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Macumba Melody

Part Two

By

Max Swyft

“It is said that our imagination is ninety percent of our sexuality. This dark tale comes from the largest organ of the human body: the mind.”

Max Swyft

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Chapter Eight

This is surreal. It's Saturday night, the final show. The showroom is packed, the beer and booze is

flowing and it's so damn quiet it's unreal. My legs are not so shaky now. This is my fourth set. I

did the closing show Friday night. Adrena said it would be like a practice.

When I got up there late Friday night I thought I'd pee my panties. I was that scared. I don't know how I got through the number, a slow Stevie Nicks ballad. I wore a long, form-fitting ankle length gown that was split in front, my feet tucked into three inch heels. I wore the heels all afternoon Friday, Ricky giving me tips on how to walk; take smaller steps, don't mince but get used to putting one foot directly in front of the other. That's how the runway models do it. Of course I wore sheer pantyhose to accent my legs which Rene claims is my best feature.

And she's right about that. It's amazing how good a guy's legs look without hair and in heels, even flats. My elongated muscles add to the feminine illusion. Ricky used makeup on my clean shaven chest to give me false cleavage. That and the aqua bags in the pushup bra made it look like I had slim but real breasts. My blond hair fell past my shoulders in a single large curl and I wore a gaff to make me smooth between the legs.

All the "girls" in the dressing room agreed. I could go out in public and wouldn't be clocked.

The spots followed me around the stage and, heart in throat, I parroted the words. When the number was over there was a lot of clapping, even a few whistles. And three guys were standing there at the edge of the stage waiting for me to come over, take their tips and buss their cheeks.

I did, too. Smiled, looked into adoring eyes. No doubt about what they wanted. I wanted to tell these eager boys I wasn't gay. Two of them sent me drinks, hung around after I got off stage. The fools wanted a date. I told Rene and she said she'd send them away.

I couldn't believe it. How well it went. And Rene was right about the tips.

Between shows some of the other "girls" told me stories about other dragons. Some of them were married. Many wives approved. Some of the drag queens had long time girlfriends. Most of them got along. Some of the women whose guys and husbands played the clubs even enjoyed ménage B trios with other men or dragons. Sometimes even the tourist or admirer wives participated.

Listening to these tales I wondered if it were true.

Now as I move about the stage ... glide ... I still have fear but not as much. I'm the new kid on the block. Ricky told me not to let it go to my head. New blood always makes the boys pant, gives them diamond cutters.

I stand at the edge of the stage, wear a short black skirt that is pulled taut across my thighs. My legs are in black pantyhose, feet shod in three inch spikes. I mouth the words of the Stevie Nicks song, look at the four guys standing in front of the stage beneath me.

Each of them holds money in their hands. From the tips I got earlier most of the money is fives with a few scattered tens. An occasional cheapskate will pass a couple dollars. All these guys want me. They know it's an illusion but they want to have sex with me anyway.

It's sort of flattering. I need to put the word out that I'm heterosexual. Not quite like them. But it might diminish tips. Ricky told me not to let them know about my sexual preferences. Just take the money and flirt with them. Which is what I'm doing. Flirting as I sing the song.

Between shows the juke is turned on and many of the patrons lock-up on the dance floor. Adrena encourages the girls to work the crowd and they ... we ... are often asked to dance. So far I've shied away from dancing between sets, but like the other girls, I have joined customers at their tables, had a drink with them, even flirted a little. The wives and girlfriends are always nice.

Now I squat and take this older guy's hand, lean forward, kiss his cheek.

I move on to each of them, take their bucks and buss their cheeks.

One of them whispers to me, "I want you real bad, baby. I'm willing to pay."

"Sorry, I'm spoken for, honey."

The last guy is short, brown-skinned. Hispanic I think. His dark eyes peek up my skirt and I stand over him, put one foot forward, tease him a little. I remember peeking up gals skirts, trying to see all the way to "heaven."

He's doing the same. Though what I got up my skirt isn't the same.

He wraps a hand around my ankle, makes it awkward for me to retreat.

Nothing to do but squat, knees together.

I pry his hand from around my ankle. "That's not nice, sweetie. You're not supposed to handle the merchandise."

"You putas all the same."

Maybe so, amigo, but you'll never find out.

He pushes a bill into my hand and I palm it, stand up. I blow him a kiss, feel his fingers hard on my ankle as he reluctantly gives me up. I look into his brooding face and dark eyes. A little involuntary shiver runs down my back as I step back from the edge of the stage.

The number is about over.

The spot grows smaller as Stevie finishes the torch song, I mimic and glide back, my fist clutching the tips.

Later I find a fifty among the fives, tens, and one twenty.

The fifty disturbs me. I know it's from the Mexican. I wonder how I can get it back to him, let him know this girl's not for sale.

He strolls along the shore, hands in pockets, a blustery wind off the ocean billowing the long baggy nylon pants he wears. Above, unseen clouds blot out some of the starry firmament. It's going to rain soon but he doesn't care if he's caught in it.

Things have become complicated since the transvestite's death. Death...that's not really right now, is it, he thinks. It's murder. The word sends a little shiver along his spine. Suddenly the money isn't so important now.

Getting away still is.

But that will have to wait until everything blows over.

He still has all the money. A lot of it.

He needed it to be one of the investors. A minor player for sure, but the projected profits from shore development were astronomical.

He had it all figured out, too. An offshore account in the Bahamas where his share was to be deposited and added to over time. He could draw on it whenever needed. And he'd found a small place on St. Martin, or somewhere near South Beach. He figured he get a pilot's license and small plane, come back to Florida when he wanted.

Everything was falling into place, just like he planned.

But the tranny's death, well that changes everything.

He stops, faces the ocean, the wind blowing his hair, buffeting the baggy nylon pants. He shakes his head, peers at the black ocean.

Now everything is different.

Conrad getting offed makes it all complicated.

Now everything's turned to shit.

I ask about Wendy whose name is on the rusty pole sign by the street, on the door, too. Wendy's Whistle Stop Diner. Nobody seems to know who she is, just the long-forgotten proprietor of the old railroad diner that everyone claims has been here since time immemorial. Though it's a greasy spoon I like the old time decor. Chrome and wood, sort of rustic, the once burnished wood now dull, having lost its luster long ago. We sit in the one of the booths along the window side. Sparse traffic passes by outside on Palmetto. A narrow isle separates the booths and the Formica counter which is marked by short red vinyl upholstered stools where sit a couple customers.

Through the window opening behind the counter a cook prepares our food; eggs, hash browns, a cheese omelet, pancakes, a double cheese burger for Jody. Coming from a faux old Rock Ola at the other end of the diner, Jimmy Buffet is going up to San Francisco wearing his hush puppies, the music courtesy of Jody who looks a little crammed sitting in the booth beside Rene. He's humming along with his island idol but it's barely audible.

Good thing, too. Jody might be a J.B. wannabe but he needs the proverbial bucket.

After closing the club, Rene and Ricky suggested coming here.

This early the railroad diner isn't crowded. Yet the couple in the back don't go unnoticed by any of us. Rene tells me who the girl is; Darlene Johnson, once old man's MacCaulley's mistress. Ira and her had a thing going before he turned up suddenly dead all those years ago.

She and Norton Norris seem an unlikely couple but maybe they're both early risers.

A chubby waitress wearing a stained apron comes by, refills our coffee cups, gives Jody the once over. He ignores her, gives Rene a quick, almost startled look. Makes me wonder what Rene's hand is doing under the table.

The thought brings a smile and I say, "Jody, you did very well tonight."

He tries to scoot closer to the window in the small booth, put a little distance between him and Rene. "I tripped a couple of times in those ridiculously high heels Rene insisted I wear." He shoots her a look of disapproval, gets a smile in return.

"Nobody noticed, sugar."

"You were great," adds Ricky.

"Had a lot of the clientele standing at the stage," I say encouragingly. "Several women, too."

He smiles. "Now the women I can handle."

"I'm jealous," pans Rene. "All those guys and gals flocking to the stage, tripping over themselves to give you the money."

Ricky bumps my leg with hers. "Jody you looked good up there in the spotlight. Already you have most of the moves."

I suppress a smile. He's basking in the praise but doesn't want to seem too eager. Trying to be modest, yet eating it up. One thing this guy's not is modest.

"Yes, Adrena," coos Rene. "Our girl here is going to be a star!"

Jody gives Rene another look, is about to say something when the waitress appears with our food. Conversation dies as we all dig in.

To my surprise the cheese omelet is quite good.

Later Norton Norris and Darlene Johnson stop by our table on their way out. An unlit cigarette hangs from the corner of thin lips. He's going to brace me about the Connie Fairchild murder but then surprises me, doesn't bring it up. This guy makes me weary. He's just too nice but a definite improvement over his sidekick, Melvis Morris.

Those tired eyes rest on Jody and I try to see what he sees: A slender and tanned good looking guy with long blond hair done in a large girlish flip, hangs below the shoulders. A remnant of mascara clings to now curly lashes and compliments large azure blue eyes, eyebrows femininely arched. The shirt he wears is ribbed cotton, has lace at the short sleeves and reveals a smooth upper chest area in the low square neckline. I bought him the shirt which is not too fru-fru but definitely fem. Slender hands are accented by longer, lacquered fingernails...a bit much for a guy.

Norton hopes we enjoy our early breakfast, takes Darlene by the elbow and they move toward the door. Darlene gives Jody a backward glance and then whispers something to Norris.

Thinking about Melvis Morris, I decide to have another go at his mother at the municipal building tomorrow. The woman is determined to bring in condo and motel developers, make Macumba Beach just another tourist trap.

I've heard talk of an amusement park, too. God, does the world really need another Disney Land? The thought makes me ill.

Macumba is such a nice place, laid-back and untainted by the masses. We don't need more hotels and condos here, spoiling the untarnished atmosphere and pristine beaches.

Waves roll along the sandy shore, reach my ears through the open bedroom window of the quaint cottage. A candle flickers in a gentle breeze from the open window, casting floating shadows on the wall. Dawn will soon be upon us, and soon, after Jody's reward, the three of us will fall into an exhausted sleep...perhaps in the same bed.

Though reluctant to go on stage, Jody has outperformed my expectations, thus I'm rewarding him, giving him my sweet Ricky's talented mouth, who knells beside the bed trailing soft kisses along the inside of his legs, from knees to inner thighs.

We are all three naked. My breasts are pressed into Jody's back, my legs wide, thighs cradling his hips. I slide my hands under his arms, peer over his shoulder as Ricky gets closer to his erect prize. I gently circle his areola with my palms and when finally I finger his nipples they are already hard, like pebbles made smooth from a babbling brook.

I tenderly cup his pecs. They are a bit fleshy from the pills. The pectoral exercises Ricky has taught him will help round them out with time. The lotions and creams have also helped soften his chest and bloat the nipples. Not as pronounced as Ricky's but coming along nicely.

At the club I watched Jody perform on stage from my usual table along the bar-side wall. My initial instincts were correct. He's going to make a convincing female mimic. Indeed, the more he is under my tutelage the more feminine he will become, and, the better lover for me.

I've thought about throwing caution to the wind, increasing his regime of phytoestrogen, the one with the Black Cohosh root in it. Phytoestrogens have estrogenic effects, are estrogen-like compounds contained in certain plants and berries. Phytoestrogens support female hormone levels by mirroring and increasing estrogen effects on the body. Herbs and berries containing phytoestrogens also have other compounds, such as flavonoids, which control the effects of other hormones.

Unlike pharmaceutical estrogens they do not induce unfavorable side effects which commonly occur with the more potent, chemical versions.

Phytoestrols provide hormonal building blocks and allow the body to create the precise amounts of hormones needed to enhance a more feminine persona. Using phytoestrol-rich herbs eliminates the need for excess chemical hormones and takes the guess work out of knowing the proper dosage. A smorgasbord of choices...all these herbal pills found in Nature's greenery...helps the body create the hormones it needs from the building blocks supplied by the plants. The phytoestrogens eliminate the excess harmful estrogen from the kidneys and liver.

When Ricky first started out I gave her a breast pump, look at Jody and wonder if I can con him into using one.

He is a flight risk. I don't want him to bolt the nest, find greener pastures elsewhere. The one thing I've got going for me is the locale. This is his home and he wants to stay here. So the sweet guy is torn between rejecting this alternate lifestyle and staying put.

Though he pretends reluctance, I recognize his attraction to the life, its bent glamour and the lure of the stage. His vanity and pretentious personality are an asset for us and keeps him within our influence. I think he secretly likes the attention he's received both on and off the stage.

I suspect given time, Jody and Ricky will become lovers. That's fine with me. The spice of a ménage à trois with two fem boys makes my juices flow. I'm going to encourage Rene to push him over the edge, too. She can't deny she's taken with him. Her larger than life physical presence and dominant personality have already served me well. She has entertained several wealthy friends of mine from the north. Friends, which shall I say, have peculiar tastes. Many wives, especially after learning of the exotic ways of the Cythera Coterie, have seduced their husband's into our lifestyle by controlling their libido.

We are all jaded to some degree, whether we want to admit it or not.

I tug on Jody's swollen nipples, feel the heat between my legs, the wetness as I push my pelvis into his backside.

Ricky has yet to fondle his unit. She rubs her palms along his smooth girlish thighs as she kisses his balls, licks them and gently sucks each one into her mouth, alternating, drawing on the bloated jewels, teasing him unmercifully.

Jody moans and leans back into me. I kiss his neck, flick my tongue into his ear and tug on those thick sensitive nipples.

It seems man has taken eons to discover the delight and pleasure of his own nipples.

With seductive skill, and when manipulated properly, it is the key to enslaving him sexually. The thought of enslaving Jody, or any man, by exciting his nipples is sexually in-

vigorating. What makes it more rewarding is giving him a bit of cleavage and enhancing his chest to more pleasing dimensions.

Thinking of Jody filling modest bra cups makes me weak and excited.

Jody's hands help Ricky to his hard prize.

"Take your hands from her hair, dear," I whisper and press my pelvis into the small of his back. "Put them at your sides. That's a good . . ."

He shivers in my arms.

"What was I about to say, hmm?" I prompt as I tug on his nipples. In time I see them to be almost an inch in length and thicker, more womanly.

Ricky licks his shaft from the base.

Our eyes meet as I prompt him again: "Finish for me, hon."

A passionate sigh escapes his lips as Ricky licks his shaft like a lollipop but evades the helmet.

I'm sure it's driving the poor boy crazy.

"That's a good . . . what?" I ask, massaging his soft chest.

"I . . . don't . . . know," he says.

"Yes you do, sweetie. That's a good . . . girl." My lips at his ear when I say the last word in a hushed tone. "Now say it for me."

He slowly shakes his head and his hands reach for Ricky's head, wanting her to take his cockhead into her mouth.

"Uh-unh, sweetie. That's a no no. Now be a good girl and let Ricky work her magic."

"Please, Adrena, I need it bad."



"Hmm, yes, I know you do. But you have to be a good girl first."

He closes his eyes as Ricky works her tongue and lips over his organ. All but his circumcised head.

"Are you going to be a good girl and let Ricky do it for you?"

"Yes, yes. Of course."

"Then tell me you're a good girl."

The candle flickers and Ricky makes little sucking sounds along his shaft.

"I'll be a good girl," he finally says in a small hiss.

"You want to be my sweet girl, don't you?"

"Yes."

I give Ricky a nod and she swallows his cockhead.

A whoosh of breath escapes Jody's lips and Ricky swallows more of him until her fat, collagen treated lips reach the base of his organ.

"Doesn't that feel good, honey?"

"Oh . . . yes. So g o o o o o d."

"If you're a good girl you'll get rewards."

"Yes," he says.

Ricky's pace quickens on his clitty stick.

"Do you want to cum in Ricky's sweet mouth?"

He nods and moans.

"Like a good girl?" I prompt.

"Yes."

"No, sweetie. I want to hear you say it."

"Yes, like a good girl."

"You want to be my good girl, don't you?"

"Yes."

"My sweet little slut."

"Yes."

"Do you like what Ricky's doing?"

"Yes."

"She's such an accomplished cocksucker."

"Yes."

"She loves it so. And I love her because she's a good cocksucker."

"Yes," he says with a tremor in his voice.

I pinch his nipples, whisper at his ear. "My sweet little girl may cum now."

His hips buck from the edge of the bed as he impales himself inside Ricky's wondrous sucking mouth.

"Oh, damn, I'm cumming. I can't hold it any longer. Dammit, I'm cumming!"

I hold Jody in my arms, feel his body tremble in release. His legs shoot out straight as Ricky's head bobs in his lap.

It was a quick climax but Ricky gets all the credit.

Jody sags in my arms.

"Kiss Ricky. Give momma a kiss."

Ricky rises on her knees. I push Jody's spent body to one side, meet Ricky's cummy lips.

