



Reluctant Press presents:

Harvesting Peaches

Dee Dee Perri



A 'New Woman' E-BOOK

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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Harvesting Peaches

by Dee Dee Perri

Chapter 1

It was after the church service and before Sunday dinner when I encountered Jimmy. That he was there, in Gamma House, on a Sunday should have seemed remarkable to me, were I connected to this earth. I wasn't. My plain white 'church' dress was a high collared gown with a hemline that wisped lightly across the tiled floor that led toward the front desk. My white slippers, occasionally peeking out from my skirts as I advanced, seemed more to glide above the earth than to trample down on her bosom. Even with eyes that had muted harsh contours into slightly fuzzy transitions, I could discern the discomfort that lurked unveiled in Jimmy's eyes.

I twirled, causing my skirt to billow out as I raised my hands above my shoulders. I twirled once, twice, then three times and began to giggle, for I'd never experienced anything quite like this. The long, conservative skirt intensified my sense of the feminine. That sense of living in the Looking Glass, of being Alice, had grown moment by moment as the day aged into early afternoon. I wasn't going to let Jimmy's long looks destroy that. I began to twirl again even more rapidly.

He grabbed me, or to be more exact, I spun willy-nilly into his arms as a fit of giggles consumed me. He waited until I was fully entrapped and ceased to struggle. Finally, as I let his arms gather in my whole weight and hold me suspended against gravity, he said, "How would you like to go for a ride, Peaches?" He didn't wait for me to respond but led me to the front door. IT OPENED. I stood there transfixed. This was Sunday and it was afternoon. I hopped over the threshold like one might jump over a rope and looked back in delighted surprise mixed with a bit of alarm. The door opened and I was free. For over four months, it hadn't opened, not to me. I looked back at Jimmy without comprehension. "Never on a Sunday," I said as confusion bloomed. There were no day passes on Sunday,

there was almost no staff and certainly no one to supervise me, except Jimmy and Jimmy wasn't a real member of Gamma House.

"But a Sunday drive would just be the thing, don't you think, Peaches?"

I thought my heart would explode as he joined me. We glided onto the sidewalk and down the nearly empty street. Ok, I glided; he seemed to be entirely Earthbound.

Jimmy was an M.D. who worked at least forty-sixty hours each week at Eastside Hospital; he had a small but growing private practice. Not rich, but certainly a man of adequate income. The car was the same shambling wreck he'd owned as an undergraduate, a Ford Crown Victoria built long before God had run out of oil. Twenty years old if it was a day. It was, maybe, the one clear sign that he hadn't bought into the 'doctor status' thing. I remember thinking that here was someone I could trust. I giggled and poor Jimmy rolled his eyes. He hadn't expected to find me in this condition. "When?" he said.

I knew what 'when' meant. "Oh Jimmy, I was all wrong about everything." As the car accelerated away and Gamma House disappeared, I leaned back into the seat pleased with the world for really the first time ever.

We stopped at a Burger King. I was famished but after a few bites, I was as full as a feather pillow. Jimmy took it all in good humor but it was obvious that I disturbed him something terrible. There was a young woman with a baby sitting across the room. Jimmy was talking to me and his voice was heavy with significance but it was impossible for me to keep my eyes off that sweet bundle of love. Finally he gave up, reached across the table and grabbed my wrist. Without further word, he led me back to the car. I watched that baby until I couldn't see her any longer, then, finally, my attention returned to the here and now.

I thought that we were going to Pasadena and my heart stuttered a bit at the prospect that he might be taking me to Tina, but we headed more south than that and eventually entered the very wealthy area around Huntington Gardens. The homes were mostly mansions, huge estates with vast lawns and magnificent old trees. We went into the driveway of the least of these, a mere gatehouse or cottage compared to the neighbors, but magnificent nonetheless. The drive way split, one lane going to the east side of the brownstone, the other sweeping to the left, past the main door. Jimmy stopped the car where the drive divided. "There," he said, pointing to the east side where a large sunroom, an enclosed porch, stood. "That's where my Grandfather had his medical practice."

The car stopped in front of the front door. He got out and opened my door. "I grew up here. Mom and me. You're going to love it." He looked at me to see if I understood. "It's been in probate for almost five years, but it's mine now, Peaches." He took me by the hand and led me up to the front door. He opened it and stood back, "What do you think?" he said as he nudged me inside.

It was beautiful. To the right was a formal dining room filled with marvelous mid-nineteenth century antiques and to the left was what could only be called a setting room, though the furniture was of a late nineteen-thirties style. It was no Victoria or Queen Ann structure, newer, perhaps nineteen hundred to nineteen ten. The squared massive beams running the length of the entrance way screamed, "Craftsman."

"It's exactly like my Grandmother left it, except for my study and, of course, my clinic. Let me show you around, Peaches." He took my hand in his and we went through the dining room into the connecting kitchen. The latter had almost a nineteenth-century feel to it though the major appliances were modern. Never had so much tile met so much wood. I could see why he loved this house so much.



It was quite a bit later when his arm went around my waist as he led me up the stairs to the second room. At the top of the stairs, we turned right and followed the hard-wood-floored hallway all the way to the front of the house. He stopped and opened the door before stepping aside. It was a bedroom. A huge curved bay window dominated the far wall with a built-in sitting area, "How precious," I sighed. To the right and left of that window were tall narrow windows, forming arches at the top like in a church. To add to that church-like illusion, stained glass existed where normal panes might have sufficed. It was like a little chapel but cozy. To the right was a four-poster bed that was of the same period as the house.

"I was born in that bed," Jimmy said. "My grandfather delivered me right there." He turned and looked at me. "I want you to have your baby here, Peaches. In the same bed. I want to deliver Beatrice into your arms. Me, not some unknown physician."

I could see the emotions in his eyes. I wasn't ready for the intense relief that overwhelmed me a moment later. "Jimmy?" I said, my eyes now leaking. I wanted to say that I didn't know what to say. But I was so moved, I could not say anything. Go figure.

He drew me into his embrace and tucked my head to his shoulder. I cried all the harder. This was a home. "Oh..." I moaned.

"I was granted your ward, Peaches. You are staying here. Tonight and tomorrow and countless tomorrows after that. You and Beatrice."

I guess I swooned. I'd never done that before but once you get the hang of it, swooning comes pretty easily. It's a good escape when faced with more data than one can properly encode. It cuts off the flow. It sure is a conversation stopper.



I was sitting in the front parlor curled up in an over-sized chair with my feet tucked under me and a magazine in front of me. It had been so long since I'd had access to the outside world, internet, TV's or magazines like Newsweek. But my eyes were just skimming the pages. Every time I tried to read an article, I just lost interest in all those words. Jimmy told me to sit here and so I did. I could hear him at the front door, then a car door banged just outside. I turned in the chair and froze. Tina was walking up to the door. Tina. No alarm ran through me, not like last time. I felt removed from what I had been. I was no longer Bill. I'm not sure I'd fully convinced myself that I no longer cared because my heart quickened its pace. Then I heard her voice as she entered the entryway, and a knife stabbed me in my chest.

"I don't have time for this," she said with a familiar edge in her voice. "I should be at the station by now. What's so damn important, James?" The last was followed by the sounds of her high heels on the hardwood floor followed by the door closing. She was only a few feet away from me now.

"It's Bill," Jimmy said.

"Oh my God. Has something happened to him?" There was concern in her voice, I noted.

"Yes and no."

"What?"

"Peaches is here, Bill isn't."

"Don't jerk me around, James. Here? You brought who here?"

"Her. Bill is Peaches and she's in full Gamma transition, Tina. The Bill you knew is gone. I told you what was going to happen in the final months before her due date. I think it would be good if you could see her. I think it might help you to, err, resolve the feelings you have regarding your former husband."

She hissed like a snake. "Ssssick. Sick, you're... pathetically sick, James. I don't want to remember him that way."

Obviously she attempted to leave, for the next thing she said was, "Let go of my arm, James. Damn it! You're hurting me! Let goooo..."

I was still wearing my 'church' dress but no shoes. I had made up my mind to say or do nothing. It was obvious that Tina did not want to see me like I was and I couldn't blame her. There was actual fear in her voice now. "Let her go, Jimmy." I said stepping into the entryway. "And Tina, I understand."

And there we were, face to face. "The Gamma from the other night?" she said. Her eyes were already wide and they grew wider still. She was staring at me, transfixed, but also screaming at Jimmy at the same time. "YOU NEVER TOLD ME!" She twisted and turned to face Jimmy, her hands forming claws, "YOU KNEW, DIDN'T YOU, THAT NIGHT AT THE PARTY! YET YOU-NEVER-TOLD-ME!"

Something inside me snapped and I did what any Gamma would do under similar circumstance, I began to bawl. Not some wimpy sob or a little boo-hoo cry, a whole lot of something broke loose inside my brain like cargo that had broken its bounds in the hold of a storm-tossed vessel. I threw myself down and tried to bury my face into that polished hardwood floor, not really a very good idea.

Tina kept saying, over and over again, "Oh my God. My God. My God!" Her frenzy was like that of a woman watching someone dear and close to her, drown. Then something inside her snapped, as it had in me. She pushed past Jimmy and flung herself on me, wrapping me in a protective embrace. It was both very noisy and confusing because she began to wail as well. It was very much like what had happened between Mary Jane and I. Poor Jimmy. He stood there dumbstruck. He was male and had not a clue as to what to do. Males fix things, females share. It was like all the grief we'd stored up together came out

simultaneously. It was like I'd died and left her a young widow, only I hadn't exactly died and now I was returned in impossible form.

She tore Jimmy a new asshole. "Give-us-time-alone," she said with a heavy cadence. It wasn't the words, it was how she said them. She never said asshole but even a deaf man could have heard what she meant. He backed away, walked into the kitchen and quietly closed the door. A few minutes later, "Bill?" she sobbed wetly into my ear.

