to the stories he told. He seemed quite happy with me and it was quite satisfying.

When we were finished, Christy and I excused ourselves to freshen up. I took my leads from Christy. I wanted to tug at the hem too often. When she did, I did.

"You OK Jen?" She asked when we were away from the guys.

I was feeling pretty good. "I'm alright." I admitted with a smile. In a whisper, I added, "It feels funny having all those people staring at me but I think I like it."

"Good girl! Finally!"

"I'm having fun tonight."

"You're doing great. A few more dates like this and I think you'll be fine."

"I didn't over do it with Jack?" I thought there was a few times there when I went a little overboard with trying to be attentive.

"No, you're doing fine. He's hooked." She seemed sure of herself.

We put on fresh perfume and lipstick and returned to the table. I would have given anything to overhear their conversation while we were gone.

It was about eight o'clock when the guys paid the check and escorted us out the door. "Thank you for dinner Jack. It was wonderful." I was showing Christy I could play the game. I saw her smile.

"It was my pleasure Jennifer. I'm glad you enjoyed it." He squeezed my hand and returned my smile.

The concert was held at the Lambert Center. It only took us twenty minutes or so to get there. I thought we'd park and walk but Jack surprised

me by pulling right up in front of the place. A valet parked his car when he showed him some kind of pass.

"Classy." I said looking up at him as he took my arm to walk me inside.

"Classy lady." He said smiling down at me.

Jack looked like a million bucks that night in his double breasted suit. The man was very trim. He must have worked out regularly because he didn't seem to have an ounce of fat on him. I wasn't the only person who received looks that night. Some very attractive woman gave him the eye, I noticed. He really did look a lot like Mel Gibson.

As weird as the circumstances were, I was pleased to be with someone so good looking.

We had great seats. They must have cost the guys a fortune. Cindy gave a great performance. I was awed.

Over and over I told Jack how thrilling it was to be there. He was obviously pleased.

I wished the concert hadn't ended as we got back in the car to leave. It only meant that soon we would be back at my door and I would have to endure the only part of the evening that I was still so uncomfortable with.

"Anyone like to stop for a drink?" Tom asked us.

That was alright with me. That meant I could put off the inevitable. I looked at Jack, questioningly. "Jack?"

"If you'd like to, sure."

I looked back to Christy. "Ok?"

"Ok, but just one. I'm a little tired." She agreed.

She was tired, tired of Tom. It showed as the evening went on. Tom was a little too handy. We had talked about him in the ladies' room at the theater. Christy was barely putting up with him. She was getting annoyed at his persistence.

Jack drove us to a quiet little piano bar not far from the hall. The

setting was intimate and the tables secluded. Jack sat close in the booth, holding my hand, most of the time, under the table. His hand rested on my leg but he didn't try anything. I felt safe with Jack. I thanked God he wasn't like his friend Tom.

I had a White Russian instead of wine. I needed something stronger to brace myself for what was to come. I had made up my mind during the course of the evening how I would handle Jack later. I hadn't shared my decision with Christy because I didn't know how she'd react. Frankly I was curious what it would be like. Scared, but curious.

Jack was true to his word when Tom suggested we have another round. "No, I think these girls want to get home." I wondered if he realized that Christy wasn't having a great time and wanted to rescue her. If that was his motive, and I thought it was, he was a sensitive man. Nice.

"I'll wait for you down stairs Jack." Tom said after saying good night to Christy. I was sure his evening didn't exactly end the way he hoped. Christy just brushed him off when he went to kiss her goodnight.

Christy stood at our open door. "Don't be too long Jen." To Jack she said, "Thanks for a nice evening." She was sincere.

"I'm sorry about Tom, Christy. Sometimes he gets carried away."

"That's ok. Goodnight Jack." I saw the look she gave me as she closed the door. Jack missed it.

"I had a really great time tonight Jennifer." He had been holding my hand the whole time we stood there.

"So did I." I said looking up at him, smiling. "That was a really nice restaurant and I loved the concert."

"I'm glad. We should do this again."

"Yes, we should." I wouldn't mind but I didn't think that Christy would agree to go out with Tom again.

He put his fingertips on my cheek. "You won't mind if I kiss you?" He asked, looking at me with his captivating big hazel eyes.

This was what I'd been preparing for and now the moment had come. "No."

I closed my eyes before his lips touched mine. I cocked my head. I was scared but I was ready. He pressed his lips tenderly against mine at first. He breath had that same clean smell I remembered. I hoped my was as fresh.

As his lips pressed harder against mine, I kissed him back. My passion wasn't as strong as his but I let him know I was there. His arms wrapped around me and drew me gently to him. I didn't push him away. I let him hold me.



It was the strangest experience. Jack was the one to end the embrace. I played my part out, opening my eyes only after he pulled back. "Mmmm."

"Good night Jennifer." He tenderly touched my cheek once more.

"Good night Jack." I said with a warm smile. I watched him, smiling as he walked to the elevator. I thought to myself, what an unusually sensitive and gentle man he was. I watched him until he stepped into the elevator and the door closed.

"What were you two doing out there so long? You got so quiet." Christy asked. She was sitting on the couch when I came in, locking the door behind me.

"Nothing, just talking."

"He kissed you again, didn't he?"

"Yes." Was all I said.

"Did you like it better that time?"

"Don't be silly. Of course not."

Christy got up from the couch, walked over to me smiling. "Well your lipstick is certainly a mess for someone who doesn't kiss back."

I didn't realize. "Well, maybe just a little."

"How did it feel?"

"Strange."

"Did you like it?"

She'd have known if I tried to lie. I could tell. "No . . . yes, no."

"Which is it? Yes or no?" Christy didn't seem annoyed, only curious.

"It was so weird. I was scared to death at first but then . . . I can't quite describe it."

"I know, I know." Christy came close, wrapped her arms around my neck and kissed me hard. She was no stranger to a French kiss. "Now we

both have our lipstick messed up." She said with a grin. "Come on, it's late. Lets get to bed."

I followed her into my room and got ready for bed but I wasn't tired. My mind went back to those few moments out in the hall. Then, when we got into bed, Christy managed to bring me back to the moment.

Christy and I met Virginia at her house Sunday morning and went to church with her. I was quite at ease with myself that morning.

In church, I found myself looking around at the congregation with a curious eye. Even the cute married men with their wives. I didn't let Christy catch me looking.

Christy and I attended a 'Tea' with a group of Virginia's friends at one of their homes. There were a lot of important women there. It was quite an experience. I was so relaxed, able to feel comfortable among them.

I wasn't worried about discovery anymore. I was sure I could carry off my charade under any circumstances now. I was very confident of that.

Virginia noticed the change in me and said so when we got back to her house later on. "You seem different somehow."

"It shows that much?" I asked.

"Yes, it does. What's happened to you all of a sudden?" She was pleased but curious.

"I guess I'm just happy."

"You haven't been this happy in a very long time. I'm glad."

"Me too." I said, giving her a kiss on the cheek.

I purposely stayed away from the apartment till late that night. We went back to Christy's early in the evening. We talked until almost eleven. There was so much to talk about.

"You know you have to be careful?" Christy warned me when we got on the subject of Jack.

"I know. Nothing's going to happen."

"You're going to see him again, aren't you?" She seemed a little hurt.

"He probably won't ever call me again." I told her. Inside, I hoped that wasn't true.

"Oh, he'll call."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Are you blind girl?" Christy stopped there, looked at me and laughed. "Do you hear me? For a second there I almost forgot who you are. You're getting too good at this Jeffrey."

No one had called me that in a long time. It sounded weird. "Jennifer, remember?"

She looked at me seriously for a moment. "It's getting harder and harder to forget. You've come a very long way."

"I know." I didn't say it with sadness, but with satisfaction. "It's late. I better go."

Connie was up when I got home. "You had two calls from Tina today Honey. I was afraid of that. "She want's me go up to New York and visit." I didn't mention my birthday to Connie. She had done so much for me I didn't want her to feel obligated to get me anything. Better to just let it pass.

"What are you going to do?"

"I certainly can't go."

"What are you going to tell her?"

"I guess the same thing I've been telling her all along. Work's just kept me too busy to get away." At least that's what I planned on telling her.

"You won't get away with that forever. Sooner or later you'll have to end it with Tina."

"I know but I don't know how?"

"What about your real mother and your dad. You're going to have to face them sometime too."

"Not until they find a cure for whatever's wrong with me." About that I was adamant.

"Alright Honey but for now, you have to take care of your friend Tina."

"What should I do?" I had no idea. I dreaded calling her and breaking the news that I wasn't coming home yet.

"You'll just have to stick with your original story about work Jen."

"She's going to be beside herself. She's worried about me."

"Just tell her you're fine but very busy right now. She'll understand."

"You don't know Tina."

"Call her tomorrow, from work. It's too late tonight to call."

"I suppose."

"You have to do it Jen. You can't leave her wondering forever."

"I'll call in the morning." I promised.

"That's my girl." Connie kissed me on the forehead. "Now you better get ready for bed. It's late and morning's going to be here before you know it."

She was so sweet. "I love you." I said, hugging her.

"I love you too Sweetheart."

"Oh, I didn't tell you about our dates Saturday night." I had so much to tell her. "I've got to tell you about Jack and the new dress Christy bought me and the dinner and . . . and . . ."

"Tomorrow Sweetheart, tomorrow. It's late." She said smiling. "There'll be plenty of time tomorrow."

I had trouble going to sleep, I had so much on my mind. My thoughts weren't of the people up north. They were centered on the events of the past week. Before climbing into bed I went to my jewelry box and found the card

I had put there, Jack's business card. I stared at it for a moment before putting it into my purse.

I put on one of my prettiest dresses Monday morning. One of the ones Connie bought me. Connie's taste in clothes was a little different from Virginia's, more contemporary. It was short but I didn't mind that at all. I fussed a little more than usual over my hair that morning too. If I thought I could have gotten away with wearing it up, the way I had Saturday night, I would have but that would have been too much for work.

I filled Connie in on the way to work. She seemed surprised that I enjoyed myself so thoroughly. "You weren't scared?" She was pleased about that.

"I was, a little, at first. But Jack's just so easy to get along with. I really like him." I explained.

"You didn't mind kissing him?"

I should have, I really should have minded. "I felt funny about it at first but it wasn't so bad." I couldn't stop thinking about the way he touched my face and kissed me so tenderly, the way it made me feel.

At my desk, I must have looked at his card in my purse a half a dozen times before ten o'clock. I wondered if he'd really call me, and when?

It took forever for ten o'clock to there so I could call California. I had called Pat at home in the morning before and I just had to tell her all about Jack. She was excited for me. It was great to have someone to tell that I could talk to just like another woman. We talked for half an hour.

"What did Tina say?" Connie asked.

She thought I had been on the phone with Tina. "That was Pat in LA. I haven't called Tina yet." I explained.

"You better call her right now Jen." Connie stood there waiting for me to dial the number.

I was afraid to call. I didn't want to hurt Tina and she was certain to feel just that. I dialed.

"I waited all weekend for a call from you. Something's wrong, isn't there!?" Tina insisted.

"No, everything's fine. I'm just swamped, that's all."

"They can't make you work around the clock."

I didn't like the tone in her voice. "I've got all these new responsibilities now. I told you."

"I knew you were going to say that. That's no excuse Jeffrey. You've got to have a life. Don't you want to see me anymore? It's been so long."

"No Tina. You know I still care about you. It's not that." Right after I said it I wished I hadn't. Sure, I did care but not like I used to. Things were different now, much different and she was so far away.

"Well then, you come home to me."

"I can't. Not now."

There was silence on the other end of the phone. "Tina?"

A few seconds later I heard "I don't want to talk to you anymore. I'm furious with you Jeffrey." With that she slammed down the phone. Sadly, puzzled at what to do, I looked up at Connie.

"That didn't go very well. I gather she was pretty upset."

"She's furious. I knew she'd react that way. That's why I was so worried about telling her."

"You had to do it Jennifer. But it would probably be best to just end it."

"I know." She was right. I knew that but I didn't know how. Tina had stayed with me through so much. She had helped me through a very difficult time in my life and I loved her for it. She was a friend, and much more.

"Well, you did what you had to do. Now lets just get on with things. Try to put it out of your mind."

Easier said than done but I had plenty of work to do to give it a try.

I was just about to break for lunch when my phone rang for the

umpteenth time that morning. I answered the way I normally did, "Hi, this is Jennifer."

"Hi. This is Jack." He replied cheerfully.

"Jack! Hi!" I said, sounding a little more excited than I probably should have. I was surprised to hear his voice. I had thought of him often that morning. "How are you?"

"I'm great. I was just wondering what you were doing for lunch?"

Lunch? He wanted me to go to lunch with him? "I was just going to have a salad here." I told him with caution in my voice.

"Why don't let me take you out for Italian?"

I wasn't sure what to say. I'd been waiting for something just like this to happen and now that it did I wasn't sure what to do.

Connie walked out of the office as I was talking to him. I pointed to the phone and mouthed his name. 'It's Jack.' She raised her eyebrows and nodded that she understood.

What the hell. "Sure Jack. That'd be nice."

"Great. I'll pick you up in twenty minutes?"

"Ok."

What did he want?" Connie asked when I put down the phone.

"He's taking me to lunch." I said with a smile.

"Oh he is?" Connie seemed amused.

"Why not?" I asked sheepishly.

Connie laughed. "No, that's fine Honey. Have a nice time."

I hurried upstairs to the ladies room I used and checked my hair, my lipstick, put on some powder and freshened my perfume. I went to the lobby to wait for Jack.

"Hi." Bobbie said. "What are you up to?" She asked casually.

"Nothing much." I hadn't told anyone at work about Jack. I wasn't sure what the reaction would be and I didn't care to find out. I was anxious to tell Trish and Kim. I just couldn't keep that sort of thing from them. They were supposed to be back in town on Wednesday.

"Who you waiting for?" She asked.

It was pretty obvious that's what I was doing. I didn't normally hang around the lobby at that time of day. Bobbie knew I went to lunch around twelve.

"Just a friend. I'm going out for lunch."

That seemed to pique her curiosity and Bobbie was very curious. "A friend? What's his name?"

Bobbie was kidding with me. She didn't know how close to the truth she was. I wasn't about to tell her. It would have been all over the office in an hour. "It's just a client." I told her, passing off her joke lightly.

I only had a few minutes to wait before the familiar Mercedes pulled up in front of the building. "See you in a little while." I said to Bobbie as I walked out the door to meet Jack.

I wished he had stayed in the car so no one saw him but he didn't, of course. He got out, came around the car to open my door for me.

"Hi." He said with a smile then kissed me on the cheek. I knew Bobbie saw that. I was sure it killed the client story. Damn! I didn't look back to be sure she was watching. I didn't dare.

"Hi." I said, returning his smile.

"So did you have a nice day with your Aunt yesterday?" He asked as we turned around and pulled out of the driveway.

We had a really nice lunch. We talked the whole time. I was learning a lot about him and we were beginning to have more in common than just sports. He remained the perfect gentleman, seeing to my needs and comfort.

I never realized, as a man, that it could be so nice not to have to make every decision in a relationship. I discovered how lucky women were, at least those that were looked after by a man as kind as Jack.

He had me back at the office by one thirty. I didn't normally take that long a lunch and I'd be behind when I got back to my desk.

"No, don't get out." He was going to go around and open my door. "I can get it this time." I didn't want to give Bobbie anything else to see. I planned what I'd do. I leaned over to Jack and kissed him on the lips. "Thank you Jack. I really enjoyed lunch." It was silly but I'd planned on doing that all through lunch, just like normal couples did.

"It was my pleasure." He said gratefully. "Want to get together this weekend and do something?"

I wasn't kidding myself. I know I couldn't let the thing go too far. I shouldn't have said yes but, "I'd like that."

"Good, I'll call you later in the week."

I did another stupid thing. I gave him my home phone number.

"So, maybe I can be trusted?" He said when I handed him my number.

"I'm beginning to think so." I said with a smile. "See you later."

I didn't stand there and watch him turn around and drive away. I knew Bonnie was probably watching us. I thought to myself, as I walked up to the door, how well I was playing the game and how much fun it was. The best part was how easy it was to get away with it.

"He's cute." She commented as I walk through the door.

"Who Jack? He's just a nice guy." I replied. I didn't like her smile. She had seen him kiss me earlier, I just knew it.

"Who's he with?" Bobbie asked coyly.

I wasn't prepared for that. My mind raced. "He's with Burbanks." It was a store I made a presentation to the previous week.

"Oh." Bobbie said, still smiling. "Do all your clients greet you the way he did, with a kiss?"

She had me but I didn't give in. I pretended his familiarity annoyed

me. "He a little too friendly." I had to get away from her.

As I walked through the inner door I heard her say, "Friendly, Hmmmm..."

Connie asked how it went and I told her what little there was to tell. I did say that he wanted to go out over the weekend.

The afternoon was sort of crazy. I was in such a good mood it seemed to race by. With everything I had on my mind, not the least of all Jack, I hardly gave thought to my earlier conversation with Tina. It wasn't till later that evening that I let it bother me again. I really didn't like the way it ended.

Judy picked me up and we hit the spa after work as I did every Monday night. Thursdays was usually with Trish and Kim. Sometimes Christy joined us, but not that night.

I was home by eight, had the salad I hadn't eaten at lunch, then Connie and I went food shopping. Another Monday ritual for us.

Tuesday was too quiet. It would have been nice if someone knew it was my birthday but I didn't think it was a good idea to announce it. I knew I made some of the people at work uncomfortable and there was no point in aggravating the situation. Still, a small cake would have been nice. Not even Connie seemed to know.

I had my regular appointment with the doctor that morning. That wasn't any way to raise my spirits either. The nurse, Linda, took two vials of blood, the same as she did every visit. Dr. Winter gave me a new prescription to get filled. Another type of hormone, she explained.

As always, I gave the prescription to Connie to get filled since she was able to get it filled more cheaply than I could. The drugs were so expensive. The cost was eating up quickly, the little money I had saved. I had to wait ninety days before Jennifer's insurance would kick in. And even then my problem wasn't covered. It was preexisting. That was one of the bad parts about being a 'new employee'. I lost all the time and benefits I had gained as Jeffrey. At least I had Connie. I made Connie promise to keep a running tally of what I owed her.

Losing the car Jeffrey was awarded wasn't so great either. I had to depend on Connie and my friends to go anywhere. They were all really nice about it though.

The rest of the day was pretty tame. It was just a normal day. I had lunch with the girls from the art department. Spending time with them was really nice. It seemed to me that they'd come to accept me as one of them. I was no longer left out of their conversations even though some of the things they talked about sort of embarrassed me.

I was glad when the day started to wind down. I finished a shoot about four and was ready to go by a quarter to five. I just had to wait for Connie. I filled my time with busy work while I waited. I thought Connie would never be ready. It was almost six thirty before we left.