After a minute I lean back. My face descends on Jody's and I find his lips.

As I've taught him, he parts his lips to accept my kiss. I dribble a little semen into his mouth, and, anticipating his move, hold his head tight in my hands, feed him more of his own hot discharge. I take my time, passing small vestiges of his orgasm into his mouth, push forth with my cummy tongue and make him swallow his own load.

Chapter Nine

In the municipal building I sit in front of Mrs. Morris. Like her son, she is short and fat. On the way in I saw Norton Norris in the hall. He came up to me and I told him I had an appointment with his sidekick's mother. Another attempt to talk her out of pushing land development along the pristine north shore where I live with Ricky, and now Jody.

"Well, you see, Ms. Forchia," she says. "I'm going to push hotel and condo development along the shoreline. It will be good for the city, bring needed dollars to our little community. It will expand the tax base and provide much needed money for city improvements."

"Hotels and condos, land development here will ruin Macumba's quaintness. "This town," I pause and spread my arms, "is treasured by some of the snowbirds who know about this area. If it just becomes another tourist trap it will lose its valuable appeal. I know, I come from a large northeastern city. You might ask Detective Norton Norris. We're from the same city and he loves the slow easy lifestyle here."

"Yes, Detective Norris," she says, frowning. "I don't know why they put him with my son. Melvis will be chief someday," she says, offering a toothsome smile. "I have high expectations, both for my son and the city."

"Much could be done without corrupting the beach with high rise motels and condos," I suggest.

She rambles on, tries to soothe me with political double-speak. It's disgusting but I keep my face impassive. I'd like to tell this fat cow how wrong she is about her grandiose

plans for the city and that her fat ass son will make chief when Columbo trades in his trench coat for Armani.

"You know," she says, leaning flabby arms and bosom on the desk, "Ian is pushing this, too. He thinks it would be good for the area. There's even talk of building an amusement park." She waves fat fingers depreciatingly. "Nothing on the grand scale of a Disney World. Something more like Myrtle Beach, smaller, or some of the other parks around the country."

"Mrs. MacCaulley doesn't want to sell the land," I counter, smiling sweetly. "The land's been in the family for generations. Her late husband's ancestors helped settle this area."

"You know she murdered her husband."

"So I've heard." I meet the fat bitch's disapproving stare. "Maybe he had it coming." Mrs. Morris leans back in the large leather captain's chair. She looks squeezed into it.

"The MacCaulley fortune isn't what it used to be, Ms. Forchia."

I don't have an answer for that, haven't a clue about the family's liquidity.

We're interrupted by her son who breezes into the office without knocking. He has a box of doughnuts under one arm. Seeing me surprises him and he lurches to a halt. A sick little smile creases his lips and he smooths a hand along the side of his head. "Ah, Ms. Forchia," he comments, and opens the box of doughnuts. "I brought these for mother but there's enough for all. Please have one." He opens the box, holds it in my face.

"No thanks."

His mother is clearly annoyed. "What Melvis? I'm busy here."

He carefully puts the box of sugary treats near her reach, grabs one for himself and bites hungrily into it.

"Uhm, I saw Ian this morning. He wants to see you." His beady little eyes sunken above chubby cheeks glance my way. "Soon."

Mrs. Morris gives the open box of doughnuts a quick look. It's almost as if those short fat digits have a mind of their own. She plucks one, bites daintily into it and a soft sigh escapes her lips.

She looks at me while thoughtfully chewing. "I'll call him. Is there anything else, Melvis?"

"Uh, well, no," he says, eyes shifting from me to the box of calorie-laden morsels. He plucks one, too, smiles and takes his leave.

"Ms. Forchia, we...the city council...certainly welcome the improvements you made to that club of yours. Surely you must see the advantage of having more tourists here. It will only increase your business."

"At what cost?"

I'd like to give her the high hard one, he thinks as he exits the muni building, licking dusty sugar from his fingers. She'd like it, no doubt come back for more. Maybe if she had enough of my monster it'd turn the tall skinny bitch straight.

The thought brings a wide smile to Melvis' jowly face.

He couldn't find Norris, now stands atop the grand concrete steps of Macumba's newest government building. He starts down them, thinking; if only there weren't so many steps. Reaching the sidewalk, he's out of breath.

Melvis looks about for the unmarked, doesn't see it, wonders where Norris is off to.

It's too hot to stand out here in the sun. He sighs, reluctantly treks toward the park in search of shade. Finding a shaded park bench, he sits, wipes beads of sweat from his brow.

Slowly his mind turns to the Pink Chameleon. It was two, three nights ago. Norris was off duty and he'd sat in the unmarked Ford for over an hour. Casing the place, he told himself, seeing who was coming and going, what was what.

A lot of people going in, few coming out.

None of them the usual suspects.

Maybe he should go in, take a look around, ask a few questions without revealing he was on a case. Maybe find something out.

He'd sure like to crack this case, find that dead tranny's killer. Do it without Norris' help, show the department that he was a competent detective. His mother needed something to help push his career, and solving this murder would be a big step in that direction.

Make her proud, too.

He put the Ford in gear — it was idling for the air conditioning — drove into the crowded lot beside the Diamond Brothers Import building. The Forchia woman had put a new facade on the front of the place, resurfaced the parking lot, put up some extra lights. She'd kept the old sign and door for some reason.

The haughty bitch wasn't too smart there, he thought.

Melvis found a slot near the back of the building near a dumpster and away from most of the security lights. Nobody would spot the unmarked there.

Inside he looked around for anybody he knew, or knew him. But there was nobody. He sat along the wall that separated the barroom from the showroom, and even though he was on duty, ordered a whiskey and Coke...not Crown Royal — since he was paying.

A lot of couples, men and women. More of them than boys and boys or girls and girls. Everybody seemed to be having a good time and nobody paid any attention to him. Not that he could see, anyway.

By the third drink Melvis began to relax and he sat through the second show.

These guys really looked good. Hard to tell they weren't really girls. Some of them were babes. After the second show, the girls started mingling with the patrons, and to his surprise, he invited a cute little number to sit when she came up to his table.

She wore a short skirt, the kind had a split up the front, and he caught himself looking. She didn't seem to mind. A nice rack on her, too. Couldn't be real, though. But through the part in her blouse they looked real. Cleavage and all.

Maybe she was one of them transsexuals who had honest to goodness boobs.

She asked him to dance and his back went stiff. She said it was okay, she understood, but a guy needs some recreation. She understood that, too.

Then she put her hand on his leg . . . above the knee.

Melvis ordered another round, squinted at the convincing cleavage and those legs so nicely revealed in the split skirt.

Wouldn't know she wasn't the real thing.

He should ask her something about Connie Fairchild but didn't want to ruin the...what?

Ambiance of the moment. He was pleased with himself for coming up with the word.

She put her hand over the lump in his lap and squeezed.

He shifted on the high stool, wanted her to take her hand away. However, shifting his legs it gave her easier access to his pony.

Her hand really digging in there now.

Making him gasp a little bit.

"You don't mind do you?" she said, batting her lashes and smiling.

Melvis didn't know what to say. One of those fairy waiters happened by and he ordered another round. She didn't bother to remove her hand, and anyway, the waiter didn't look.

He didn't quite know how it happened. But later, when the place was closing, he found himself walking out with this cute number with big knockers.

Just going to give her a ride home.

That was it.

Doing a nice turn for her, watching her knees as they split the cute little skirt.

In the car she looked around. "So you're a cop. You going to take me in, sir, use your nightstick on me?" Teasing, smiling, finding the lump in his lap again.

He told her no, drove her to an old rambling house that had been converted to furnished apartments. She lived upstairs in the back. It wasn't much but he was welcome to come up, have a nightcap.

Her hand busy in his lap, decided it for him.

He'd let her give him a blow job. Just this once and nobody'd be the wiser.

He followed her up the back stairs, saw way up that short skirt.

Nice legs.

He followed her inside after she opened three sets of locks.

Inside he bumped into her and she turned into his arms. Before he knew it she was kissing him, pushing her tongue inside his mouth, hunching his high hard one with her hips.

"Oh fuck," he'd said.

And she went to her knees on dirty linoleum, unzipped his fly, flopped out his cock and took it in her mouth.

Melvis didn't think about it, just let it happen.

She took her mouth off him just before he was ready, grabbed his hand and led him into a bedroom, helped undress him, herself stripping to pantyhose and bra.

He lay back on the bed and she stood there for a moment biting her lip.

"A girl's gotta get by, Jerry," she said, sitting on the bed, stroking his cock.

He'd given her the phony name. "What's that mean?"

"Hmm, you know, honey." She rubbed her fingers together, kept jacking his cock.

"Money?" Incredulous. "You want fucking money?"

She nodded, bent and took him in her mouth.

She wanted a hundred but settled for fifty, only after Melvis threatened to arrest her for prostitution.

She knew what she was doing. Melvis was soon shooting his wad into her tight mouth. It was over too quickly.

He was ready to get out of her squalid little apartment.

She pouted.

He asked what was the matter.

She didn't get hers, and then flopped out her "clitty," wanted him to return the favor.

The gall of the bitch. He wanted to slap some morals into her. Almost did, too.

Yet, after she'd worked him up again, Melvis found himself on all fours in the middle of her sagging bed, her kneeling behind and, fucking him in the ass.

Now as he sits on the park bench, head in hands, elbows propped on his knees, he wonders what in hell possessed him to do such a sickening thing. He had succeeded in occupying his mind with other things all morning, but walking out of the muni, she had popped into his consciousness.

Sitting there alone he recalls the size of her unit, bigger than his.

It pissed him off and he wanted to slap her around for a while, didn't know how she'd gotten him into "position" and then fed him her bigger cock.

The bad part was how she flogged his limp noodle while drilling his asshole, getting it semi-hard again, getting him off again while she pole-axed his rectum, the two of them in the middle of that sagging bed fucking like two crazy animals.

Melvis decided he must stop thinking about "her."

He could tell no one of this ordeal, or that right now, reliving the events of a few days ago, he was getting hard.

Wanted to do it again.

My worst fears are realized. I sit on the front porch in the chain swing, Ricky beside me. She's reading the letter, thinks it's not so bad.

I had sent to Al's for my mail; advertisements and one letter. I knew who it was from without opening it.

My mother. She and Aunt Linda are coming to Florida. Getting away from the harsh Midwest winter, vacationing in the Keys. Coming to see her son and bringing her sister, the woman who I'd carried a crush on when I was a kid.

And me a blooming faggot!

Or at least looking like a faggot.

"Ricky, what am I gonna do?"

"Hey, it's not so bad, Jody."

"Not so bad! Look at me. I look more like a girl than a guy. I've lost my masculinity. Jeez, I'll never be able to face them. They'll laugh at me."

"Stop," says Ricky. "You're pissing me off! There's nothing wrong with the way I...or you look. Get that through your thick head."

"I'll make up some excuse why I can't meet them. That'll work. I gotta think."

"We can make a few changes, Jody. You can cut back your nails, wear long pants, even cut your hair."

"Never!" I look at her like she's Frankenstein's monster. "I'm not cutting my hair."

I jump off the swing, go inside, look at my face in the bathroom mirror.

My eyebrows are plucked in a nice feminine line. "Shit. I can't let them see me like this."

Ricky stands in the door, one bare foot on the other. "We'll think of something. Don't worry."

"Easy for you to say, bitch! You live for this fem look. It's the way you are. Who you are. But not me. I'm just temporarily a girl. Shit! What am I gonna do?"

Rene Dehaven is dressed tonight, wears a white peek-a-boo blouse that reveals a lacy bra cradling firm but slim breasts. Her makeup is garish, makes her look like a whore. Those long, long legs, adorned in skin-hugging black stockings, are enticingly revealed in a tight short black leather skirt, the outfit topped by black skyscraper patent leather pumps.

I can't help staring at the tall vixen. She knows it, too, keeps flirting with me as I'm getting ready for the last show in the dressing room. She often comes back stage, encourages the girls, helps them make last minute adjustments with their costumes.

She keeps rubbing up against me, complimenting my outfit, which tonight is a short wraparound that shows off my legs. Her word is "stunning," and I must admit I've great ... what mom used to call ... gams. The front of the wrap around is a bit daring with a plunging vee that reveals faux breasts that are accented by my taped chest, cleavage makeup and liquid bra inserts in a demi bra that is barely visible in the vee-shaped bodice. Underneath it all a constricting waist cincher gives me a somewhat hourglass figure.

Looking in the mirror I shake my head at the illusion of breasts, the phony bra-studded nipples. Ricky says our chest exercises and the proper vitamins and skin emulsifiers will make my real nips become larger, more "natural."

I've got to get away from these people.

Rene comes up beside me, puts her arm around my shoulder and our eyes meet in the makeup mirror. "You really look good tonight, sugar. Wish I could stay and see your number."

"You're a real hottie tonight, yourself" I say, feeling her hip hard against me. "Got a date or something?"

She chuckles. "Or something. The young couple from last night? Friends of Adrena's from Cyrenaica. Remember them?" I nod. "I'm doing the wife's husband at their hotel. That handsome hunk's been cheating on her so the Sisterhood recommended revenge. After tonight his wife will be a top. I'm showing her how to handle Mr. Studley."

"Rene, you dising me again?"

"No, sugar. His wife wants revenge. I wonder, though . . . "

"What?" I ask.

"If it's really a dish best served cold."

Chapter Ten

For such a hunk, Steve is showing his docile side to Rene and his wife, Sally. He kneels beside the bed, wrists Velcro-cuffed behind his back. His only article of clothing is a leather cod piece that is now swollen prominently between muscular legs.

On his knees he watches as Sally and Rene lay on the king size bed, arms and legs entangled. Sally wears off black bra and bikini panties and Rene is stripped to matching black cup-less bra, leather bikini's, garter belt and skin-tight stockings on long magnificent legs.

The two of them are soul kissing as Rene pulls Sally hips between her slightly spread legs, caresses her pubic thatch with her hidden and sizable swollen instrument.

Steve knows Rene is a transsexual, and if their marriage is to survive, he knows he must have sex with her this night. Last night at the club his eyes hungrily devoured the tall Rene. He thought it couldn't be all that bad. Even though she's older she's still a babe with high pert breasts and legs that seemingly go on forever. Being the strutting stud, he thought too, that he'd be pitching, not catching. "I'm a pitcher, baby," he whispered in Rene's ear while the tall transsexual fondled his package beneath the table.

What Steve hasn't seen yet is Rene's unit. Nor does he know to what extent he's going to be on the receiving end of her truncheon.

On Adrena's last trip to Cyrenaica — on the way she stopped off in Boston to meet with Miriam Webster, the woman whose diamond ring Jody had stolen — she met Sally at the Cypress Club. A friend of a friend. Sally happened to mention that Steve was taking her on vacation to atone for being caught shagging one of Sally's closest friends. It wasn't his first discretion. In the past Sally had eventually forgiven him the others. But since she'd started aerobics and met new friends at the Cypress Club, learned a lot about the Cythera Coterie, her attitude had changed precipitously.

She had fallen in with a clique of ballbusters. Steve didn't like it. In the past she had taken part in some of his hedonist practices, had enjoyed more than one ménage B trios with Steve and one of his hottie's. She figured it was the price to pay for marrying such a handsome hunk. And the sex was great, even though she didn't consider herself bi. However, since she had joined the Sisterhood, she was broadening her sexual horizons.

There was something to be said for being in the soft arms of another woman. The best of both worlds. Or so it's said.

At the club in Cyrenaica, Sally had learned from Adrena that nearly all men could be tamed, taught to submit to a woman's will. Female dominance was a powerful aphrodisiac that few men could resist. In the new millennium women were learning to control men, make them slaves to their own libidos.

By making her husband submit to a transsexual she could take the upper hand in their relationship and marriage. Adrena explained to her that it wasn't that hard to strip a man of his stubbornness and masculinity.

And Adrena knew just the "lady" to assist Sally in her determination to break her husband's philandering ways and bring him down to size and lead him into subjugation.

Now Sally felt Rene mash her sizable instrument between her legs. It felt absolutely huge and the young fledgling dominant knew she had to have the monster where it counted most.

Though a novice in the coterie, Sally had already learned from other sisters that ridiculing the size of a man's penis was an effective way of reducing his masculinity. What was pressing urgently at her nether lips seemed all that, and more than it should be. She just knew Steve, though well-endowed, was no match for Rene Dehaven.

In a few deft moves Rene settles between Sally's legs, and in the bargain manages to hide the evidence of her sexuality from Steve who kneels beside the bed, eyes glittering, eagerly watching Rene sink into his wife's depths.



Sally bites her lip, splays her legs further to accommodate Rene's impressive instrument. Rene penetrates the young woman, sees the grimace of pain and pleasure on her face. This mixture of pleasure mingled with pain is a familiar expression to the tall transsexual. She knows, too, Sally's passion will overcome the initial pain. The two forces will blend into a crescendo of sexual fervor that is almost unparalleled to anything Sally's experienced before.