"Tina." I clawed my way up and twisted around to face her. I blubbered, "I love you so much."

She all but crushed me in her hug as she groaned, "Bill. Bill? Bill!" There was no comprehension in her voice, only more confusion.

~oOo~

Women innately notice and attend to young humans, especially babies. The Gamma does the same. But an Alpha female has resources to inhibit that response if the occasion indicates more advantageous behaviors or perhaps detects dangers or some disadvantage in that particular behavior. The Gamma seems one-tracked in her response to the sight, smell, touch, or sound of a baby. For both her and her Alpha sister, this response system is extremely powerful, as it should be since the survival of the species is closely tied to how she responds. But the Alpha female has inhibitory options. I think Tina is a prime example. A baby and a career are not readily combined, though it is possible to have both. Tina was no Gamma and I was. Therein lay the difference.

After Tina repaired her makeup, she left. Meeting obligations was as essential for her career as they were for an Alpha male.

I remember standing there as I watched Tina's car disappear. The wound was once again open and raw. My emotions, though on an ebb tide, were orders of magnitude higher than the norm. I did what any emotionally traumatized female might do and a Gamma would do, I looked for human comfort. I was entirely self-focused at that moment, a natural reaction to the intense and confused messages Tina and I had exchanged. Had I not been that way, I might have realized that Jimmy had wounds of his own. A sensitive, aware, individual would have noticed that Jimmy had displayed more than a casual interest in Tina. That she referred to him as 'James' suggested that she desired to maintain some distance between them. Had I been Bill and not Peaches, I would have known that she and Jimmy were not lovers. But I wasn't Bill, and Peaches needed comfort.

My needs were real, though, unlike an Alpha's, not sexually motivated. Dr. Ash had hinted at the possibilities of my 'apparent' sexuality to attract and hold an Alpha's interest. And I knew full well that neither Jimmy nor any man-woman Gamma could satisfy me sexually. I am not suggesting that I had such clear, cost-benefits profiles in my head that night. That would surely be well beyond my Gamma capacity. More simply put, could fucking Jimmy make me feel, over all, better? That was the question. Indeed I'd given that some thought before he'd adopted me. Besides, I'd never been with a male.

Jimmy made it a little easier by slipping beside me and putting his arm around my waist before pulling me away from the door. "That went well, didn't it." It wasn't a ques-

tion anymore than it was directed toward me. I was more aware of his arm around me and the force of his body as he guided me back to the sitting room. I looked up at his face and saw only a distant, thousand-yard stare. He could have been a robot working the assembly line and I a box poised for shipping. "Jimmy?"

"Huh?" he said as he turned away. It looked as if he were going to just leave me there, alone.

He might as well have done so. He fixed himself a drink and eased back into his easy chair, maintaining his thousand-yard stare. Finally he looked at me. "What, Peaches?"

"You care for her, don't you, Jimmy?"

"That bothers you," he said, not as a question but as a fact. "You still love her, right?"

He didn't wait for me to respond, "She's no fucking lesbian, you... twit."

He looked suddenly embarrassed, "I'm... I'm sorry, Peaches. I had no right..."

I could have cried but I'd expended all the tears I had. Moreover, what was the point? He was right. Tina had been traumatized more by the complete absence of my maleness than I had expected. She'd kept asking for Bill. There was no Bill left except a bushel of memories, like an scrapbook from a bygone era. Gammas aren't all that good at planning, nor at inhibiting their emotions. I stood up and walked over to where he sat, "Could you hold me, Jimmy?" A few tears splashed harmlessly down my cheeks. For an age, he didn't move. I dropped to my knees and fumbled at his zipper. His voice said no and his hands gripped my shoulders with sufficient strength to stop me but in the last instant, his resolve slipped away.

I'd never handled a man's cock before, perhaps in foreplay, but Bea wasn't a man any more than I was. I went down on him with no more force than I had done with Bea. Orally gratifying Jimmy was mostly an easy way to make him want to hold me in his arms, which was what I most wanted. To desire me? Or value me? To share some humanity? Of course Alpha's aren't designed that way. They can't sip at the fountain of sexuality without taking off their clothes and diving into the water, making lots of splashing sounds.

We ended up in his bedroom at the back of the house on the first floor, me naked with my cock rigid. I think it was the cock that slowed up Jimmy. I think it could have ended there before it had begun. I was flush with excitement, my nipples were twisted into wrinkled knobs and I wasn't about to have his sexual concerns become mine. I lined up my vagina with his erect penis, the latter still slick with my spit. In the superior position, I essentially thrust him into me. The shock on his face as he realized that my pussy was the real thing, that I could grip his shaft with my muscles as tightly as a practiced whore, that I was as 'real' as any woman he'd ever known.

Like any male, he must have assumed the frenzy that overcame me was of his doing. That I was at the very apex of desire, a wild woman, possessed, surely said something good, right? Thank God he came less than two minutes later. After he came, he held me tightly against his chest. It was the post-coitis closeness that I craved. It was either his manly skills, my pure attraction to him or, most likely, both that had made me his dedicated sex kitten. Were he to ask, I planned to lie. He didn't and I didn't.

It took Jimmy some time to recover. The second time we did 'it,' he claimed the top position and I suffered below. I think I frightened him as well as myself in the levels of passion 'we' achieved. I had trouble sleeping the rest of the night, though I'm sure he didn't. It was pretty easy to fake a climax; it was damn hard to fake the quiet calm afterwards.

"Jimmy, you're quite the lover."

"Thanks, Peaches." He believed me. Why not? The last thing I needed was a male that was a lover.

~oOo~

Jimmy lay with his shoulders, chest and groin against my back, warm flesh to flesh, his hand that once draped across my waist now pressed palm down on my pregnancy, my baby, as if he were protecting her and me. It was nearly three o'clock in the A.M. but I wouldn't have traded mere sleep for this. I was mind-fucking, as Bea would have said, or masturbating, since this was a solo gig.

That I was falling in love with Jimmy made for a jittery ride. Try as I might, there was nothing about his form that fit my expectations. I mostly had not looked at him when we screwed. More than once, when he was on top, I half-expected to see Bea's sweet breasts swaying there, just out of reach of my mouth. I had found his climax to be most delicious part of our lovemaking. At that moment he was as vulnerable and overwhelmed as I. For me, vulnerability and need were just facts to be accepted; his momentary climax brought him relief. I couldn't help wondering what it would be like to actually cum to the summit, so to speak. All I had now were memories of such an event, memories that would likely fade with time.

Near dawn, he awoke and entered me from the rear. No foreplay, nothing. I felt the fullness of him inside me and a ripe pleasure gripped me in the absence of excessive stimulation. It was Zen. The beauty was soon broken but I remembered those rich minutes more vividly than all the screwing we did before and after. He could never have understood and I saw no reason to tell him. It was my problem, not his, as long as he held me after we were done.

Dawn came and he explored my body yet again: my breasts, my baby. His lips slid tenderly across my shoulders and neck, then finally to my lips. The soft, sweet kisses captured my heart. Had I hoped to enslave him, I would have failed. I that had been tamed and made his. The rose-colored glasses I'd worn yesterday continued to color my world. It had been beautiful then and it was even more beautiful now.

At seven forty-five, in the privacy of his home clinic and without assistance, Jimmy cut off my balls. Snip-snip.

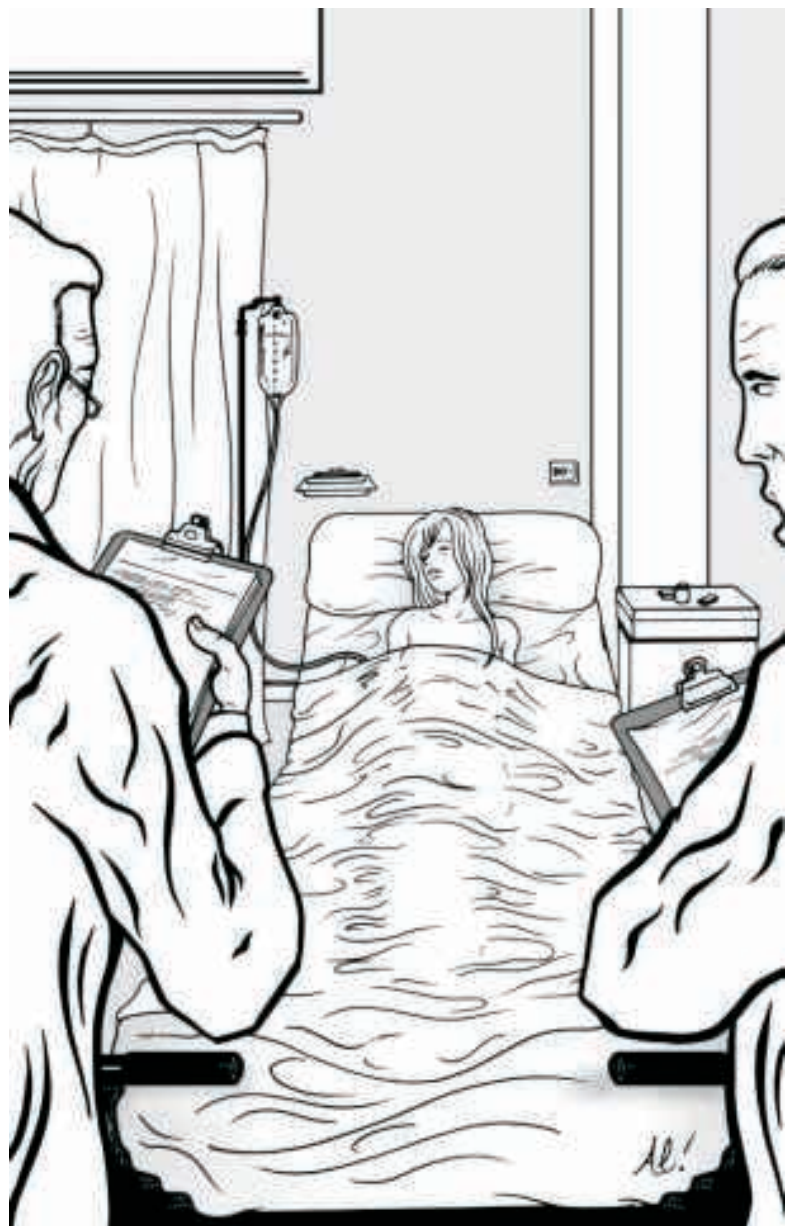
~oOo~

"How is she doing?" said Dr. Ash. "You did perform the surgery this morning, correct?"