"So he didn't call today?" Connie asked as we drove home.

I thought he might. I almost hoped he would. "No."

"Don't worry Jen. He'll call. From what you've told me he likes you."

"How do you know?" I asked. I meant he seemed to but how do you know about those things.

"When they stop treating you the way they should. When they stop opening doors, when they break dates with you, when they argue over the smallest thing. That's when you should worry." I knew she spoke from experience.

I was feeling pretty tired and let down as Connie unlocked the door to the apartment and went in to put our briefcases down.

Food? The apartment was filled with the unmistakable smell of food. I glanced into the dining room and the table was fully set. I just began to dawn on me what was happening when I heard, "Surprise! Surprise!" The words rang out from the bedrooms and kitchen door. "Happy Birthday!" My friends sang out as they poured out of the woodwork.

They had done it to me. I was shocked. Never before had anyone managed to throw me a surprise birthday party before.

All my friends were there. Christy, Brook and Debbie. Trish, Kim, Gloria and Judy. From the office, there were the girls that had stood up for me, Carol, Pam, Linda and Gwen. Somehow Bobbie's husband Jack even let her out for an evening. Dear Virginia stood in the background giving me the warmest smile. Of course she was there. Along with Pam from makeup.

Carol and Patty from accounting. All the people I called my friends. The ones who stood by me through my difficult and awkward transition.

As I stood there, facing all my wonderful friends I did the dumbest thing. I was so over whelmed and happy that I just started to cry. They hadn't forgotten me.

Connie, Christy and some of the others came over and assured me there was nothing to get so emotional about. "I know. I can't help it." It always seemed so odd to me that women could cry at the drop of a hat, especially when they were happy. I could never understand that and there I was, doing just that. I was so happy, surrounded by all of my friends.

The crowd of us squeezed in around the dining room table as the caterers, who were hiding in the kitchen came out and served us a delicious dinner. We talked and laughed through the whole meal. When we finished, we got up from the table and the caterers cleared it all away. They even took the dirty dishes with them as they left.

The cake was beautiful. They had it decorated with the face of a girl and the words 'Happy Birthday Jennifer' and beneath that it said, 'To A Special Young Lady'. I almost cried again.

We drank champagne as I opened the mountain of gifts they had all brought me. We had a ball. A lot of the gifts were gag gifts. Carol and Brook bought me teddies, really sexy ones. I got a few really sexy things from Fredericks of Hollywood, including a few pairs of sexy underwear, a slinky bright red silk chemise with matching string bikini panties, a reveling black lace nightie and a white lace body suit from Judy.

Christy bought me designer jeans and a short spandex top to go with them.

I got three new dresses. I saw Virginia's reaction when I held up one of them. She must have thought it was too short, too revealing to be tasteful. I thought it was great.

Linda, my favorite tennis partner, bought me the most adorable white tennis outfit and everybody loved it.

Kim got me a new workout set, including knee length leggings, a leotard and a pair of nylon shorts to wear over it. It was really cute.

Pam bought me perfume. It smelled great and they insisted I put some

on. It smelled wonderful on me. I didn't say anything to anyone but I wondered how Jack would like it?

Connie was the practical one. She bought me another pair of jeans, a white jeans skirt, two casual blouses and the most beautiful white silk blouse. She thought just like a mother and I loved her for it. To her, I was a daughter.

I wasn't surprised, only a little disappointed that I didn't even get a card from my real mother. I should have been used to it. It was much more than the miles that separated us. It didn't bother me so much anymore. I had a new mother that loved me the way my own should have.

Virginia saved hers for last. I think she was a little embarrassed because she definitely spent too much. At least I thought she did. The ring was gorgeous and the matching necklace and bracelet were exquisite. She apologized to me because she couldn't find earrings to exactly match. The set was breathtaking and everyone was so envious.

None of it was gaudy. The gold setting on the ring had three diamonds, one large and two small, in a modest setting that made it all the more stunning. The necklace had about seven diamonds. The one in the middle of the set was slightly larger than the others. "It's about two carats altogether." Virginia explained modestly. The bracelet looked something like a tennis bracelet only the stones were cut a little differently than I'd ever seen and the settings were much more delicate.

The earrings were 18 carat gold with cut diamonds set in a large open teardrop. They dangled from a short delicate gold chain from the diamond studs. If the necklace had two carats worth of diamonds than each earring had a least one. It was too much. At the time, I couldn't imagine where I could wear them. I'd be so afraid of losing them. Still, I couldn't thank Virginia enough after I scolded her for spending too much. She only laughed at me.

Having opened all their packages, I finally sat back on the couch and looked at my friends. They were gathered around me on the furniture and sprawled on the floor among my opened gifts.

I could feel it happening again and I couldn't stop it. As my eyes filled with tears I said, "You're all wonderful. I've never had friends like you. I don't know what I did to deserve you all." Then I just balled.

Christy, Trish and Virginia stayed till we had cleaned up the last of

the mess. It was late. I put on my new red chemise that night to sleep in. As I turned down the bedspread, I found the card on my pillow. It wasn't one to be shared with my friends at the party that night.

'Dearest Daughter', it began. 'There are few things in a woman's life more precious, more rewarding than her daughter. God has blessed me with one of life's greatest treasures'. In Connie's own hand, at the bottom, was the following;

'Jennifer, having you here with me has given me more pleasure than you'll ever know. My life has had a gaping hole that has been filled with the love I feel for you, my daughter. Know that you will always have a home here with me.' It was signed, 'Your loving Mother, Always'.

I just sat on the bed, absorbing her words, appreciating the bond we had formed between us. Did she know she filled the hole in my life too, I wondered? I went to her room to make sure she knew.

I crawled under my covers, feeling very warm, very loved. That night was full of pleasant dreams.

My spirits were really up Wednesday morning. I wore the new dress that Judy bought me. It was really cute, all white and trimmed with delicate lace.

I went around to the girls who had come to my party and thanked them again. Everyone in the office knew about it and a few said that they wished they had been invited.

I had a really good day. I never felt better about who I was. Who I was pretending to be, was probably a better way to put it but who was I if I wasn't Jennifer? I was happy with my life, I had friends and I had a great job. How could it get any better?

I wore my new workout outfit to the spa that night and gave the workout everything I had. I was exhausted when it was over but felt great.

At home that night I gave myself a complete beauty treatment with Connie's help, a facial with beauty mask, a bubble bath with oils, the works. I felt wonderful.

"We should treat ourselves to a day at the spa soon." She suggested. "You'd love the way they treat you there."

"Could I do that?"

"Of course you can Honey."

"I mean, could I get away with it?"

"We'd just have to be a little cautious, but sure."

That sounded terrific. "I'd really like that."

I told myself I did it was so that I would be prettier, more attractive, more convincing. In the back of my mind was the thought that the better I looked, the easier it would be to continue to fool Jack. I got quite a boost in ego knowing he found me attractive. That was where my new found self confidence was coming from and I enjoyed the attention he showed me. Still, it was just a game, wasn't it?

I was on my way out my office door on Thursday morning, heading for the art room for a meeting I had scheduled, when my phone rang. I went back to my desk and answered it.

"Do you ride?" The voice asked. It was Jack.

"Hi Jack." I was a little surprised to hear from him so soon. Glad, but surprised. "Do I ride?" I asked.

"Horses, do you ride?" He asked again.

"When I was little." It was a half truth. At a fair in New Jersey, when I was five or six.

"Great. We're going horseback riding Saturday, with my sister and her husband."

I didn't know what to say. I didn't know which worried me more, riding or meeting his sister and her husband. It appeared settled though. "It sounds like fun." I didn't want to tell him I wasn't completely comfortable with the idea. There wouldn't have been any reason to be if we were a normal couple.

"Good. Get out your riding boots. I'll pick you up at eight, Saturday morning."

That early? "Alright, I'll see you then."

As I walked to the art room, I wondered what I should wear Saturday, where I could find a pair of boots and why I should be so excited about spending the day with the man?

I told Linda that I had to skip our regular Thursday night tennis date because I had to go shopping for Saturday.

"What's happening Saturday?" She asked, curious.

"I'm going riding and I need to find boots." I explained.

"That sounds like fun. Who are you going with?"

I couldn't tell her the truth. "Just a friend."

I was too vague. "Is that the same friend you had lunch with on Tuesday?" She asked with a smile.

Bobbie had a big mouth. "He's really just a friend." I insisted.

Linda touched my arm, and with an understanding smile said, "It's alright Jennifer. You're allowed to have 'friends'. Just be careful. I wouldn't want anything to happen to you. I'd hate to see you hurt."

I just looked at her in disbelief. She was saying it was alright for me to go out with a guy? Did she think I was gay? When I thought about it, what else would someone think? I was a man, living as a woman. It was a natural assumption. And why not let them think so? Wasn't it better that way?

"He's just a really nice guy and he treats me well."

"That's all a girl can ask for." Linda said with a smile.

I felt relieved in a strange sort of way.

I didn't know how Christy would react to my having a date with Jack on Saturday but I had to tell her. She knew me too well and I couldn't get away with lying to her. She wasn't thrilled but she didn't get as upset as I thought she would. "Just don't get too friendly with him."

She knew I couldn't do that. That was probably why she didn't get too upset about my going.

Christy knew right where to go to find boots. She picked me up at my place early, I wore my new jeans to break them in. I also wore the spandex top she gave me to wear with them. It felt strange to go out with my midriff exposed but lots of girls wore that kind of top so I had no real reason to be embarrassed.

I brought along a change of clothes for work Friday, since Christy talked me into spending the night at her apartment. That was fine since I was feeling a little guilty for going out with Jack Saturday, instead of Christy.

I found a great pair of boots, brown, with a short heel, appropriate for riding, the man in the store assured me. I wore them out of the store.

We got to Christy's early and just laid around after getting ready for bed. I was setting my hair every night and so did Christy. We looked quite a sight, snuggled up next to each other on the couch in our nighties.

Christy tried but wasn't able to make me achieve an orgasm that night but that was alright. I was getting used to that. As usual, I took a lot of satisfaction from bringing her to that peak again and again.





As we lay there later, holding each other, I asked her, "What does it feel like?"

"What does what feel like?" She responded, absent-mindedly stroking my shoulder.

It was a strange thing to ask but, "Having a man touch you, stroke your breasts, inside you, making love to you, touching you the way I do?"

Christy rolled over and looked sadly into my eyes. "You poor thing. Poor Jen. You are trapped between two worlds, aren't you?"

She didn't need to remind me. "What does it feel like?" I knew it felt good to have my face touched so tenderly. I wondered if the rest felt that

good.

"I don't know how to describe it. There's a definite difference between the way a man makes love and making love with another woman. You know now how women make love to each other and it's wonderful. When a man and woman make love it's different. A man's reactions are more unpredictable, less sensitive to a woman's wants. Still, it's that unpredictability that makes it so wonderful. When a man and a woman are in the heat of passion they think of only one thing, animal lust and that's what makes it so exciting.

I tried to imagine what it might be like for a woman, but I could do only that, imagine. "So it's better?"

"No not better. Different. Just as satisfying, sometimes more, sometimes not."

I went to sleep wondering how it felt to be made love to by a man.

Friday was another good day. Connie and I found time for a heart to heart. We talked about men and I shared with her my innermost thoughts. Including those that I couldn't share with Christy. She asked a lot of probing questions about how I felt about Jack and I was honest with her. I knew she wanted to know if I was interested in men. I confessed my curiosity.

Dinner out was Christy's treat on Friday night. Brook and Debbie joined us. I never got tired of Debbie's sense of humor and I always felt good when I went out with the three of them. They behaved themselves in public, not giving away their secret. We were just four girls out for an evening of fun.

Christy made a suggestion as we were leaving the restaurant. "What would you think of taking Jen to 'Ladies Night' at the Oasis?"

Brook and Debbie weren't that thrilled with the idea. "Why not go to Temptations?" Debbie suggested.

"What's Temptations?" I asked, innocently. I knew what going to a bar where they had a ladies night meant.

Christy explained in a disapproving tone. "It's a bar where a lot of lesbians hang out." She told Debbie, "I don't think Jen would enjoy that too much."

"Could we go another time?" I asked. "I've heard about 'Ladies Night' entertainment and I'd be curious to see what goes on in those places."

Brook said, "It could be fun, let go." She whispered something in Debbie's ear and Debbie agreed. I wondered what Brook told her.

We were early enough to get a table down front. Debbie cut in front of another girl to get it. We had drinks while we waited for the entertainment. We had to wait for almost an hour and a half.

By nine, the place was packed with women. Some were really decked out. I wished I had worn something other than my skirt suit that I had worn to work that day.

I hadn't bothered to go home to change and we didn't know what we were going to do so Christy didn't offer to loan me anything else to wear. It was nice that I could get away with borrowing some of her clothes from time to time.

We were on our third round when the lights finally dimmed and they lit up the dance floor. I was feeling quite mellow when the spotlight was shone on the curtains and the young man strutted out to do his stuff.

I watched the women make fools of themselves as they screamed at the guy to take his clothes off. They played rap music as his background and the well tanned guy obliged the waiting women. His moves were very erotic and held everyone's attention. I was fascinated by his gyrations and their effect on the women.

Christy and Brook got into the spirit. Debbie wasn't all that taken by him but she went along. I was the only one that acted like a prude. I saw what the guy did when women flashed their money and I didn't want any part of his coming over to our table and gyrating in front of us.

The second guy was even better. He was a real body builder and, while his moves weren't quite as good, his flexing his muscles drove the women crazy.

We were on our fourth round of drinks when blondie came out. He wasn't as muscular as the second guy but he danced better than the first. He caught Christy's eye. Brook liked him too. They were both waving dollar bills in his direction.

Christy and Brook were nearest to the dance floor, Christy got his

attention first. She took great care in tucking her money safely into his gee string. She rubbed his ass when he shook it in her face. He didn't seem to mind her doing it. I always thought you weren't allowed to touch the dancers.

Brook was even more risqué. She placed her dollar so that she could rub the inside of his thighs.

I thought he was going to leave and move on, having collected his money. I hadn't seen what Debbie was doing the whole time he had been dancing for Christy and Brook. My attention had been elsewhere.

He surprised me when he came behind Christy, squeezing between the crowded tables, and stopped in front of me. I didn't know why he'd done that. He started gyrating for me, pressing himself closer and closer. I was so embarrassed. Finally, with one foot on one side of my chair, he swung the other up onto the table. He thrust his pelvis at me and waited.

I was so flustered.

Debbie pressed the money into my hand. "Go ahead Jennifer, tuck it in there."

Everyone in the whole place was watching me. They were screaming at me, "Do It! Do it!" They all could see how embarrassed I was, including the man standing over me with his crotch only inches from my face. I took the money from her and played along, gingerly pulling out his gee string and tucking in the five dollar bill. I didn't know he was going to lean over and kiss me till it was too late. I didn't know that a five bought you a kiss. I wasn't ready exactly. He had a tongue and wasn't afraid to plunge it into my mouth. I wondered if they were in the habit of doing that. I half heartedly returned his kiss, just so he wouldn't think I was too strange.

Knowing I was embarrassed, the whole place applauded me. The dancer moved on. I turned to Debbie and Brook with that look that said 'die'. They laughed and so did Christy. She must have known Debbie would pull something like that.

Nothing like that happened again during the show. We had fun and I let them talk me into tucking away a few more singles. I was amazed at the way most of the women in the place behaved. Once or twice I thought a few of the women were going to rape the dancers. They actually chased them right out onto the floor, hanging on them.

When the entertainment was over the men, who had been impatiently waiting outside, poured into the bar. They were in heat and so were half the women in the place. We decided to go. It was eleven and I had to get up early in the morning. I wanted to be ready on time and I wanted to look just right.

I was ready when Jack arrived at eight. I didn't mind that he took the liberty to kiss me when I greeted him at the door. It was only a brief brush of our lips. It was reassuring and I liked the feeling it gave me.

I was dressed in my new jeans, my bright yellow silk camp shirt and my new boots. I thought I looked pretty good in the outfit. Jack said I did.

It was a two hour drive to his sister's house. We talked the whole way. He asked about my week, since lunch on Tuesday and I told him about my party and going out with the girls. He was sorry he didn't know it was my birthday. He listened intently as I bent his ear the whole way. I didn't even realize I was doing all the talking.

I had been nervous as we neared his sister's. I took an instant liking to Jack's sister, Karen. She was a woman, about twenty five, and I knew from previous conversations with Jack that they had two young children, a boy three and a daughter only a year and a half old.

Karen's husband, Kirt, I wasn't so sure of. He seemed nice enough but he was a flirt and I didn't think Karen appreciated the attention he paid me in front of her, I didn't.

When Karen offered to show me the house I took her up on it immediately. I was relieved to get away from her husband.

She had a beautiful huge four bedroom home that was immaculately kept. It had to be a lot of work for her with two small children.

"Jack's quite taken with you Jennifer." She told me.

I wasn't sure why she confided that to me. "I like him a lot. He's very sweet."

"He rarely brings his girlfriends to meet me. You must be pretty special."

It was gratifying to learn that he felt that way. I was curious, "I haven't wanted to pry, has Jack had a lot of girlfriends?" I thought she'd tell

me. She seemed very open.

Karen seemed sad when she said, "Not that many. His last relationship lasted several years. He was heartbroken when she left him." More cheerfully, she added, "Betsy was a lot like you, kind of quiet and reserved. Jack seems to like women who are more refined."

It was a compliment and it was appreciated but my modesty made it difficult to accept. "I'm not so refined."

Karen didn't accept that. "You're more refined than most and very pretty to boot. Jack's lucky to have found you."

I wanted to change the subject. "You have a beautiful home."

She and I seemed to get along really well. I thought I'd be so nervous around her but she was very down to earth and not at all threatening. I liked Karen a lot.

They owned a large piece of property. It was a gorgeous spot for a home, nestled in a beautiful little valley. The yard was beautifully landscaped and they had a big screened pool in the back yard. "Kirt's a fanatic about his yard." She explained as she showed me her rose garden on the side of the house. "He just about gets down on his hands and knees to trim around the gardens. But the roses are mine."

"They're beautiful." I assured her. They had a lovely aroma. "You must love having them around the house."

"Oh yes. We'll pick some later and you can take some home with you." I didn't need her to do that but I wasn't going to tell her no. She was so sweet.

Karen had prepared us a picnic lunch that morning. We all drove to the stables, another half hour north, in their car. Karen and I rode in back while the guys rode up front.

It gave Karen more time to ask me more about myself. I told her all I could that was truthful and filled in the gaps with my customary lies. I hated lying to her and to Jack.

It only took them a few minutes to get our horses ready. Apparently Kirt had some kind of association with the stable. Whether he was part owner or what I wasn't sure but they certainly went out of their way to treat us

well.