The morning will come soon enough for her to feel the soreness of Rene's gargantuan.

Rene, propped on her arms over Sally, slowly pushes inward. Though highly sexed, she studies the woman's facial features, sees the etched animation of her lover's desire. She wishes Sally to open her eyes. When she does not she looks at her husband kneeling beside the bed. With glazed eyes he looks between their legs.

She catches his eyes, flexes her hips, goes deeper.

Sally mewls softly.

Rene sees the confusion on Steve's face, perhaps wondering if

the breathless moan is that of pleasure or pain, or both.

Like most orifices Rene penetrates, Sally is tight. The woman's inner vaginal muscles pulse around Rene's large cock. The redeeming aspect of the coupling is Sally's well lubricated vagina.

But to Rene it seems ages since last she climaxed.

This first orgasm ... the first act in this perverted play ... will soon reach its finale.

Rene leans to the side and Steve eagerly raises to meet her, accept her tongue. They kiss for several moments as Rene feels the rising zenith to completion.

Softly she bites Steve's lower lip, pulls away from him, sees Sally's glassy eyes. She lowers herself on the woman, whispers in her ear.

"Yes," Sally hisses. "Yes, yes."

They kiss as the cuffed man helplessly watches.

"Fuck me!" cries Sally. "Fuck me good. Steve's never fucked me like this."

Rene bites her own lip, rises over the perspiring girl and hunches her hips. She glances at Steve who senses the moment . . . and Rene ejaculates. It is a prolonged climax and little knots twist inside Rene's belly as she expels herself into Sally's clinging pussy.

Again and again she spurts thick rich semen into her vagina.

Until she collapses atop the woman.

Rasping breaths fill the room as Rene slides off her, careful to present her backside to Steve.

Rene lays on her side for several moments, catching her breath and staring at the far wall.

"Was it good, honey?" inquires a husky male voice full of passion.

"Yes. The best."

"Better than me?" Incredulous.

"You could learn a lot from Rene."

Silence and Steve's heavy breathing.

"Make him eat you," says Rene.

"Yes, I think so," Sally whispers softly.

Rene feels the bed shift, sees Sally sit up, swing tightly clasped legs to the floor.

"Eat me, Steve."

"Look, baby. I've gone along with this up to now." He shakes his head, glances at Rene whose looking over her shoulder at him.

Rene's condescending smile makes him look away. "We're just getting started, sugar," she says sarcastically.

"You owe me, Steve," Sally says in a steely voice.

"I told you I was sorry," is his lame response.

"Sorry doesn't get it, asshole! Now do what Rene said."

Rene tucks herself, rolls over, gives the kneeling man a stern look. "You'll like it, sugar. Really you will."

He looks at Rene, his wife, eyes darting to Sally's lap where her tightly closed legs hide her freshly fucked sex. Shaking his head, Steve looks at the floor.

"If you don't get your head between my legs, bring me to a nice oral orgasm, Rene will force you. You're handcuffed, have no choice, you cheating piece of shit!"

Steve's head shoots up like he's been slapped.

Sally seizes his hair in both hands, tugs his head between her every widening legs. "Do it, honey. It won't be so bad."

"That's right," encourages Rene. "Do a good job. Be a good pussy lick and I'll be nice to you." The look on his face makes Rene chuckle dryly. "This party's just getting started."

Sally jerks his head and he cries out but his head is now high on her thighs.

"Can you smell it?" taunts Rene. "The smell of a freshly fucked woman always makes my nipples go hard. Believe me, sugar, your wife's never been fucked like this."

"Do it," commands Sally.

"We know you want to," says Rene. "They all want to in the end. Lick her pussy. Lick her clean. It's only fair." Rene knows there's nothing fair about this scene. It is all about revenge, putting this macho male in his proper place.

"Hmm, that's better," Sally says. "Kiss my lips, lick it. Suck Rene's cum from my pussy."

Steve's face is at his wife's besmirched gates. The fuck smell is strong, as is the scent of semen. At first his kisses are chaste but his lips finally part and he tastes the violation he just witnessed. Sally's vulva seems swollen. Its coated with a mixture of her own juices and that of her lover's. His tongue labors at his wife's befouled labia as he tastes the semen of the tall transsexual who only last night he was so attracted to.

Sally holds her husband's face, flexes her inner muscles as she feels his tongue probe deeper. Rene slides over, sits beside the young woman.

"Eat her pussy, Steve. Be a good boy. There's more forbidden treats for you tonight. This is only the beginning."

Steve's mouth is inundated with their combined juices. As he licks and sucks on the fount of his wife's womanhood, he feels a hand caress his shoulder, slip down and tweak one nipple then the other. Soon a pair of hands are caressing and tweaking the tiny points atop the slabs of his pecs.

His cock soon rises against the leather cod piece.

His wife hunches his face as he worships her pussy, licks and sucks her juices and the secretions of the transsexual.

He continues on his knees even as he hears the two of them ridicule his effort. He's glad his face is hidden, wishes he wasn't so hard and excited, doesn't quite know what to make of this debasement.

It seems his face is between the violated thighs of his wife for a long time, when finally his lips and tongue feel the dance of her release, the hum that signals her orgasm.

She pulls his hair as she cums, wonders of his own lust, his hard cock straining inside the leather holding his stiffening sex, this throbbing cock excited, witness to his undeniable excitement.

Sally releases his head and he slumps sideways to the floor.

His wife jerks the snaps loose on the piece of leather that restrains his unit and it pops free, hard and ready.

Opening his eyes, he is greeted with a pair of feet clad in spiked heels. These large specimens do not belong to Sally. Mesmerized he lays still as the toe of one of the shoes traces his lips. The insistent pressure strains his neck, and incredulously, he finds the toe inside his mouth.

Looking up, Steve sees both of them looking down on him, something akin to amusement and derision on their faces.

"Suck it," insists the tall transsexual. She reinforces her words by pushing the toe of her pump harder inside his parted lips. "Sally and me are gonna make you a proper sucker."

Before he is allowed to come to his knees, Steve worships both Rene's tall pumps, sucking on the stiletto heels as if they were tiny cocks.

Sally pushes his face into Rene's lap. "Lick her clean," demands his wife.

Rene smiles and slowly those magnificent legs he so admired the night before part and reveal her colossus. His eyes go wide in disbelief.

Sally points at his cock and chuckles. "He's hard, Rene. I think he likes your beast."

"We shall see," is Rene's sagacious reply.

"Suck it, honey. Show Rene some respect."

Steve looks incredulously at his wife. "You can't mean for me to ... "

Sally slaps his face. "Do it, bitch! Stop pissing and moaning. Suck Rene's cock. Lick my dried pussy juice from my new lover."

Rene inserts her hands in his armpits and nods. Helplessly Steve feels his face nearer the transsexual's rising cock. "You like it, don't you, sugar?"

Rene and his wife feel the almost palpable anticipation in the room.

"No, I can't do this," he cries weakly.

"But you will do it, hubby baby. I insist."

He gives his wife a quick horror-filled glance while shaking his head.

Steve shakes his head but remains on his knees in front of the tall transsexual.

"It won't be so bad," says Sally in a sweet soothing voice. "You know how guys like to be sucked. Think of all the times I gave you head." He glances at his wife, shakes his head.

Sally reaches between his legs, strokes his penis. "Kind of inadequate beside Rene's monster, isn't it, baby?"

"Please Sally. I can't do this."

"You can and you will, sweets. Think of all those women you fucked behind my back. Think of what Adrena's attorneys will do to you in divorce court. Think of all you'll lose."

Rene slowly strokes herself, smiles at the unnerved man before her. "Give it a little kiss."

Sally wraps her hand around Rene's hardening member, asks, "Will you be alright with this, I mean so soon after?"

Rene kisses her. "Yes. When I'm doing one of these numbers I abstain, sometimes for weeks to extend my stamina. I take herbs and supplements, too. They help with the production of testosterone and semen." They both look down at the now rock-hard tool.

They look at Steve who is staring between Rene's legs, watching as they play with it. A tear of seminal fluid blossoms on the blunt circumcised crown.

"Lick it," whispers his wife. "This is making me hot."

Rene puts her hand behind his head, brings him closer.

"Do it, sugar. You'll like it."

"Yes," says Sally, reaching between his legs again, stroking his hardness. "Suck her."

There's nothing to do but give in, get it over with, Steve thinks.

He gives Rene's cockhead a tentative lick, tastes the slick essence of her.

"Yes, that's it, honey. Give her a good lick. Up and down the shaft. Lick her balls, too."

The two of them watch the hapless hunk shiver in abject humiliation as he licks Rene's cock. Along the shaft laves his tongue. To the base he licks as Sally continues to jack his lesser but substantial equipment.

"Take it in your mouth," encourages his wife.

He licks around the head, opens wide and struggles with the bald helmet.

"Suck!" says Sally, quickening her pace between his legs. "Suck hard."

Steve glances at his wife sitting beside the tall transsexual, sees the lustful fever in her eyes, how much she's enjoying this.

"Release his hands, hon," says Rene. "It'll make it better for him. Us too."

Sally goes to her knees behind her husband, puts her hands around him, slides them over his flat chiseled chest, pinches the nipples. "You must behave, baby," she whispers in his ear. "I want you to feel how wet I am between the legs, how excited this is making me."

She loosens the Velcro cuffs, pushes his hand between her legs, tells him to finger her pussy. He does, all the while Rene's cock just inside his stretched lips. Her hands go between his legs, feel his hardness.

"It's good for you to like this, Steve. We'll have fun back home once you get used to it. If we're to stay married you'll do as I say. We can all have fun. You'll see."

"Put your hands on it," hisses Rene. "Stroke my shaft and take more in your mouth."

His hands slide up Rene's long smooth stocking clad legs, along her thighs to her rigid prize. He wraps both hands around it, starts jacking it, moving his mouth on it, now past the crown, filling him, making him wonder how much more he can take.

Behind him, Sally works his cock and his nipples, whispers encouragement. Not in her wildest dreams did she think she'd enjoy her husband's debasement this much. Her pussy weeps onto the tops of her thighs as she thinks of his numerous infidelities. She knows he's enjoying this, too, but likely won't admit it.

Well, that's fine, Stevie Boy. We're just getting started. Back home I'll see to it that you suck enough cock to pay for your adulteries, and in the bargain we'll have so much fun!

Rene holds his head, forces a little more into his mouth, feels her helmet brush the back of his throat. His hands stroke her shaft faster and she feels it coming. For a beginner, if he truly is a beginner, he's doing quite well sucking her cock.

The night is young and her stamina is high.

Thinking this, Rene feels her glans begin their ancient dance. She holds his head securely and pulls back. She wants him to feel her load splash in his mouth, wants him to get a real taste of her essence.

Rene looks at Sally and nods. She leans, presses hard nipples against her husband's back. Finding his hard cock she masturbates him faster and harder, wants him to climax as Rene cums in his mouth. Sally's learned from other coterie members to try and coordinate climaxes.

If they cum together it will instill in him a great measure of pleasure and will be easier to lead him back to similar sexual scenarios.

Rene shudders and explodes in Steve's mouth. Her orgasm is intense, feels like a knotted cord being pulled from deep within her balls, through her urethra and into his hot wet mouth.

Steve chokes, tries to pull away but Rene's holds his head securely.

Another volley of creamy semen shoots into his mouth.

Steve's cheeks balloon as Rene's abundance overwhelms him. He has no choice but to swallow Rene's salty essence.

His wife's hands work furiously on his cock and he feels his own impending climax as his glans hum as yet weaker but more ejaculate squirts in his mouth.

Rene let's his head go, tweaks her womanly nipples to prolong her dying orgasm.

Steve shoots as he pulls his head away, looks at Rene's slit as it dribbles a weak runnel of cum down the underside of her organ.

His wife continues to jack his cock and he spurts again and again.

It didn't taste that bad, he thinks, nor was the experience as horrific as he imagined.

Sally kisses him, sends her tongue inside his mouth like a little pink serpent.

"Hmm, yummy," she says.

Steve is on all fours near the foot of the bed. They rested, smoked a joint, Steve between them on the bed. The two of them kissed, stroked and teased him into a frenzy before putting him on his hands and knees.

Sally sits near as Rene positions herself at his vulnerable backside.

The fear in his eyes makes her wet. Rene assures him she'll be gentle.

He knows he has no choice and his cock is at full mast as Rene nudges his brown-eye with her bludgeon. Sally prepared him with generous globs of KY-jelly, is now slowly stroking his cock while Rene exerts pressure on his sphincter.

It takes a while but finally she pops inside. He cries out and in spite of Sally's handy efforts, his cock wilts. Holding his hips, Rene presses her advantage, inches up his tight anal canal. She tells him to relax but of course he doesn't, cries out painfully as he is invaded.

"I can't take it," he pleads. "Please . . ."

"You're doing fine, honey," says Sally, trying to stroke some life into his drooping dong.

Rene inches forward, thinks about impaling him on her thick instrument. But that might ruin it for Sally. If it's too painful he might balk at a repeat performance from another TV or TG.

After a while the two of them fall into a tortuous rhythm and Sally's efforts between his legs produce modest results.

Soon the coupling is consummated as Rene climaxes in his pussy/ass.

The three of them fall together on the bed.

Rene lays in post coital bliss but soon feels Sally's hands between her legs. There is a gleam in her eyes. She pushes Steve's head between Rene's legs, tells him to revive her, she wants one last ride before they call it a night.

Chapter Eleven

The situation, what was once a sure thing, has turned to shit since Connie's gone. That's how he thinks of her – just gone. Like she'd caught a train or a bus back to Columbus. He will not think of it any other way. Like she was still alive, living and breathing, looking so cute and coquettish.

He knew using her was risky. And now she's . . . gone.

And with her gone the denaro is gone. He doesn't want to deal with Gomez. Not anymore. Connie told him the Latino was trouble, not only hotheaded but way too macho. He didn't want to think about it; realistically he was dealing with him from the start, but

through Connie. He had depended on the drug money to finance his small stake in the proposed property development.

Now with his mother outside, not inside, all the grandiose plans, the whole scheme, is going south. He'd already asked her for money and she emphatically turned him down, told him to get a job. "Me," he'd said incredulously. "Me, get a job? The joint has really screwed you up, mother. Totally screwed you up. You owe me!" She'd looked at him, a little sadness tugging at her eyes, shook her head and walked off.

Yeah, sure, most of the family fortune had dried up while she was away. But that wasn't his fault. Brokers and financial consultants had made bad investments of the MacCaulley money. And the market was taking a serious nose dive.

Ian tried to explain it to his mother, looking at her new muscle-defined body. "All the more reason, Inga (Years ago, before Ira found them out they addressed each other by their first names. It somehow made what they were doing then almost acceptable), to sell our land along the north shore. We need the bucks. Don't you see that?" But she didn't see it, was going to drive them all into the poor house holding on to the precious MacCaulley land.

It made him sick. Yet he wasn't giving up. His mother always ... but always ... came around to his plans, his way of thinking. Only now, since she'd got out, it was going to be a little harder to bring her around. He didn't want to think about it, but as a last resort he could fall back on their once secret relationship. Since getting out though, Inga had acquired some measure of confidence. She wasn't as lonely. But he knew she was vulnerable and he would play on that vulnerability.

For this meet in the Hyatt he wears a dark blue cashmere jacket, a silk shirt and microfiber silk trousers, even socks, which are a major concession, and expensive leather loafers, but no tie. Tomlinson on the other hand wears an Armani suit, button-down shirt with cuffs, looks like he just stepped out of a GQ advert.

In from Miami Beach, the consortium sent Tomlinson to deal with this temporary snag. It was Tomlinson who'd promoted Ian's investment as part of the deal. It was the price they had to pay to get their hands on the land, and now the power brokers had sent Tomlinson to fix it.

Ian MacCaulley is nervous, and not just because Connie's gone and the denaro has dried up. Norton Norris, the detective, is sniffing after him like he knows something. Like he might suspect Ian did her. Ian doesn't like him. The guy's too cagey. Melvis is transparent. An empty seashell could outmaneuver him.

What can Norris know, thinks Ian.

Tomlinson sips from a tall frosty glass of ice tea. "Tell me what's going on, Ian," he says, voice reasonable.

Ian shrugs. "I've run into a couple of snags. I need a little more time."

The exec nods, purses his lips. "Your mother isn't being cooperative and now this."

Ian looks at him then away, tentatively sips his untouched tea. "Yes, she's stubborn but I'm working on her."

"You begged us to take you in as a junior partner, Ian." Tomlinson flashes a smile.

" barracuda smile, thinks Ian.

"Don't worry," Ian says with false bravado. "I've the majority of the city council in this with us. Inga ... mother ... will come around."