"Yes, and she handled it very well. She was probably a little sore after the local anesthesia wore off, right, honey?" He looked at me, then back to Dr. Ash. "But she was a real trooper, Tom. Hardly complained at all."

I nodded in agreement when he said 'honey,' a reflex I guess because he wasn't really talking to me. Being treated as if I wasn't there wasn't exactly a novel experience. Oh, when I first got to Gamma House, the staff would pretty much look you in the eye when they spoke to you. Being treated more like a very young child or a beloved pet didn't happen overnight. The interactions between Alphas and senior Gammas were of this nature and I was clearly now established as 'one-of-those.' As to the reality of my adventure in Jimmy's clinic, castration had been and still was a scary idea. My sense of having been violated rang inside my head as if Jimmy had hit a very large gong. I wasn't stupid nor had I lost my sense of self. I was more afraid of making Jimmy angry at me than I was of the surgery, however. It seemed to please him when I acted as if it hardly hurt. Truth was even now I felt the loss and I simply endured that throbbing pain between my legs. It was like someone had kicked me in the nuts with a hobnailed boot. My nuts hurt worse now than they ever did and they didn't even exist any more.

Dr. Ash nodded somberly, "Excellent tolerance for pain is one of the more notable characteristics of Gammas." The old man shrugged, "Very adaptive for... well, for what they are designed for, Jim." He looked around, "I guess we pretty much covered the legal aspects. She'll continue to wear the G.P.S. band until her baby is delivered and your security arrangements seem adequate. I'll finish the paper work and get it off to the Federal Building. She remains a subject of interest to the Federals with regard to her 'maker,' so don't be too surprised if you receive a visit from Homeland." He looked



down at some notes he had, "L.A. county is a bit less prissy than the City, so you need not worry about having a social worker under foot. The medical facility you have here in this house along with your medical credentials exceed the county minimum. It's reasonable to say, you are good-to-go." He handed the copies of the various agreements to Jimmy.

"Now as to our arrangements..."

"Coffee, Tom?" Jimmy said.

"That would be appreciated, Jim."

Jimmy turned to me and said, "Peaches why don't you take Dr. Ash to the parlor and wait for me there."

I looked around the clinic, a sterile environment if there ever was one. The chill in the air was only partly due to the air conditioning. In the next room, in a plastic bag, bloody remnants of my manhood sat upon a counter. I was eager to leave. "Doctor?" I said.

Dr. Ash took my hand in his much as an adult might take the hand of a child. The symbolism wasn't lost on me but also didn't feel wrong.

~oOo~

I was sitting on the floor of the parlor when Jimmy entered with a tray. The rich aroma of fresh-brewed coffee filled the morning air. As to why I was on the floor, I had no idea other than Dr. Ash had motioned for me to sit, literally, at his feet. I hadn't even fully settled into that position before I felt his hand on my head. He'd run his fingers through my hair before his hand dropped down to my neck and shoulder. The most delightful thing happened, he began to pet me as one might pet a beloved dog.

As his hand lightly ran across my shoulders and my back, I really wished I wasn't wearing one of Jimmy's shirts. I'm sure the pleasure would have been even greater were it flesh-to-flesh. Pleasure. If I were a cat, I would be purring. I tried to imagine me as I was six months ago. I tried to imagine Dr. William Walker at Tom Ash's feet, suffering such attention. I tried but couldn't really get my brain around the image. I leaned into those strokes as a woman might rise up to meet her lover's thrust.

"About the arrangement with the Nevan Foundation?" asked Dr. Ash as he raised his cup of black coffee with two sugars to his lips and drank. He continued his stroking of my back and shoulder, giving the actions little or no thought.

"They appreciate, very much, your support for this arrangement. Peaches is important to them, more than you can imagine." Jimmy smiled, "Tom, you will get all the funding you requested."

"The full two years?" When Jimmy nodded, Dr. Ash smiled but only for the moment. "Could you tell me the nature of Nevan's interest in my sweet Peaches?" The look on Jimmy's face said no. Dr. Ash continued, "There are rumors..."

"Rumors, Tom? There are always rumors."

"I heard that some of the same people who were involved with the exploitation of Betas, some five years back, in the wholesale distribution of 'Beta sex slaves'..."

Jimmy sat up and looked alarmed, "Surely Tom..."

"But that's what I heard..."

"If it were true, Tom, I'm not the one to talk to." He shrugged. "I'm a cog, a useful cog perhaps, but only that. I suspect had I not known Bill before he became a Gamma, you wouldn't be talking to me. I gave up my association with Nevan when I returned to California. I'm as surprised to be part of this project as I was to discover Bill's condition." He shrugged. "I'm certainly not privy to the inner working of the Nevan Foundation. If there are hidden forces that control Nevan, I would be about the last one to know."

"But it is possible, Jim?"

Jimmy shook his head, then looked down at me. Was he curious about what I thought? I don't think so. Was I even listening? Just, slightly. Mostly I was awash in pleasure. "Look at her, Tom. What in the world would be their purpose? Surely you can't imagine that they might want to do to her what they failed to do with the Beta. She's pretty, but hardly in the same league." He stopped and looked at Dr. Ash, "Have you ever had a Beta?" Dr. Ash looked aghast. "I have. Many times. It was one of the benefits of working for Nevan back then. Trust me, Tom, they are like no female that has ever existed before. And Peaches..." He stopped.

"So you have, ah, had sexual relations with her." This wasn't a question. I was all ears now, a fact impossible to hide as I stared at Jimmy and waited for his response.

"She initiated it, didn't you, Peaches?" I nodded. Jimmy looked at Dr. Ash, "I have to be entirely honest with you. I was quite uncomfortable with the whole thing."

"I can imagine," responded Dr. Ash. "You knew Dr. Walker, you two were friends. That must have been a very odd experience, to say the least."

Jimmy was smiling but it was one of those uncomfortable smiles. "I was following Nevan's instructions."

"There!" exclaimed Dr. Ash, almost in triumph.

He shrugged. "Perhaps."

"Perhaps, bullshit," swore Dr. Ash. "Perhaps, my ass. Why all the interest in the subject of 'attractive' Gammas if not for sexual exploitation? The surgery you performed today, what precisely is Nevan trying to achieve? A blind man can see it. If Gammas weren't so focused upon being mothers and they were exotically attractive, bingo, a safe Beta!"

"Perhaps."

"Perhaps nothing, Jim. It is as obvious as the nose on your face. You could see it if you weren't so deeply in their pocket."

"And you're not, Dr. Ash?"

Tom Ash blanched and he quit rubbing my back. "But my girls need me. The awful truth, Jim, is that no one is interested in the ordinary Gamma. Only in Peaches." He'd sold out Peaches for what, the greater good? An idea slowly grew and was expressed in Dr. Ash's eyes. "They want to know why she developed as she did, right? How does one make a princess from a frog?"

"That's about the size of it. Betas vary genetically as widely as the rest of the human population. It follows that variations in the mechanism that creates the Gamma must occur. Possibly an interaction between the Alpha genes Bill had and the Beta that implanted him."

"You don't know."

"That's why she's here."

"Between you and me, Jim, I hope your research falls on its face. Flat on its face. Damn it, you could just say no."

"And so could you, Tom. But it isn't that easy, is it?"

~oOo~

Jimmy worked a forty-eight hour shift Tuesday-Wednesday and picked up additional hours 'on-call.' In an age where a private medical practice was becoming more and more rare, doctors had become increasingly 'owned' by the large Medical establishments, had become employees rather than freelance professionals. This contract with Nevan was possibly the best hope Jimmy had of breaking out of the financial trap he'd fallen into. With the additional income provided by Nevan, he planned to cut back on his hours at the hospital. This would not only allow him to complete the Gamma research but also open a temporal window whereby he might expand his private practice to a level that would be self-sustaining. The transition, however, could not be made instantly. For the next two weeks, he would simply have to wear the Nevan program as yet another 'hat' in his already overloaded agenda. He needed help.

Help came as a month in Spring. April was the very essence of the classic girl-next-door. Her blue eyes and long blond hair were her best features. With a nose a tad too long and features just off the symmetrical, she was no beauty, nor was she ugly. A pronounced overbite and full lips, could, under the right lighting and with the right makeup, suggest to an average male a young woman of a sensuous nature. In the harsh afternoon light however, she could be seen for what she was: naïve, insecure and all too eager to please. It was a twenty-four/seven arrangement with room and board. While the hourly wage was no better than what she received as a nurse's aide, the additional hours and the room and board provided would allow her to finally escape the constraints of living at home. Dr. Franks was young and eligible. A girl could dream, couldn't she?

The doctor was way more attractive and younger than she'd even dared to hope and the house was awesome. Calling this 'home' with the possibility, no matter how remote, of sharing a bed with Dr. Franks made the potential assignment the most exciting opportunity in her twenty long years. She was to serve more as a companion and care giver than as a nurse; that only one patient was involved was almost too good to be true. And it was. "A Gamma?" she said, startled. She quickly hid her distaste or at least she hoped she had. There was a worm in the apple but there always was, right?