Jack made sure that I was given a very gentle horse and I was glad for that. Karen apparently was an accomplished rider and was quick to give me pointers when she realized that I knew very little about riding.

It was difficult at first. We blazed our own trails, avoiding the usual beaten paths the tourists followed. Jack seemed to know his way pretty well. It didn't take too long before the horse and I got to know each other and riding became easier.

The mountains were beautiful and Jack was quick to point out things of interest as we rode side by side. Karen and Kirt followed. It was a beautiful morning and as time passed, it got warmer. I was able to take off my jacket.

We'd stop to enjoy a waterfall or a scenic view. Some of the views were absolutely breathtaking. There was a time when I wouldn't have appreciated nature's beauty the way I did. How blind I once was, I remember thinking to myself.

We spread a blanket on a grassy mat at the base of one of the picturesque waterfalls. Karen and I laid out lunch. Kirt poured wine. We ate cheeses and cut up vegetables with ranch dip. Karen made sandwiches for the guys. "You know how men eat. I'd blow up like a balloon."

"So would I." I told her. I couldn't eat that sort of thing anymore. I wouldn't.

With the food cleaned away, we just lounged with our wine for a while. I, of course was the center of attention. Kirt wanted to know all about his brother-in-law's new girlfriend. Karen was curious too and Jack was quite happy to just let me talk. He stretched out there next to me and just listened.

I was trapped into talking about myself for a little while then I started asking Karen about her children. That got her started and I was saved. Kirt brought out his wallet and showed me pictures. They were adorable kids. The boy took after Karen but the little girl you couldn't tell who she took after yet. She was too young. They were content to tell me all about them for almost a half hour. "You'll meet them later, when we go back to the house."

"Where are they today?" They weren't at the house earlier.

"We left them with Kirt's sister, June. She'll bring them when they come over later for the barbecue."

A barbecue? Jack hadn't mentioned anything about us staying for a barbecue. The idea really didn't bother me though. I wasn't uncomfortable with these people.

I got a little start when Jack turned and put his arms around my waist from behind and pulled me close to him. "Go ahead and lean back against me." He was trying to make me more comfortable "Is that better?" He asked, thinking he'd done me a favor.

In one respect, yes. "Yes, thanks"

He kissed the side of my neck, giving me a little squeeze at the same time. It felt strange but nice, having his arm around me, holding me. I didn't resist.

We relaxed for an hour and a half before getting back on our horses. We continued on in the direction we were headed before we stopped to eat. I was completely lost. I had no idea which was the way back.

It was a leisurely ride. By early afternoon, my behind was more than a little sore from the constant bouncing. It was almost three when we got back to the stable and headed back for Karen's. It was a relief to be able to sit on something softer than the worn leather saddle. The car seats felt wonderful on my sore rear end.

Karen took me to her bedroom and let me freshen up. I wasn't too dusty from the trail but I did wash up and freshen my makeup. When I got downstairs, everyone was having drinks.

"Wine or a White Russian?" Jack asked me.

He remembered. I had enough wine the night before and at lunch, "A White Russian if it's not too much trouble." I asked.

"Bill and June are on their way with the kids." Karen said as I joined her at the kitchen table. "We thought we'd all take a swim when they get here. Did Jack think to tell you to bring a suit?"

A bathing suit? No, I couldn't! I struggled to appear calm. "No. He didn't say anything about bringing a suit."

"Jack, what's the matter with you. I told you to tell Jennifer?"

From behind the counter, he replied sheepishly, "I forgot, sorry."

Karen got up from her chair. "Come on upstairs Jennifer. I have plenty. You can take your pick. Why don't you boys go get your suits on. Kirt, yours is in the laundry."

I didn't know what to do but I couldn't stand there in front of the guys and make excuses. I hesitantly followed Karen upstairs to the bedroom.

"I haven't been able to wear these since Becky was born, cesarean." She explained. She laid out three two-piece suits on the bed.

Had I not been so nervous I might have been curious what 'cesarian' meant and why that stopped her from wearing the two piece suits.

Karen started to unbutton her blouse.

"I don't know if I should." I said.

"Aww come on Jennifer. We'll just have a quick dip to cool us off."

How do I respond to get out of it, I wondered? I had no clue.

She saw that I was hesitating. She must have thought I was embarrassed to undress in front of a stranger. "Go ahead and take them in the bathroom and try them on if you'd like." She suggested.

"Thanks." I picked up the three bathing suits from the bed and left her there to change.

I weighed my options as I stood there in the bathroom, holding the bathing suits in my hand. I had serious doubts about my new found self confidence. Putting on one of the skimpy suits Karen gave me would be like walking around in my bra and panties. Could I do that?

On the other side of the coin, what excuse would I give for not joining everyone at the pool? I had no excuse that I could think of.

I reluctantly undressed and tried on the largest of the two piece suits. None of the three were particular large, in terms of square inches of material.

It had a low, scooped front bottom and a halter top. I clumsily tied the

strings behind my back and neck.

"Are you just about ready Jennifer?" Came Karen's voice from the bedroom.

No, I wasn't nearly ready. "I'll be right out." I called back. I knew my makeup would run, all but my mascara and eyeliner. I used Karen's makeup remover that sat on the counter.

"That suit fits you nicely." She remarked when I stepped back into the bedroom. "I really miss my old figure."

I felt so exposed. "Thanks." Was all I could think to say. I had checked myself in the bathroom mirror before coming out and I certainly didn't have to worry about any bulges giving away my secret. I compared myself to Karen and saw no noticeable difference.



Once upon a time, before having children, Karen probably had a great figure but now she was a little flabby. Not fat by any means, just sagging a little here and there. She was still a beautiful woman, non-the-less.

"Have you got something I could use to hold my hair?" I asked. "I really don't want to get it wet."

"Sure." She was so nice. She found a white elastic twist in her top dresser drawer and handed it to me. "Is this all right?"

I had used one like it before. "That's perfect, thanks." I quickly tucked my hair through it, making a pony tail.

"All set?" Karen asked, standing at the door in her modest one piece suit.

I wished she'd offered me one like hers to wear. I didn't know that was the style she was going to put on. It was too late now.

"All set." I was anything but. I was petrified at the thought of going down stairs they way I looked. Being around Karen, other women, that way was one thing.

She handed me a towel and I followed her back down to the kitchen where the men were waiting. I heard the children's voices somewhere in the house. They must have arrived while we were upstairs.

There were new faces in the kitchen. June and her husband were there, having drinks, in their suits. Karen introduced me to them. I saw Jack watching me, amorously, as I said hello to the new arrivals. His smile was reassuring. He seemed delighted with the way his date, Jennifer, looked. I felt conspicuously naked standing there but Jack seemed to like what he saw. That at least made me feel good.

June was an older woman, in her thirties I guessed. She was pleasant but a little cool toward me, I felt. Her husband Bill was just the opposite. He was as bad as Kirt. I don't know if Jack realized they made me uncomfortable but he came to my rescue just the same.

"I have your drink ready." Jack came over close to me, handing me my drink, he put his arm around me, resting his hand on my waist as we stood there next to the counter.

He had been sitting since I came into the room and I hadn't gotten a very good look at him in his bathing suit. He looked great with his trim waist and muscled chest and arms. He didn't have the huge bulging kind of muscles like some of the fanatics that I used to know, he was just in excellent shape and he looked terrific in his modest boxer style trunks. There was no doubt he worked out regularly.

He stayed close at my side as we all stood there talking, finishing our drinks. Again I had to endure answering the newcomers' questions about myself but Karen felt free to field some of the questions since we had spent time getting to know each other.

The kids came out in the kitchen in their bathing suits, anxious to go swimming. It hadn't occurred to me that June and Bill had kids and that they'd bring them along too. Their kids were a little older than Karens. The two girls were eight and ten, according to June. I didn't mind at all getting out of there.

The guys played with the kids in the deep end while the women leisurely waded and talked at the shallow end of the pool. Karen and June had interests much different from mine. They talked endlessly about their children, their interests as housewives. I had very little to offer to the conversation but listened politely.

When they made an effort to include me, I learned they had given up their careers for their husbands and were content to be wives and mothers. I couldn't imagine what that kind of life that would be.

"So how long have you been modeling?" June asked me in a break in their conversation about the kids.

She must have misunderstood when I explained what I did earlier, in the kitchen. That, or she just wasn't listening. I really didn't care for her much.

"Jennifer's not a model June." Karen explained for me. "She's an account representative. She goes out and gets the advertising, sets up the layouts, arranges and oversees the photo shoots for her clients."

Karen had listened. "She could be a model. She's certainly pretty enough." Karen added.

"No I'm not." I insisted.

"Of course you are Jennifer." Karen disagreed.

"I'd kill to have your figure." June commented. "I used to be slender like that." She reminded her sister-in-law.

Karen didn't comment. I wondered how well she got along with June. I got the impression that June had a vivid imagination and that she was jealous. The irony was that she was jealous of me. How ridiculous.

"I guess I'd better go get dinner started." She turned to me. "I can handle it. Why do you and June just relax."

No way was she going to leave me out there with that woman and the guys. "No, I want to help." I insisted, climbing from the pool. June followed us. We dried off there by the pool. I looked over at Jack who was playing with his niece. She was diving off his shoulders and having a ball. I caught his eye and saw that smile that I was coming to enjoy. I returned it with mine. Neither of us said a word.

I wrapped my towel around my waist and followed the others into the house. I didn't mind at all helping Karen get dinner on the table. June must have decided there were enough cooks in the kitchen. She made herself comfortable at a stool on the other side of the counter and supervised.

The guys came in about a half hour later and Karen asked Kirt to start up the grill. Jack went to help him while Bill wandered inside somewhere. A moment later I heard a TV turn on and heard an announcer giving play by play of a football game. It wasn't long till Kirt wandered in and disappeared too. I hadn't sat and enjoyed a football game in ages. I would have enjoyed that too, but that wasn't the day for it.

We finally had everything just about ready. We just had to wait on the chicken and ribs that Jack had on the grill.

"He looks hot out there. Why don't you get out of the kitchen now?" Karen told me. She went into the refrigerator and got a beer. "Here Jennifer, why don't you see if Jack would like a beer?"

"How are you doing? You look hot." I said as I walked across the patio toward him. "Here, I thought you might like this." I handed him the beer.

He stopped staring long enough to say, "Thanks." I wasn't that he was leering, or even ogling now, it was that sweet adoring look I had grown

to appreciate.

"You having a good time?" He asked.

"I really like your sister. She's great." I told him. I didn't want to say anything bad about any of the others, I didn't know how he might react to that. I apparently didn't have to worry.

"I love her to death, but sometimes I wonder why she ever married Kirt." Jack was leaning against the low patio wall. He put his hand out for mine and I gave it to him. He gently pulled me close to him. I was a little nervous about what he might have in mind but I didn't shrink back from him. After all, there were all these people around.

"Karen likes you too. She said I could bring you up anytime."

I was glad she felt that way. I still didn't try to back off as Jack put his arms around me and pulled me gently against his bare chest, even though it made me a little nervous.

"I told her good taste runs in our family." He gave me that look again as he stared into my eyes. The next thing I knew we were kissing. Not the gentle brush of our lips we had done previously. Jack was excited and put passion into our embrace. I felt something too but I shouldn't have let him continue. His hands stroked my back, wandering lower and lower until he had my ass in his hand, squeezing it gently, lifting me to his mouth. I started to get a little scared.



"How are the ribs coming Jack?" Kirt asked with a tone that said he

had seen us kissing. What bothered me was that he no doubt saw Jack grabbing my ass. I wished I had not set the towel aside earlier.

"They're just about ready." Jack told him, still holding me close to him. His hands were around my waist now.

"I better see if I can help Karen in the kitchen." I suggested, to get away.

"Tell her we'll be right in with the food." He said, letting me go.

I was going to run upstairs and change but when I told Karen what Jack said, she asked me to take some of the food out to the picnic table. June was nowhere in sight. I had no time to change.

I sat between Jack and Bill on the narrow bench and ate. I picked at my food. I wasn't terribly hungry. I had become less self conscious about the bathing suit I wore with the other women sitting around in theirs. Of course, I was the only one in a two piece and my little top still made me feel like I was wearing only a bra in front of everyone. It got a little easier as time passed.

I decided Jack didn't think he'd done anything wrong earlier. He probably thought it was the natural thing to do. Had the circumstances been different, would I have done less? I thought not.

I finally did get to change, after the dishes were all cleaned up. I didn't feel right, deserting Karen in the kitchen since June joined her husband in front of the TV.

My hair was the only thing that gave me fits. It had gotten a little wet in the pool, just splashed, but I had trouble getting it to behave. Karen loaned me a beret to hold my hair back. I had my makeup in my purse so that wasn't a problem.

"Why don't you just take these Jen?" Karen suggested. "I'll never get into them again. At least they fit you." She laid two more bathing suits on the bed. There were five in all.

"Are you sure?" I asked, turning from the bathroom mirror. I was intrigued about how the other suits might fit me. I actually was happy now to have them. After I got over my initial fears, I started to feel good about how I looked in one, besides, it was far easier to accept the gift from Karen than going to a store to buy my own. She placed them into a shopping bag she

took from her closet.

Everyone except the kids were in the living room when we went back downstairs. The football game was in the fourth quarter and the guys were glued to the set.

"Here Jennifer, I saved you a spot." Jack moved to the end of the couch, leaving me a narrow place to sit between him and Bill. Bill didn't budge as I nestled in between them. He hardly noticed I was there, he was so engrossed in the game.

Jack slid his arm around my shoulders and tucked me in close to him. He'd gotten dressed while I was upstairs. I wasn't uncomfortable, because I didn't know what to do with my left hand. I finally, bravely, rested it on his leg. He seemed to like that because he pulled me a smidgen closer when I did.

I gave Jack another surprise when he found that I easily followed the action of the game.

"You know football too." He said with delight.

"Sure." I told him. "I love football."

"I'm so glad I found you." He kissed me on the cheek.

It seemed so easy to please him. I almost felt guilty for what I was doing to him.

I thought we should have left earlier. It was almost ten when we started to leave for the long drive home. I felt good when I hugged Karen, thanking her for a wonderful time. She returned the hug, saying, "I want to see you again Jen." She had adopted the nickname I told her to use.

"I'd really like that."

"You're welcome to come up anytime, even if my thoughtless brother doesn't come." She said to him more than to me.

"You know how busy I am." He said in his defense.

"Too busy to visit your sister?" She chided him.

"I'll come up more, I promise." He conceded.

"And bring Jen with you." She told him forcibly as we left, saying goodnight.

As we started back toward the interstate, Jack asked, "What were you and my sister talking about for so long?"

Which time I wondered, laughing to myself. We had lots of time to talk. I knew what he wanted to know. "She was just telling me all about you and your past loves."

"That's not fair."

"What's not fair about it?" I said, smiling. He knew better than to argue. He gave in like a little boy. I saw quite a bit of that little boy that day and it was cute to see a grown man, a man like Jack, show that side of himself. It made it easier to feel close to him.

I decided not to be too inquisitive about the things I'd learned of Jack from his sister. The trip home was definitely his turn to talk and most of the discussion was about his family and about him, growing up.

Jack offered to stop for a late bite as we drove into town. I told him I was tired. It was nearly midnight.

I had enjoyed the day but I had church in the morning and Virginia, Connie, Christy and I were playing golf after. I needed to get home.

Jack seemed in no rush to leave. "Can I come in for a few minutes?" He asked as we stepped from the elevator.

I hadn't expected him to ask that but with Connie there, what could it hurt? I wasn't a fool. I knew he wanted to neck and while I should have been repulsed by the idea, it excited me.

"You have a beautiful place here."

"Thanks. My mother decorated it herself." I took the precaution of reminding him that Connie was there, no doubt, in the bedroom sleeping.

He was a little surprised by that. "You and your mother live here together?"

"Sure." I felt confident, with him knowing that, that he wouldn't try

to go too far. "Would you like anything?" I asked as he settled down on the couch.

"A cup of coffee?"

The usual scenario was to ask for a drink, alcohol. Jack was different. I told him we only had instant and that was fine with him. He was easy to get along with.

Neither Connie nor I drank coffee. It tended to stain your teeth. Connie had encouraged me to give it up. I remember her saying that 'girls with stained teeth are so unattractive'. I had been taking great care to not let that happen to mine.

I set the cup on the coffee table and sat next to him on the couch. I had anticipated his wanting to kiss me but I thought he'd want at least one sip of his coffee first.

It excited me to know he wanted me. Without thinking I touched his lips, tightly pressed against mine, with my tongue. He must have liked it because he pulled me even tighter against him. I responded by flicking my tongue into his mouth again.

One arm was around my shoulder, the other around my waist. I clutched his neck with both arms. He squirmed to nestle me closer and I responded, feeling more and more excited. His hand, first at my waist, moved lower and stroked my hip. I didn't panic, feeling my passion rise.

I stopped thinking about the fact I was kissing a man. The intensity of the excitement I was feeling wouldn't let me stop and think about that. I did remember what Christy had said about how exciting it was to let yourself go in a man's strong arms and she was right.

His hand came back to my waist and higher. The anticipation in me built into a wave. I wanted him to do things he shouldn't. I wanted to feel more. His hand stoked my stomach through the smooth material of my blouse and I had goose bumps from anticipation. My tongue flicked around his mouth faster and faster, probing. I wanted to feel his hand on my breast. I wanted to feel what Christy had described.

Jack didn't disappoint me and I twitched when his strong hand covered my breast. Through my blouse, through my bra I felt him gently

squeeze my anxious breast. He toyed with my nipple, first rubbing it then squeezing, it sent that wave racing over my whole body. It was wonderful, I didn't want the feeling to end.



Suddenly his hand was gone from that tingling mound that had once

been a cause of horror to me. It caressed my stomach again, working his way down. Still, our lips were locked together in passion.

I didn't realize what he was trying to do at first. Suddenly it dawned on me. He was trying to undo my belt so he could unbutton my jeans. I came to my senses. I pulled away from his lips and said quietly but anxiously, "No Jack, don't."

He stopped immediately, taking his hands off me. "I'm sorry Jen. I thought you . . ."

I did, but I couldn't. I was confused. "It was my fault." I told him, sliding away from him on the couch. "I can't." I didn't know what to say.

"No, it was my fault. I'm crazy about you Jen. I want you but I shouldn't have assumed. I'm sorry."

It was all right. The gentleman was back. "I just can't, I'm sorry." I couldn't explain.

"I understand. I tend to go to fast when I want something. I shouldn't have. . ."

I wanted to tell him it was all right to touch me, he just had to stay away from down there but how do you draw the line? "I like you a lot too Jack." I said to console him.

"I think I better go Jen." He said, standing up and straightening himself up. "I hope I didn't upset you. I really want to see you again."