"The developers were happy to include you in our plans for the land, Ian. But you owe us. Not only money but you claimed you could deliver the land. Unconditionally is the word you used. Without the land the development is dead. You understand that."

"Yes. Yes." With Connie gone the drug money is drying up. He can't tell this corporate executive he's financing his stake in the land scheme with drug money. "I'm working on it. Inga's early parole was an unforeseen development. But it'll be okay. You'll see."

"I need some assurances, Ian."

"I'll have the money. It's just ... "

" ... Not the money, Ian." Tomlinson leans into the table. "Without that stretch of MacCaulley beach our project is dead. There is no other ideal place in or around Macumba." He sits back, crosses his legs, takes another sip of tea from the tall narrow glass. "We can delay payment on the money you owe."

"I'll deliver," Ian says, mustering some semblance of confidence in his voice.

Tomlinson frowns. "The corporation has already spent millions on this project, Ian." He looks at his watch, stands. "You better deliver."

"It'll be okay, really," says Ricky. "Wear long pants and shirts. Cut back your fingernails. Use less makeup. Shit, Jody," she says with some humor, "think masculine."

"This isn't funny, Ricky. They're driving in this weekend. I haven't seen mom or Aunt Linda in over a year. I've gotta figure out a way to postpone them. Come down sick with something or other. At least until I can figure this out."

"How about leprosy, sugar," adds Rene innocently. "I understand that stuff is contagious. You can tell your dear mom that you're rotting away."

I give Rene a dirty look, shake my head, tell her this isn't funny.

The three of us are in the dressing room. Adrena had to come in early. She's down the hall mulling over the books in the office. Rene arrived after we did. I'm scared to death to face my mother and Aunt Linda. Cutting back my fingernails is okay with me but there's nothing I can do about my arched eyebrows.

Rene, the tall bitch looks good, wears strappy gold lamé sandals, long delicious legs in short shorts and a light cotton sleeveless blouse, pert titties snuggled in a padded bra. She caught me looking. I can't help it, hot male blood courses through my body even if I do look girly.

"Cut your hair back," suggests Ricky, hands clasped around a raised knee.

"Never!" I exclaim forcefully. "An asshole principal in high school made me cut it once. I vowed I'd never do it again. "This long blond hair is part of me. Who I am."

Ricky puts up a hand. "Okay, Jody. I got it. Clothes make the man or woman. Get into some of your old stuff. That alone will change your appearance considerably."

"Why not just come out of the closet, sugar?"

"I'm not in the closet, Rene," I bite emphatically.

"Coulda fooled me, baby," she says, giving me a big smile.

Adrena sticks her head in the open door. She's barefooted so we didn't hear her. "It's simple, Jody."

"Oh?"

"Uh-huh. Since this establishment caters to alternative lifestyles, ergo the gay community, I require all my employees to dress and act appropriately. You work at the club, are an invaluable employee and must present the proper image."

It sort of makes sense but can't be that easy.

"Think it'll work?" I say doubtfully.

"Sure it'll work," adds Ricky.

"The fantastic Adrena Forchia once again to the rescue," Rene says, not attempting to hide the sarcasm in her voice.

Adrena, whose magnificent legs are complimented by tight abbreviated shorts, pats her mound, winks at me. "You owe me, sweetie."

The Past (1990s), Kansas

The movie critics largely pan Kevin Costner's new movie, *Dances with Wolves*, but the audiences love it. It made producers and directors take notice of little known, Mary McDonnell. The epic was honored as Best Picture and Costner won the Oscar for Best Director. Another movie, on the other side of the motion picture spectrum, signaled the rising star of actor, Joe Pesci, who starred with Robert DeNiro and Ray Liotta in, *Goodfellas*. *Pretty Woman* resurrected the career of Richard Gere who starred with, what turned out to be, one of the biggest stars of the decade, Julia Roberts. Whitney Houston, "Everybody's Baby Tonight," belted out hit after hit while she was getting belted by her music producer hubby, Bobby Brown. Marion Barry, Washington D.C.'s mayor was busted for smoking crack in an FBI sting operation. Tarkanian's UNLV Running Rebels beat Duke in the NCAA finals, and Martina Navratilova won the U.S. Open.

Jody was twelve when his dad took him to see, *Dances with Wolves*, and later the kid conned his mother into taking him to see it again. That summer, Louella took him to see her kid sister, Aunt Linda in Bunker Hill. On Wilson Reservoir they went for a speedboat ride with the father of the kid who dated Aunt Linda, and as it turned out, would later marry her. Aunt Linda had huge tits and, like his mother long legs. She loved teasing Jody.

Later that night he was in living room watching TV when Linda came out of her room. She wore a shorty pajama outfit that showed off her well proportioned legs. He was on the floor and she sat behind him on the couch. Occasionally she'd jab him playfully with her foot. Just looking at her was enough to give the impressionable youth a hard on. Linda wondered aloud what was wrong with her legs. He looked over his shoulder, saw one long bare leg extended, could see between them enough to see the bottoms of her shorty.

She pointed her foot very near his face, asked him again about her legs, what was wrong with them. He shook his head, his dick digging into the carpet beneath him. There must be something because he kept looking. He finally babbled there was nothing wrong with them. She had great legs.

Aunt Linda brushed his chin with her toes, told him to follow her. Into her bedroom, her back to him, he furiously wrestled his dick into a modest lump that wouldn't be so easily noticed.

She teased him, then said he better go. She needed to paint her toenails. Unless . . . Unless what he shyly asked, looking at the small bottle of polish. She said he could help if he really wanted. Jody found himself on his knees, amateurishly painting her toenails, sneaking looks between her legs at the mystery there. He blew them dry for her, too.

Linda and Louella had great legs. A good pair of legs always got Jody's engine started.

On that trip to Bunker Hill the youngster overheard his mother and Linda talking about some movie called, *The Crying Game*. And just how cute was that Jaye Davidson. Louella had made Jody's father take her to see it.

Years later, while at Wichita State, the drama coach, Eva Pangor made Jody go with her to see it in one of those old art theaters. Eva was way bent, trained Jody about a lot of things sexual, mostly cunnilingus. She loved being ate, and still a pup, Jody was eager to please. Turned out she was bisexual and wanted Jody to taste those forbidden waters, too. He narrowly escaped with his bruised heterosexuality intact.

That same summer, Louella, his mother, took him with her to see, *Goodfellas*. He was underage but nobody paid any attention to that business. In the theater his mother seemed to get agitated whenever that Ray Liotta guy was on screen. He thought maybe she was sick but that wasn't it. She told him afterward that Ray Liotta made her hot . . . and did he know what she meant by that.

Oh, yeah, for a twelve year old, Jody was pretty hip.

The thing with his mom and dad, though, it took him a while to figure it out. Louella always had her engine purring. She had it fine-tuned quite a bit, and not by his dad. He didn't know all this stuff was going on at the time, later figured it out with Aunt Linda's hints.

To say the least, the sexual relationships of his parents was bent.

By Friday the three of them convinced me it would all work out. Adrena's plan explained nearly everything. I called mom's cell phone in the afternoon and told them to come to Macumba Beach, I was anxious to see them. And was Aunt Linda still a hot number. Louella allowed that she was, and I made a confession about having an adolescent crush on her sister. Mom just sniggered, said she was well aware of my young hungering for Linda. The two of them always wondered if back then, I might not trip over my dick, since it always seemed to be hard.

I didn't go on stage at the club. I did dress down, wore a little makeup and a short skirt. In the morning Ricky would trim back my nails and help me get the polish off. I kinda liked the pearl color on my finger and toenails but could reapply it late Sunday or whenever Louella and Linda left.

In a way I looked forward to seeing the two of them but as the night grew late I became very apprehensive. Rene, Adrena and Ricky noticed, as well as a couple girls in the show.

I'm a basket case. It's three a.m. and we're home in the bungalow. Adrena mixes a stiff drink but it doesn't help. Ricky suggests I take a walk on the beach but after a couple hundred yards I realize I'm just going through the motions.

The tide's coming in. Maybe once I'm in bed the sound of the ocean will lull me to sleep. When I come through the door I'm surprised the two of them are still up. It was a busy night at the club. Friday's always are. They take me by either hand and lead me down the short hall to their bedroom.

Adrena kisses me while Ricky slides my clothes off. Adrena, wearing only panties, reclines against the headboard, beckons me. She pulls me back into her chest and I feel her turgid nipples on my back.

The two of us watch while Ricky strips to her panties, the telltale bulge clearly visible.

She crawls up on the bed until her face is mere inches from mine.

I know what she's going to do but can't stop it. Adrena already has her arms under mine, fingers busy tweaking my small nipples, making me instantly hard.

"Kiss girls," Adrena softly commands.

And we do.

Soft and sensuous, like two lesbians.

Ricky's tongue slips into my mouth and I feel her soft hands between my legs.

"This will get rid of all that tension," coos Adrena, tugging on my nips. "Suck his cock, Ricky. It will help him sleep."



Ricky trails wet kisses down my naked body and I soon feel her hot breath on my tool. She scrunches down between my spread legs, licks my helmet, smiles up at me, then swallows it without preamble.

Ricky is an expert fellatrice. She enjoys it, has teased me about how one day I'll enjoy it, too. She knows how furious that kind of talk makes me. I've told her time and again, "I can never be part of this. Willingly anyway. I'm going to work off my debt to Adrena and then we'll all part friends. Don't you understand that?" She smiles and answers in the affirmative and that makes me even more furious.

Now she's coping my knob, licking sucking, moving her head up and down, really making short work of it.

Adrena, licks my ear, wants to know if I like what pretty Ricky is doing. Of course I do. Isn't it wonderful all the pleasure I'm getting from my nipples being tweaked. Yes, that too. She wants my nips plumper, and not just from the plumping cream. Oh, no, she knows how to make them longer, thicker, the areola a deeper brown,

more womanly as befitting my new image.

Things I really don't want to hear with mom and Aunt Linda due in Macumba tomorrow afternoon.

I'm too far gone to argue with her.

Ricky has me on the edge.

I feel her fingernails scrape along my hips as she swallows me completely, then draws back, licking and sucking the head, doing it again and again until my balls rumble.

I'm very much aware of Adrena's maddening fingers on my nipples, feel how swollen and sensitive they are.

Oh, jeez," I mewl, feeling my load churning from my balls and through my urethra.

Exploding into Ricky's hot sucking mouth, making her cheeks bulge. Her mouth swallows my organ and I feel the glans spasm on her tongue as I shoot another volley of hot ejaculate into her wet mouth.

Ricky keeps at it until it hurts.

I try to squirm away from that carnivorous mouth but it is no use.

My sweet feminine friend wants it all, will leave nothing behind.

She raises up on her haunches and I see the evidence of my lust on her lips, a streamlet on her chin. Her wide smile shows me my own semen.

"Kiss children," Adrena says.

I shake my head, feel the vice-like pressure of her forefinger and thumbs on my tender nipples.

"I said Kiss."

Ricky's face descends on mine and there's nothing I can do.

Her lips are slimy with my fresh discharge. She inserts her tongue in my mouth and, not for the first time, I taste my own cum.

It is the way with these jaded perverts.

Chapter Twelve

We meet them at Wendy's Whistle Stop, the old railroad car diner, the former proprietor's name still on an old rusty sign hanging by Palmetto Street. I asked once; nobody seems to remember Wendy, who she was or where she's gone. The diner has become one of our favorite after-hour haunts. The food's not bad. Much to Jody's relief Ricky agreed to stay away while Jody's mother and aunt are in town. He wears long twill pants and a white, open collar muslin shirt, fingernails, devoid of polish and cut back, long blond hair in a ponytail. Nothing to do about his arched eyebrows but I'll explain to them how it is at the club ... It's all for show.

They're already there sitting in a booth by the window. He doesn't say anything but I see the two women wave through the front glass. As we go through the door I whisper for him to relax, it'll be just fine.

Both of them slide from the booth. Everybody hugs each other. I stand back at a discreet distance, feel the younger one's eyes on me. Jody's mother starts crying, wipes tears away with the heel of her hand. It's easy to see where Jody gets his good looks. They've nearly the same eyes and hair, though hers looks to be bottle enhanced. Both women wear loose cotton shorts. Nice legs for an older woman, the kid sister, too. Large boobs in a halter bra under an open shirt, advertising her wares.

The kid sister, name of Linda, I think, is checking me out, looking from Jody to me. His eyes are a little filmy. I wonder if he's going to break down and cry with his mother. Kind of tugs at my emotions a bit, as I look at the sister, step forward, slide my arm around his waist and introduce myself. His aunt's already figured it out, while his mother doesn't get it yet, that Jody and I are lovers.

We slide into the booth across from them. The waiter takes our order, ice tea all around. I suggest dinner at the new Mexican restaurant, Rolando's which is down from the club. His aunt is studying his face, noticing little subtleties, the arched eyebrows for sure. Her eyes fall to the open shirt, his smooth hairless chest. She looks at me and I hold her eyes until hers waver.

I wonder if the big-bosomed bitch realizes she's met her match.

The tea comes and I listen to his mother's nervous prattle, how she's working at their local small town paper, recalling old friends, what's happened to some of his school chums. I sense he's relaxing but avoiding his aunt's looks. She hasn't seen his father since the divorce but hears he's with another woman. As divorcees both of them are enjoying their freedom, not allowing themselves to be tied down to any one guy.

Promiscuous in other words but Jody's not hearing them.

Finally Mrs. Combs runs out of breath.

Her sister looks at me, offers a phony smile, "So, Ms. ah . . . "

"Forchia. Adrena Forchia."

"Yes. Ms. Forchia, are you a native of Macumba Beach?"

"No. A snowbird from Cyrenaica. I hate northern winters, bought a nightclub here."

"Oh?" says Mrs. Combs

"Yes. I hope the two of you have time to be my guests tonight," I lie, wishing for a quick death to this ridiculous charade. He should just tell them the truth, but then he's still in denial.

"A nightclub?" queries his aunt.

"What kind of nightclub?" his mother wants to know.

I feel him tense up beside me.

"Ah, it's a big city sort of place," says Jody. "There's a lot of these types of night spots in the Keys."

His aunt is asking him but staring at me. "What kind of night spot, Jody?"

Sounding all sugary and sweet but a hint of Midwestern steel in her voice. She's already made up her mind. She doesn't like me. I give her a slow sardonic smile, wait for his answer. The bitch sitting across from me is waiting for me to answer but I won't give her the satisfaction.

Of course Jody's oblivious to the almost palpable friction growing like some verdant and toxic vegetation between me and his aunt, but his mother's now attuned, glancing from her sister to me, wondering what's going on.

His aunt is definitely the protective mother hen.

"Tell them, Jody."

Both women are staring at me now.

"Well, here in the Keys," he says, gulping tea. "Uhm, it's not like back home. It's a different lifestyle down her."

"A different lifestyle?" his mother puzzles, looks at her younger sister, who may have already figured it out.

Jody casts a nervous glance at me. But his aunt and I are dueling with our eyes.

Tell them, dammit, let's get past this.

"Uhm, yeah," he says. "Sort of an alternative nightclub that caters to different lifestyles."

His mother is trying to figure it out.

"What's this nightclub to you, Jody?" his aunt says, finally looking at her nephew and breaking eye contact.

"I work for Adrena," he says, exhaling.

"At this club?" his mother wants to know.

"More than that, isn't it?" Aunt Linda says flatly, eyes back on me.

It's time for me to smile and I do. "Yes, we're lovers."

His mother sort of wilts against the booth, looks at me, then Jody.

"A little old for my nephew, aren't you?" says the bitch with the big tits.

My smile broadens and my eyes remain on hers. "I don't think so. Why don't you ask your nephew, auntie."

"Aunt Linda," Jody says reproachfully, "Of course Adrena's not too old for me."

"Yes, you're a very attractive lady," Louella rushes in and gives her younger sister a look.

Shut up bitch is what your sister's telling you.

Aw, the poor guy didn't expect this, two women at odds over him. Not coming from his fave aunt, anyway. With all the sly and slick moves, Jody still doesn't understand women. He doesn't see us as his equal, still wants to play all women like a grifter does his

marks. He thinks he's still playing me, doesn't realize it's the other way around. I almost feel sorry for him.

They ask about lodging and I suggest either the Marriot on the beach or the Holiday Inn Express out on highway One. The two women exchange a look and Auntie Linda decides on the Marriot. Jody told me this morning that she received a handsome divorce settlement from her rich ex husband.

The big-titty bitch is a gold digger.