The only contact with Gammas April had had was from the media. Like the black Americans in the nineteen-thirties, Gammas were portrayed by the media in the most demeaning fashion. Bunny Wop-Wop, a character in a popular sit-com, was an Alpha male

in drag playing the part of a Gamma. With exaggerated breasts, hips and butt squeezed into a dress always far too tight, like a camp drag queen, Bunny's use of makeup, facial expressions and other mannerisms were way over the top as a parody of the 'feminine.' Close-ups of her face always showed the underlying five o'clock shadow and the actor's bobbing Adam's Apple. For all of Bunny's femininity, when 'she' opened her mouth and let forth that deep bass horn she called a 'voice,' the audience would go berserk. And, of course, it was all done in 'fun.'

"April, I would like you to meet Peaches. Peaches, April."

For me, it was love at first sight. You have to understand that I was in full 'glamour' now and no, that's not what you think. Glamour was a technical term applied to a mature Gamma which only meant that I tended to 'love' everyone. Had April shown fangs and the facial features of the Wolfman I doubt I'd reacted much different. "Pleased to meet you April," I said, extending my hand.

April hesitated but only for a moment. She was watching Jimmy out of the corner of her eye and weighing all the pros and cons. She decided the pros were heavier. Our fingers touched but only for a nanosecond. "We're going to be the best of friends, aren't we, Peeches?" Her smile was as fake as her words. The way she said Peaches was the same way characters responded in the sit com to Bunny Wop-Wop. I saw none of that poison.

Jimmy drew up beside me and put his arm around my waist. He allowed me to lean into him as he studied April. "What you might have heard about Gammas is probably wrong," he said.

April felt half-sick. It didn't take a psychologist or a detective to figure that there was something of a sexual nature between the two of them. That she could imagine being in Dr. Franks embrace was one thing but that he could even touch that thing... They had penises, you know. Men without balls and a vagina. She would have felt better had Dr. Franks been openly queer than about this. She was on the very cusp of turning and leaving. She could taste the bile at the back of her throat. But there was a calculator in her mid-brain that compared Dr. Franks with the men in her life. With a house like this, he had to be rich. And if he were desperate enough to settle for a Gamma, why not her, a real woman? She shoved aside the bile. Like carrying bed pans in the hospital, it was only difficult if you thought about it. "Wrong?" she said. "Peaches is very pretty." She had to admit, Peaches was no Bunny Wop-Wop.

"I have to warn you, April. If you take this job, Peaches' happiness and mental balance are my only concerns. If she should become stressed..." Jimmy left his warning linger for a moment. "Gammas are very loving. They need human contact more than most of us." He gave me a squeeze. "Right, Peaches?"

I blushed, put my head on his shoulder and murmured something. April was smiling as if she understood. "Can we keep her?" I said.

Jimmy ignored me. "What I mean to say, April, is that they really need human contact. Touching is just a part of how Gammas communicate and it is as important to them as air is to us. Sometimes you will feel that she is invading your personal space. I know I did at first. If this is a problem for you, this is not the assignment you want. So give it some care-

ful consideration, OK? But I need someone, here, with Peaches starting early tomorrow morning."

April responded immediately, "I'm your gal, Dr. Franks. Me and Peaches are going to have a good time together, right bunny?"

She came within a hair of destroying her interview at that precise moment. Jimmy's face brightened to a shade of red I'd never seen before. The term 'bunny' was a rough parallel to the ancient term of 'nigger.' Gammas were bunnies in popular slang and the term was not given as a compliment. April brightened in turn, "What I meant was..."

April moved in that afternoon because Jimmy would be leaving for the hospital before midnight and he wanted to be sure we were settled in before he left. April and I would be alone for the next forty-eight hours. Well, not entirely alone. Tina was due to stop by sometimes in the morning; she'd agreed to help Jimmy at least that far. And several Nevan employees would be in and out of the house over the next two days as new equipment was being brought to Jimmy's clinic. Jimmy promised to check in via phone ever so frequently. It was clear that he wasn't fully comfortable with April. I knew he was wrong. April was my sweet April.

Chapter 2

I remember seeing my Grandfather lying in his coffin. I was eighteen at the time and I didn't understand. Perhaps it's the nature of the young to not understand death. It was too painful, too wrong. I felt violated and robbed, abandoned even. By the end of the service, the pain hadn't gone away, but the feeling of wrongfulness was fading. They'd held a wake after the religious services; many of my Granddad's friends had hung out beside him. There was much talking and some drinking though I'm not entirely sure which act was more readily performed. Eventually I joined his old friends as the evening wore on; gradually even the pain disappeared as the concept of transition rather than death grew into my awareness. Perhaps it was that way with Tina. Perhaps it was because she and I were alone. Without Jimmy and with April hovering out of ear shot, I think she and I had our own wake.

We spent most of the first part of the morning talking about what had been, reliving a past abruptly lost. She even shared with me her anger and jabbed a finger in my direction: "Fornicator," she said.

Never had a man been so completely exposed and so powerfully punished for his dalliance. I knew better than to tell her it was only that one time, as if a judge would look more favorably upon an act of deliberate murder if there was only one victim. She continued to refer to me as Bill and finally I had to correct her. Bill was as dead as the court had made him, legally dead. There was no road back, no return and no 'he.' I wasn't sure how much she knew of my new physiology. I finally told her about my castration though not who performed it. It seemed to provide a scale of some kind for her for she began to use my 'real' name at last. When she said Peaches there was no scorn or ridicule in her voice.

I was now sitting beside her, held in her gentle embrace as if I was the feminine member of this couple, as if, by magic we had quietly swapped roles. Tina had always been the

stronger of us. To make it in her field, she had to be. An academic could succeed without being particularly assertive but broadcasting was another world all together. "It's ironic," she said. I could feel the air stirred by her voice move the fine hairs on my neck signaling her sweet closeness. She reached across and laid her hand on my belly. She knew the name of my baby, it was surely one of the first things I'd shared with her. "Beatrice should be mine by all rights. And inside me, not you."

Tears wet my cheeks for the first time that morning. Not because I was sad or resented that baby inside me but because I knew that if it had been so she would have felt the same joy I felt. The involuntary spike of pity I felt for her was as real and unexpected as was the entry of Little Bee had been into my life. I placed my hand over hers. "I wish you could have been my guardian, Tina. You and me and baby makes three." I giggled even though I felt a sad longing. Gammas don't handle sadness at all well. Giggling worked like a ointment on a raw wound.

"I was not brave enough," she said. There was truth in her words.

"But you still have time." I felt her grow tense but I went on anyway. "Jimmy would marry you in an instant."

"Jimmy," she said somewhat harshly. "I didn't marry Jimmy, I married you."

That brought up a point I'd chewed upon for the last two years, "Why me, Tina? I never did understand how, of all the people in the world, you chose me. Jimmy was better looking and," I giggled, "a real doctor."

She reached up and took my chin in her hand so as to turn my face toward hers. I anticipated that she was going to kiss me but I was wrong. Her dark eyes were wide and thoughtful. I think I could actually see her soul inside. I was certainly not ready for her answer. "I have no idea, Peaches. Not a clue." She looked away as if she were afraid to hold my gaze any longer. I wasn't breathing. "You were not the most handsome man I'd known. God knows Jimmy was horrified when he heard we were getting married. He was sure I was on some kind of destructive re-bound." I still wasn't breathing.

"I've known men far richer and obviously better connected. Some were smarter and more talented and heck, most were better lovers." Then she brought her gaze fully into mine, "I was asking myself that same question. Why you? I was considering a divorce actually. It could have been a career move."

I was stunned. Were I not a Gamma, I would have been heartsick. Had I been Bill, that much damaged ego of his would have been in tatters. "Oh," I said.

"When I lost you, I was forced to re-examine everything. Jimmy was available, of course. There were men waiting in the wings." She had this thousand-yard stare in her eyes, certainly she wasn't looking for my reaction. There was neither anger nor relief in her voice. She was, as I guess she had always been for me, an enigma. "I guess I found your naVve sexuality charming, your love unbounded. I felt safe with you."

I giggled. "Safe?"

"Hey." She gripped me more tightly, once again held my chin in her hand and threw at me her whole focus, "But when you were gone, I was devastated, OK?" She kissed me full

on the lips. She pulled back. "I honestly don't know why I loved you, I just did. Do you understand, Peaches?"

I shook my head yes, but I had no idea what she was talking about. Safe? Was that a basis for a relationship. I was sure 'safe' now, sans balls. Even a Gamma could see that there was an emotional screw loose somewhere. Safe?

"Show me your room and your clothes."

"Huh?"

"This is the second time I've seen you and both times you have been in one of James' shirts."

When she found out that all I had was that white church dress and some undies, she was determined to take me shopping. That's when April stepped in. "Dr. Franks say she's confined until her baby is born, ma'am." She stressed ma'am as a younger woman might with an older one as if to emphasize that she was young and Tina was old. I think all three of us were startled. Was she jealous? I could all but see her claws out now. Even more strange was the look Tina gave her. Were it six months earlier, I might have screamed 'cat fight.' As it was, I simply explained the purpose of that plastic band on my wrist to Tina and the certainty of what would happen were I to leave the house.

Tina left a few minutes later, promising to return tomorrow with clothes for me. As soon as we were alone, April reverted to her former manner, somewhat distant and wary, as if I might suddenly lash out at her, or worse. I went up to my room to take a nap. What Tina had said seemed to have left little lasting impression. That was Bill's problem not mine. My dissociation with my past was moving along nicely, aided by my Gamma world view, I still loved Tina, of course. And April and Jimmy. Things further back than a few days had a tendency to vanish from my reality. And, of course, there was Little Bee. She was the sun of my solar system, the others were mere planets.

~oOo~

April was setting, cross-legged, on the foot of my bed when I woke up from my nap. That she was there in my room was surprise enough, on my bed even more so. She must have been there for some time for I'd been half-awake for several minutes without sensing her presence. I fluffed up my pillow before sitting up and yanked down the T-shirt I'd worn to bed. "Hey," I said.

"Who was that woman?"

"My wife."

She looked as if she was going to say cool. Like most people, she must have thought that us Gammas were hatched or something. "So you were a guy then, huh?"