He had that look again, that little boy look. "I want to see you again too." I told him. I took his hand to walk him to the door.

I had to find a way to tell him some of what he did I wanted him to do again. I know my face was flushed, just thinking about how it felt to have him touch me.

"It's all right Jack. Will you call me Monday?" I already told him my plans for Sunday and he understood.

"Definitely." At the door he took my face, gently cradling it in his strong hands and kissed me tenderly again for a long moment.

I didn't wake Connie. There was something about the moment that I

didn't want to ruin by talking about it. I savored it, getting ready for bed. I slipped into the sexy black lace nightie Judy had given me for my birthday and just lay there in the dark, trying to imagine what it would be like, if only Jack could have taken me, made me feel like a real woman.

My night was filled with sweet dreams.

There was a knock on the door Sunday evening, a little after Connie and I got home from Virginia's. It was Mrs. Strand, our next door neighbor. She had a brightly wrapped package in her hand.

"A young man left this for you earlier Jennifer." She said with a grin, handing me the package.

I thanked her and said goodnight. I brought the package into the living room and sat with it on the couch, next to Connie.

"Who do you suppose it's from?" I wondered out loud.

"I'll give you three guesses."

I hoped she was right. I excitedly ripped off the wrapping. At first glance in the box I thought, 'what a sweet gesture'. An adorable soft stuffed bear. I didn't realize, till I had it out of the box, that it was more than that. Around the bear's paw was a beautiful fine gold bracelet.

"Your new friend has nice taste." Connie said, admiring the bracelet.

"It's so delicate." I said, after I removed it from the bear.

"It's an ankle bracelet." She explained.

I felt silly. I should have known. "It's beautiful."

"It's extravagant," She commented, "having come from someone you've only just met."

She was right but so what. I loved it and it was so thoughtful of Jack.

As soon as we got up Sunday morning I told Connie all about my day Saturday. She was proud of me for the way I handled myself and seemed relieved that there were no mishaps. I stopped short of telling her about the intensity of the moment Jack and I shared on the couch.

It wasn't too late and Connie thought it would be all right for me to call Jack and thank him for his gift. She normally disapproved of a girl calling a man. I just wasn't proper. Jack and I talked for an hour.

The week went by quickly, what with work, Christy, Jack and my weekly commitments with my friends. I had very little time to myself.

My conversations with Pat were becoming more and more frequent. With the Jansen job getting closer, we had a lot to do. We also found time to talk about ourselves, what she was doing, what I was up to. I told her all about Jack and our intimacy. She agreed I was smart to hold off on having sex with him, although she didn't know the real reason I stopped him. If I had my way, my friend would never know.

I didn't share everything with Christy. I did tell her about the way Jack grabbed my behind at Karen's and she didn't seem to care for that so I decided better not to tell her everything.

Jack and I had lunch twice that week and we had plans for Friday night. At least that's what he told me when we talked on Tuesday, over lunch. He didn't mention what those plans were and I didn't think I should ask. I was excited, just that we were going out again. I did ask what I should wear, not knowing where we were going. All he said was, "I'll pick you up from work so don't go to any trouble, besides, you always look great." It was of him to say but it didn't mean I wouldn't go out of my way to look my best.

Christy wasn't happy about my spending our Friday night with Jack. She thought I was seeing too much of him. She saw the ankle bracelet and, learning where it came from, looked a little hurt. I told her it meant nothing, that I only wore it because it was so pretty and it made me feel pretty. She accepted that.

I went to Christy's apartment Wednesday night, after we worked out and while we had a good time, I thought of Jack often. Even when we were in Christy's bed, making love.

I closed my eyes and imagined it was Jack kneading my breasts, sucking on my swollen nipples, touching me in the places that excited me so.

It wasn't the same that night with Christy. What she told me in the past about men was true and I became more and more curious about what it would feel like to have Jack do the things she did to me.

Christy was a little surprised when I asked her not to use her toy that night. "It hurts a little." I told her and she put it away. Somehow it seemed wrong, dirty, or at least not right, having that thing pushed inside me. I wanted something else, something I knew I couldn't have.

We had a very enjoyable lunch Thursday. Jack took me to the Marriott, to the restaurant where my odyssey began. It was a confident, happy young woman that enjoyed her lunch there that day. I was happy to take the arm of the well dressed man that escorted me to my table. I enjoyed having women stare at him, at us. I felt proud and lucky to have him.

Connie and I had been talking since Tuesday night about what I would wear on Friday. We were still deciding on Friday morning.

"Isn't it too dressy for work?" I asked. Connie had been trying to convince me to wear the dark green three piece suit. It was one of the beautiful outfits Virginia had bought me. It had a collarless jacket with three quarter sleeves. The skirt was a short slim skirt and the sheer white ruffled silk blouse had soft, oh so feminine, ruffles on the three quarter sleeves too. I even had shoes to match.

She convinced me, not by assuring me it was fine for work, but when she was sure Jack would love me in it.

It took me forever to get ready. Everything had to be perfect, not just my clothes. I spent forever on my makeup and hair. Connie helped me get my white hair bow to sit just right in the back.

"Will you stop admiring yourself in the mirror and finish getting ready?" She finally yelled at me.

I picked through my collection of perfume, finding just the right one, light and feminine.

The finishing touch was my beautiful pearls. My bracelet was too much for work though. I put it and my ring in my purse for later.

I did get some compliments on the way I looked that day. I knew some of them were because of my situation, how well I passed as a woman, but some came from the people, outsiders, who didn't know my secret. Those were the ones that meant so much to me.

I hadn't noticed that morning, getting dressed, that my pretty lace bra showed through the sheer material of my blouse. I didn't let it bother me. I'd

seen the same thing in the way lots of women I knew dressed and I was anxious to see the effect on Jack. Just a few weeks ago I would have just died at the thought of dressing this way.

The day dragged even though I was busy. There were layouts to approve and I had two meetings with clients that morning. I was glad I scheduled them at our office and not the client's. I had lunch in, with the girls. The news that I was dating a guy had spread throughout the office and the girls were curious how I was handling it. Even Trish and Pam dropped in to see me. I hadn't seen them all week and I brought them up to date.

I couldn't stop them. Carol, Gwen, Linda and a few of the others girls all wanted to check this guy Jack out. They waited in the lobby with me after five, instead of going home.

Jack was right on time. I would have liked to hear their comments about him but I didn't want to keep him waiting. I left them staring out the smoked windows as I went out to meet him.

Jack looked so good. He had on a fitted gray double breasted suit and he look like he just stepped off the pages of GQ. He looked at me and smiled only the way he could. I hoped the girls could see the way he look at me.

"You look fantastic Jen." He took my hand, looking me over from head to toe. All my effort had been worth it.

"Thanks, so do you." I meant it. I didn't wait for him to kiss me. I didn't do it just for the girls, I wanted to. He was wearing the same great smelling cologne he always wore and he smelled so goo. "Mmmm, you smell good." I told him.

Jack liked it when I complimented him. He acted modest and shy but he liked it, I could tell.

He graciously opened my door and put me into his sparkling clean Porche. I felt special when I was with him and it didn't hurt that he drove such a great car.

"Where are we going?" I asked as we turned and pulled out the drive, onto the street.

"They're having a party at my office, a celebration, then dinner."

I was going to meet the people he worked with? That shouldn't be too

bad, I decided. His was a pretty big law firm but how many people could there be? "What's the occasion?"

"We just signed a new client, an international conglomerate. Their business should bring in over twenty million dollars a year."

It was a staggering figure. "That much?"

"Maybe more."

"Is it your account?" I asked.

"I wish it was but it will still mean a substantial influx of revenue and some of that will find it's way into all our pockets."

I never asked Jack how much he made. I didn't think it was something a girl asked. I still didn't. He drove an expensive car. He dressed well, better than well. It got me curious about where and how he lived.

Jack had told me where his office was but I didn't know Atlanta that well so I had no clue. The office building we arrived at had at least sixty floors. I noticed that much as we pulled into the underground garage. His parking spot had his name on it. I was impressed. I didn't even have a car anymore. I couldn't afford one for that matter.

I knew he wanted me on his arm when we walked into his office. I would have taken it even if he didn't offer. I heard the music as we stepped off the elevator. There definitely was a party going on.

It wasn't the modest office I had expected. It was enormous, taking up at least half that floor of the building. There were at least fifty desks in the large center common area and that was surrounded by the glass walled offices. That was all I had time to take in before we were greeted by his coworkers.

Jack introduced me to so many people, I didn't have a hope of remembering all their names. They were broken up into small groups all over the office and we went to one group after another.



I smiled pleasantly and said hello to everyone. There were a lot of women that worked there and I had an uncomfortable feeling as they all gave me the once over.

"Come on Jen, I want to introduce you to Jill." He took me over to a small group of people gathered around one of the desks. I learned that Jill was his secretary. She was young, maybe twenty five, and very attractive. She was one of those bubbly people that you couldn't stop from talking once she got started.

Jack asked me if I'd like a glass of wine and, thinking I'd go with him to get it, I said yes.

"I'll be right back. Why don't you wait here with Jill and the others?"

I suddenly felt very alone and vulnerable. I didn't like being alone with all these people I didn't know.

"So you're, Jen. Jack talks about you all the time. We had to hear all about you two going horseback riding last Sunday. It sounded like you really had a nice time. What did you think of Karen?"

I guess I took offense that this girl called me Jen instead of Jennifer. It bothered me a little that she should be so familiar, having just met. And she knew Jack's sister? I was a little surprised that Jack told her all about our date. It was nothing, I told myself.

I was polite and made small talk with the girl and the others. They asked a lot of questions. I think they were surprised at what I did. I was surprised that Jack hadn't told them. He seemed to have told them everything else about me.

I chided myself later for being annoyed at him. He was just being a man and didn't I tell all my girlfriends all about him? I decided I was being silly for getting annoyed.

Jack was back in about ten minutes with my wine and a drink for himself. "Would you like to see my office?"

"Sure" I wanted to see where he worked and I wanted to get away from Jill.

Jack's wasn't the largest office in the place but it wasn't the smallest either, from what I saw. A glass wall separated it from Jill's desk. The far

wall of smoked glass overlooked downtown. I looked out and saw the little river down below and the little park that Virginia and I strolled through that Sunday.

Jack's big desk was mahogany and matched the bookshelves that lined the whole wall behind him. The whole place looked rich, with its plush carpeting and expensive furniture.

"I had no idea you were so important." I told him with a little smile. He picked up on my meaning and laughed. I was simply telling him I was impressed. Girls did that sort of thing to build up men's egos. He thought I was kidding. "No, I mean it." I insisted, playing the game I'd been taught to play.

He got a little more serious. "I'm eligible for a partnership in a few months and if all goes well I'll be up there with the big boys."

I went around the desk and, touching his face with my finger tips, I kissed him briefly and said, "I'm sure you'll get the promotion. You're very important to me." I had seen Jill walking up, out of the corner of my eye, and I did it partly for her sake, partly because I wanted to. I guess I resented her, being so close to him all day, knowing more about us than I thought she should. I wanted her to know that Jack was mine, not hers. I suppose it was silly of me.

He blushed when I kissed him. It was so cute.

"I want to introduce you to my boss and some of the others."

"Where can I put this?" I asked of my glass of wine.

"Bring it with you." He said.

"I don't want your boss to meet me with a drink in my hand." I told him. Another lesson I learned. That one from Virginia. She was very wise in her knowledge of etiquette.

He took my glass and set it on Jill's desk. I liked that. Let her clean up after me. I really resented the girl. I didn't really know why, I hardly knew her. It was just that she was so attractive and so close to Jack all day.

We found his boss in a large crowded conference room with most of the partners, a few of the other staff attorneys and the new client, as I found out later. They were having their own party. There was a bar in the corner of

the large room and a table set with hot hors d'oeuvres.

I clung dutifully to Jack's arm as he took me around and introduced me to everyone. Virginia taught me well and I smiled and laughed at their jokes, not too loud, but with just enough conviction to impress them, I hoped.

I was making small talk with one of Jack's friends when I heard my name called. "Jennifer?" I turned at the sound of my name.

"Mrs. Peterson?" I was shocked to see someone I knew.

"It is you Jennifer. I wasn't sure." The older woman said with a smile.

We knew each other from church. I talked to her and her husband every Sunday when Virginia and I socialized after the services. They were dear old friends of Virginia's and good new friends of mine.

I didn't feel at all uncomfortable about exchanging hugs with her. We did it all the time.

"What brings you here dear?" She asked.

I looked over at Jack. He finally found his voice. "I asked her to join me for dinner this evening." Jack explained. Meeting someone I knew surprised him too.

Mrs. Peterson was happy to see me there with Jack. "I didn't know that you two knew each other."

I didn't know that her husband worked for the same firm as Jack. "Where's Mr. Peterson?" I asked. Mr. Peterson was an imp, at least that what Virginia called him. He was a sweet man who loved to tease and he seemed to take great delight in teasing young women and I was frequently the recipient of his attention. It was always innocent and I look forward to seeing him each week. The fact that he saw me as a pretty young woman, worth his attention, always made me feel good about myself, about Jennifer. He and his wife made an adorable couple.

Mrs. Peterson looked around and spotted her husband. "There he is." She said, pointing across the room. "Wait until I tell him who I've found. I'll be right back dear, don't go away." She left to fetch him.

"You know the Petersons?"

"We go to the same church." I explained. "They're such a sweet couple."

"He's the senior partner." Jack looked delighted.

"Your Boss?" I asked. I was surprised.

"No, but he will be if I get that promotion."

This could be good for Jack, I thought to myself.

I watched Mrs. Peterson as she approached her husband. I moved closer to Jack and took his arm again. I wanted Mr. Peterson to see us together when his wife told him I was there. My timing was perfect. The biggest grin filled his face. He reminded me of a little old Irishman, the way he smiled and his face lit up.

He immediately excused himself from the people he'd been talking with and came over. "Jennifer, how nice to see you. What a surprise."

"Hello Mr. Peterson. I hope you're going to behave yourself tonight." I said with my best smile.

"I always behave myself." He replied with his roguish grin. He turned to Jack. "I didn't know that you and our Jennifer here were seeing each other."

"Jack and I have only been seeing each other for a short time." I explained for Jack.

"We only met a few weeks ago." He added.

I realized my error. I had to be less aggressive in these new surroundings. It wasn't good for Jack to have me appear too assertive. Young women had their place in these circumstances. I was forgetting my coaching and that wasn't good.

We talked for a short while and I let Jack take over for me. Inevitably, conversation turned to business and I simply listened, as I should, not interrupting.

The Petersons had to return to the others and we continued to mingle,

with Jack introducing me to the others. I didn't forget again and acted the role of the interested but demure girlfriend.

Jack certainly seemed pleased by the way his peers reacted to me. 'It's important for a man to have a wife who knows how to act in front of his superiors. It can do a lot for his career.' That was some more of the wisdom Virginia had imparted to me. I was definitely not Jack's wife but didn't the same thing apply to a man's girlfriend?

We mingled with them for over an hour and I played my part to perfection. I knew Virginia would have been proud of me. Before we left them to join the others outside, Jack was pulled aside by Mr. Peterson and was told we were invited to sit with them later at dinner. Jack came back very pleased.

"He must really like you." Jack said proudly when we left the room.

"I didn't do anything. He's just a friend." I said. I was rather proud of myself. At times it had been a little unnerving to behave the way I did.

"You did more than you know. He wants us to join them at his table for dinner."

"I'm glad." I said smiling.

I was introduced to the people we missed earlier. I think Jack made sure he didn't miss anyone. He wanted them all to meet me. It was getting a little tiring, putting on the act for so long, with so many people, but I stayed right by his side, smiling, the whole time.

I did feel a little funny when I had to go to the ladies room. Surrounded by strangers who all knew Jack. I made pleasant conversation with the women I'd met that evening. It wasn't too difficult. I know what to do, how to behave. I'd had enough practice.

We managed to avoid Jill most of the time. That was fine with me. Whenever I spotted her across the room, looking our way, I simply moved in closer to Jack. She pretty much left us alone.

Finally, around eight, the party started to break up and people started leaving. "Is everyone going to the dinner?" I asked. There were so many of them.

"Just the partners, the clients and the staff lawyers. The party was for

the office personnel." He explained.

"Oh, that makes sense." I had another question, "Where is the dinner?"

"It's upstairs, in the penthouse. They've brought in a chef from New York hired a seven piece orchestra."

It sounded very formal. I wished then that I had dressed differently but it was too late to worry about it. Given the invitation we'd received from his boss, maybe I was wrong.

I thought Jack's office was posh. The penthouse was even more extravagantly furnished. I sank into the deep pile carpet in my heels. The furniture was all antique and none of the pieces were reproductions. Tasteful oil paintings adorned the walls and there were no less than five huge chandeliers, each over one of the five long mahogany dining tables. The orchestra played soft music while waiters circulated through the room serving more hors d'oeuvres and bringing drinks.

Jack kept me close, on his arm. He glanced at me from time to time and he looked very pleased. If not for the company we were in, I know he would have kissed me each time. His ardor excited me. It made me wish we could leave but that wasn't possible.

Dinner was excellent and the company we shared made it even more enjoyable. Jack sat to my left and Mr. Peterson was on my right. He did tease me a little but not too much. He was fun to be with. Mrs. Peterson gave him the dickens and told him to leave me alone but he didn't listen, he never did. I didn't mind.

Jack didn't seem to mind either. My knowing his potential new boss could only be good for him and the way we got along was great. I was well aware that I could be an asset to him and that pleased me no end.

When conversation turned serious, I adopted the proper posture. I listened intently, when appropriate, I would ask questions but I never, never gave my opinion. Not that I didn't have one to offer.

It was almost eleven when we excused ourselves and left the party. Tactfully, we weren't the first to leave but were weren't the last either. That would have been boorish. Jack had to promise to Mr. Peterson and his wife that he would bring me to all the company functions. He did, eagerly.

Maybe it was because I had such a good time but it didn't seem late as we rode the elevator down to the garage. Jack asked, "Should I take you home?"

I thought I knew what he was thinking, he'd gone too far the other night and he didn't know quite what to do now. He was being cautious.

I had an edge, a power over him, that I never imagined I could. I never realized, in the past, before the days of Jennifer, that women could control men the way they could. I never thought, as I became this new person that I would ever have that kind of control, or would even want to. It was very satisfying, very exciting.

I debated with myself for a second. How do I answer him and give the right message? "I'm not tired. It's been a wonderful evening so far." Not too bold.

"What would you like to do?" He asked.

I didn't want to assume control of the evening. I did want to find a way to be alone with him and, within limits, enjoy some of the passion, the excitement I experienced with him last Sunday.

"I don't know Jack. Is there somewhere quiet we could go to be alone?" I only wanted to suggest, not direct.