Charter Marina runs along the old freight inlet behind the Pink Chameleon, a.k.a., Diamond Brothers Importing, and the other businesses whose back doors and old docks face the waterway. Not that many years ago Kelp's Oyster House brought in fresh catches through the marina from local fishermen but when the landmark restaurant changed hands the new owners discontinued the practice. A furniture store, the inevitable tee shirt shops, clothing stores and antique shops now occupy most of the tired old buildings. The city is doing its best to revitalize this area, gives tax breaks to any entrepreneurs willing to open small businesses. Rolando's, the new Mexican restaurant, down and across the street from the club is the newest addition in this ongoing project. Rolando's is one of former mayor, Millicent Morris's pet projects, all part of her plans to recapture the mayor's office again, and eventually promote her son, Melvis to police chief. On the same side of the street as Rolando's is a used bookstore, a Pentecostal Church and a locally owned bakery that is somehow surviving the competition from Dukin' Doughnuts and the new Krispy Kreme. Boarded up buildings occupy both sides of this once grand and bustling thoroughfare.

Today the docks are hardly used, except for pleasure craft and a handful of stubborn fishermen who supplement other jobs with fresh saltwater catches.

Ian stands on the narrow dock beside the slip that secures Crustacea Cruiser, his father's old cabin cruiser, a twenty-four foot boat with a fiberglass hull. Below deck is a small galley accented in polished teak. The boat will comfortably sleep four. The hull needs cleaning, something Ian has been going to do for years, but hasn't got around to yet.

He glances nervously at the bait shop, hoping to not see Roy Rouse, the old man whose been running the marina as long as anyone can remember. Roy is a weathered old fisherman with dark wrinkled skin, and because of his years in the sun and on the water, is desperately fighting for his life against the melanoma that is ravishing his dark leathery body.

Since Connie's gone . . . , Nesto Gomez found out about the cruiser. The stocky Mexican has insisted on using the boat. He's tried to buy it but Ian has steadfastly refused. He doesn't use the cruiser that much anymore but it represents old and fond memories of when he and his dad used to take it out for marlin, red snapper and the occasional white shark. Ira was against hunting shark but indulged his young son who might've envisioned

himself as a youthful Chief Brody of Amity fame. By Ira's count, Ian had watched the movie at least a half dozen times. When he was growing up he entertained and partied with his chums and bikini-clad girls on the Crustacea. It was that seemingly distant and magical time when Ian was exploring his youth and finding out about things sexual.

Ian doesn't want to be here but has no choice now. He must see this thing through. It wasn't so bad dealing with the unsavory character when Connie Fairchild was his go-between but now that she's gone . . .

He sighs, remembers her flirty ways and high sexual energy, that cute little penis between smooth feminine legs. She hasn't gone away. She was greedy, but her death was unnecessary and Ian regrets that.

If she hadn't been so greedy. Playing both of them.

He looks up, sees Nesto Gomez hurrying down the quay.

"You're late," he says.

Gomez gives him a look with flat dark eyes, gives the cruiser an appreciative once-over. "I like dis boat, gringo. Maybe wen our bidness done you sell it to me, no."

"The Crustacea is not for sale." Ian glances at the bait shop for any sign of old Roy Rouse, tells Nesto to get aboard. "Lets get outta here."

At the helm he flips the switch that engages the blower to clear the hull of any gas fumes, checks the instruments. He looks around surreptitiously, fires the ignition and the boat throttles to life, the engine sounding throaty, almost melodious in the quiet afternoon.

There is not much going on this time of day when the sun is high and it's so hot, very little activity at the marina. Gomez sits along the padded side bench, throws his arms over the gunwale, watches as Ian, now in the cockpit engages the gears and backs out of the slip. The cruiser idles past the slips on either side of the dock, past the speed buoys and out into the gulf.

The two men ride the calm sea in silence. It takes about thirty minutes to reach Phalarope Key, a protected bird sanctuary that is off limits to tourists and natives alike, except for special visitations by bird watching groups.

The island is small and narrow, shaped like a coma.

Ian runs the boat into a leeward cove, eases up alongside a narrow dock of warped and sun-bleached boards. He warns Nesto to be careful with the boat, goes below deck and comes back with a bottle of spring water, steps over the gunwale onto the dock.

It has to be this way. Gomez will not take him along to meet the fishing boat and shipment. When Connie was alive she rented a small boat under the guise of a pleasure cruise and took Gomez out on it. With Connie in tow, Gomez would meet incoming shipments. Now everything is different.

Gomez grinds the gears after Ian pushes the boat off with his foot, laughs at Ian's grimace. "Stay out of the sun gringo, it'll take me a while. Your lily white skin is already too dark. Somebody take you for a — how you gringo's say — a Latino, you not careful."

Ian stands on the dock, watches until the Crustacea speeds out of the cove, around the curve of the beach and disappears into the gulf. He's driving it too fast, thinks Ian. If some-

thing happens to Gomez, some unforeseen accident, Ian could die out here on this island. He turns inland, wonders how often conservation officers and the occasional tourist group visits this desolate, bird-infested paradise.

Hours pass. The sun is low on the horizon. Ian sits in the shade of two gnarled trees, random clumps of saw grass sprouting up around him in the sand. No sign of Gomez. The bottle of water is long gone. He wishes he hadn't been so careless with his thirst, has spent the time thinking about the stocky Mexican, how to extricate himself from this mess once he has enough money.

The solitude makes him think about distribution. It might be too risky to recruit one of the tranny's at the club, especially since that detective and that insufferable prick of a sidekick are snooping around, looking for Connie's killer. He'll have to move the product, probably to Key West. A lot of gay clubs there, lots of guys and gals doing crack and pot and cocaine. He knows a few girls there, too. Might be a good idea to hang out for a while there, try to take the heat off himself.

He knows Melvis would like nothing better than to pin Connie's murder on him. His only salvation might be the old guy. Yet he doesn't trust Norris. That's one thing him and his mother agree on. You never know what that guy's thinking.

What to do about Inga? His mother wants to stubbornly hang on to the north beach. The family fortune has just about dried up. He's pointed that out but she refuses to listen. The MacCaulley land ... that damn beach ... has been in the family for generations, ever since the first MacCaulley settled on the southern tip of Florida. But that's no reason to hang on to it. There's untold millions to be made off this deal and he wants his share.

For once the twins, Iris and Ingrid, are on his side. He can buy them off with chump change, send them back to South Beach. They're only hanging around for the money. He despises them as much as they despise him and his mother.

What if something happened to Inga? What then? Like something happened to Connie. Sweet Connie . . . that cheating bitch.

All she cared about was money and sex, lots of both.

And that fucking Gomez. He couldn't trust him, either. But without Gomez there'd be no drugs. No money. He wouldn't be able to raise his share of the stake. And he needed to make good on that minority share investment in the development consortium. In the future it would be his only source of income. Inga had mentioned something about him finding a job: "A job? A job? You mean like working?" She'd nodded and he'd said, "Naw. I am what I am. You made me this way. Anyway, what could I possibly do? I'm not going to find a job." She said something about a career. Her and Ira had sent him to the University of Miami where he'd graduated with a BA. College was just another playground for him, where he found plenty of loose girls and boys. "Mother I majored in orgies in college. Sex. Boys and girls. It's one of the biggest party schools in the country. That's why I went there, to party, discover who I am." He saw the sadness in her eyes, nearly laughed; this woman who'd shared a special relationship with him before she went into the Broward Correctional Institution for sticking a butcher knife in his father's prodigious belly.

His fucking father. Why couldn't he just leave them alone? Leave them to their perverted games. The old man would still be alive if only he had let them be. Nobody was complaining about his mistress in the city. Maybe Inga, but did she really care about Ira?

Sitting in the shade of the gnarled trees he shook his head. No, Inga had him. It was all fucking disgusting. And now he'd heard that Darlene Johnson, his father's mistress, had taken up with that detective, Norton Norris. Well it was a small community, the trouble being everybody knew what everybody else was doing and who they were doing.

Between his legs Ian scooped sand in one hand let it sift through the fingers of the other.

Where was that fucking Gomez?

Mentally he counted his stash. Impressive but not nearly enough. He should've gave Tomlinson, the guy from the land development consortium, some of it the other day. But he hated to part with it. Especially now that Norris was snooping into Connie's murder. If things got really sticky he'd need that money to clear out.

Disappear.

No telling who the cops would pin that murder on.

Too bad it couldn't be his mother, send her back to prison, allow him to sell the land. Some fine legal points here but lawyers were slimier than fish.

He turned that over for several minutes, explored the possibilities.

Maybe kill two birds with one stone.

It was an idea that had its merits.

But how?

Ian heard a faint sound, then the whine of the Crustacea growing more distinct. He jumped up, ran down to the beach, saw Gomez coming around the point, the boat's hull gleaming in the late evening sun. He cut back on the throttle and Ian saw a dark rime just visible at the waterline where it needed cleaning, the cruiser sounding throaty and cutting a frothy wake in the calm waters of cove.

They rode back, Ian listening to Gomez telling him how to do it. He kept looking at the two tackle boxes in the boat. They hadn't been there before. He didn't want Gomez telling him what to do but kept his mouth shut. When this was over, when he had enough investment capital, he'd deal with the spic in his own way. The asshole had it coming.

By the time they got back to Charter Marina it would be in long shadows or dark enough and he could carry the tackle boxes out under the cover of darkness.

Louella and Aunt Linda look good tonight, both of them showing off their legs. Mom wears a sarong skirt that flashes leg all the way to her thighs and Linda a short light cotton skirt. It makes her look a little hippy but the guys will be ogling her impressive headlights.

The four of us drank a pitcher of margarita's at Rolando's. The food was good, spicy. Now at the club I'm apprehensive, afraid one of the girls will give something away about my brief stage career. If that happens I don't know what I'll do. Adrena's assured me she sent word ahead, instructed Rene to clue everybody about my mom and aunt, and warned Ricky to stay away.

I'm aware of the looks from some of the other girls, the bartender in the front bar when we came in. I hope none of the locals stumble in and blow my unstable cover.

So far so good. Mom's a little tipsy from the margarita's but Linda is holding her own. They're going to stay for the first show and then I'm taking them on a tour of the other nightlife of Macumba Beach.

I'm looking forward to getting these two away from the club.

Rene comes up to our table and Louella can't believe she's not real. I'm afraid the tall transsexual will give something away but she doesn't, is on her best behavior, which is really saying something for her.

Adrena makes an excuse about doing some paper work in her office, leaves the three of us.

The show starts and Louella and Linda are captivated by the performers, the lights, the professionalism of the production.

Finally I begin to relax a little.

Chapter Thirteen

We're on the beach walking along holding hands: Ricky's idea. She wears a thin wrap over a pink shorty, a breeze parting the wrap revealing the lump in the front of her panties. The sun is just peeking over the Atlantic side and this side the gulf is in shadows which will quickly disappear as the sun rises.

Adrena's back at the bungalow still asleep. Ricky says she stayed at the club until early morning, her and Rene and a couple of other girls having some kind of pow wow.

"How did you like the Rusty Anchor?" says Ricky.

"It was crowded, a lot of straights. It'll never change. A redneck crowd but plenty of young gals and guys. My mom was hitting on a couple of cowboys. I think she likes 'em young."

"And your Aunt Linda?"

"The guys were flocking around her more since she's mom's kid sister. Don't know if you noticed at the club but Linda's got a very impressive set of hooters."

"Yes, she's very attractive. So is your mother."

"We ended up at the Treasure Ship Lounge in the Marriot. It was pretty lively too. An older crowd. A couple a tourists hit on my mom and aunt but I got the distinct impression mom was waiting for somebody from the Rusty Anchor to show. A young muscular guy, blond hair like mine. He bought them drinks, wouldn't let mom alone."

"That doesn't bother you, your mother hitting on young guys?"

"Naw. Looking back I think she always had a thing for young guys. Don't know for sure but that might've been one of the reasons her and dad divorced."

"Do you ever hear from your dad?"

"Seldom." I stop, withdraw my hand from Ricky's, bare feet now in the surf, look out on the gulf, the way the sun is beginning to shine the waves. Seagulls and egrets circle under the watchful eye of that great scavenger, the frigate bird, and on the beach white pelicans roam the beach for breakfast. The smaller birds are unaware of the pirate frigate circling above them, ready to snatch a meal.

"There were things going on between the two of them. Kinky things I think."

Ricky slides her hand around my waist. "What kind of kinky things?"

I drape my arm over her shoulder, shake my head. "Aw, it's none of my business. But she had some kind a sexual hold over dad. I don't know what it was. But I think he was aware of the way she flirted with younger guys."

"And your aunt?"

"Aunt Linda always had guys hanging around her. She ended up marrying a rich farmer. But he cheated on her. Linda was smart. She let it go on, got a good divorce settlement out of him and now she don't worry about nothin.'"

"When are they leaving?"

"Today or tomorrow. I'm not sure."

"You're pretty fond of your aunt, huh?"

"Yeah. When I was a kid she used to tease me somethin' fierce. She knew I was always ogling her legs. Once ... I was about twelve I think ... she got me to paint her toenails for her. We were at grandma's and everybody else was in bed. We'd been out in her boyfriend's boat on Wilson Reservoir that day. Mom was flirting with one of his buddies, kept giving dad looks. He had to know that mom was flirting. She was pretty obvious about it.

"Anyway, Linda caught me staring at her rack and legs. Then later that night she took me into her bedroom, got me to paint her toenails. She wore a shorty and I could see the way her panties kind of molded against her sex. She knew I was looking. Years later, the day she got married I helped dress her. I think that was my going away present. I was older and well . . . hell, I don't know."

"Most women just love guys with foot fetishes," Ricky says.

"You think?"

"Sure. You can do mine for me. I know you've done Adrena's."

Her arm comes from around my waist and she cups my sex in the billowy nylon shorts I wear. I come to life almost immediately.

"Horny Jody?"

"Shit Ricky, I'm always horny."

"How about a little head?"

"You don't have to ask twice." Her hand slides inside the waistband of my shorts, slowly strokes my johnson.

"Kiss me first."

"Come on, Ricky. Just do it," I carp.

"Kiss me first. Kiss me like you would a real woman and I'll go to my knees."

"Ricky . . . "

"Do it, Jody. Put your arms around my waist and give me a good tongue lashing."

What's a guy to do?

She turns, slides her arms around my neck and I feel her reality against my leg. Looking at her face I see a woman but what presses hotly against me is anything but womanly.

I kiss her lightly at first. Her lips part and I feel the tip of her tongue sliding over my lips. A chaste kiss will not do. I blot out who I'm holding, send my tongue into her mouth. Our tongues duel and kissing Ricky is not unlike kissing a real woman.

She holds my face in her hands, stabs her tongue into my mouth.

The kiss goes on for a long time, the two of us standing in the rolling surf this early morning, like two ardent lovers on vacation. It strikes me that if another couple saw us they would certainly take us for two girls, lesbians having an early morning assignation on the beach.

Her hands slide from my face, hover at my chest, tweak my nipples, slip to my waist and inside the waistband of the fem shorts. She goes to her knees and the shorts fall around my ankles.

I feel her hands and hot breath on my tool. She cups my nuts, kisses my helmet, takes it just inside her lips. Her tongue flicks over it and I groan, caress her head, run my fingers through her long hair, wish her to be a real woman. Yet what she is doing is as good as I've ever had, maybe better. Her mouth slides past the crown and onto the shaft, licking and sucking, pulling me deeper into her warm hot pink oral cavity.

Ricky bobs her head on my cock, laving the shaft, sucking me deeper, wrapping her hands around my naked butt.

I'm lost in the exquisite sensations as she takes it all the way to the base, then pulls back and uses her hands on the shaft, flicking her tongue over the head.

Sucking.

Licking.

Engulfing my unit completely.

Unconsciously I rub my palms over my chest, feel my nips harden, tweak them, luxuriate in the acute sensuality of my hard nipples, wonder if it's really true about them, if they

become larger, thicker, they will be more sensitive to the touch. They are damn sensitive now.

Ricky's mouth is like a piston.

Making me release my pent up load of sperm.

I flex my hips but she holds my head in her mouth, jacks my cock with her hands, milks me of all my fiery essence.

My knees go weak and I collapse on the beach.

Her eyes are dreamy and lips cummy, a viscid runnel of semen on her chin.

"Kiss me."

"No."

"Kiss me, Jody."

"Please Ricky."

"I love sucking your cock but if you don't kiss me, and do it now, I'll never suck you again."

It is a threat I'm afraid she may keep.

I kiss her, feel her oily lips slide against mine. Her tongue pierces my mouth and I taste myself, have been here before.

It is something these people do.

Perverse yet exciting, drawing me down deeper into their shadowy world.

It's the next night and I'm at the club, had met my mother and aunt earlier that afternoon, saw them off. I think of my dad as I watch them head down U.S. 1 but I haven't seen or talked to him in several years. Mom doesn't care about him. I'm not sure she ever did. I'd like to see him, find out how he's doing, if he's found another woman or got remarried. My dad's the kind of guy who needs a wife, the companionship, somebody to guide him. Marriage isn't mom's thing, probably never was. Her and Aunt Linda are off to Key West, spend a few days there until they take the rental car back to Miami. It's they're intention to spend a couple nights hitting the nightclubs on South Beach.