"That's pretty much the way it works, April. I wasn't always this sexy," I giggled.

"What were you?"

"A teacher." Her interest disappeared almost instantly. After all, teachers were pretty mundane. "History," I added. I'd lost her interest but not quite, apparently.

"Which high school?"

"College, University actually. Eastside State."

"Really? I went there last year, for a while anyway. What exactly did you teach?"

"To freshman? U.S. History."

"Then I might have known you."

The freshman classes were big as a rule, often exceeding several hundred students packing into a lecture hall. I sure didn't recognize April. She was, well, pretty ordinary. "Bill Walker, ah- Dr. William J. Walker."

"Oh my God." She abruptly looked angry. "You gave me a D!" She added, "I was flunking out anyway." She shrugged, gave me a careful once-over and shook her head, "Wow."

"Yeah. Something, huh?"

Her eyes held more interest and even some respect. She had a reason to beginning to think of me as a real human being. I was like someone injured by disease and made different rather than someone who chose to be this way. "Hey, I got a great idea. Let's do something to your hair."

~oOo~

I don't know why April did what she did nor, actually, how she did it. She'd defined Tina's exact hair color and had memorized her hairdo down to the half-dozen or so swirls of long curls that framed her face. Once I understood what she was doing, one could reasonably ask why I allowed her to continue. Maybe I was curious. April brought back more than curlers and hair coloring. She bought cosmetics that perfectly matched those my wife had employed that morning. I have since learned that April and Tina had some natural antagonism between them; her motives were probably a lot clearer than my own.

I guess having been made female, to the degree a Gamma can be thought of as female, appearing as a reflection of the person I most desired (as Bill) was perhaps a compliment to Tina. Upon reflection, I can now see why she might not see it that way. To make a long story short, when Tina arrived the next morning, I was standing there looking as much like my wife as, well, her sister might have, had Tina had a sister, that is.

Tina stood transfixed as her mouth dropped open. "Peaches?" It came out in a gasp. I could see that Tina was of several opinions regarding the transformation. She flashed daggers toward April who was standing behind me. No doubt April was looking like the cat that had eaten the canary. In the next moment, April sauntered off, leaving me with Tina, probably looking quite pleased with her work. Tina hissed, "That little bitch."

"Huh?" I hadn't expected anger as one of Tina's reactions, though Tina's anger seemed to retreat in step with April's departure.

"You don't know?" she said twisting around and grabbed my cheeks in both of her hands. Her eye fixed on mine in disbelief before saying, "My God," about ten times softly under her breath. She pulled me over to the mirror in the entryway. "Look," she said, put

her hand around my waist and drew me close. We both stared at the reflection in the mirror. The resemblance was uncanny. I had maybe an inch height advantage and a fuller figure and of course I showed signs of my pregnancy now that I was into my seventh month. "If I went off my diet and was pregnant, Peaches, you and I would be almost twins."

How could I argue with her?
"So?"

She laughed, "The little minx was just marking her territory."

I didn't follow the logic but it wasn't important. Looking at the two of us in the mirror, well, it was almost breathtaking. I could do far worse than to look like the most beautiful woman in my life. On the other hand, that transformation worked by April, created in no small part by expert application of makeup, did underscore the impossibility of the notion, however so slight, of me and Tina together.

She nodded toward the clothes that now formed a pile on the floor, the clothes she'd brought for me, some of which I recognized. Then she looked at me. "Does James know?" I shook my head no. Leastwise I assumed he hadn't seen the similarities. "He could hardly help noticing now. Come on, let's see if any of this stuff fits."



~oOo~

I can't really say what Jimmy's reaction was to my 'apparent' transformation into a copy of his unrequited love object. It was clear even to me by this time that Jimmy was really hung up on Tina and equally clear that Tina had a very different attitude. My castration had been performed to, hopefully, minimize the mental changes so common to the Gamma. Simply eliminating the source of testosterone would, eventually, allow a more

modest hormonal environment. However there was such an excess of androgens in my system that the supply of estrogen would probably continue well into my post-partum period. I was very familiar with the odd, scattered behavior of the mature Gamma but it was a jolt to discover what it was like to actually be one.

If you have never interacted with a fully matured Gamma, let me give you a hint of what they are like. Imagine meeting a friend at a party, someone you like and admire. However, they are as drunk as a skunk. Your friend is verbally active and engaged in the endless meaningless diatribes so common with drunks, monologues that simply peter out, going nowhere. Crazy talk but with just enough familiar content to remind you of who this creature was at one time. The Gamma drunk is a very loving drunk, an in-your-face touching and hugging and kissing kind of drunk. The latter is particularly disturbing if you are unaware that these advances are not sexually motivated. They were in fact the model from which the Bunny Wop-Wop character was drawn. Pathetic.

From the inside, I can tell you that being a Gamma is like being stoned. The endorphins flowed like chocolate in a fondue pot. I was as high as a fucking kite and filled with more love than there was water falling over Niagara Falls. I could hear it roar in my ears. I

A Gamma can talk to her baby inside the womb. Looking back, I can't say that it was actually so but it seemed so. The complete fusion of my being with Little Bee, was utterly real to me. The maternal floodgate had opened. Neural mechanisms that I, as a male, had never been aware of, triggered and came fully to life. That hunger for the images of babies was really my need to come to grips with this unstoppable force that had been unleashed.

Social relations of the most basic typed peel away like wall paper on a hot, humid, Florida summer day. Neither Jimmy nor Tina could interject themselves into my world now. But I could peek into their world, from time to time, if I was sufficiently motivated.

~oOo~

The weeks spilled by in a jumbled but delightful confusion. I was huge now. Sometimes I felt more like the house that Little Bee lived in than a person in my own right. I was but hours away from delivery, she said. The woman was familiar but I couldn't actually place her in my life. It must have showed on my face for Jimmy leaned over me and said, "This is Mrs. Anderson of the Nevan Foundation, Peaches. You met her at the party a few months back." He patted me on the wrist. "She's come here to take Bee home."

For the first time in weeks, I was fully aware of my surroundings. Take Bee home? Take Bee from me? I should have exploded in rage. Were I an Alpha female, I would have, instantly. But I was still wrapped in chocolate sauce. Rage wasn't in me, nor was there fear or any other normal Alpha reaction, yet. It was simply inconceivable as a concept. "No," I said firmly.

If anyone heard me, they didn't respond. There were others in my room in addition to Jimmy and Mrs. Anderson. There was another Gamma there looking as huge as I was. Unlike me, she was obviously a 'normal' Gamma. Rather big-boned, decidedly a feminized male. Her face showed little understand of what was going on, so that made two of us. And she, like I, were not included in the conversation.

I recognized Dr. Ash's voice. "So she was carrying a Beta."

"Yes. That must account for her successful transition. She is lovely, Dr. Ash, simply lovely."

"Why wasn't her condition identified? We do genetic tests as a matter of course. All the babies are carefully screened. It's Federal law." And then he added, "Mrs. Anderson, Nevan had something to do with that. Right?"

The woman laughed, "Of course. We control the state laboratory testing program just for this possibility, not that a Beta is likely, unfortunately. Fewer than one in a hundred Gamma pregnancies are so blessed." Her voice took on a tone of outrage, "Dr. Ash, the authorities would abort the Beta fetus, in all instances. How could we not protect them?"

"You could have told me. You could have told sweet Peaches."

"You know now and so does she, Dr. Ash. Dr. Franks? How soon will the authorities arrive when you signal that Peaches is about to give birth?" He shrugged and she leaned over me, "Peaches, I know you can understand me, so listen. They will kill Bee when they come here to inspect her. Do you understand?" I think I nodded. "Kathy-Jane will care for your baby." She nodded toward the other Gamma. "We will switch her baby for yours, Peaches. Each of you will have a baby. Both babies will live, Peaches. Do you understand?"

"NO!" I screamed. Losing my Bee was like losing my very life. I tried but I couldn't understand. "Why would anyone kill my Little Bee?" Tears flooded my eyes. "You don't understand," I wailed. "You don't know what she means to me..."

"But she does, Peaches." Another voice intruded. A woman. She drew up beside me; even through my tears, I could see those green, cat like eyes. "Mrs. Anderson is a Gamma and she knows what it would mean to lose a baby." She stroked my arm.

Logic was wasted on a Gamma. I heard, perhaps I understood. More important, I could not accept the possibility of losing Little Bee. I felt the sting of a needle. They were going to force the labor. I watched my counterpart, the other Gamma, being led away. She and I would give birth within minutes of each other. I finally found my fear and anger: I screamed until there was no hope left inside me. Then the contractions began.

~oOo~

Mrs. Anderson was once J. Donald Anderson. He too had been impregnated by a Beta some five years earlier when the phenomenon was simply unheard of. Unlike most men in that situation then, he chose to carry his baby to term and thus avoided becoming a Beta. The transitions from Alpha male to a Gamma is a slow process and is, at first, hardly detectable. He was able to convert his considerable holdings, principally General Motors stock, into cash. The Nevan Foundation was his idea and by the time his condition was fully apparent, he had safely hidden most of his wealth from the greed of his family. There were no Gamma Laws back then. A legal change in gender and name and she was home free. In time, she recruited others of similar situations: those others included her 'maker'.

The Nevan Foundation was Betas and Gammas hiding in plain sight. They controlled enough money to protect themselves but not enough money to alter the poisoned social climate. They were trying to buy time until the Beta and Gamma could be allowed to join the human race. They were of a different breed than the 'wild Betas and Gammas' but both had common goals. And both had to remain invisible for now. Gammas like me were perhaps the first step in the eventual transition to full acceptance or that was at least the Nevan Foundation's aspiration. Biological change can occur in an instant; sociological evolution would be much slower.