He was thoughtful for a moment. "We could go to my house? I have some great old records and I think I have a bottle of wine chilled."

With anyone else, after what happened last time we were alone, I would have been terrified at the thought. Jack had shown his regret at what he tried with me. I was sure he wouldn't try anything like that again. I was sure it was safe enough.

"That sounds nice. I'd like to see where you live." I was curious.

We talked about how well everything went that evening and I told him I hoped my being friends with Mr. Peterson didn't cause him any problems.

He assured me it was not a problem and that our being friends was definitely an asset.

I knew how important office politics were to anyone's career and while I didn't really have to play the game myself, as the boss's 'daughter',

Jack certainly did.

The overwhelming undertones of the political games played in Jack's office were obvious. I had never seen the game played so intently until that evening. If you didn't play the game and play it well, you didn't stand a chance of getting ahead. Having someone at your side who your superiors took such delight with was definitely an advantage that any of Jack's peers would have given anything for.

Virginia's always said that the right wife made all the difference in a man's career. That could certainly apply to a man's girlfriend too.

Jack lived in a quaint rural neighborhood on the outskirts of Atlanta, about a three quarter hour drive from his office. I pictured him living in a penthouse. It was certainly an affluent neighborhood, judging by the well maintained large homes with their beautifully landscaped yards. Jack's was one of the nicer looking homes, from what I could see in the light from the street lamps.

I had been brave, back at the office. Now I was far from familiar surrounds with a man that both excited and scared me. I wondered if it had been such a good idea as he opened the front door to his home and ushered me inside.

It was furnished nicely, to a man's taste. The furniture was heavy with lots of wood trim. The pictures that hung on the walls exhibited a man's taste. Over the fireplace was an enormous painting of a sailing ship. There was not a live flower or plant in sight, no color.

I might have found the surroundings appealing once. My tastes had changed considerably. "It's very nice." I told him, trying to appear impressed.

"I do my own decorating." He said proudly.

I wanted to tell him he should have hired a decorator.

"Why don't you make yourself comfortable? I'll put on some music and get us a glass of wine."

That was difficult. I sat on the sofa where I could partially see him in his kitchen. I debated sitting in one of the chairs but that would have sent a definite signal and I didn't want to do that. I was in a precarious position.

It took Jack only a few moments to join me with the wine. Through speakers hidden in the ceiling, I assumed, came music. Oldies from the sixties. Nice, easy listening, tunes.

It was awkward for both of us, sitting there, not saying a word, pretending to be just enjoying the music. Someone had to break the ice.

"Jack," I started, very unsure of myself. The little boy listened. "we got off to a very confusing start last Sunday."

"I know, I'm sorry Jen."

He was taking the blame again. "No Jack, just listen." I had thought about what I'd say to him all week. "It wasn't your fault. It was mine."

He started to interrupt me. I put my fingers over his lips to quiet him. I had to get out the words I'd rehearsed, uninterrupted.

"I'm a virgin Jack." It was the only plausible explanation I could come up with. "I've made a promise to myself and my mother that I would remain one until I find the right man and we get married." It sounded corny, I knew that and it also might turn off most men. I was gambling that Jack was different.

He looked surprised and I couldn't blame him. Whoever heard of a twenty two year old virgin these days. "I know it sounds very old fashioned but I can't help it Jack." Then came the really hard part. I put on as though I was ashamed of myself. "The other night I came very close to breaking that promise. I wanted you so badly." Give him a little hope, just a little.

"I didn't know Jen. I'm sorry. I won't . . ."

"No, Jack, you don't understand." I paused for effect. "Your gentle touch. The way you make me feel. It drove me crazy and no man ever made me feel that way before." Wasn't that the truth? "I don't trust myself with you."

I saw compassion. "I didn't know you felt that way about me."

"That's what scares me Jack." Did he know I was trying to put the responsibility on him to stop short of going too far?

"Jen, I promise that nothing will happen if you don't want it to."

That's what I wanted to hear. "You are so sweet. How did I ever find someone like you?" I leaned over and kissed him tenderly on the lips. "I'm so lucky."

"I'm the lucky one." He took my cue and made the next advance.

It was wonderful and Jack didn't break his promise. Our passionate love making stopped short of my removing any of my clothes below my waist. He did everything I asked of him and it was so arousing.



As he did all that I asked of him, and none of what I'd asked him not to, I felt obligated to fulfill his one request. He was kneeling on the floor, between my legs, sucking on my breasts and asked me to rub him. He did have his pants on, I remember thinking. He climbed back on the couch and

while he continued to caress my chest, we kissed and I rubbed his crotch. I was amazed at how big he was under the fabric and how he responded to my touch. The harder I rubbed him the more passionately he caressed my breasts. It was heaven for me and we responded in tune to each others touch, getting ever more aroused. He unzipped his fly and guided my hand to his erection. I thought he just wanted me to rub it. He pulled it out of his underwear and guided my hand until I was stroking it alone. It was almost too much. He leaned over to put his mouth over my breast again and I felt the warmth rise in me again. I all but forgot about the mechanical motion of my hand as it stroked him harder and harder until the inevitable happened.



I shouldn't have been surprised when Jack started to make the little moaning sounds and his erection started pulsing in my hand. I looked down only when I felt the warm fluid on my hand. He had actually come in my hand. Later, when I was dressed again and cleaned up, when I was calmer, I was embarrassed about what I'd done.

I still wondered, if only I was a whole woman. If only I could have experienced what women take for granted. What would it have been like to have him inside me? I drove the thought from my mind. There was just no way I could ever find out.

He asked again if there was any way we could see each other on Saturday and I had to remind him I had plans with my friends. He was disappointed and so was I. He had, again, made me feel so good. "Why don't you call me tomorrow around noon and if I can get out of my commitment I will." I would try.

I didn't tell Connie what happened at his house when she and I awoke Saturday morning. I did tell her we kissed and she asked me again how it made me feel. I was honest and told her I enjoyed it. That it excited me, but that's all I told her.

I was certainly not going to tell Christy. She and I met at her place. We had to go shopping for new shoes and she had a fitting for the bridesmaid dress she bought for the wedding she was going to in a few weeks.

I felt guilty, as though I'd been cheating on her. It was so confusing. I wanted to tell her how great it was with Jack but I knew she'd be hurt. If we could just finish our shopping early enough and get her through her fitting by noon I could make some kind of excuse and get home to get Jack's call.

It didn't work that way, unfortunately for me. We didn't even get into the fitters till after one and it took an hour. I knew I'd missed his call.

We spent the rest of the afternoon together and she wanted us to go out with Debbie and Brook that night. She hadn't even told me she'd made plans for us.

I called Jack around three. He wasn't home but I left him a message explaining that I got hung up and couldn't get away. I asked him if he'd call me that evening, around eleven. I didn't tell his machine what I was thinking, that I was trying to find a way to spend Sunday with him. It didn't

even occur to me that he might have other plans.

Christy was disappointed, even a little upset that I wanted to go home instead of staying with her that night. I promised I'd make it up to her when she dropped me off around ten that night.

Connie was surprised I was home so early. I explained about my wanting to be home for Jack's call.

"Is that really fair to Christy?" She asked. "You seem more interested in Jack these days than her. She's been a very good friend when you needed her."

Connie only made me feel more guilty than I already did. "I know it's just that things are different now." I tried to tell her.

"Different how?"

I wasn't sure myself. "I don't know. I don't feel the same way I used to feel about her."

"Since you met Jack?"

"I suppose so." It was true. She wasn't grilling me, she was just sitting there asking questions. She was making me think and that's probably all she intended to do.

"Jennifer, I think it's wonderful that you've met someone but you need to be cautious. Your relationship with Christy's been a relatively safe one for you, under the circumstances, but if you're going to go out with men you need to be oh so careful. Maybe we should talk to Dr. Winter and see if there isn't something she can do to help you be a little more comfortable with yourself."

What was Connie getting at? "What?" I asked.

"Well, there is a corrective surgery that would make you more of a woman."

Had she read my deepest thoughts, the thoughts that were causing me so much anguish and confusion? I knew that there were women out there who used to be men but how complete was the surgery? "They can do that? I mean, they could change me to be just like a woman?"

"Of course they can. I've heard that it's a relatively simple procedure."

Could it be that easy? "I have wondered about what it would be like." I admitted to her.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful Honey, to be a complete, whole person again?"

I never thought of myself as 'incomplete' before but now I could see, she was right. "Sure it would." Still, it was a scary thought.

"When do you go see her next?"

"Tuesday" Connie knew I went every Tuesday.

"Would you like me to come with you and we can both find out?"

I'd never have the nerve to ask myself. "Yes, please." I agreed anxiously.

I had some things to think about. I waited in my room for Jack's call. As the hour round eleven, I waited anxiously for the phone to ring. Eleven came and went. Eleven ten. Eleven twenty, still no call. Eleven thirty. I was worried he wouldn't call. He had to have gotten my message. Midnight came and went.

I saw the Petersons at church and we talked about Jack. When we got back to Virginia's after church and I had changed, I called his house. No answer. I didn't leave a message on his machine that time. I didn't want to seem too pushy. As anxious as I was to hear from him, I didn't want him to think I was chasing him. That lesson came from Trish and Kim.

We had a nice day but I could have been better.

There was no message on our machine when I got home Sunday night. He hadn't called.

By Monday morning I was sure it was my fault. I'd gone too far, telling him I was a virgin and that sex was out of the question. I couldn't offer Jack enough, he was dumping me, I told myself.

When I answered the phone that afternoon and it was Jack, I was so relieved. His explanation was so simple. He gone up to Karen's for the day

and decided to stay overnight. Our visit with Karen and her family had made him think about how he'd been neglecting his sister and her kids, his niece and nephew. He didn't get home till late Sunday night and felt it was too late to call.

All my fears, my apprehensions, melted away. "I missed you." I told him sincerely.

"I missed you too." He replied.

Jack had 'commitments' that evening. I would have gone out with him in a heartbeat, had he asked. Instead, I went and worked out with Trish. Kim was out of town, working.

"He's got nice buns." I remarked to Trish as we walked toward the aerobics room.

She turned and looked. "Where?" Then it dawned on her and she turned to me. "Jennifer!?"

"What?" I asked innocently.

Trish looked at me curiously. "What's gotten into you lately?"

"What do you mean?"

"This interest in guys all of a sudden? Dating this 'Jack'?"

I took offence. "What's wrong with me seeing Jack once in a while?" She didn't know I thought about him all the time lately.

Trish was a little surprised at my reaction. "Nothing, if that's what you want."

"He's a nice guy and he treats me so good." I mellowed out.

"I think it's great that you've found someone. I just worry about you."

Who wasn't worried about me these days? I knew she was sincere in her concern. I wasn't angry with her. I decided to ask her opinion about what had been on my mind since Sunday night. "Can we go over in the corner? I want to ask you something and I don't want anyone to overhear."

We were early and there were only a few women in the room.

"What would you think if I told you I was considering getting a sex change?" It sounded so weird to just come out and say it.

Trish was thoughtful for a moment. "If it's right for you Jen, you should do it. You certainly have become a woman in every other respect."

I wanted to hear yes or no. "You don't think it's crazy?"

She responded instantly, "No! You're not crazy. Under the circumstances, it would seem like the right thing to do. You do live as a woman and you have definitely started thinking like one." She grinned. "Nice buns' indeed."

I couldn't help but laugh along with her. It broke the tension.

After our workout we talked some more. Trish didn't say do it and she didn't say don't. She said that with the direction my life had taken it seemed that it would be the thing to do. She also said, and she was right, that it had to be my decision alone. I had to do what would make me happy.

I knew what Connie thought and I knew how Trish felt about the idea. I wasn't satisfied yet. I wanted another opinion.

I was relieved to find Virginia home.

"What's bothering you Sweetheart?" She asked when we sat down in the living room.

I started with the basic question. "What do you think of me?"

"That's a silly question. I love you like you were my own daughter."

That I knew. It was so awkward to ask my question. "If I told you I was thinking of having surgery, to make me a woman, what would you say?"

Her face lit up. "I'd say that was wonderful." She said with delight. "I'm so happy for you dear." She moved over next to me and hugged me.

Why, I wondered, was she so thrilled? I had to ask.

"I guess there's something I should tell you. Come with me." She

took my hand and led me upstairs to her bedroom.

She guided me to her dresser and pointed to the photos in the gold frame on her dresser. Virginia had shown me pictures of Jimmy before, her son that had died. The photo on the right was Jimmy. The other was of a girl. I had no idea who she was.

I knew it hurt her to talk about Jimmy. "It's such a shame that Jimmy's gone but what's he have to do with me."

"Look closely at the other picture." She told me.

The girl bore a striking resemblance to Jimmy, when I took a closer look. I still didn't understand. "Is this his cousin?" I knew Virginia didn't have a daughter.

"No Sweetheart. That's my Jimmy too."

Unbelievable! I stared at the two photos. "No!"

"Yes, it's true. That picture was taken a few months before Jimmy committed suicide."

"Oh God, no." I was heartsick for my friend. It was at that moment that I began to understand why the woman opened up her heart to me. Why she befriended, supported and nurtured me through my transition from Jeffrey to Jennifer.

"Jimmy was always a gentle child, quiet, sensitive, almost introverted. We never knew why. His father called him a sissy because he wasn't interested in doing the things his friends did. He didn't like sports and preferred to play with the girls in the neighborhood. He tried to tell us he was different, in a hundred different ways, but we were too blind to see."

"His father wouldn't listen when he finally tried to tell us what he had known for years. I was shocked, I didn't know what to do or say. His father disowned him, threw him out of the house. I was mortified, unable to understand what was happening to him."

"That picture was taken by friends, on one of the few periods in his life that he was truly happy and at peace with himself, away from his father and I. A part of me wanted to support him but it was so difficult. He and his father battled constantly right up until he finally left."

I sat quietly and listened to her pour her heart out.

"We heard little from Jimmy after that. He moved from place to place, staying with one or the other of the friends he'd made. He had no money, no job. No one would hire him. He was harassed and badgered wherever he went. All Jimmy wanted was to make the transition from what he was born as, to the person inside. Without the support, either financial or emotional, he fell into such a deep depression."

"He would call occasionally, pleading. He wanted to come home. All he wanted was my love and comfort and I couldn't give it to him. Paul, my ex-husband wouldn't even allow his name to be mentioned in the house."

"It had been almost three months since I'd heard from Jimmy when a friend of his called, another transsexual. Jimmy had moved to Texas, hoping to find work near the clinic where they would do the gender reassignment, if he raised the money. His depression had grown worse. He was, drinking, using drugs."

"One night he was beaten by some gay bashers. He survived their brutal assault only to crawl into an alley. With a broken bottle, he slashed his wrists and died in the gutter."

I took Virginia in my arms and she softly sobbed and tried to console her. In all the time I'd known that woman, I'd never seen her cry. Guilt had led her to be my guardian angel. Guilt for what she felt she'd driven her only son to do.

"All he wanted was my love." She said when she could finally stop her sobbing. "And I wasn't there for him." She dried her eyes and looked over at me. "That first day I met you, in my office, I saw Jimmy. I saw another struggling soul and I swore that you wouldn't suffer the same fate as my Jimmy."

"I'm fine." I assured her. She was so giving. Not just toward me but in everything.

"I know you are dear. You have people who love you and care about you."

She was reassuring me. "I have you and Connie."

"And your friends." She reminded me.

I did have a lot of friends.

I came back to my original question after she finished drying her eyes. "Virginia, should I have the surgery."

"If that's what your heart tells you is right for you, yes. Trust us that your Mother, Connie, and I will find you the best help money can buy."

I stayed with Virginia that night. I didn't leave her side till well over an hour later, when I was sure she was all right. That had been very hard for Virginia and my heart went out to her.

As I lay in bed, in the dark, I tried to put myself in Jimmy's place but it had been so easy for me. I didn't anguish over anything until I arrived in Atlanta. I never felt that I was the proverbial 'woman in a man's body' until only recently. And I had Connie and Virginia and all the others. He'd had to live with his confusion, his secret desires, all his young life. How terrible it must have been for him, I thought as I waited for sleep.

When Connie came to pick me up for work the next morning I had was still undecided but I wanted to hear what Dr. Winter had to say about the surgery. There was only one logical choice to be made. I had everything a girl could want and more. A great job, a career. A mother and Aunt who loved me.

I had Christy, at least for a while. Would she still want me if I went through with it?

I had Jack. I still struggled with my dilemma there. Was it curiosity or a deep emotional need that the man filled. Did I really long to be a woman? I was so confused.

Dr. Winter didn't appear surprised at our question. "It's not as simple as that." She explained. "Gender reassignment usually requires quite some time in therapy and then living as a woman for a period of time."

"Jennifer's been living as a woman for quite a while and she's very well adjusted." Connie replied, looking at me and smiling.

"It's up to the therapist as to when an individual's ready."

She had already explained what the procedure entailed and it sounded relatively simple. It didn't sound as scary as I thought it would. I was didn't realize that it would involve so much time in therapy. I wondered what sort

of questions the therapist would ask?

On our way back to the office Connie had a thought. "You know Jennifer, we don't have to go through all of what she described. There are some very fine clinics in Mexico that will perform the same surgery."

A part of me was impatient, another was scared to death. Added to that the fear of going out of the country, to a place like Mexico was more than a little frightening. I wondered how Connie knew about the clinics there?

"I'll do some checking but in the mean time I'll make you an appointment with the therapist as soon as possible." Connie obviously wanted to hurry things along.

That's what I wanted too, I told myself.

We got an appointment for Thursday. I had to skip my regular appointment with Dr. Winter to make it, but that was all right. She had run out of new drugs to try, she told us on Tuesday. She had tried everything and told me she was sorry she couldn't do anything to help me. Under the current circumstances, that didn't surprise me. I had given up hope of ever being myself again.

I didn't go alone. Connie and Virginia went with me for support. I was glad they came. The three of us talked to the woman for the first few minutes.

Connie and I had discussed what I should say to the therapist, and she convinced me that I shouldn't worry about bending the truth a little to make me appear more than ready for surgery. It was no problem to get Virginia to agree to go along.

After the therapist got over her initial shock, meeting me, she explained, "I spoke to Dr. Winter and she tried to tell me what to expect but I must admit Jennifer, after meeting you, she didn't prepare me nearly enough."

The woman was impressed, not just by how I looked but also by how I came across. I was glad Connie had coached me.

At the end of our hour she was happy to tell me, "With what I know of you from Dr. Winter and after talking with you, I don't think there's going to be any problem. We'll set you up with bimonthly visits and, in a year, if all goes well, we'll be able to go ahead and schedule your surgery."

I was floored and so was Connie and Virginia when I told them what she said.

"That's absurd! There's no way you should have to wait that long." Connie was upset. "Don't worry Jen. We'll find another way. I should hear back by tomorrow from the clinics I contacted."