I'm standing in front of a full length mirror in the dressing room assessing my outfit and makeup. Rene walks in, wears tight Capri pants and a sleeveless silk blouse that shows off his large nips. The remaining "girls" are putting the finishing touches to their makeup, adjusting costumes. Tonight I wear three inch pumps and a form fitting black sequin dress slit up one leg. My blond hair is coiffed and I wear false, blood-red fingernails. Under the dress is a waist cincher that narrows my waist, gives the illusion of hips.

All in all I look pretty good. If only Aunt Linda could see me now. It brings a sardonic smile to my face. In my heart of hearts I think my sexy aunt would accept it, see it for what it really is. But I don't know about Louella, my mom.

Rene comes up, drapes an arm over my shoulder.

"Sugar, you look good enough to eat."

I bat false eyelashes, smile. "I bet you say that to all the girls. By the way, I'm do in court in the morning, need to talk to Adrena, get a hold of her attorney. I haven't seen her since this morning. There's a chance I could be in jail by tomorrow afternoon. Have you seen her?"

"You're out of luck if you wanna see Adrena. She drove up to Miami while you were seeing your mother and aunt off. Catching a plane up north is what she said."

I look at her face to see if she's having me on. "You're not kidding."

"That's right, I'm not kidding. Won't be back in time for your trial I'm afraid."

I turn to the tall transsexual. "What am I gonna do, Rene?"

"Don't worry, I'm sure her lawyer will be in court with you."

"Easy for you to say."

"I'll go with you. Ricky too, how's that?"

"I'm scared. If Miriam Webster flies down here from Boston, testifies against me I could be in a world of hurt. Be my word against hers. Rene, they got me dead to rights."

"Don't worry, honey, Adrena's lawyer's a smart guy. He'll get you off."

One of the girls comes in from working the tables. My act is first. Rene gives me a hug and I leave the dressing room, head backstage.

Easy for her to say. I'm full of doubt but soon have to concentrate on my act. I go through the motions on stage and somehow get through it. My last number is a lip sync to "When Something is Wrong With My Baby" sung by Patti Labelle.

I wind it up, am standing at the front of the stage where several admirers are waiting to give me tips. In the glare I can't make them out but suddenly know who one of them is as a firm hand goes round my ankle.

The short stocky brown-skinned guy is back and I have no choice but to squat and pry his vise-like grip from my ankle. Just like the last time, I get bad vibes from him. He catches me off guard, slides his other hand up my dress all the way to my thighs.

"Take it easy, man. No handling the merchandise."

"You a fine muchucha. Nesto got more'n denaro for you," he says, poking folding money into my false cleavage. Tequila is heavy on his breath and a clumsy hand pinches my thigh. "I tole you before I like you."

I try to give the money back just as another admirer steps up and shoulders the Mex to the side, wants his turn.

"Hey gringo, wait you're fuckin' turn!"

It gives me a chance to step back from the stage. I fish the bill from between my falsies, throw it at the Mexican who has already turned. He shoves the other guy on his ass.

Oh shit!, I've got two guys fighting over me.

From out of nowhere Rene appears, stands between them. Somehow she gets the Mexican to escort her away from the stage. She's got her arm over his shoulder and his arm is around her waist, the two of them cozy as old friends. Or looking like it, anyway. A waiter helps the other guy to his feet and they retreat in another direction.

Backstage a couple girls kid me about the brief skirmish. It's not funny and I make for the hall and the dressing room, bump into my least favorite cops, Norton Norris and Melvin Morris.

"You know that guy?" Norris wants to know.

"No. He's a pain. Won't take no for an answer."

"You've seen him before then?" asks his sidekick, slyly giving me the once over.

Getting that look from the chubby Morris makes my skin crawl. "Yes, he's a regular. I've seen him around."

"How about the other girls," says Norton, "is he dating or going out with any of them?"

"I'm sure I wouldn't know, Detective Norris. Now, if you'll excuse me . . . "

Norris steps aside. "Uh, Jody, have you ever seen that guy hanging around Connie Fairchild?"

The insinuation puts goose bumps on my forearms. "That was before my time."

"Huh."

To my back Morris says, "See you in court tomorrow, darling."

From Rene they find out a City Cab picked him up in front of the club, Rene right beside him when he called. It doesn't take long to locate the driver, find out where he took the stocky Mexican. Rene's seen him at the club, too. When asked if she can remember seeing him with Connie Fairchild, she tilts her head, isn't sure but thinks that might be right. Out by U.S. 1. they set up a stake out in a convenient store parking lot across from the old one story motel where the cabby dropped him.

Melvis is hungry wants to break for eats. What if the guy takes off while we feed your endless appetite, reasons, Norris, and we lose him. What then? Melvis figures the guy's in for the night, especially after the dustup at the Chameleon Club.

Turns out Morris is right for once. The guy stays in his room.

Norris doesn't see where skipping eats will hurt his partner but doesn't say anything.

"Remember what that tall transsexual told us on that first interview?" Norris says, fishing a small notebook from inside his jacket, thumbing through the pages.

"Who?" says, Melvis, his high, hair-receding forehead wrinkling in frown lines.

"Rene Dehaven."

"Oh, yeah, her. Refresh my memory."

"She said a Mexican was hanging around the club, seemed to know Connie Fairchild."

"Oh, yeah, that's right. Jesus, Norton, I'm hungry."

"Ian MacCaulley had a thing for Connie, too."

"You think that homo lover looks like that old actor, George Hamilton?"

"Sort of but a younger version. He is handsome."

Morris gives his partner an incredulous look. "Ian's queer as ... queer as . . ." his voice trails as his brain scrambles for a suitable comparison.

"Truman Capote?"

"Whose that?" says Melvis.

"Never mind."

Constant hunger pangs overcome Melvis and he goes into the convenience store, comes back with a sub, chips, a big slurry, two candy bars and a coffee for his partner.

They sit on the motel for three hours, Norris enduring Morris' constant harangue over food, how it's not good to starve your stomach, all that internal acid eating away at your stomach walls, causing an ulcer or something worse.

Norris tells him to watch the Frito's room while he goes into the office, checks the Mexican's registration.

"What?"

"Number six. Watch that room."

"What's a Frito?" Melvis wants to know, but Norris ignores the question, is already moving into the street.

Five minutes later Norton is back in the unmarked. "He's registered as Nesto Hernandez."

"Let's run his name through the computer," suggests Melvis.

Norton gives him a look, lights his last cigarette, crumples the box, drops it on the floorboard. Morris frowns. "You think he's using his real name, Melvis?"

Which begets another frown.

Norton fires the Crown Vic, says, "I'll come back tomorrow with a digital camera, try and get Nesto's photo, see if we get a match on the crime data base.

"That's not a bad idea," says Melvis as he unwraps the second candy bar, a Baby Ruth.

In the morning Rene and Ricky come with me to the muni building and the courtroom. I'm glad they're along. I'm nervous, wondering why Adrena had to pick this time to fly north. The courtroom is over half full, and as the three of us sit in the church-like pews behind the railing, I scan the crowd looking for Miriam Webster but don't see her. She must be waiting in the hall for the prosecutor assigned to my case. I didn't notice the two detectives either.

It seems we wait a long time, only half listening to attorneys plead their clients cases.

At the last minute Adrena's attorney breezes into the courtroom, briefcase hanging from his arm, says not to worry, all is well.

Easy for him to say.

He scoots in beside me. Eyeing the three of us, a distasteful expression crosses his face. His eyes are drawn back to Rene several times. He's probably trying to figure out if she's a real girl.

It gives me a dirty thought and I picture him naked on all fours, Rene ready at his backside.

About another half an hour and my case is called and I make my way with the lawyer through the swinging gate, take chairs at a table on the left. A young prosecutor, whose been here most of the morning, sits at an opposing table, a real babe with coal black hair and a golden tan, gives my attorney a heads-up and together they approach the bench. Something's going on but what I don't know. The judge glances my way a couple times as he nods his head, listening to the two of them talk in hushed voices. Listening to their animated whispers, the judge looks at the papers on his high bench, frowns, pushes wire-framed glasses up a bulbous nose, glances my way. More frowns while he shakes his head.

I wish I could hear what's being said.

The babe with the nice frame and black hair shrugs.

Their conference lasts about five more minutes and we overhear the judge scolding the young prosecutor, something about wasting the court's time.

I hear the judge say, "Case dismissed."

I'm sure he can't mean my felony case.

The attorney comes back, smiles and tells me I'm free to go.

"Just like that?"

He nods, checks his Rolex and suggests we go out into the hall.

Outside the courtroom he informs me that the prosecution had little choice since their star witness, Miriam Webster refused to fly to Macumba and testify. Without her testimony they really didn't have much of a case.

"You've got to be kidding me?" I'm incredulous.

"I kid you not," he says. "You can thank Adrena Forchia. I believe it was through her efforts that the Webster woman decided not to testify, thus saving you from an extended stay at the state's expense." Once more he looks at Rene, checks his watch again and takes his leave.

At the station house the next morning in the municipal building Norton's partner is late. The lanky older detective hangs around till ten while he fiddles with one of two digital cameras. He doesn't want to wait much longer for Melvis to show, calls his apartment and cell phone, letting both ring at least six times. The cell phone goes to voice mail and Norton hangs up, decides to go out to the motel alone.

He sets up in the convenience store parking lot, backing in against the store's facade, taking advantage of a small slice of shade. He buzzes down the window, lights up and sticks his arm out.

He takes a chance, goes in the store, keeps his eye on the motel, buys a coffee, watches for a bit through the large front windows of the store. The store is nice and cool and he takes his time drinking the coffee. He goes to the counter, buys a pack of Cowboy Killers, moves back to the window. He always hated stakeouts. In his experience they were mostly boring and uneventful.

After a while he becomes aware of the clerk's nervous glances, thinks about telling the kid he's a cop and on a stakeout but decides against it. This Nesto guy probably frequents the store. Less said the better.

Back in the car he buzzes down the passenger window but there's little breeze.

Another hour passes and a sleek caddy pulls into the motel parking lot in front of number six. Norton knows the car, is not surprised when Ian MacCaulley steps out, looks around and knocks on the door.

Huh.

In a little while both of them come out of the room, stand in the shade of the overhang talking, the short one gesturing with his hands. Norton raises the camera and as Nesto steps into sunlight snaps several pictures. They get in Ian's caddy, drive south on U.S.1. Norton gives them plenty of room and follows.

Follows for over twenty miles before heading back to Macumba.

Back at the station he calls Marathon, Big Pine Key other jurisdictions, gives them a BOLA on Ian's caddy. No apprehension he explains but wants to know if the caddy passes through, and where they might be headed.

Melvis is at his desk polishing off the last donut from a cellophane-covered box.

"Where you been?" he accuses Norton after swallowing a couple bites.

"Waited on you, called both your numbers, had to get going," he says while feeding the minuscule memory card into the computer, picks the best snapshot, sits back and thinks while fumbling in his jacket for a smoke.

"You can't smoke in here, Norton."

The older detective, his tired eyes settling on his partner, looks around the open room. Just the two of them here at lunchtime.

"What about those doughnuts?"

Melvis shrugs, peers innocently into the empty box.

"Not suppose to eat in here either, I hear," Norton says casually.

"Doughnuts don't count."

After punching up the search engine, Norton leans back, looks at Melvis and lights up.

"Hey! You can't smoke anywhere in the municipal building. My mother can't stand the smell of smoke or its effects. You know that, Norton."

"Go tell her then," says Norton, exhaling, blowing smoke at Melvis's desk, watches him wave his arms, blows another cloud his way.

He sends the name and snapshot on its way, wonders if he'll get a hit, sending it this way to a specific locale and police department. Then on impulse, types Nesto Hernandez into the FBI's National Crime Information Center, isn't hopeful that the NCIC will produce a hit. Norton starts to walk out.

"Hey, where you goin'?"

"Lunch."

"Wait up a minute, I'll go with you."

"Not a chance, Melvis. Darlene don't like your company."

"Yeah, I heard you was seein' that no account ... "

" ... Don't call Darlene a dirty name you oinker, or I'll pound lumps on your noggin right here and right now."

Melvis blanches, looks at him, decides to lie. "I wasn't goin' to call her a name."

"Good thing."

At Lowes after walking the isles, Norton finds Darlene Johnson helping a customer in plumbing. She nods as he comes toward her, excuses herself, and to his question tells him, no, she hasn't had lunch but if he'll wait around a little while she'll be off for the day, take him home and give him a good ride.

A wide smile deepens the creases on the detective's otherwise sober face.

Chapter Fourteen

Rene drops me at the cottage. We'd left Ricky there after leaving court. She begged off and we went shopping. Rene didn't flirt or come on to me and I was relieved. She bought lunch at the new restaurant, Rolando's, across and down the street from the club.

Before reaching the porch I hear the shake and rumba of Jimmy Buffett, smell the distinct odor of cannabis. Ricky partying, I think. It brings a smile to my face which quickly fades when I see her in the company of the MacCaulley twins. The three of them working on a bottle of pale wine, the name of which I can't pronounce.

Iris or Ingrid, passes me the roach. All three sets of eyes are glassy. No wonder Ricky begged off from shopping.

I slouch in the only unoccupied armchair, draw the harsh smoke into my lungs. I hope they don't want to see what's in the bag. Rene picked out a couple nice outfits for me, said I'd look good in them. A little too girly for me, but that's what they want, for me to look girly, be a part of their jaded lifestyle. If the twins see what's in the bag I don't want to hear their catty remarks.

The twins wear string bikinis under short diaphanous wraps.

One of them pats the middle of the sofa, says, "Come here, Jody. We won't bite."

No, it'd probably be worse. These babes run on high sexual octane, play rough games. I'm not going to let it happen again, what they did to me at their place not so long ago. Their mother, Inga coming in, catching us, me all trussed up and having just been impaled on one of the twins dildos. The repulsive look on the old lady's face still lingers in my memory as she looked at her daughters and backed out of the room.

Scary, these two. In fact the whole family is scary.

For some unfathomable reason Ian MacCaulley and Connie Fairchild cross my mind. I shake my head to dispel the awful thought. What if Ian offed Connie? According to Rene the two of them were an item. Was that the drug connection, and if so, was the Mexican involved? The possibilities make me shiver.

Somebody — whoever it is — is playing for keeps, and they're too close to me. Hell, too close to all of us.

Ricky's glassy lamps latch onto mine. She smiles vacantly, looks at the twins, holds up four fingers.

You got to be kidding me. I shake my head, get up, go down the hall to the can, take a whiz. I need to get out of here, get away from these three potheads.

Back in the living room the twins are rummaging through the bag, pulling out the two sleeveless tops, a pair of hot pink Capri pants, some underwear and another pair of slacks.

"Look at these Capri's, sis," says one of them. Her wide eyes settle on me and she smiles, "Are these yours, Jody baby?"

"What if they are?" I challenge defensively.

Ricky sits up, looks at the new clothes. "Rene picked them out I bet."

I nod, step over to the twins. "Here, I'll take that stuff."

"Why don't you model your new threads," suggests the other one, a smirk on her pretty, Paris Hilton wannabe face.

"No thanks," I say, lunging, snatching the Capri pants away from her.

"Hey, sweetie, there's no secrets here," says the other one. The two of them exchange a chilling look. She looks at Ricky and smiles. "Did Jody baby tell you about our little interlude?"

"Interlude?" Ricky says.

"Oh, yeah. Jody was up the beach, lookin' all pretty and such. Iris and me couldn't resist, took him to bed."

"He really liked the dildo," says Ingrid.

Ricky gives up a lazy smile, sees me shaking my head at her.

I gather up the rest of the clothes, stuff them into the sack, stomp off down the hall to my room, throw the package in the closet.

Going out I check my image in the mirror on the back of the door. Long hair coiffed femininely, wearing a button-front shirt that looks too much like a blouse, unbuttoned to the middle of my smooth hairless chest. For a scintillating moment I flash-forward, see small but unmistakable boobs, dark areola and thick protruding nips; how Adrena and Ricky want me to be.

I shake my head, dispel the troubling image, look at the rest of me, my trim waist accented by a hemp belt, flare-leg khakis on smooth slender legs.

A woman's legs for sure.

I'm fucking doomed!

"Where you going?" Ricky's voice chases after me as I bound out of the cottage, head up the beach.

Wandering seemingly aimlessly, not realizing where I am going, I find myself walking onto the MacCaulley's deck. Behind me the red orb of the sun is sinking toward the distant horizon. Inga sits in one of the Adirondack loungers, Ian in a matching chair beside her, and facing them in another wooden chair is Norton Norris.