Mrs. Anderson was herself the essential role model. Her freedom from the Gamma mental state had been freed by castration, but, unlike me, her baby hadn't been a Beta. Extensive cosmetic surgery had made the forty-something billionaire an elegant, if not beautiful, woman now in her early fifties. That a Beta fetus could do what she had done to me would become a new focus of the Nevan Foundation, now. Of course I neither knew, nor cared, about that at that time.

I was scarcely aware that the babe in my arms wasn't my Little Bee. That she was obviously of Asian parentage hardly mattered since I'd provided none of the genetic material. When her sweet little lips drew down the first fluids from my breast, not milk yet, when that electrical connection between my brainstem and my heart fused, I bonded with her as she did with me. My heart was almost too full. I hardly noticed the visitors who came and, eventually, went. Soon it was just April, Jimmy, me and Little Bee.

In time, I would discover just how demanding Gammahood was. At first, breast feeding occurred every two hours, day and night. How many guys could have tolerated that? Were it not for my modified limbic system and reticular formation, I would have been driven slowly mad, I think. Day passed endless day with scarcely a moment to think. Fortunately, thinking wasn't what made me a Gamma. Eventually, April vanished, yet I hardly missed her. I had Little Bee. Soon Jimmy faded from common sight, though we spent some time together. He was back working for the hospital and he now enjoyed a fuller private practice; he was a busy man going places.

Truth is, I wasn't much fun for him to be with; as is true for many men, he just wasn't as captured by sweet Little Bee as I was. Within weeks, my figure recovered from the pregnancy, a Gamma trait. That tiny waist I thought I'd have did emerge, an impossible seventeen inches, shockingly tiny. My breasts were still a tad on the large size, due, I'm sure, to breast feeding, but perfectly sculptured. I was a very trim, sweet package, if I say so myself. My black hair, with its long light brown roots, which now reached beyond my shoulders, was pulled back into a pony tail for convenience. Makeup and the like held no interest or value to the mummy-me. I was perpetually ensconced in simple muu-muus and flip-flops. I was strikingly beautiful now and yet that beauty remained invisible to me, to Jimmy, to everyone.

I always assumed that beauty was just a physical fact, obvious to the eyes and needed no intelligence to be processed. A Beta projects her sexuality in her every movement and look. A Gamma projects her maternity, the obligations of dirty diapers and continuous infant care. Bee was my center, my core. Gammas don't breed, they need not seek out seed from passing males, they are 'asexual.' I was the wife and stay-at-home mom. I cleaned

and cooked and served my master in all but the bedroom. Neither Jimmy nor I found the latter a problem.

My hormones dropped below the full 'Gamma' threshold. Awareness, self-awareness reemerged gradually like a lingering dawn. The cognitive changes grew very gradually. They seemed entirely invisible to Jimmy, who was now spending very little time with Bee and I. For the first time in ages, I felt lonely. For a Gamma with a baby, this was utterly impossible. I didn't know that. Nor was I ready for the next turn in my life, not in a million years. With my focus broadening, my sense of self worth retreated. My life came apart like a piece of junk jewelry; if Bee was no longer my core, I had no center around which I could orbit. The depression that settled in hid the final physical changes I'd suffered at the hands of my now lost Beta infant. I had arrived at a place seldom visited by Gammas, a reality in which motherhood was simply not enough.

Chapter 3

"Hey," I said as I opened the door to Tina. She was as gorgeous as ever and I told her so between quick pecks on each cheek. She returned the kisses, then took Little Bee from my arms.

"Gosh, she's how old now, Peaches?"

"Twelve weeks. Come on, I want you to meet a friend of mine."

She followed, me carrying Little Bee in her arms as we crossed the lawn and passed through an opening in the six-foot high hedge, coming at last to the rear door of my neighbor's house, a much bigger house than Jimmy's. Tina gave me a look like what now? The door opened even before we arrived. "Hey, Sandy."

"Hey," she said. For a Gamma, she was pretty. Probably 'made' very young. Like me, she wore a loose muu-muu and flip-flops. For all her boyish features, she carried a pair of cannons on her chest and a more than ample pair of hips. As if nature hadn't decided exactly what sex she should be, she also suffered from a mild case of male pattern baldness in spite of the hormone overload. Unlike me, she hadn't been 'altered,' a nice way of saying castrated. Sandy remained totally fixated on children and especially infants. Her eyes lit up when she saw Little Bee. Behind her was the sound of a half-dozen children having fun. None of them were infants, clearly evident in Sandy's eyes as she greedily eyed Bee.

"I want you to meet a friend of mine, Tina. Sandy, this is Tina, my ex-wife."

"Pleased," Sandy said but her eyes never left Bee.

"You better give Bee to her before she attacks," I said to Tina.

"Huh?" She looked startled but she did hand over that precious bundle.

"Girls' morning out," I said, taking Tina's elbow. "Later, Sandy." But I was already too late. Sandy had disappeared inside with Bee. Tina continued to look stunned. "Sandy's a Gamma," I said.

"I figured that out, Peaches."

"Lots of families around here have their own Gamma. Trust me, rich people know a bargain when they see one." She still looked stunned. "What?" I said a bit irritated.

"I never thought I'd see the day..."

"Oh. She's safe enough with Sandy."

"Not my point, Peaches. I can't believe that you'd ever let that baby out of your sight for a second. You OK?"

I led her back toward Jimmy's house and her car. "Are we going shopping or not?" I said as I stood by the car door. I extended my lower lip into a pout. It seemed to work with Jimmy, most of the time. Perhaps it wouldn't work with Tina.

"Not until you explain what's going on, Peaches."

"I'll do it on the way. I want to hit a beauty shop before the department stores open. Besides, you have to go to the TV station in a few hours, right Tina? Come on. Please?" That seemed to work. "Pretty please?" worked better. Tina's smile briefly reappeared on her lips and she finally nodded 'OK.'

She'd just turned her car onto the street when she said, "Explain."

I didn't answer at first as I watched the world slide past my window. Finally I looked at her. "It's not exactly like I understand myself, OK? I woke up this morning and you know what I heard? It was from the movie, Poltergeist."

She looked horrified, "You heard a ghost?"

I laughed, "They're ba-a-a-ack!"

"You're not making any sense, Peaches."

"You're right, not in the real world anyway. I was somebody once. I was a professor, a husband. What I did mattered. Maybe not to many but to some, to me. I had dreams, hopes, ambition. I had a wife that loved me." I looked at her. "I'm back, I want to be a 'real' person again."

"And Bee? She isn't enough for you?"

I didn't answer. The silence was absolute and remained that way for some minutes. "Stop at that Starbucks on the corner. I could do with some Java. Pretty please?"

Minutes later, Tina still hadn't responded. The two of us sat across a tiny table, me with a black coffee and Tina with something not black. Finally, she said, "Does James know?"

"Like he'd care?" I answered a bit more sharply than I'd intended. Then I switched gears, "It's not like I can't be Little Bee's mother. Heck, when I see her, stuff still happens inside me. I mean I'm not a monster or something. I'm bored." I shook my head, "No, more than that, a lot more."

"I have no idea what that means, Peaches. None."

I drew in more coffee as if I might find some answers there. "It's like I woke up and none of this had actually happened. Not Gamma House, living with Jimmy, not even Bee. It's like I got out of our bed, Tina, ready to go to the university and there she was, this boring nobody. For Pete's sake, Tina, even the black slaves had more of a life than I have. If

the Massa wasn't fucking them, they were screwing each other. They didn't have much of a life, but they had a life." She raised an eyebrow as if questioning me.

"This is about sex then, Peaches?"

I groaned. "Like it's that easy. Sex? I have no sexual needs. I don't lie in bed wanting Jimmy to drop by. Maybe if I did, I could get angry. At least that would be something, Tina. Ever hear of a Gamma killing someone? It isn't likely to happen. Don't get mad, get bored." I fought back tears but even crying seemed meaningless.

"If it isn't sex, what?"

"You're going to laugh."

"Not," she said, laying her hand on my arm, "What, Peaches?"

"I... I want to be loved." I gulped. "Treasured, valued. I want to have fun and do things and go places and..."

Tina giggled, "You and a few million other new mommies."

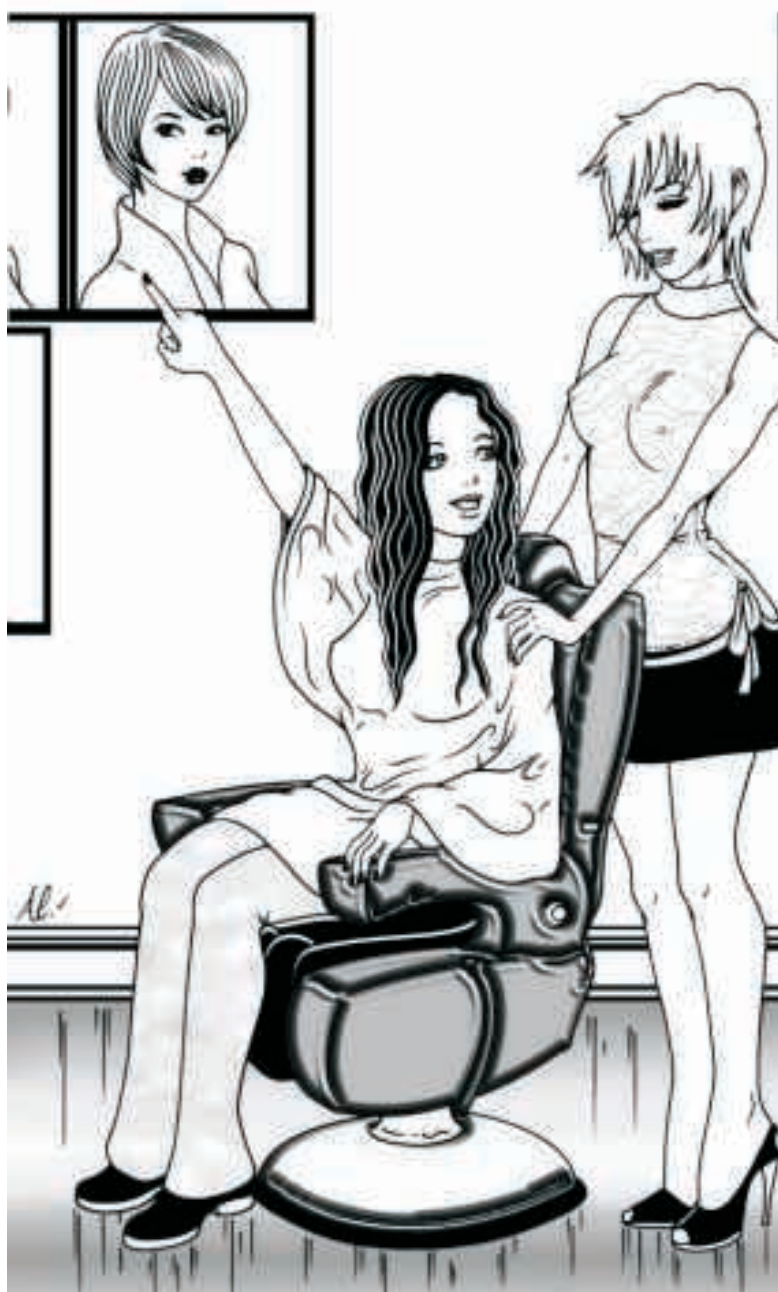
I looked at her. She just didn't get it. How many mommies lost everything the way I did? How many lost even their legal identity? It wasn't her fault, really. How could I explain what I didn't really understand myself? And, short of changing the laws, how could I even explore my options anyway?