"That soon?" I asked with mixed emotions. Things were happening very fast.

Connie was true to her word. "We have an appointment in Mexico City on Monday." She told me Friday afternoon. "We fly out early Monday morning." She was thrilled.

I was very nervous but I didn't want her to know that. "That's wonderful."

It was our secret, the three of us. I didn't say anything to any of my friends about it. I told Christy and Jack that I had to be out of town on business Monday.

Friday night, after going out to the movies and having drinks, I laid in Christy's bed beside her. The whole time I made love to her I put myself in her place, wondering what it could be like for me if I went ahead and had the surgery? Would it be the same? I hoped it would.

Jack needed to buy some new clothes. We went shopping Saturday afternoon. It was a lot of fun, helping him pick out shirts and slacks. Late in the afternoon he took me home so I could change clothes. We ate out then went dancing.

He and Connie had a long conversation while I was preoccupied getting dressed. She asked him all about himself, I learned later. He said she asked him some pretty probing questions about his past love life. She made him nervous. I couldn't imagine Jack being nervous talking to anyone.

We ended up back at Jack's house later that evening and I wasn't quite as nervous as the first time. I knew better how to please him and, as weird as it felt to do, it made Jack happy. Knowing that made it easier for me. He didn't disappoint me either.

When I was with Jack, the way he treated me, the way he made me feel, my doubts seemed so petty. I wanted nothing more than to be the

woman he thought I was.

He went to church with Virginia and I Sunday morning and I was so thrilled to be seen with him. More than a few of my friends told us what a cute couple we made. Virginia loved him. Off to the side she told me how happy she was for me, happy that I found such a nice young man.

I was nervous all day, anticipating our trip on Monday. "I've just had a lot on my mind." I told Jack when he asked me what was wrong.

We spent the afternoon out of the city. He thought the mountains might take my mind off my worries. Being with him helped only a little .

He understood when I wanted to get home early so that Connie and I could get ready for our 'trip'. I just felt like I needed to be with Connie. Jack had me home by dinner time.

I couldn't eat dinner. She knew I was nervous. "It's alright Sweetheart. It's only natural to be frightened." Connie gave me one of her sedatives around seven and I was out for the night.

Our plane left at eight. It was a relatively short flight. Flying never bothered me before but I had butterflies the whole way.

It wasn't at all what I expected. The hospital was as clean, as modern as anything back home. I had a little trouble seeing a doctor I didn't know but, as usual, Connie was there for me, answering questions for the doctor while I nodded yes or no. I was petrified when it came to having the examination but the doctor and the nurses were very nice, very understanding. They ran almost as many tests as Dr. Winter had run the whole time I was seeing her. I was impressed at how thorough they were.

The doctor, in his broken English, explained everything that would happen, given that the test results all came back positive. They wouldn't be back for several days. After that, assuming we, I, still wanted to go ahead with the procedure, the surgery could be scheduled for anytime after that. It all seemed so simple.

It was almost four in the afternoon before they finished with me and we caught the next flight home. I called Virginia when we got in around nine. She wanted to hear everything and Connie got on with her and filled in everything I left out.

I was just glad to be home. I'd been a nervous wreck all day.

While I had been gone only a day my work was terribly backed up. With the Jansen layout getting close, I was busier than ever. That was probably best because it kept my mind off things. We worked late Tuesday night and Wednesday. I probably wouldn't have gone out after work, following my normal routine, any way. I was too preoccupied.

I had lunch with Jack on Thursday. I skipped my tennis game with Lin and the girls to just go home and relax. I needed to be alone. I needed to think.

The call came on Friday. They called Connie and gave her the test results. Everything came back positive. "Isn't that wonderful?" Connie told me, all excited. "Now all we have to do is decide when."

I was getting cold feet but I couldn't tell Mom that. "That's great."

"We'll need to schedule it soon, with the Jansen shoots starting in a few weeks. You'll need time to recuperate before we leave."

I didn't follow, "Leave? Leave for where?"

"California silly."

"I'm going?" I had no idea she expected me to go with her.

"Of course Jen. You didn't think I was going to go without you?"

It would be great to see Pat again but I couldn't go. "What about my accounts?"

"Carol or Paul can cover for you while we're gone." She explained.

But they were my accounts. And what about Jack? I didn't want to go and leave Jack so soon. Especially right after what I was considering going through.

"Jack will still be here when we get back Honey. Don't worry." She told me after I explained my apprehensions about leaving him.

Being gone for a month or two, would he still be there when I got back or would he have found someone new. I couldn't stand the thought of that. He was the major reason I even considered having the surgery. Where would I find another man like him? He was so special.

Connie wouldn't hear of her going without me. Her mind was made up and that was that. "I think we should get it over with as soon as possible, give you plenty of time to recover." She checked her calendar without even consulting me. "A week from today is perfect."

A week? Only a week? "So soon?"

"There's no reason to put it off Sweetheart. With the week he said you'd need to recoup and for them to make sure you're all right, you can come back the following Thursday. That'll give you another two weeks to take it easy until we have to take off for LA."

She had it all worked out. "You are coming with me?"

"No Sweetheart. I can't and get things wrapped up here. No, Virginia's going to go with you. She insisted."

I should have thought of that. My stomach was doing little flips at the thought of going back there and having the surgery. Going without Connie, even though Virginia was going, scared the hell out of me. All I could think of for the next seven days was, am I doing the right thing, was it really what I wanted?

When I finally expressed my doubts to Connie on Thursday, the day before we were to leave, she took it very hard and I felt terrible for causing her such anguish. She reminded me of all the reasons why I should go through with it. Her loving support of Jennifer not being the least of it. There was also my job, Jennifer's job and her career. She didn't hesitate to remind me of Jack and that if I ever wanted a normal life again I should go through with it.

I did so much want a normal life again. I'd been so happy as Jennifer. Happier than I could ever remember being. Connie was right, I accepted that finally.

It didn't leave me any less nervous as she said good bye to Virginia and I at the airport that morning.

As far as anyone knew, Virginia and I were taking a little vacation. We were going to be gone for two weeks.

Jack took me to dinner Wednesday night. "I'm really going to miss you. I don't know what I'm going to do without you for two weeks."

I thought to myself, just you wait till I get back. I'd be ready to discover all that I'd been missing for so long. It encouraged me, to think about that.

Christy offered to go with us, pay her own way, but I had to tell her no. I explained that I needed to get away for a while and I'd promised Virginia that it would be just her and I. I wondered what her reaction would be when she discovered what I'd done. Would she be happy for me, or furious? There was no way to tell.

Virginia was good company. It was obvious that I was nervous and she worked very hard at keeping my mind off where we were going. It helped for a while but as the wheels touched down in Mexico City I finally lost it and threw up what little I had in my stomach into the neat little bag they provided passengers.

They were expecting us. The doctor had a few encouraging words for me then left. I didn't even have a chance to tell him I wasn't so sure about what he was about to do to me. Virginia was right by my side as the nurses prepared me for surgery. I almost threw up for a second time.

Virginia warned them I was very nervous. They were prepared for that too, injecting me with a strong sedative before I knew what was happening. I thought they were just going to take some more blood. It took effect almost immediately.

I lay there so passively while the nurse shaved me. I was embarrassed, of course, but I didn't have the will to even object.

Virginia stood at my side as I lay waiting to go, stretched out on the gurney. I felt as though I was floating in clouds. My apprehension was still there but I didn't have the presence of mind to express my fear, my uncertainty. My head was full of the soft floating clouds as they wheeled me from the room and down the hall.

I remember lying there, my legs wrapped in the warm material and my feet resting in the stirrups.

"You may feel a little prick." The woman in white told me, as she prepared to give me another injection. I saw the needle go into my arm. I didn't feel anything.

Virginia was standing over me smiling when I was finally able to

open my eyes. She was stroking my forehead, looking down at me with that loving expression on her face. I was disoriented at first, confused about where I was. It took me a moment to recall.

I didn't feel any different. I didn't feel anything. Had something gone wrong? Had they decided at the last second not to go ahead with the procedure? I felt the same as ever. But then I realized, I didn't actually feel anything. I was numb in the area of my crotch. Even my legs felt numb, too heavy to lift.

"Virginia?" I looked up at her, questioning.

"Just relax Sweetheart. You're fine. It's all over now." She told me reassuringly.

Did she mean what I thought she meant, I wondered, scared to find out? I closed my eyes, unable to deal with what I was sure they'd done to me.

"That's my girl. Just rest Jennifer. It's the best thing for you right now." I felt her hand, stroking me, reassuringly as I sank back into a medicated sleep.

The sun shown brightly in my window when I awoke. I was glad to discover I was in a private room. It was like any hospital room you'd find in the states. The sheets smelled clean.

What time it was or even what day, I had no idea as I lay there. When I first awoke, whenever that was, I couldn't tell if they'd done anything to me. I couldn't feel anything. Now I could feel mild discomfort. There was no doubt they had done something. I was heavily bandaged, I could feel the dressing between my legs. It wasn't till I looked under the covers that I saw the padded straps around my ankles. The restraint across my hips kept me from shifting in the bed.

At that point I had no more doubts.

I only laid there a short while before the door opened and Virginia came in.

"You're awake!" She said surprised. She came over next to the bed.

"I can hardly move." I said.

"It's all right Dear. They don't want you moving around too much for a few days. You might tear your stitches."

A few days?. "How long has it been since . . ." I couldn't bring myself to say 'since the surgery'.

Virginia seemed to understand. "It's Monday Sweetheart. They've kept you sedated so you'll heal more easily."

I'd been out for three days? I had to ask, "Did they . . . ?"

"You're fine." Virginia said with delight. "The doctor's been in to see you several times and he's quite pleased. He said the surgery went beautifully."

I wished I felt as thrilled as she did. "How soon can we go home?" I didn't want to be there anymore. I wanted to be home.

"You need to be a little patient now Jennifer. The doctor said it's best if you get bed rest for another week. He said it went so well that he did a little more constructive surgery than he normally would and he wants to be sure that nothing happens to disturb the grafts."

What did she mean he did more than usual? "What did he do?" I was scared.

"There's nothing to worry about, really. I was here when he examined you and you look perfect. He did a marvelous job."

I tried to sit up a little. I lifted the covers. "Can I see?" I was disfigured, I was certain, and I wanted to see how badly.

Virginia coaxed me back down. "No, not yet. You're still very swollen and the dressings need to stay on. You'll see soon enough." She also told me, "The doctor wants me to make sure you don't disturb the dressings so you have to just lay back and relax. He especially wants you to keep your hands away. You could cause infection or even tear your stitches."

It was bad enough that I was disfigured but I couldn't even see how badly.

I had another concern. "What did he do to my arm?" The underside of my left arm felt tender. I couldn't imagine what they'd do to me there or why they'd need to do anything?

"He said you'd be a little sore." She replied. "That's just your hormones. It's the little time release capsule they put in your arm."

"Why do I need hormones?" Virginia already knew what Dr. Winter had told me about my hormone imbalance. I didn't understand why I needed more of them.

"He explained that it was just to maintain balance. If your system decided to produce fewer hormones at any point. The capsule will release what your body needs to keep you even." It seemed so simple to her.

Hormones were the least of my worries. I had grown accustomed to them and the effects they'd had on me.

Virginia stayed right by my side. She never left me for a minute.

When they brought my dinner, they brought her a tray too. The food was all right, typical hospital food. I half expected tacos or something.

We were just finishing when Connie called. I learned she'd been checking on me four or five times a day. It was nice talking to her but I couldn't answer her question. "So how does it feel to finally be a whole woman Honey?"

I told her that, lying flat on my back, unable to move, unable to see or feel anything, it was hard to tell. Like Virginia, she told me to be patient. "You'll be home soon."

The call concluded with her telling me how much she loved me and that she missed me terribly. "I miss you too." I told her. I did. "I love you Mom. Bye."

They came in after dinner and changed my dressing. I wanted to see but the nurse said the doctor didn't want me to until the swelling went down more. She told me that I should be back to normal in a few days.

Normal? What was that, I asked myself?

The days dragged by. Virginia came each morning with newspapers and magazines from the states. I tried reading a book but just couldn't concentrate long enough to get through more than a few pages.

Each time they came in to change my dressing I asked the same

question, "When can I see?" Each time they put me off. The doctor just said, "You're healing nicely. Be patient, be patient."

Finally, on Thursday, I saw. They misunderstood my tears. I wasn't me anymore. I was someone else. I was truly, happily, Jennifer. The reflection in the mirror could have been Christy's or Tina's or any of the girls I'd seen in the porno magazines I use to relish ogling at. I certainly wasn't Jeffrey anymore.



When we first thought of my having the surgery, I was more excited than scared. Now that it was done, as I lay there in the bed, it was the other way around.

They removed the restraints on Friday and they let me sit up in bed. My heavy dressing had been replaced with a lighter, less bulky one. It wasn't terribly uncomfortable just sitting on the edge of the bed.

Saturday they had me get out of bed and walk around a little. That was a little painful. With the dressings and the mild pain I couldn't walk very well.

Sunday was a little better. I waited impatiently for Monday, anxious to go home. When they said they wanted me to wait for Tuesday I was very disappointed. "Just be patient young lady. You have your whole exciting new life ahead of you."

I wondered what it would be like? Would it be so different from the life I'd been living for the past months? Would it be better? I couldn't imagine it being less fulfilling, less wonderful.

I couldn't wear pantyhose for another week, they told me and they gave me those awful, huge, baggy cotton panties to wear home. I was still bandaged, of course. They said the stitches should begin to fall out soon. I was to start taking warm baths in a few days to help them dissolve.

No aerobics for a month and no tennis. Monday I could go back to work but I had to take it easy for the next two weeks. Virginia had a long list of dos and don'ts.

I was relieved to be on the plane, on my way home. Connie picked us up at the airport. She was so happy to see me. She didn't want to leave me but she had to get back to work after dropping us off. She vowed to get off early and join us.

It was wonderful to lie in a normal bed, even if it wasn't my own. It made more sense for me to stay with Virginia. She could afford to stay at home with me while Connie had to be at the office each day.

I couldn't call anyone. I couldn't let anyone know I was home. I was

supposed to be on vacation. I found out Connie called three times that afternoon as I slept. I was exhausted from the trip and walking so much left me a little sore and exhausted.

I didn't know that Connie planned on spending her nights with me. When Virginia wasn't watching over me, Connie was. We all had our dinner in my room, not leaving me alone for a minute.

I was interested in everything that had been going on at work and Connie filled me in. I was gratified to know that they missed me.

It was after dinner that night when I went to the bathroom for the first time, alone. I'd been using a bed pan all that time and someone was always there. I never got a chance to discover how different I was.

I took my little hand mirror from the vanity and probed the soft pink flesh where there had once been my penis and testicles. There was no trace, nothing. I looked just like a girl. I gingerly touched myself and was surprised to learn how sensitive I was. There was no pain anymore.

I was already losing some of the stitches. I'd been told that the baths I would begin taking by Wednesday would speed along dissolving of the rest.

I pulled gently, looking. I probed gingerly with my finger and found my newly formed vagina. The doctor had explained on our first visit that he would simply invert my penis inside me to create it. It was really much more complicated than that but I wasn't listening at the time. I tuned him out. It looked so real now though. It was amazing.

I decided not to take too long in the bathroom. Virginia and Connie scolded me when I was too curious. They were afraid I might damage the Doctor's good work.

For days I was mothered to death but I was a little more at ease in familiar surroundings.

Christy was the one I really worried about. I had no idea how she'd react when she discovered the change in me. Would she hate me for what I did or would she be thrilled? What I'd lost was certainly not something she'd miss. During our relationship she'd only seen it a few times. It was useless for making love. No, I told myself, she'd be happy with the change in me.

If she wasn't, too bad. Sex with her wasn't what it used to be, since I'd met Jack. I spent no small amount of time wondering what it would be

like, making love to him. I started to feel that excitement again. The excitement that I'd discovered after meeting and getting to know the wonderful man.

Virginia insisted that I start getting up and around more by Thursday. The Autumn breezes felt wonderful as I lay out in the back yard. I took out my book finally and started to pass the time reading the novel Connie brought me, a romance novel of all things. I did enjoy it once I got into it. I imagined myself as the heroine, loving and making love to the hero. Soon, I had trouble putting it down.

They could see the difference in me as the weekend approached. I was happier, more at ease. I looked forward to work on Monday.

I was walking better. I was still tender but it was wearing the tampex that bothered me now when I walked. I wondered how women could stand them. At least I was spared ever having a period. I was lucky in that respect.

"You can't go back to work without a tan." Connie warned me. "What self respecting girl goes to Mexico on vacation and doesn't come back with a tan?"

She was right and I didn't object to putting on the bathing suit Connie had brought me from home, along with my other things.

Virginia made sure I didn't get too much sun. "There's nothing worse for a young girl's skin than to get too much." She made me put on plenty of sunscreen. I did get a tan, regardless. My tan lines looked so odd when I saw myself in the bathroom mirror. I made sure to switch between styles of bikini tops so the lines weren't too pronounced.

Connie and I moved back to our place on Sunday night. I felt sad leaving Virginia home by herself. She had devoted herself to me completely and I felt like I was deserting her. I couldn't thank her enough for all she did for me. I knew she was sad that I was going. I filled a need for her. I promised I'd spend more time with her from then on.

I was glad to be home at last, in familiar, comfortable surroundings. I wanted to make a call, Connie said don't. "Let him call you." She said. "Men don't like girls that chase them. They get bored eventually."

That wasn't the first time I'd heard that piece of advice and as much as it killed me, I didn't call.

I was up early, anxious to go to work. The two weeks I missed seemed like an eternity. I missed my friends as much, if not more, than my work.

Most everyone was happy to see me back. I thought to myself, what would the ones that thought I was some kind of freak think now if they knew? It bugged me that I couldn't just tell everyone that I was a woman now. Would I be construed as more of a woman now? More than I'd been for the past months? No, telling everyone about the surgery wouldn't change anyone's thinking. They'd accepted Jeffrey as Jennifer, I should just leave it at that.

It wasn't easy to take it slow but Connie kept an eye on me and when I started taking on more than I should, she pulled in the reins on me.

I wondered when he'd call. Christy called me around nine. She was glad I was back and wanted to see me that night. I got out of it by explaining we got in late and I needed that night to get things cleaned up from the trip. I lied, of course. If Jack called and wanted to see me I wanted to be available.

I was a little hurt that he waited till it was almost noon to call. He sounded the same. He wanted to take me to lunch Tuesday and I said yes, happily.

I felt less and less as though what had been done to me was a bad thing. I liked my life as Jennifer and it was a life I wanted to keep. I just had a little more adjusting to do, according to Connie.

We had a wonderful lunch. I was busting to tell that man that I wanted him, but no. Even if I did, it was too soon. "At least a month, better a month and a half." The doctor told me.