Jeez, maybe I should beat feet, get out of here. It's too late, though. I'm already on the deck. Ian invites me to join them over my protests. He looks relieved. I stand uncertainly, glance at Norris who nods in recognition.

I try not to think of what might be going on at the bungalow, Ricky and the MacCaulley twins. I'm surprised at the twitch of jealousy I feel imagining Ricky hooked up with the twins.

"I was just out for a stroll. Nice night," I say lamely, feeling the fool.

Inga looks at me as if I'm a cockroach but her son waves me to a chair, looking thankful for the company.

Inga looks at her son. "Do you know this, uhm . . . man?"

"Sure, mom. He works at the club."

Norton turns back to mother and son. "Ian you're keeping some rough company. I think you better tell me about it before it's too late."

"What company I keep is my business, detective," he says defensively, looks at me and adds, "You working tonight, Jody?"

I shrug, don't want to say anything in front of the cop who, for some strange reason, likes me, I think.

Nobody says anything for several moments.

Then, "Nesto Fernandez." Coming from Norris.

"Who's Nesto Fernandez?" Inga MacCaulley wants to know.

Norton looks at Ian, waits.

Sitting there it strikes me how much Ian looks like the actor, George Hamilton. A younger version for sure, but the same dark tan, swept back coal black hair, even his facial features.

"Ma'am," says Norton, "Nesto Fernandez is a drug dealer."

"Now, wait a minute," objects Ian. "You don't know that. And besides, his name is Gomez, not Fernandez."

"Huh," says Norton. He looks at Ian. "I'm pretty sure this Latino is dealing. You're in too deep, Ian. I'm gonna bust that Latino one way or another. He's dirty and I know it."

"I don't know anything about that," defends Ian, looking out to sea.

"What're you saying, detective, that my son's a drug dealer?"

Norton looks at her, then her son, says nothing.

This old cop is cagey. Smarter than he looks.

"Ian, do you know this Mexican?"

Ian looks at his mother, slowly nods his head.

"What about Gomez and Connie Fairchild?"

Ian's head snaps back to the detective.

"What ya mean?"

"Connie, Gomez and you. Only it's just you and Nesto now," says Norton.

"I told you," says Inga MacCaulley angrily, "running around with those gays will get you in trouble.

You're telling me! I give the woman a look, want to tell her I'm not one of them.

"I want Connie's killer," the cop says, looking at Ian. "Nesto and you are the likely suspects."

Hey! You said I wasn't a suspect!" Ian is fidgeting in his chair, like maybe he caught a splinter in his ass from one of the wooden slats.

Norton Norris shrugs and stands. "Get away from the Latino, Ian. Or I'll take you down with him."

He starts off the porch toward the beach. "Come on, Jody, I'll walk you back to Adrena's bungalow. I want to talk to her, too." He looks at mother and son. "Mrs. MacCaulley, you better have a serious talk with your son. I'll be back for my car."

Sounding very ominous to me.

I tell him Adrena's not home, don't fancy walking along the beach with this cagey cop.

He comes along anyway.

Heading down the beach Norris stops, unlaces his shoes, slips off his socks and rolls up his pant legs.

"How'd it go in court for you, Jody?"

"You know how it went. You and Morris weren't even there."

Norris smiles. "The Forchia woman is taking care of you Jody. But at what price?"

"What ya mean — price?" I say defensively.

He looks me up and down, shakes his head. "It's none of my business. But if you remember, when you got out of the pokey I told you to stay away from the Forchia woman. Now look at you."

He has a point but what can I do, finally, never at a loss for words, say, "It's not what you think, Norton."

"Hmph. You're one of them, looks like to me."

"No! No, I'm not. You don't understand."

"You're right about that, Jody."

"Look, I owe her and — "

"You thought you could play her, just like the Webster woman."

"No, it's not like that."

"Please . . . "

"Jeez, Norton, you're right. Wouldn't you go for a babe like Adrena?"

"No. I know when I'm out of my league."

"Well, shit, I can't just up and leave. I owe her."

"When did you care about owing anybody?"

"You are cynical, Norton. You know that?"

He smiles, reaches in his shirt pocket, comes out with a cigarette, lights up with a Zippo and exhales. The ocean breeze whisks away the smoke.

Birds meander the beach before us searching for food.

"It's nothing to me, Jody. But it's not too late."

"Not too late?"

"For you. As a grifter you're not very good, really. I've known a lot of them. You could go straight."

"I am straight!"

The cop chuckles dryly. "I mean stop grifting. Get a job, go back to college. Something like that."

"Good advice, detective. I'll consider it."

That gets another dry chuckle.

We walk in silence the rest of the way.

The lights are on in the bungalow and I don't see Adrena's Porsche, wonder how Ricky and I will get to the club tonight.

The ripe smell of cannabis hits us as we reach the porch. Jeez, I hope he don't bust Ricky.

Inside the three of them are passing another roach. Grey haze hangs in the air and Jimmy Buffet sings a fave ballad about Spider John. Ricky chokes when she sees the cop come in behind me. The twins slouch on the couch, grin stupidly at us.

"Having a party?" quizzes Norton.

One of the twins tokes the joint, smiles at him, says, "You wanna join us copper?"

They're in a grubby bar on U.S. 1 south of Macumba Beach sitting at a back table. Ian's sips a Michelob, the Latino a Dos Equis — the lager. It caters to locals but Ian doesn't see anybody he knows and he didn't think he would. Different circles, for sure.

A couple guys are playing pool and several worn-looking women are at the bar with about half a dozen patrons. Ian sits with his back to the wall so he can see the front door. Nesto sits across from him, his back also to the wall.

"I'm out Nesto. Things are getting too hot. It's not worth it."

"No, amigo, you ain't out. You out when I say you out. I tole you des before. Only you don't listen."

"The cop came by the house this afternoon. Somehow he knows about us." Ian leans across the table until Nesto looks him in the eye. He doesn't like what he sees in those dark malevolent eyes, makes the hair on the back of his neck stand up. "I'm not going to prison for dealing. You gotta understand that."

"Fook the Federalizes. Those amigos in Key West, we took dem Glass and meth, a little pot. Coke. El done good. Man, you loco tink we quit now. We be goin out in des boat of yours soon." Gomez pokes a stubby forefinger on the scarred tabletop. "We be don wit it soon, amigo." The Mexican smiles crookedly. "Los — you and me, amigo — we talk about los boat."

"The boat's not for sale, Nesto," Ian says in an even voice. Connie had warned him about the Mexican and now — finally — he understands. The guy is loco!

"Everything for sale in des country," Nesto says with a crooked smile.

"The cop ain't. He's on to us and I'm out," Ian says forcefully.

The two guys shooting pool look at them.

Gomez leans into the table. "Look you cocksucker. You ain't out until Nesto says you out. Or maybe you get de same ting Connie got."

"So you admit it."

"White boy, you estupido. Da bitch cheatin' me, got what she had coming."

After squinting at the twins through the pot smoke Norton dropped a generous smile on them, asked Ricky to let Adrena know he wanted to talk to her, that he was going back up the beach, talk to Ian and his mother again. I walked back out on the porch with him and he wondered aloud if he'd given Inga enough time with her son to talk him out of hanging with the Latino. I shrugged and he went down the porch steps, turned back and said, "Those twins give me the willies."

I nodded, watched him go up the beach and be swallowed by the darkness.

Now Ricky and I are back at the bungalow after a short night at the club. One of the other girls brought us home. Rene and Adrena stayed, they're having a meeting with the other girls. The main reason Ricky and I are home is too much wine. I'm not much of a wine drinker and it shows. Ricky kept filling my glass.

Now the two of us are in Adrena's bed, waiting for her. Ricky's surprise. She rolled a joint, and on top of the wine I'm now thoroughly wasted.

We're in the clench and she's sucking my nipples, stroking my cock. I'm naked and she's wearing only panties, her cute cock flat against her belly, the crown peeking over the waistband.

I find one of her small breasts in my mouth while she works on getting me up.

It's crazy but I'm too far gone to fight her off.

Time passes and somehow I find myself on all fours, Ricky kneeling behind me, reaching around my hips, stroking it, pressing herself between my cheeks. I squirm trying to avoid her insistent rod but she skillfully moves with me.

Her voice is soft, encouraging, coaxes me to be still, reassures me I'll like it.

She tells me to lean down on my elbows and tweak my little boy nipples.

I do and she positions herself, holds my hips.

This is so crazy and I'm so drunk, high on pot. Losing what little judgment I have left.

Man, that's a laugh! Better judgment.

Jeez!

Ricky pulls back with her hands and pops inside me. I cry out and she scolds me, says I'll get used to it. Even like it.

I giggle. It's not that bad.

I lose my hard as she inches inside, gently fucks me.

One hand snakes around my hip, strokes my softy.

We establish a rhythm and, between me tweaking my nipples and having my cock stroked, I get hard, feel the fullness, wish I hadn't had so much wine, hadn't shared the smoke.

I close my eyes, try to lose myself in the erotic and forbidden moment. Soon Ricky's thrusts go deeper, become more insistent.

Both hands hold my hips securely as she rams her cute tool inside my ass.

Fucking me, making me somehow enjoy it. She's told me about anal orgasms, how much fun they are and that I should just give into it.

She buries it inside me and I hear her moan, pump her cock into my rectum.

But I don't cum and I feel cheated.

When she withdraws it hurts and I fall, roll over on my side.

I'm about to drift off when I feel her hot breath on my softy. She takes it in her mouth, massages my balls, brings it back to life. She guides my hands to my chest and sucks for all she's worth, licking sucking, stroking my shaft as she swallows all of me.

It takes a while but I feel it coming, flex my hips, try to bury it in her throat.

We cuddle and her lips find mine. Her tongue snakes inside my mouth and I lay passively in her arms, accept my own semen.

At the station Norton finds a note on his desk to call a cop in Columbus Ohio. He leaves a message for the cop who isn't in yet. His query to the FBI's national crime data base made way too many hits. Not enough time to check them all out. Fernandez is an alias, which is no surprise. He told his partner as much and Ian confirmed it. He remembers punching the alias into the NCIC. Won't get much there, and if anything it'd be the wrong guy, a false lead. He considers bringing Nesto in, fingerprinting him. But that might make the Latino rabbit. If he takes off Norton would lose him for sure. He sits at his desk alone in the squad room, thinks about Ian and Nesto, how to bring them to justice.

His gut tells him the Latino is the killer but he has no real proof and not enough circumstantial evidence. He goes outside and smokes a cigarette, thinks about Connie Fairchild. The transvestite was far from innocent but that doesn't matter to him. She's still a human being and he wants "her" killer. He thinks of Conrad as a her. It's easier that way and that's what she wanted to be. Back at his desk he calls the station in Columbus again, gets lucky. The cop who called is in, tells him the picture looks suspiciously like one Nesto Gomez who has a rap sheet in Columbus for drugs but he's not currently wanted. Norton brings up Conrad Ferris, a.k.a. Connie Fairchild. She's got a jacket, too, and there's an outstanding warrant on her for dealing. She missed her court appearance, disappeared. Norton tells the guy to update the records. Conrad Ferris was found stabbed to death on the beach in Macumba.

It's the next morning and Norton finds Melvis Morris at his desk eating a box of sugary covered doughnuts. Morris tells him his mother is pushing the land development along the stretch of beach owned by the MacCaulley's, that the city council will approve at their next meeting an aggressive zoning law that will put the MacCaulley land at risk.

"You can't take that land away from Inga MacCaulley," says Norris.

Melvis licks sugar dust from the ends of his fingers, peers longingly into the box of doughnuts. "Mother thinks she can put enough pressure on the MacCaulley's to make them at least lease the land to the city which will in turn lease it to the land development consortium."

"The family has owned that land for generations."

Melvis smiles, selects another doughnut. "It's progress, Norton. It'll be good for the city, broaden the tax base, bring more tourists."

Melvis bites into the doughnut, seems pleased.

"A lot of us who live here like Macumba Beach just the way it is."

"It's what the city wants that matters. If my mother can pull this off she'll run for mayor again and win." He leans over his desk, looks around surreptitiously even though it's only the two of them at the desks. "If she wins the mayoral election she's going to

make me the chief. Think of it Norton. You'll be my right hand man. I'm taking you with me to the top."

Norris groans, reaches in his shirt pocket for a Cowboy Killer, thinks he may have to find another place to live, maybe farther south. Key Largo, someplace like that.

The skinny detective with the craggy face and tired eyes changes the subject. "I can't convince Ian MacCaulley to give up Nesto Gomez."

"Who?"

"The Mexican." Norton brings his chubby partner up to date on the murder case, is convinced Nesto did it. Nesto, using the alias Fernandez picked up too many hits on the NCIC, and they don't have fingerprints but the cop in Columbus is almost sure it's Gomez, both him and the murdered tranny from the same place. Both of their jackets having drug related felonies.

"The two of them are in it together," says Melvis.

"You think the two of them together killed her. Huh. What makes you think so? How do you know?"

Melvis rubs his chin. "Ian's a homo and so is that Mexican." He shrugs. "A lovers triangle. Both of them after the bitch."

"What about the drugs?"

"All three of them are dirty," says Melvis. "This Connie Fairchild got what she deserved." "She was a human being. Nobody deserves to get snuffed out, Melvis."

"Let's bring both of them in. Fingerprint the Frito and sweat 'em." Melvis is pleased with himself for using his partner's term; Frito.

"Just like in the movies, huh?"

"Yeah, MacCaulley will squeal for sure."

Norris goes to the coat rack near the door, slips into his jacket.



"You're a regular Clint Eastwood, Melvis. You could scare a confession out of Robert DeNiro for sure."

The sarcasm doesn't go unnoticed by the fat detective.

"Hey, where you going?"

"Out."

"I'll tag along."

"Stay put. Have another doughnut."

Chapter Fifteen

Ian studies the horizon in all directions, doesn't see another boat. They're maybe twenty miles out to sea. The sun, a fiery orange ball, hangs in the west, will sink in a few hours. He doesn't want to be out here after dark, throttles back the *Crustacea*, comes down the ladder from the captain's deck.

Except for waves from the cruiser's wake the sea is calm, gently rolling.

Gomez is looking over the gunwale into blue water.

"I see no fishes, hombre."

"Give it a little time, Nesto. The dolphins and sail fish probably scattered because of the boat's engine." Nesto looks at him. "The motor you know, it makes mucho noise under the surface."

Gomez picks up the bottle of Reposado Tequila. It's the 1800, and Ian flinched when he bought it but when Gomez jumped in the boat and saw the bottle, he grinned from ear to ear.

Gomez takes another swig straight from the bottle, hands it across the open deck to Ian represses a moue, takes a slug, then looks at the bottle, sees it's about a third gone, smiles and hands it back to Nesto.

"Des tings look pretty old," says Nesto, nudging one of the two harpoon guns laying in the bottom of the boat beside the unattached rusty anchor. "You sure de work, gringo?"

Ian sits on the bench across from the Mexican, nods. "They belonged to my dad. They are old but do work. We speared many a sword fish and shark with them."

Gomez looks over the side into the deep water searching for fish. He turns back, takes another swig of Reposado, watches as Ian picks up one of the harpoon guns.

"See this spool of line under the barrel? We use it to reel in the fish after it's been harpooned so it won't get away."

Gomez looks at the rusty anchor, then over the side at the calm waters. "No mucho current here. You maybe din't need de extra anchor."

Ian smiles at him, holds the harpoon gun across his lap. "Oh, I'll need it. Wait and see."

Nesto takes another drink, bites into one of the lemon wedges Ian thoughtfully cut. "So you come to Nesto's way of tinkering. We make mucho dinero. Fuck de ass-wipe cops. Now, if only you make me a deal on des boat, we mucho friends for life."

"For life," repeats Ian. "I've been thinking about that. That cop ain't stupid. It's just a matter of time before he nails one of us. Maybe both."

Nesto waves a dismissive hand, peers over the side. "Hombre I don see no fishes. Maybe you pick de wrong place."

"No, this is the right place." Ian does a three-sixty scan of the horizon. "Nesto, the boat's not for sale. I told you but you won't listen."

"I wan the boat, white boy. Make you good deal. I tole you."

"This was my dad's boat. I have a lot of fond memories of the two of us on the Crustacea. And I'm telling you this last time, you can't buy the boat for no amount of money."

Nesto's smile fades fast from Ian's tone of voice. "Maybe I jus' take de boat. What you tink of that, gringo?" He turns from looking over the side and his dark brown eyes go hard.

"I've given this a lot thought, Nesto. I'm afraid this is the only way for you and me."

Nesto looks at the harpoon gun that's pointed at him.

"You ain't got the guts," he says and tilts the bottle, lets the tequila burn down his throat.

"Yeah, I thought about that, too."

I'm gonna gut you."

"Yeah, I figured when this was all over you might. Like you did Connie."

The thunk and report wasn't that loud.