"Come on, I know a beauty shop on Ellsworth you're going to love," she said as she stood up and grabbed my hand.

~oOo~

"Gail, I'd like you to meet Peaches. She's having a very bad hair day."

I grumped as I nodded toward the shop owner. Tina led me over to a poster with numerous hair styles on display. "See anything you like?"



"Actually," I said as I stabbed my finger toward one of them. "That."

"Really?" Tina looked surprised. It was a modified page boy with the hair brushed forward to the cheeks. No curls to speak of, smooth and straight, not even particularly feminine. "You will not believe this, Peaches, but I've been thinking of going that way myself for awhile."

"Small minds," I said. "I was planning on going back to my natural brown."

She looked at my hair dubiously. "Not with that black dye job. You'll need to have it stripped and then re-dyed."

I shrugged. "Not so bad."

"If you want to spend the whole morning here, it isn't. Go black like me," she grinned.

"The last time, you almost had a heart attack."

"I grow stronger every day," she laughed, "Besides, it was more like having kittens, honey."

Gail almost had a heart attack when she walked past us an hour later. Well that's an exaggeration. She stopped and said, "Oh my God. She's your sister, right? Tina, you never told me you had a sister."

I looked at Tina and she looked at me. We both got out of our chairs and headed for the mirror on the far wall. It wasn't really possible. We put our arms around each other, pulled together and stared at our combined image. There was something eerie about our image beyond just looking the same. "We looked like sisters before," I said thoughtfully.

"Yeah, but that was April's doing and it took a lot of makeup." She looked at me in wonder. "I always thought that the physical changes had stopped a long time ago, guess not huh?"

"I'm prettier," I added, "Way prettier." I fingered my new hairdo carefully and preened.

"Sexier maybe, if you like udders," she laughed, "Me, I'd rather not look so 'moo'."

I poked her. She giggled and I giggled and for the first time in a long time, I felt almost happy.

~oOo~

When we got to the department store, I headed directly to the lingerie section. I may have awoken this morning more aware of 'me' but it wasn't the me of last year. I'd grown fond of sweet, sexy underthings and had, finally, conceded that bras were necessary. Try running around with almost D-cup sized boobs for a while. The aftershocks can kill. And it was doubly thrilling to look up and see Tina. Me-her, almost a perfectly matched set. The clerks really seemed delighted with the two of us. I hadn't had this much attention since the Feds looked between my legs to make sure I wasn't hiding a second baby.

I knew my face was pretty but watching my alter ego confirmed my wildest imagination. I was no ordinary feminized male. Some of the party flavor leaked out of me. If

Jimmy was that hot for Tina, why hadn't he already made me into a constant bed partner? There were two, not mutually exclusive, possibilities. First and most likely, he still saw me as I was, that fluffy-headed Gamma momma person. Second, it was that little prick between my legs and all that history. In the absence of hormones, it still hadn't ceased functioning. I read somewhere that some castrated men have actually been able to function for several years. "I want to try this on," I called out to Tina, waving a very pretty bra in her direction. The matching panties were in my other hand.

Did I really want Jimmy's attentions? It was better than what I had, I suppose. I remembered us having 'sex' or rather him having sex and that image hadn't really set any bells off in my head then. Could it now? I guess if he loved me, you know, adored me, desired to be with me. I tried to picture him pie-eyed as I came into the bedroom in something really sexy. I'd learned from reading Romance novels at Gamma House, that the heroine usually got off on how sexy she was. Could that work for me? Could I imagine him having his way with me? The tingle I felt said possibly. A wicked pleasure, me with my plunging neckline and Jimmy's eyes riveted. I made my way into the women's dressing area. This was a first for me, I was in No Man's Land.

We were having way too much fun. Truth was, I'd never had fun shopping, especially with Tina back when I was her husband. Tina busted into my stall, holding up a dress. Her cheeks were rosy and her eyes extra bright. She started to say, "What do you think..." then stopped. She'd not seen me naked since, well, the last time we made love over twelve months ago. I'd just removed my bra and, other than my panties, I was naked. My back was turned away from her so all she really saw was my backside. "Oh," She added. "Heavens. I had no idea." She gasped.

"What?" I said turning. She was still bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked but she looked shocked.

"You're... stunning," she said as she surveyed my body. She reached out, then stopped, "May I?" She didn't wait for me to respond. The tips of her outstretched fingers slid down the side of my chest with the weight of a butterfly wing tip; they swept inward toward the narrowest point of my waist, then further down until she reached the outward thrust of my hips. She shook her head. "If James took one look at you..."

The way she looked at me felt good, really good: Like I was special. "You think so?"

She jerked her hand away, brought both of her hands to her lips and giggled. "If he doesn't think so, he's dead. Lordie, Peaches, you are one hot mama."

I looked at her, trying to decide if she was being straight or was just putting me on. "You mean it, right?"

She gave me this funny look. "Isn't it obvious?" She swept me into her arms and gave me a big hug. "You sure know how to hide your light under a basket," she giggled, "Nobody is that dense."

"Jimmy?"

She laughed, "No, you, dummy. I'd kill for a figure like yours. I'd die and go to heaven." She looked at the dress she'd carried in and tossed it into the corner. "Let's do some real damage, Peaches. Something that will rip a man's heart out."

~oOo~

I wasn't ready for what happened when she took me home. We were up in my bedroom and she was helping me put away my new things. It wasn't like what a man might have done. Without warning, she kissed me on the lips. Not one of those crushing, mindless clasp-of-mouth-against-mouth kisses, hers settled on my lips so lightly one might not have known they was there. It was an endlessly long, lingering, almost-kiss. There was no demand in it, no request either for my surrender, or a promise of hers, for that matter. I was breathless and charmed and I never wanted it to end.

All things end, though, and this ending was as quiet and stealthy as it had begun. She slipped away without comment and returned to the bed to retrieve the last dress. I stood there still nested in that moment as if it hadn't ended. She brushed past me without looking as she went to the closet with the final item. Only her cheeks gave her away; she'd ripened with a bright, spreading blush that was now threatening her neck.

"Tina?" I said breathlessly for I'd not yet exhaled.

"Not now," she said. "I have to go to work, sweetheart."

I felt like a truck had hit me as she hurried out of the bedroom. I heard her heels clatter on the hardwood of the stairs. "TINA!" I yelled. The front door banged shut and she was gone. "Tina?" I said softly. Perhaps you would have to be a Gamma to fully appreciate that kiss. There was love there. Passion, perhaps for Tina, but more important to me, love. Love was more savory and filling than a thousand fucks. Yeah, you'd definitely have to be a Gamma to understand.

The day that had started out so dark had found its dawn: no answers or solutions. It was not a promise or a contract but that kiss was hope. Can there be any better gift than that?

~oOo~

It was a simple thing that hung off my shoulders on tiny spaghetti straps; the top of the dress was cut square in both the front and back, and it was sleeveless, of course. It was made of the sheerest material. Velvet is usually heavy, I know, so perhaps it was a new man-make fiber, a simulated velvet. It was black as space but it caught the light as velvet does, throwing it back so that one can almost see its softness. The dress clung to my every contour like a second skin. It was not constraining, and of course it had that magical feel of velvet. In its embrace, I felt delightfully delicate and more feminine, if such a thing were possible, than I had before putting it on. Stroking myself through the dress made my touch feel like a caress. My every movement was transformed into an invisible lover's naughty touch. Underneath were matching black satin panties and bra; both were enhanced with feminine patterns of the most precious sort. Shiny black patent leather spiked heels, of excessive height, and sheer, transparent clinging nylons completed the basic ensemble.

The bra itself was of a clever mechanical design that pushed my breasts up and together so that while the dress itself appeared modest, ample cleavage was clearly evident

to the unaided eye. The high hemline and the excessively high heels set off my legs and behind splendidly. With my smashing new hairdo and matching black pearl earrings and necklace, I was a choice, prime babe. All of this feminine display was utterly wasted. Jimmy probably wouldn't be home for hours and I was not going anywhere. It was designed more for a night out, which I'd never had as a Gamma, unless you included the Nevan Foundation party I'd gone to more than six months ago.

That I felt pleasantly lost in this deliberate femininity or perhaps was enjoying the re-discovery of my feminine self after my intense bout with maternity was beside the point. That this was what Tina had chosen for me was the very essence of my journey. Even if one ignored the high heels, the ensemble put my body on display in a way I would not have expected a woman to like. I have never experienced a greater difference between men and women than that. God knows women's fashions seldom reflect male desires. If the latter were true, the micro skirt, bra-less, see-through blouse would never have gone out of style. It was more the style a Beta might have chosen or created for a Beta by her rich consort.