I was a little disappointed that he didn't ask me to go out with him that night. I broke the rules and asked him to come to my place to just relax and enjoy each other's company. He had to work. On my first night back, he to work.

I said I understood. He was overwhelmed with a rush case that had to be dealt with. He hoped he could wrap it up by the weekend but all that he could promise was that he'd call and keep me posted on his progress.

I called Christy back later, that afternoon. I asked her if she still wanted to get together later, after dinner. She came over around eight. In front of Connie, Christy and I were just good friends so I was safe from

discovery. I was still very anxious to tell her what I'd done. It would have to wait. I knew that before the week was over she'd know.

I made up stories about my vacation and we passed the evening with idle chatter. She wanted to know if I'd heard from Jack. I didn't tell her about lunch. It was obvious she was jealous and I didn't want an argument, especially in front of Connie.

Tuesday night Connie and I spent together, alone. We talked a lot about what the future held for us, for me. She also had some new wisdom to impart, now that I was truly a woman. Things like not getting into an elevator with strangers, not getting caught in dark places alone. It was hard for me to accept that women felt themselves so vulnerable to violence. As a man, none of the situations she described sounded so scary. "You have a lot to learn Jennifer." My Mother told me.

I'd experienced very little of the fears, the prejudices, that women were so accustomed to. It was difficult to accept that those things existed. My experiences so far had all been positive. I'd experienced none of the down side of being a woman.

"There will come a time and you'll need to know what to do, how to protect yourself." She warned me.

Why didn't we have discussions like the one we had that night, before I had the surgery? Had Connie held back intentionally, I wondered?

No. That was silly. She still showed me that same love and support she had always given me. More, now that I was really her daughter. Our relationship had never been stronger.

I had to make excuses for not going to aerobics with the girls Wednesday night and Thursday, the night I usually spent with Christy, I stayed home. I told her I didn't feel well.

Jack and I talked several times late in the week but not once was there any mention of our getting together to go out. Lunch was nice but I was getting impatient, waiting for him to ask me out.

Thursday night, after soaking in the tub, the last of my stitches were gone. It had been three weeks since the surgery and I was feeling pretty good about the way I looked. The bruises that had lingered had all but disappeared.

Friday was the day. I knew it would be my moment of truth. I was concerned that I still hadn't heard from Jack so when Christy called around four and suggested, if I was feeling better, we should go out, I agreed. I was tired of just sitting around and said I'd meet her at my place after work.

I wanted to change clothes. I wanted to wear something different than I'd worn to work. I'd felt like such a frump in my loose fitting clothes all week and I was still wearing the awful cotton underwear I'd been wearing since getting home. Besides, I wanted to put on something pretty, something sexy. I told myself, I didn't go through all this to act like an old maid.

I was surprised to find Christy waiting for us when we got home from work. I didn't expect her to be that early.

Connie knew she didn't know about me yet. I told her I wasn't sure when I would tell her. She didn't understand why I hadn't told my best friend but she respected my right to be the one to tell her.

I didn't know how much time I'd have alone, while Christy and Connie talked in the living room. I raced to change. I had just slipped into my dress and was in the bathroom, fixing my hair when Christy walked in.

"I like that on you." She said when she saw me in my new outfit.

Virginia couldn't resist buying me a few welcome home outfits. She was getting better about the style of clothes she bought. Especially after seeing my delight at what my friends gave me for my birthday. Make no mistake, she still thought I looked sweet in the traditional, preppy outfits she bought too.

"Do you?" I said, happy that she liked it. It was a typical 'little black dress', sleeveless, with thin spaghetti straps. I hugged my figure and it made me feel pretty, feel sexy.



"Very nice." We talked while I finished my hair and touched up my makeup.

Christy had suggested earlier that we get together with Brook and Debbie. I said, "Let's just go out, the two of us." I enjoyed their company but I didn't want to just hang out with the girls. "Let's have a little fun."

She looked at me funny. "Fun?"

"Sure. Let's go see if we can get picked up." I suggested.

"Jennifer? Is that really you?" Christy was mildly shocked at my suggestion. "What's gotten into you?"

I was a woman now. I didn't have to just pretend. I didn't have to be afraid all the time, afraid of being discovered. Besides, Jack hadn't called and I was annoyed at him.

Even Connie had urged me to make new friends. "Don't just sit around waiting for him to call. Go out, have fun. There's lots of young men out there." She did warn me. "Just don't feel that you need to go to bed with all of them to prove anything. Don't make the same mistakes I made."

I knew what she meant and she had nothing to worry about. Sure, I was curious, but I had no intention of going that far. Jack was the only one I would ever consider going to bed with. I hadn't changed that much. The surgery hadn't scrambled my brain. I just wanted attention. I wanted to feel like a woman, desirable. I wanted men to seek my attention.

At dinner, I wore the short jacket that was part of the outfit. The dress was a little too much for just dinner. It would be perfect later, at a nightclub.

"What's gotten into you?" Christy asked as we waited for our table in the restaurant lounge.

"What do you mean?" I knew.

"The way you're eyeing every man in the place." She sounded almost jealous.

I insisted I wasn't doing anything of the sort. I was though.

"This isn't like you Jen."

I told her, "I'm tired of being the shy, timid wall flower. I want to have some fun."

Christy was surprised at my new found courage. "What kind of fun?"

"I want to get picked up. I want a man to make a fuss over me. I want to go out dancing, have a few drinks."

She couldn't seem to figure me out. "You do?"

"Sure." I did need her help. "Will you teach me how to flirt the way you do?" Christy and some of the others had tried in the past but I wasn't really receptive and I was too afraid to act the way they told me I should. It was different now.

"Ok." She replied with a slight hesitation in her voice.

They gave us a secluded booth where we could eat and talk without being disturbed. Christy told me about body language, how to react under different circumstances. She taught me what girls knew men liked to hear. Some of it sounded silly and when I told her that she insisted, "Jen, you have to forget the way you used to think. Trust me. What you think is silly, works."

It was a little hard to accept that acting dumb, laughing at jokes that weren't funny and acting impressed by the smallest things would really impress a man.

"Girls' have been doing it since the beginning of time. Nothing's changed."

It was hard to argue with.

We went Dutch. Connie had given me fifty dollars to go out on and dinner cost me twenty five. I hoped I'd have enough.

"Don't worry. We're going to by ourselves one drink, that's it. You'll see."

I wished I was that confident. Christy picked the club. "This is the place to go if your looking to get picked up."

I left my jacket in the car. There was no need to look modest anymore. I wondered if I had over done it with the dress when we got inside.

It was a mixed crowd. There were younger people, kids, that hardly looked old enough to drink. For the most part the crowd was older, our age and up. It was the way most people dressed that bothered me. Very few of the women were decked out the way Christy and I were.

"That's good." She said happily. "They'll notice us."

Christy was wrong about the drinks. We had no more than taken a stool at the bar and set our purses down than the bartender, a man, came over to inform us that, "The gentlemen across the bar would like to buy you ladies a drink." He pointed to three men, no, I decided they were more like boys, who looked across the bar smiling.

I remembered what Christy had said about coming on to guys. "Take their drinks but if you don't want to spend the rest of the evening with the first guy that smiles at you or buys you a drink, don't respond. Don't say thank you, don't smile, don't nod. Just ignore him."

The three guys were young. They were wearing jeans and casual shirts. I didn't break a smile as I looked them over. I turned to Christy. "I don't think so."

"I agree." She gave them the cold shoulder too. We did take the drinks they already bought us.

We passed the next few minutes looking over the rest of the men in the bar.

"There's a couple of cute ones." Christy spotted them at the other bar across the dance floor from us.

"They're not bad." I agreed. They looked young, about our age, they were dressed a lot better, and were better groomed than the guys who tried to pick us up. Neither one was a good looking as Jack but I wasn't looking for anything more than a little fun.

"Ok Jen. Just do it the way we talked about."

I felt ready. We both watched them as their eyes wandered around the bar. When they caught us looking at them, I fidgeted, pulling the hem of my dress down. I looked back to Christy with a little grin on my face and pretended to be shy, demure. "I think they're interested." I glanced back in their direction briefly, still smiling, and played with my hair. I watched as they exchanged words.

"They're going to get up and come over." Christy turned and whispered.

"You think so?" I asked anxiously. I did the things she said to do to get their attention. Was it really that easy?

"Just watch."

They did. They put money down on the bar, picked up their drinks and got up from their stools. They didn't come directly to us. They took a detour around the dance floor, walked all the way around the bar where we sat and finally came around to us. We didn't make it obvious that we were watching. That wasn't how you played the game.

"Hi." The taller one said to me.

"Hi." I said back, the silly grin still on my face.

The other one asked, "Are you girls waiting for someone?"

"No." Was all Christy said.

They exchanged glances. They were so obvious. "My name's Jeff." The taller, blue eyed one said to me. "This is Mike."

"I'm Jennifer. This is my friend Christy."

"You have great eyes." Jeff said to me.

It was a come on, an ice breaker, and while I knew that, I still appreciate the compliment. "Thank you." I twirled a strand of hair around my finger, grinning.

Jeff, nice name I thought to myself, was obviously the talkative of the two. Mike stood there nervously. He wasn't very sure of himself. He did ask Christy, "May we buy you and Jennifer a drink."

We had hardly touched our first drinks but Christy said, "Sure".

The small talk was nerve wracking. They asked us about our jobs, we asked them what they did. I could never figure out how to get past hello when I was . . . a guy. I sympathized with them.

I asked Jeff, "Do you dance?" The music was playing and there were a lot of couples dancing. I figured dancing was better than the awkwardness we were putting them through.

"Sure." He said readily.

Christy wasn't about to be left there alone with Mike. "Let's." She and I slipped off our stools. She didn't ask Mike if he wanted to, she didn't give him a choice.

Mike was actually the better dancer. Not as good as Jack but he did all right. Dancing broke the ice. We continued to make small talk. We went back and danced a few more times.

Jeff obviously felt he knew me well enough, after about an hour to put his arm around me. When the rare occasion arose that they played a slow song he asked me to dance. He had no hesitation when he drew me up against him as we settled into step on the dance floor. It had taken Jack longer than that to get so familiar.

They suggested a table. I said fine. As we got up to find one we were intruded upon.

"Jeff!" The blond in the white dress called out angrily from a few feet away.

He looked unnerved when he turned and saw her. His arm immediately dropped from around my waste. Girlfriend, I wondered?

Apparently she was just that. He didn't excuse himself from us. He went over to the blonde and steered her away from us, toward the door. She was angry, there was no mistaking that. He went outside with her.

Mike tried to cover for his friend. "They just broke up last week. Jeff'll be back in a minute. Let's go get that table."

I was a little disappointed. I had a fun evening in mind, without complications. I wanted simply to be made a fuss over. Have some guy flirt with me. It wasn't just that I needed the reassurance. I had never felt more confident. I wanted to be made to feel like the woman I'd become.

We found a table in the back, where it was a little more private.

"Jennifer, I have to go to the ladies room." Christy said as Mike took

a seat.

"We'll be right back." I told Mike.

"Ok, so what now?" Christy asked as we waited on line to get in the busy bathroom.

"What do you mean?"

"How far do you want to take this with them?" Christy wasn't having as much fun as I was.

"I don't know. Can't we just see what happens?"

"Jen, nothing's going to happen. These two are not our type."

I knew what she meant. She figured nothing could happen. She also wasn't interested in going to bed with a guy that night. She just wanted to go to bed with me. I couldn't tell her right there in the bar. "Let's just have a little fun with them. An hour, just another hour and we'll dump them and go somewhere else."

Christy agreed reluctantly.

Jeff was at the table when we returned.

"Everything alright?" I asked, sitting next to him.

"Yeah. Everything's fine." He said smiling. "We broke up last week and Carol's just having a hard time letting go." He didn't look particularly heartbroken. "You girls want to go somewhere else?"

He just wanted to get away from the girl. That was obvious. "Ok." I agreed. Christy gave me a funny look.

I saw the girl again, by the bar, as we walked out of the place. Jeff didn't see her, his arm was around my waist as we walked out. There was more to the story than he told. Why else did he let loose of me so quickly when he saw her. I didn't think much about it till later but it was a unique situation for me to be in, coming between a guy and his old girlfriend. She was jealous of me.

Now we had a problem. We had come in Christy's car and we couldn't very well leave it there and go with Jeff and Mike in theirs. No way

would Christy do that. We had to take two cars and that meant splitting up.

We stood by Christy's car, deciding what to do. Actually, it was Jeff and Mike who were doing the deciding. It didn't seem to occur to them to ask us what we wanted.

"Christy and I will follow you two." Mike told Jeff.

Christy looked at me, expecting me to object but I didn't. IT would be fun, I thought, to be alone with him for even the few minutes it would take to get wherever we were going.

When I didn't say anything, Christy opened up. "Why don't Jen and I just follow you two?"

The two guys just looked at each other for a second. That didn't sound like such a great idea to them.

Mike looked like he was about to say something when I spoke up. "It's all right Christy. I'll go with Jeff." I knew that would annoy her. She wanted to get away from them. I couldn't help it. It was my night to have some fun, to experience things new to me. It had taken a lot of nerve on my part to get this far and I didn't want to give up so soon.

"Alright, alright. What ever." She said, obviously pissed. She opened her door and got into her car. She looked up at Mike and side, rudely, "Get in."

Mike looked at Jeff and shrugged. They didn't know what was going on. Mike didn't look too thrilled. He probably figured out he wasn't going to get anywhere with Christy as long as she was annoyed with me. He got in the car just the same.

The guys had already decided where we were going. Christy wasted no time pulling out of her parking spot. She spun her wheels as she pulled out onto the highway, leaving rubber. I knew that I would have some explaining to do later but that was later.

Jeff had parked his car in the back of the lot and we had a little walk to get to it. His arm was around me again when we reached it. "Jennifer, do you know how hot you are?"

I was 'hot'? It felt good to hear it. "No Jeff? How hot am I?" We were facing each other. My back was against his car door. I reached up and

rubbed my hand on his chest. I wanted him to kiss me then and there. If I didn't encourage him then, when we rejoined Christy and Mike I knew nothing would happen. This was my only chance.

He put his hands on my bare shoulders. I looked up at him and smiled, waiting.

"You're very hot." He leaned over and kissed me.

I put some passion into my kiss. Not as much as when I kissed Jack, but enough to turn on Jeff. As we kissed, he stroked the soft skin of my arms, up and down. I waited, feeling myself getting caught up in my own excitement. I wrapped my arms around his neck and pulled him closer to me, kissing even harder.

He got the message. His arms were behind me, stroking my back through the soft material of my dress. His hands wandered lower and lower. I responded in kind, my hand was under his arms now, wrapped up around his broad shoulders.



I didn't begin to worry until he started rubbing his whole body against me as he pinned me against his car. A dog in heat was the first thought that came to mind. I pictured a dog humping my leg.

His hands were stroking my waist and hips at that point and my dress was riding up with the motion. Like a dog, he was humping me and I scared me. I tore my lips from his. "Stop it Jeffrey!"

Breathing hard, he was a dog in heat. He looked down at me, confused.

"I'm sorry. I didn't . . ." He said, appearing embarrassed.

"It's all right. I just don't like being groped like that." Funny, how I felt so in control of the situation now, when just a few seconds ago I wasn't at all. He apologized for coming on so strong. I knew it was my doing. I had turned him on. I felt good that I could do that to him.

"We better catch up with the others." I suggested. I had accomplished what I set out to. Now Christy and I could leave these two and go our own way. I was anxious now for what would happen when we were alone, back at her place. I told myself she would accept me. I told myself that she would be thrilled with what I'd done. I looked forward to experiencing the feelings she had told me about so often. I was anxious to have her do the things to me that I so often did for her. I wanted to feel her sensitive touch.

Jeff opened my door and put me in. He didn't say too much as he drove.

Neither of us were particularly thrilled with their choice of places to take us. It was a little neighborhood bar. Christy put her foot down before we even set foot in the place. She waited for us outside the place.

"Jen, we're leaving." She said matter of factly.

It didn't take much to figure out that Mike must have tried something with her. She was not happy.

I was ready to go too.

Jeff didn't know what to say. Mike had already gotten the message from the dejected look on his face.

"I'm sorry Jeff." I said. I wasn't, of course.

"Can I call you?" He asked.

I said, "Sure." and gave him a number I made up off the top of my head.

We got in Christy's car and she wasted no time getting out of there. Christy didn't say anything right away. Finally she asked, "What the hell got into you?"

"I was just curious." I stayed calm.

"Curious!?" She replied, annoyed.

"I just wanted to see if I could turn him on." I said innocently.

"Do you know what could have happened!?" She asked.

"Nothing happened."

"I don't understand you Jen." She was silent the rest of the way to her apartment. Once inside, I apologized. "I just wanted to know how it felt to get a guy excited."

Christy was cooling off. "You can't do things like that. Especially with a complete stranger. You don't know what he's like. He could have tried to rape you and then what would you have done?"

I wanted to save my little surprise till we were in bed. I acted remorseful. "I'm sorry Christy. It was a dumb thing to do." I hugged her.

She let it go at that. I was glad. "It's been so long since we made love. Can we just go to bed now?"

That brought a smile to her face. "Sure. Come on."

Christy liked me to undress her, slowly. I did all the things that I knew that turned her on. I wanted her in the heat of passion before I surprised her. I wasn't worried about her discovering my secret before we were in bed because I always got in bed with my panties on. She still had a thing about seeing my privates.

As always, we slowly, tenderly, built up to the point where I'd make her orgasm. First I stroked her sweet breasts then I'd kiss and suck on her

nipples. I knew right where to touch her, how to rub her clit to make her orgasm. I was going crazy. I couldn't wait for her to do the same things to me.

I had helped her orgasm several times, using both my fingers and the toy, when I asked, "Do me now?"

So far, it was the same as always. She caressed my breasts expertly and I nearly went insane with sensation. "Can I have the toy too?"

"I thought you didn't like that anymore?" She said reaching for it.

"I want it tonight." I told her.

She pulled back the covers to pull down my underwear. I was glad the room was dark. When she started to spread my cheeks to put it inside me I said softly, "Not there."

I couldn't see her face very well in the dark but I could make out her funny look.

"Where?"

I guided her hand, "Here."

Christy jumped back. "What the . . ."

"Just do it, now." I was ready. I'd never been more ready. I knew the doctor had said wait but I was impatient. I wanted to feel it inside me.

Christy wasn't ready. "What have you done?"

I couldn't tell by her reaction if she was pleased or angry. I didn't care at that exact moment. "Do me Christy, do me now." I whispered anxiously.