Nesto looks at Ian, the grim smile on his face, sees the trail of line stretching from the reel.

He drops the bottle of Reposado. It doesn't break but rolls toward Ian who picks it up.

Nesto looks down, is surprised to see the harpoon sticking out of his gut just above his belt.

He looks at Ian who calmly sits across from him on the opposite bench.

It doesn't hurt. He doesn't feel a thing. Not yet.

His eyes go wide and he says, "You cocksucker! I gut you for sure now."

Nesto Gomez tries to stand up but the harpoon arrow has him pinned to the gunwale. He squirms around trying to free himself and then begins to feel an ache.

"I think the arrow is embedded in the gunwale, Nesto."

Nesto looks down at the spreading dark red stain — almost brown — leaking from the shaft. He grabs the shaft in both hands and jerks but it doesn't come loose.

"You cocksucker!" screams Nesto, and blood bubbles from his mouth.

Nesto struggles with the shaft but the arrow seems firmly embedded in the wooden gunwale.

"I don't know about pulling that arrow out, Nesto. It's barbed and will tear more of your guts up, even a bigger hole in your stomach if you try and pull it back through."

Now Nesto shudders from the pain that starts to come at him in waves. He looks down at the blossoming stain, sees his life leaking out of him, over his belt and soaking his trousers.

"You cocksucker!," he screams, and more blood bubbles from his mouth, down his chin.

"Yeah, you said that. And you're right." Ian kneels in the bottom of the cruiser, plays out some line from the reel under the barrel of the harpoon gun, begins wrapping it around the old rusty anchor.

The Mexican utters a long litany of Spanish, struggles with the shaft.

"I hope that's a prayer, Nesto. I don't think it matters much where you're going, though."

Nesto slumps against the gunwale, held in place by the stubborn arrow and shaft of the harpoon.

Ian sits back, turns up the bottle of tequila, takes a long drink, grimaces as it burns his throat, puts fire in his belly. "I really liked Connie, Nesto. She was a lot of fun. The two of us were going to take off after we got enough money. Maybe, at first, get a small apartment near South Beach."

Nesto, eyes glazed, looks at the man sitting across from him, can't quite figure how he underestimated him.

"You cock — "

"Cocksucker. I got it the first time, Nesto. We're both cocksuckers, you and me. The only difference is you'll soon be a dead cocksucker."

Ian scans the distant ocean for any other sign of life. Nothing, not even birds.

"The water here is pretty deep. I'll wrap you up in this line, heave you overboard. With a little luck maybe the sharks will find you. Maybe, if you're lucky, you'll see the fishes after all."

He plays out more line, starts wrapping Nesto's legs up, moving up his body.

Nesto slaps feebly with his hands and Ian catches one then the other, wraps them in line, too.

He steps back, grabs the shaft where there's no blood and gives a mighty jerk. Nesto moans and blood leaks from his mouth and wound. Ian has to jerk twice before the arrow tip comes free.

"You've bled all over my boat, Nesto. But I've enough rags to clean it up."

With some difficulty he leverages under the Mexican's arms, gets him in a standing position.

"Bon voyage, Nesto," Ian says and shoves his body over the side.

For a moment Nesto bobbles above the surface, stares at Ian with vacant, nearly lifeless eyes, and then the weight of the anchor takes him down.

With the sinking sun at his back, Ian cuts back the cruiser's engine as he passes the idle buoys toward the calm glassy waters of the marina. The boathouse and slips are in long shadows this late in the afternoon, yet there's enough light for Ian to see two shadowy figures standing on the walkway near his slip.

The stoop shouldered shorter guy is old Roy Rouse, caretaker of the marina, the old man with weathered wrinkled skin who is in a desperate battle with melanoma. The other guy, tall and slim, is Ian's worst nightmare.

What is Norton Norris doing here this time of day, he wonders, as he throttles back the twenty-four footer and glides into the slip gently nudging the dock buoys.

He slides down the ladder from the captain's deck, sees Norris standing beside the gunwale right where Nesto had been sitting when he'd harpooned him. Nothing to do about the chewed up hole in the gunwale made by the harpoon. He had toiled with rags and seawater for some time before heading back to shore, trying to get rid of the huge blood-spill the Mexican had leaked all over his boat.

He was quickly over the side, noticed the cop surveying the boat.

"What can I do for you, Detective Norris?" he says, doing his best to form a friendly smile.

Norton looks at the cabin door. "Where's the Frito?"

"The who?"

"The Mexican. He went out with you."

"Uhm, you must be mistaken, detective. I went out by myself." He sees old Roy Rouse shaking his head, looking at the cop.

"No sir," says the old man. "I seen the two of you leave together and I called Mr. Norris right away like I was supposed to."

Norton looks at Ian, doesn't say anything.

"Naw, you must be seeing things old man. I went out alone, did some fishing."

Norton steps over the side, his foot on the upholstered bench right where Nesto had been sitting.

"Hey!, get out of my boat."

"Where's your catch, Ian?"

Ian shrugs. "Didn't catch nothin.'"

The detective goes into the cabin under the captain's bridge, Ian right behind him.

"I didn't invite you on this boat, detective. This is my boat. Private property."

Norris ignores him, looks around the small cabin. "Why you so nervous, Ian?"

"Nervous? I'm not nervous. What makes you think I'm nervous?"

Norton's tired eyes settle on Ian MacCaulley, make him uncomfortable. "Where's Gomez?"

Ian shrugs, walks out of the small cabin into a slice of sunshine that somehow found its way into the slip and his boat.

Norton follows and Ian sees him looking at the discarded bottle of tequila on the other bench.

"I didn't know you liked tequila," says the detective, taking out a hanky and carefully picking up the nearly empty bottle by the neck. "Reposado 1800. This stuff is expensive."

"There weren't no mistake detective," says Roy Rouse, standing beside the slip. "The MacCaulley boy showed up first and then the Mexican. They've been out on his daddy's boat before. These boys are up to somethin' for sure."

The cop is looking at the upholstered bench, and then Ian sees it, too, where a rime of blood has soaked into the crease made by the white stitching, about two feet in length, dark, discolored. Then he's looking at Ian's feet. Ian looks down, sees tiny dark droplets on his boat shoes, a dark brown smudge on his off-white muslin trousers near the cuff.

Norris's eyes settle on Ian, then he looks at the old man standing on the dock beside the slip. "Roy, you go on back to the boathouse. Thanks for your help. I'll be up there in a minute."

The weathered old man looks at the two of them, hovers for a moment and then shuffles off toward the boathouse.

The detective's tired eyes settle on Ian.

Ian sighs, sits down on the bench but not too close to where Nesto had been sitting.

"Where's the Frito?"

Ian looks at the cop, rubs his face with his hands. "He killed Connie. He admitted it to me. I was pretty sure it was him, anyway."

Norton hands him the bottle of tequila. "Have a drink."

Ian tilts the bottle, drinks, holds it between his legs. Nesto's fingerprints will be all over this bottle and Norton just handed it to him. But he knows he's caught. This cop is far from stupid.

Norris sits down on the bench seat across from him, lights a cigarette, looks out at the sinking sun which is a fiery red orb, about to slide off the edge of the earth. God, he likes this place, the people, the slow pace.

"I . . .," Ian starts, then falls silent. "I know you don't understand, Norton. But I liked Connie. Oh, I knew it wouldn't last forever. But we had good times together and, well . . ."

"I didn't know her. Before my time. She was playing both of you I guess."

"Maybe at first. But we got to know each other — shit! I don't expect you to understand."

"You don't have to explain it to me, Ian. But you're right, I don't understand. It doesn't matter that I don't understand."

Ian takes another drink of tequila, feels it burn all the way down into the pit of his stomach.

"Gomez is gone."

Ian looks up. The way the cop said it.

"I took him out, told him we were going to do some deep sea fishing, harpoon some game fish." Ian looks at his feet, the dark brown smudge near the cuff. "And, well, I — "

"I know what you did, Ian. You took him out to meet a boat. His people, his compadres, and they took off. Maybe back to Mexico."

Ian stared at the detective.

"It was getting too hot for the Frito here. He knew it'd just be a matter of time before he was caught. If not for Connie's murder, then for dealing."

Ian nodded, handed the cop the bottle.

"No thanks. I don't drink."

The cop stood, stepped on the bench seat, over the gunwale and out of the boat. He lit a cigarette and started off, then stopped, turned back. "Ian, no more drugs. You understand?"

Ian understood.

Melvis shows up late again to the squad room with the ever-present box of doughnuts under his arm, offers his partner one and dives right in, hungrily biting into another round sugary morsel. Norris sips coffee and considers his decision. Don't rock the boat a tiny voice is telling him but looking across his desk at Melvis Morris, he decides rocking the boat is worth it.

He was off duty last night and stopped in the Chameleon Club about ten-thirty, Darlene Johnson with him. Having never been to the Chameleon Club, she wanted to see a show and he was happy to oblige her. Seeing Adrena Forchia head down the hall beside and behind the stage, he ordered drinks for both of them; a Shirley Temple for himself and for Darlene a vodka gimlet. He excused himself and found Adrena in her office sitting behind her desk, papers scattered across it.

She didn't look happy to see him. "Detective Norris, how are you this evening?"

"Fine, brought a friend of mine. She's never seen one of your floor shows."

"I hope she'll be entertained."

"I'm sure she will."

"Have you made any progress on finding Connie's murderer?"

Norton fishes in his pocket for a smoke and asks permission. Adrena nods and he lights up, blows smoke away from her. "I'm afraid the murder of Conrad Ferris will stay unsolved, Ms. Forchia."

"You don't sound too unhappy about it," she observes.

His smile deepens the wrinkles in his craggy face. "Sometimes justice sneaks up on us. I'm convinced it did for Nesto Gomez, her killer."

"The Latino who's been bothering the girls at the club?"

"Yes. I thought you should know. He won't be around to harass any of the girls or push drugs. I think this drug thing has met its end, too. If I stay in Macumba Beach — I'm considering moving on — I'd appreciate it if you'd let me know if drugs become a problem again. I'm not talking about pot and maybe meth. I don't know if we'll ever stop the meth. Too much money in it. But cocaine and heroin, I'd like to stop it."

"I'm totally against the illegal use of any drugs, detective. I've told my girls as much. Using drugs on these premises will get them fired. We've enough to deal with, our unorthodox lifestyle without adding the taint of drugs to it."

"Don't you find this lifestyle much more acceptable than in the North where we both came from?"

"Yes, that's true. I've noticed, too, you don't look down your nose upon us, the girls."

"To each his own, Adrena."

"This Gomez character. He won't be hanging around here then. Is that what you're saying?"

Norton nods, looks for a place to dump his ashes. Adrena reaches in one of the desk drawers, slides and ashtray across to him.

"I'll tell you this, and it would be best if it was kept between the two of us, Nesto Gomez will not be bothering anyone around here or anywhere else — at least not in this world."

"That is indeed good news and I'm grateful to hear it. Not a word about the Latino from my lips from this night forward."

"Are you still fighting Melvis and his mother over this land development?"

Adrena nods. "I don't want to see the pristine north beach corrupted by condos, high rises and the such and all that that stuff brings. I've been told seventy percent of the condos in Panama City Beach sit unoccupied. With the economy the way it is now, it'd be a bad idea to build more here. The developers will, I hope, soon realize this."

"I agree. If I stay here in Macumba Beach, I will help you fight these guys."

Adrena looks at the gaunt, craggy faced detective. "Won't that put your job in a precarious position?"

Norton smiles. "It sure will. But that might be a good thing."

Now in the squad room of the police station which is housed inside the new city building, Norton watches Melvis tag another doughnut and devour it, drink from a carton of milk.

Norton leans toward Melvis, gets his attention. "Melvis, the Mexican got away. He's gone." "Gone?" Melvis incredulous. "What' ya mean, gone?"

"Can't find him anywhere. He must have been in a hurry. He left all his stuff in that flea bag motel."

"He can't be gone," says Melvis. "What about Ian MacCaulley. Let's go talk to him."

"I already have, Melvis. Ian doesn't know where the guy went. But he's glad he's gone."

The other detectives in the squad room are watching them now.

"I'm gonna drill that queer, MacCaulley. I'll find the spic," Melvis says with bravado.

"Melvis, you couldn't find the ocean if you were standing on the beach."

"What the fuck is it with you, Norris? You and me are supposed to be partners."

"Don't remind me. Another thing, Melvis, I'm going to fight you and mother on this land development thing. It's a bad idea and a bad time for throwing up condos and tourist traps on the north beach."

Melvis looks at him, chews on the doughnut, shakes his head. "Opposing my mother and the city council is not a good thing for you, Norton. Or your job, I might add."

Norton takes out a cigarette and lights up over his partner's protests. The other guys at nearby desks suppress smiles. "I really don't give a fuck, you oinker."

He grabs his sports coat off the back of his chair and starts out.

"Hey!, we got work to do," says Melvis. "Where you think you're going?"

"Darlene has a couple days off and we're heading out of Dodge."

"You can't do that!"

Norton smiles, flips Melvis the bird.

They're in Key West at a restaurant off the beaten path, where some of the locals eat, have just finished medium rare burgers and crisp fries and are now drinking milk shakes, Darlene worried about the calorie intake.

In the booth behind them sit two old codgers, their weathered faces evidence of the relentless Florida sun.

Norton is happy in Darlene's company, glad that she doesn't see the need to talk a lot, both of them sitting in the booth in silence enjoying each other's company.

Conversation from the booth where sit the two old guys drifts to them: "Our nephew who's been in Brazil for years working in the rain forest called the other day, asked the wife if she'd got the bird he sent her for the holidays."

"Yeah, the one in Brazil, he sent you and Myrtle a bird?"

"Yes, Mortie, every holiday he sends us a present. He's very close to Myrtle. He asked the wife did she get the bird and she says, 'Oh yes, Herman, we got it. That was so thoughtful of you to send us the bird.' and he says, 'It was a very rare bird, auntie. I hope you like it.' and the wife says back, 'Oh, Herman, the bird, it was very good. Very tasty. You ate the bird?' he says. 'Auntie, tell me you didn't eat that rare bird. It speaks three languages!'"

"So what did Myrtle tell your nephew?" asks the old codger.

"Well, Herman, the bird should of said something."

Norton grins, shakes a cigarette out of a pack of Cowboy Killers, starts to light up."

"Norton, this is a no smoking zone," gently chides Darlene. "But I know a bed and breakfast not too far from here that allows smoking in the rooms. In the bed even." She gives him a look.

Norton's grin widens. "Lead the way my lady."

Rene and I exit Rolando's after having some authentic Cuban cuisine. We decide we don't want to go back to the club, not even to party. It's a really slow night and Adrena shooed us out, gave us the night off. She was staying behind with Ricky, do some paper work and get the place organized since it wasn't crowded. Ricky groaned, didn't want to stay behind, but Adrena insisted.

We wear very short skirts, the kind that make you keep your knees together when getting out of chairs or cars. Rene towers over me in elevated high heeled sandals, one arm casually draped over my shoulders. Before eating we did tequila shots and even though we ate we were a little tipsy from the genuine mescal.

Two guys are coming up the street toward us. Ogling. One whistles, the other gives a cat call.

Rene laughs, say, "Hey sailors, we got something for you."

"Ladies, we're not sailors."

"And we ain't no ladies."

The two guys stand at the curb, watch as we pile into Rene's Jimmy. Rene flashes them, all but takes out her dick and shakes it at them. More cat calls.

We head for the bungalow.

I doze on the way.

The Jimmy bumping over the sandy road and ruts wakes me. It is a starry night, the black sky sprinkled with God's little lanterns. She follows me up on the porch and for a minute we stare at the black ocean, foamy waves rolling along the beach before disappearing in the vast darkness of night.

Inside I turn on a few lights, remember Ricky and the MacCaulley twins sitting her smoking a Fat Boy not that long ago.

In the kitchen I swig orange juice from the carton, ask Rene if she wants something.

"No sugar. But there's been something I've been wanting to give you for a long time"

Hearing her voice I turn around, didn't realize she followed me into the kitchen.

The tall transsexual stands in the doorway, skirt around her ankles, muscle hanging out over the waistband of her panties.

"Cowabunga!"

The damn thing throbs and sways, raises it head like a divining rod.

"Jody, I've been wanting to give you this for the longest time."

"Put that damn thing away, Rene, before you hurt somebody."

"Not this time, sugar."

Somehow I scoot past her. On her face is an amused expression. I run down the hall, twist my ankle and break off the heel of my shoe.

"Put that thing away, Rene!"

She starts after me, her gargantuan swinging between her legs.

I hobble into my room, slam and lock the door, lean against it, breathe a sigh of relief.

Rene pounds on the door. "This flimsy door won't stop me, sugar."

Heart in mouth I jump on the bed.

"Jeez, this can't be real. It's all just a twisted fucking dream!"

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