I slept late Saturday morning. I didn't want to get up and face the day. I still felt so sad after fighting with Christy last night. It was very late when I got dressed and called the cab to come and take me home. I'd disappointed her in a way I never imagined I could. She'd disappointed me too. It wasn't till we fought that I learned that it wasn't really me that she cared about but the novelty of having someone like me to dress up and take to her bed. I cried for the longest time when I got home. I thought I loved her and really believed that she'd never speak to me again. We both said some terribly

hateful things to each other. Things that neither of us would soon forget

I moped around my room until almost noon, feeling sorry for myself.

"You want to tell me about it?" Connie asked, poking her head into the room.

I did and I didn't. "Come in." We plopped down beside each other on the side of the bed. I told her what happened. She'd heard me come in last night and knew I was upset but I couldn't talk about it then. Now, after having some time to think, I told her about the fight.

"Don't be too hard on her Sweetheart. Your friend was used to you as a man. It may take a little time before she's willing to accept you as a young woman."

Maybe she was right.

I had just about given up on Jack when he called, a little after three that afternoon.

"I feel terrible that I've ignored you all week. I finished the brief an hour ago. Can I take you out to dinner tonight?" He asked.

"Nothing would please me more." I replied without hesitation.

We spent almost the entire weekend together. We had dinner at a really nice restaurant Saturday night and then went back to his house after. We both just wanted time alone with each other. Nothing happened, other than our usual necking and petting. As much as I wanted him, it was too much of a risk to jeopardize my surgery.

The four of us went to church together Sunday morning. Virginia thought Jack was a great guy and Connie appreciated him too. I was so thrilled that they approved of him.

It was my idea to go visit Karen. I hadn't seen her in so long. It had been a month since Jack had visited his sister. He had other ideas for how we should spend the day but I talked him into it. I really liked Karen. She was someone I wanted to be closer to.

Having Jack, made it easier for me to let Christy go. I still thought of her often but that was in the past.

I felt guilty leaving Connie and Virginia alone Thanksgiving day but they insisted I should spend it with Jack and his family. I agreed only when they offered an alternative. Virginia and Connie would prepare another special dinner on Sunday and I'd bring Jack there with me. Those two women were more special to me than any family member I'd ever known. They were my family.

Thanksgiving had other significance for me, beside being a holiday. It marked the end of my abstinence. I was so excited that I would finally be able to fulfill my greatest desire.

It was a very long day. I enjoyed meeting the rest of his family, his mother and father. I didn't know if it was Karen's influence or what, but they seemed to accept me without hesitation. His dad was a lot like Mr. Peterson, from church. He was an older man, older than I'd pictured he'd be and he was such a tease. You had to like him the instant you met him.

His mom was really sweet. I didn't expect a hug as I walked in the door. She asked a lot of questions about me but that was expected. Jack was her little boy. I learned a great deal about him from her that day.

As we were leaving that evening, she took me aside. "I just want you to know that I'm very pleased that my Jack found you. I really hope that you'll be part of our family one day."

Karen heard her and chastised her on the spot. "She already is Mom." We hugged.

It was hard to contain myself on the way home. I was excited. I was nervous. And I was a little scared. I knew there was the possibility that I would disappoint Jack.

How many times had I imagined us finally making love? I'd pictured it in my mind, each time refining how I'd approach it, what I'd do and what Jack's reactions would be. Now that the moment was almost at hand, I prayed that I would please him. My future with Jack depended on what would happen this evening. I was convinced of that.

"I don't want to go home. Can we go to your house?" I replied when Jack asked me what I wanted to do. It was only eight o'clock as we passed the interstate loop, approaching Atlanta.

"That's fine." Jack agreed with a smile.

I looked at him and smiled back. He thought he knew what I was thinking. He thought I just wanted some intimate time with him.

I left my coat on the chair in the living room and went straight to the kitchen and put together a small pot of coffee. I knew Jack liked a cup when we got home about this time. We'd spent quite a few evenings at his house and making myself at home in his kitchen was only one of the many liberties I was used to in his house.

As always, while I made his coffee, he got comfortable and put on music. Next to each other on the couch, Jack sipped his coffee and we talked. We usually eased into kissing and holding each other after he finished his coffee.

It was an awkward moment. We kissed innocently for a moment than I drew back.

"Is something wrong?" Jack asked.

"No Honey. Everything's great. I had a wonderful day." I just wasn't sure how to tell him what I wanted. All the words I'd practiced, the speech I'd rehearsed, seemed so inappropriate now.

"Do you feel all right?"

He was so sensitive and caring. He was great. "I never felt better." I told him with a loving smile. I stroked his cheek tenderly.

He had this puzzled look on his face like, 'then what's wrong?'

I took his strong hand in both of mine. I looked down at it and stroked it. "I don't want to wait any longer." I said, looking up, into his beautiful hazel eyes.

He was quiet for a minute. His finger tips touched my cheeks tenderly, touching me the way he knew I enjoyed. "Jen, I don't think we should."

I expected just that reaction. I would have been disappointed if he reacted any other way.

"I've been thinking a lot about it lately and I want you to make love to me." I'd been thinking of little else. I knew he wanted me too. I'd seen it so many times in those passionate moments we shared.

He looked so worried. "There's nothing I like more." Jack admitted. "I'm just not sure it's right."

I stood up, still holding his hand. "It's right." I assured him, coaxing him to stand up.

Jack stood, still appearing reluctant.

"Take me to your bed." I said softly.

It wasn't till that night that I really became a woman, and any regrets disappeared



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I was in the middle of the presentation when Bobbie came into the conference room and whispered in my ear. "I have someone on the line that's looking for Jeffrey. It's her again."

So much for my good mood. Tina had called several times in the past few weeks. "Tell her I'll return her call a little later." I told Bobby. I really didn't want to talk to and I was busy.

"I'm afraid she insists." Bobbie said. She knew the calls from Tina upset me.

"All right." I would have to talk to her "Give me a minute then transfer her." I told Bobbie. I excused myself from the meeting, assuring our newest clients that I would return shortly, and went to my office.

I closed the door. I didn't want anyone to overhear the conversation.

"Tina?" I said hesitantly, answering the phone.

"Jeffrey, I'm at the airport and I'm about to board my plane. I'm due into Atlanta at 12:35. I need you to come pick me up." She was short and to the point with me.

I was confused. "You're getting on a plane. Tina, I don't think . . ."

She cut me off. "Jeffrey, I don't care what you say. I'm coming. Are you going to come pick me up or do I have to take a cab to your work?"

She had me flustered. "No! I'll come get you." I assured her. She really sounded ticked. That was obvious. "Tina this really isn't a good time." I had to try to convince her not to come. How could I see her now? How could I go get her? I needed time to think. "I'm in a meeting. I have clients waiting for me. I have a photo shoot to do for them today." It was the truth. I needed to think what to do.

"I told you Jeffrey, I'm coming."

"OK, ok. I'll figure out something to do about the client. I'll be there to get you. Just wait for me in case I'm late." What was I going to do? The situation was a disaster.

"You better come if you still care anything about me Jeffrey. I'm

coming in on Delta flight #167." She was easing up on me a little.

"I'll be as quick as I can. Just wait for me." I put the phone down on the cradle. I was dumbfounded. How could I . . . ? What was I going to do?

"What's wrong?" Connie asked. She poked her head into my office. I hardly ever closed my office door. She knew something was wrong.

"It's Tina. She's on her way to Atlanta. She wants me to come pick her up." I said, staring at my desk.

"Oh my God!" Connie was almost as stunned. "She's on her way, NOW!?"

"Yes!" I looked up at her from my chair. My heart had sunk in my chest.

Connie was silent but I could hear the wheels turning.

"Connie!?" I said in desperation.

"Don't panic. Just let me think a minute." She paced for a few seconds. "What time is her flight due?"

"Twelve thirty five." I said anxiously.

"Ok. Ok, I think I've got it." She turned to me. "Go tell the Lassiter people that a family emergency has come up and you have to leave. Tell them I'll be there in a few minutes to oversee things. Then go around to the back stairs and go up to Pam's room. Don't let the clients or anyone else see you if you can avoid it."

"But what for?" I didn't understand where it was all going.

"Just do it. I'll be up to explain in a few minutes. I've got some things to arrange."

I did as she said. I made my excuses to the clients and made the loop up the back stairs to makeup. A few of the girls, the models, saw me but I cautioned them not to say they'd seen me to anyone. I promised I'd explain to them later.

Connie had obviously called Pam because she was expecting me. "We don't have much time Jennifer." Pam was all business. Connie had

obviously told her what was going on. "I hear you don't have much time so let's get busy. What a mess." She looked me over. "You'll need to shower and wash your hair."

"You're not going to cut it." It was a statement, not a question.

"No, of course not." The way she said it, I knew she thought about it. My hair was finally just the length I wanted it and looked so nice now. No way was anyone going to cut it off. I couldn't bear the thought. It was obvious that I was to be transformed back into Jeffrey. How else would I confront Tina?

"Your toenails have polish too?" Pam asked. Looking at my hands.

I nodded. Of course I did my toenails too.

Stephanie came running into the room. She had her measuring tape in her hand. "I just hope I can find some things that will fit you." She obviously knew what was going on. Connie must have sent her. "We'll just have to make do with what I can find. I'm probably going to have to take something in for you."

I just stood there while she took my measurements quickly.

"I know I don't have any guys' underwear so you'll just have to leave your regular underwear on." She looked at me thoughtfully for a moment, checking me from head to toe. "Shoes are going to be a problem. What size do you wear?"

I was beginning to feel really uncomfortable about the whole idea. "I'm a size seven."

"I think I have a shirt that will fit you and I know there are some ties around here somewhere. I hope I can find a pair of shoes that will fit." She hurried off.

"Come sit down." Pam was impatient. "Connie said you only had about an hour. I need all the time I can get."

"What are you going to do?" I asked. At first, I figured I'd just put my hair in a ponytail, low, the way guys wore it, the way I used to wear my hair.

"I sent Bobbie out to pick up a rinse for your hair. Those highlights

will never do." Pam told me. "Connie sent Bobbie to find an ace bandage to wrap up your chest. She should be back by now."

"An ace bandage?" I asked, looking up at the clock on the wall. It was a little after ten thirty.

"Connie said to bandage your chest. She said you can tell your friend that you broke a couple of ribs playing tennis. Besides, with broken ribs she can't expect too much from you." Pam raised a playful eyebrow.

"Connie's pretty smart." That would take care of two problems at once.

Pam grabbed a bottle of nail polish remover from the table and handed me a cotton ball. "Here, you do your nails while I do your feet."

It occurred to me only then that I'd have to cut my beautiful long nails that I'd worked so hard to keep nice.

"Wait a minute!" I said, jumping out of Pam's chair. She looked at me surprised. "What are we doing here?"

Pam must have thought I was crazy. "We're getting you ready to go get your friend from home?"

"No, I'm not going to do this!"

At just that moment, Connie walked in with Bobbie. "Here's the rinse and the ace bandage." Bobbie said, handing the rinse to Pam.

I made up my mind at that instant. "This is ridiculous. I'm tired of this nonsense!"

Connie didn't say anything but I knew what that look on her face meant. Connie had been after me to tell my parents and Tina the truth for months. "It's time." I said to her with conviction.

The sparkle in her eye and her little grin said it all to me. "Yes, it is."

"I don't know what's going to happen but I'll call you later." I told her. I put my jacket back on, grabbed my purse and went back to my office for my coat.

I was so brave and full of conviction at the office but driving to the

airport, I was scared stiff. The clock in the car said it was twenty after twelve. I had plenty of time to get to the airport.

I didn't take it as easy driving as I should have. I weaved my red Grand Am through traffic like a maniac. I loved driving my little sports car. The thrill still hadn't worn off yet.

Mom and I settled up months ago. Jack helped me pick out the car and Mom consigned for it for me. It was mine though, and I made the payments every month. I still remembered the fun I had going shopping for a car. Jack said that salesmen would try and take advantage of me and he was right. After that first time looking, I didn't go without him.

Parking was the usual pain. The airport was a madhouse. I frequently picked up clients flying in and I knew my way around but finding a parking spot was another matter.

On the way down in the elevator I checked my hair and makeup in the reflection of the polished steel elevator door. Both hair and makeup looked perfect. I was so glad that I'd worn my green, three piece suit outfit that day. I always dressed for work because I never knew when I'd be meeting with clients but that day I was meeting with the Lassiter people and I wanted to really come across well. The short, double breasted jacket with its wide lapels, really showed off my figure nicely. I loved the way I looked in the long sleeved cowl neck blouse that came with the suit. My skirt was short, but not too short, and fitted. It was quite flattering. I always wore that suit with dark hose and my matching pumps. It was one of my 'feel good about myself' outfits.



The elevator door opened and I confidently walked over to the screens to check which gate Tina would be arriving at. I was early. I found an empty chair, away from the crowds and waited. It probably would have been better if I was late. That way I wouldn't have had time to think, to figure out what I was going to say to Tina. I had no idea how I was going to approach her. I didn't like the thought of her making a scene in a crowded airport.

By the time the plane pulled up to the gate I had an upset stomach. What was I going to say to her? How would I break the ice? With all the people standing around, waiting for people on Tina's flight, I knew I couldn't confront her here. I stayed in the background, watching for her to disembark. Finally, I spotted her coming out of the gangway. Tina looked terrific. I'd almost forgotten how pretty and petite she was, it had been so long. Her dark brown hair was styled differently than she used to wear it. I liked it. She must have been rolling it these days.

She still dressed the same. Always in tight jeans. She had on a pretty blouse, a pale green camp shirt. I had one something like it except mine was a Liz Clayborn. Hers was just an off the shelf brand. All in all, she looked great. I realized as I looked at her that I'd missed her, I missed the way we used to talk, sharing everything.

She was looking around at the crowd. She was obviously looking for me. She looked right past me as I sat there watching her. As the crowd thinned, she appeared to get frustrated. I watched her pick up her flight bag and coat and start toward the terminal.

She said if I didn't meet her she would come to the office to find me. She had to get her bags first. I got up and followed her. We both boarded the same shuttle back to the main terminal. Two or three times she looked right at me without the slightest hint of recognition. I was definitely a different person from the one she remembered.

It was a short walk from the shuttle to the escalators down to baggage claim. I followed only six of seven people behind her. It wasn't hard to spot the baggage carousel that carried the baggage from her flight. It was even more crowded here. Again, I stayed back and waited while she retrieved her luggage. She still searched the crowd for Jeffrey as she waited.

It took a few minutes for her bag to come out. I spent the time trying to think of a way to approach her without her making a scene. I got an idea.

Tina approached one of the car rental desks and appeared to ask the girl behind the counter a question. The girl pointed to the exit where the cabs

waited. Few people took cabs and I knew that outside, I'd have the opportunity I'd been waiting for. She walked right past me on her way to the door. Again, she glanced at me but failed to recognize me. I followed close behind.

I was right about that section of the pick up area being nearly empty. I had to do something before she got the attention of one of the cabbies. "Excuse me." I said, coming up behind her.

Tina turned and looked at me. "Were you talking to me?"

I was scared to death. As sweetly as I knew how, I replied, "Yes. I was just wondering? I couldn't help but notice you inside. Were you looking for someone?" It knew it had to seem like an unusual question for a complete stranger to ask but what else could I say?

"Yes, a friend."

I just had to say it. She was about to turn and head for a cab. "Tina."

She looked really surprised that I knew her name. "Did Jeffrey send . . ." The expression on her face changed from surprise to shock. I don't know if it was my voice or if she finally just put two and two together, but she recognized me.

I smiled and simply said, "Yes Tina, it's me."

She was dumbfounded. She just stared at me with her mouth open. "Jeffrey?"

I didn't like the idea that a guy standing close by could hear her. It made me feel really uncomfortable, the way he watched us. "It's me, but call me Jennifer, please."

She still just stood there staring at me. "Tina, why don't you let me take you to my car and we can talk on the way?" I actually wondered if she was going to go with me. She set her bag down and I reached over and picked it up. "Come on. The car's this way." I wanted to get away from there. I hoped she'd just follow. Looking back, she'd picked up her bag and was following. It bothered me the way she looked at me.

In the elevator, going up to the parking levels, she didn't say a word. She just stared. As we walked toward my car, I couldn't stand the silence anymore. "Please talk to me. Say something."

She shook her head. "I don't know what to say."

As we were putting her bags in the trunk, she did think of something. "Now I understand why you wouldn't come home."

She was only partially right. "I was hesitant to tell you and Mom and Dad but that's not the only reason. I've been happier here than I've ever been. I've started over here. I've got a great job and some of the dearest friends I've ever known." I told her as I backed out of the parking spot.

"So you enjoy dressing up like a girl?" Tina asked, in a somewhat judgmental tone.

Of course she couldn't tell. "Is that all you think it is? Tina, I love who I am. I've never felt so at peace with my self." I told her in all sincerity.

Not a word was spoken for a while. I was very much aware of Tina watching me constantly. I was out on the interstate before Tina remarked, "You're very pretty." She said out of the blue.

It was not a remark I expected to hear. "Thank you." I replied with a smile. I felt as if the ice was broken. "I try."

I took Tina home. We talked the afternoon away, until Connie came home. Tina seemed a little cold toward her at first, but that was almost understandable. I'd told her about my hormonal imbalance and how Connie, the woman I called Mom, helped me through it and adjust. It took a little while but she warmed up to her as the three of us sat and talked.

I suppose she felt uncomfortable in front of Connie, asking more personal questions, so she waited till it was time for bed. Connie had said goodnight and was in her room. I was straightening up the spare room for her. I'd just set clean towels on the bed when she asked me. "I feel really funny asking you this but does this mean you're gay?"

It wasn't the first time a friend asked that question. "I suppose it would if I were still a guy but since I'm not, I have to say no."

"Have you and Jack . . . , you know . . . ?"

I was happy to tell her. "If you mean do Jack and I make love? Absolutely!"

"You're that much . . . I mean you're a woman down there too?"

She was really sweet. I didn't answer. I just nodded.

"Does he know? I mean about you?"

"Jack's known for some time. I really love him. I couldn't lie to him."

I'd noticed her staring at my hand throughout the evening. I'd been waiting for her to ask. "What's that on your finger?"

I knew what she meant. "Jack asked me to marry him at Christmas." I was very proud of the diamond on my finger. I couldn't have been happier.

I had to work the next morning but I juggled my schedule to get the afternoon off. I took Tina around and showed her a little of Atlanta. We went out to dinner that evening, just the two of us and had a really nice time.

The next day, I took Tina to the airport for her flight home. It was so strange, after all the months I'd spent agonizing about seeing her again, worrying what she'd think, it was such a relief to have see her again and have that behind me. She still wasn't completely comfortable with the new me, with Jennifer, but we were still friends. Not in the way we used to be but nothing was the way it used to be.

There was one more thing I had to do. When I got back home from the airport, I had a call I needed to make. "Hi Mom. No, I'm fine. Is Dad there with you?"

The End