The kiss said it all. Its ghost still lingered on my lips. Between my outfit and that sweet kiss, there was no doubt that Tina had sexual desires of which I was the object. To be totally honest, I'd never felt her passion in the year we were married like I felt in that one kiss this afternoon. I had never turned her head, nor, apparently plucked her heart strings, as a male. But I knew with certainty this morning in the women's dressing room that Tina, with her flushed face and sparkling eyes, desired what she saw. Or was this only the wobbly fantasy of a Gamma? One thing I had learned, all the way back to my early times at Gamma House, that my perceptions were readily colored by emotions. A Gamma was love, so could I trust that love? True, my thought had become more linear since my hormones dropped. But how much could I trust them even now? It was foolish to believe that my mind worked precisely like an Alpha, male or female.

Perhaps what motivated Tina was pity, not love. I looked in the mirror and saw a beautiful woman. She wasn't me. I lacked the confidence to be beautiful. I was the rumpled remnants of Bill's soul squished inside a Gamma body that looked female. A social outcast, a reproductive dead end, a castrated male with tits. The woman in the mirror crossed her arms and gripped her shoulders as if she were cold or worse, afraid. I really couldn't stand being hurt again. I turned away and walked with the self-conscious care required by these fetish-inspired heels. Were I to forget my femininity for an instant, I would go crashing to the floor in a heap of elbows and knee caps. The natural sway of my body exaggerated by the mechanics of my shoes, gave me a cat-like grace I had never employed, at least not deliberately.

I picked up Little Bee and thrust her tightly against my bosom. Bee seemed to like the feel of my dress almost as much as I did. My mind switched back to my earlier thoughts. It was immediately obvious that more had changed between Tina and I than that kiss or what this fabulous costume she'd selected for me represented. Today she'd paid for everything, even the new hairdo. I had money, of course, Jimmy gave me an allowance. But my allowance was less than that a servant girl might receive after deductions for room and board. I could have possibly bought a simple wrap but certainly not this outfit, not even the bra and matching panties. My one form of identification clearly marked me as a

Gamma; I carried no other identification other than the small implant behind my ear. Oh yes, I'd been freed of the bracelet and the G.P.S. transponder, but I was tagged like a pet. An electronic bar code reader identified both my current guardian and home address. Were I to be stolen or lost, Jimmy could call in to the authorities my status and a signal would be triggered that would help them to locate me, very much like the old LoJack auto theft-deterrent system. Gammas were stolen so this was no idle fear.

I unhooked the back of the dress and partly unzipped it, easing the straps over my shoulder, no easy task with Bee in my arms. Pulling down the front of the dress exposed my bra which I unhooked. Thank God for hooks in the front. Bee greedily sought and captured a nipple and began to suck. Her sucking and the letting down of my milk acted like a narcotic on me. I could feel the tensions ebb as I returned to my troubled thoughts. Being a non-person meant that I was totally at the mercy of those around me, principally Jimmy. Being in 'love' with Tina was potentially a nightmare. Were Jimmy not to allow my continued contact with Tina, he could enforce my compliance. It wasn't just that I could lose the small bit of freedom I had. He could increase my hormone levels and returned me to that daffy, silly self I'd been for most of the last six months. I shuddered at the thought. My return to something similar to normal communication with the world around me had brought pain, true, but the alternative was a joyous living death.

Bee was now asleep in my arms. I carried her up to her crib, in deep thought. I love Tina, she loves me. Did it matter? Jimmy loved Tina but she hadn't given him the time of day, as far as I could tell. What I knew was that Jimmy loved Tina six months ago, before I went into total Gamma mentality. Earlier in the morning, I even had the impression that she might want to help me encourage Jimmy's potential interest in me. I assume that had changed but I didn't really know.

Two possibilities came to mind. First, perhaps Jimmy would simply give me to Tina if I asked. I was never sure exactly why he'd taken the obligation in the first place. Certainly he'd showed no sexual interest after that first night I spent here. Since Bee was born, we had seen him less and less, so the social commitment seemed minimal. If he weren't willing to give Bee and me to Tina, perhaps we could be together if Tina married Jimmy. Of course there was something horribly wrong with that notion, if I were Bill, but I wasn't. Stranger things have happened.

I remember what Dr. Ash had said eons ago, that sometimes a Gamma could use their apparent sexuality to enhance their social environment. By fucking Jimmy or Tina or both, I might, by using their own sexuality, achieve a situation that met my needs. My needs were simple: I wanted to be loved. Nothing more was essential and nothing less was sufficient. It goes without saying, of course, that Bee counted more than anyone else in my heart.

The sound of voices in the entryway hit me like an electric cattle prod; that shrill, almost angry voice had to be Tina's. I glanced over at the clock, it was almost six. Tina was on the air at six, seven and eleven every night during the week and yet she was here. I bubbled with confused pleasure as I fumbled with my bra and began to repair my dress. The second voice was Jimmy's. Neither of them should be here. As I zipped up my dress and adjusted the straps, I could hear his voice. It was not angry, condescending perhaps,

but not likely to erupt into a fury. I checked myself out in the mirror before hurrying toward the stairs.

Jimmy and Tina were arguing about me. My name came through even if little else did. "Peaches is mine, James, I want her ward."

"You had your chance, Tina. That Swillwater guy tried to move heaven and earth..."

"I... I didn't know what I wanted then or..."

"If it wasn't for the Nevan people, I'd never..."

"What, accept her ward? For you it was all about their money..."

"That's not fair, Tina..." It was the sound of my heels on the steps that cut off their discussion. "Peaches? Stay out of this, it's not your concern." Jimmy's voice sounded like he was talking to a child, not quite the tone reserved for the very young but I don't think he could have used that tone on a teenager and gotten away with it. A few days ago, I would have probably stopped dead in my tracks. But a few days ago, I might not have really realized that it was my future that was at stake. It's none of my concern? A tiny spark of outrage flickered in my Gamma breast. Of course, it was like starting a fire with wet kindling, all smoke and no flame. The smoke became tears, just enough to wet my eyes. I took two more steps down. I was halfway down and I could see both of them now.

The anger seemed to dissolve from Tina as her eyes caught mine. That love I'd sensed was clearly in evidence. "James is right," she said. Go back to your room, Peaches. Bee needs you."

That stopped me cold. "You're not at the TV station," I said, simply trying to work out how or why she was here.

"I called in sick, sweetheart." What she didn't say was that she just couldn't let things between us just hang, not after that sweet kiss. Of course she wouldn't say that, not in front of Jimmy. She flipped her hand at me as if to say I should go away.

I turned and retreated but before I got to the top of the stairs, they were arguing again. I stopped, turned and sat down. I was out of sight but I could hear; it was my very existence that lay in their hands. They moved into the parlor and I worked my way further down the stairs, sliding on my bottom.

James was talking. "You know my conditions, Tina. Lord knows I've been understanding. You don't need to marry me..."

"Just fuck you," she said. Her tone was soft, not belligerent. "That's really why you took in Bill and that little bastard. Like fishing with live bait." She must have made some kind of obscene gesture.

"That's not fair and you know it. Besides, have you considered how perfect this could be for all of us? Tina, think of it, you could have those children you want and still keep your career."

"I can do that now, moron," she spat back.

"Peaches would make everything better and you know it. A part-time mom verses a mom and a Gamma. No contest. Tina, you're just being old-fashioned."

"I could never do that to Bill."

"You could to Peaches. Trust me, she'd be in Piggy Heaven. Bill's gone, accept that and the guilt that you're still carrying. We've got to move on."

There was no sound for several minutes. Finally Tina said, "I'll think on it. Could Peaches and I have a few hours alone tonight?"

Jimmy sniggered, "Like, duh?"

"That's a yes?"

"No. And don't flutter your eyes like that. I know what women have been doing with Gammas lately. It's all the rage. What a sorry state we've arrive at."

"And you haven't fucked her?" There was a sneer in her voice.

"What in the hell are you talking about, Tina?"

"You must be blind." She got up and headed for the front door. She moved too fast for me to get out of sight since I was more than halfway down the stairs at this point. She flipped me a look that was more carnal than loving and fled out into the early evening.

Perhaps I should have listened to them and gone back to Bee. I'd received more insight into the situation than I cared to have. Tina was obviously hot to trot and being an Alpha, love and sex were tightly welded together. She wanted to fuck me. Was what Jimmy had said true, ordinary Alpha females fucking Gammas was... in? People are like that, you know. One does it and everyone else has to try it. I honestly couldn't say if Tina might stoop to that level. It was better to believe that sweet kiss. I stood up and turned to go to my room as I had been ordered.

"Peaches?"

I turned about and looked down at Jimmy. He looked mildly confused "Yes?" My voice was nothing like Tina's. Indeed it was male deep, too deep to be female, people often said, to be nice. It was a sexy, girly voice nonetheless, except maybe when I was stressed. I was stressed.

The confusion on Jimmy's face faded, "You gave me quite a start. For a moment, I'd almost thought that Tina had snuck back in." He continued to stare and then motioned me to join him. "I want to see you in better light," he added.

Those high heels, which threatened to be the death of me, added flame to his eyes as I worked my way down the stairs. The lush, feminine sway of my body, the careful, dainty steps signaled 'woman' as certainly as my new hairdo or that dress. It was not a signal that Jimmy had anticipated. It certainly wasn't the me he'd seen for the last six months, the crazy 'mommy' me.

He took my face in both hands and stared into my eyes. "I swear," he said. He cocked my head to the right and left before returning it back to the front. "How could I have not seen this?"

Well it was obvious, he hadn't really looked at me in months. My muu-muus had masked very well my returning figure. There was almost a real person behind my eyes now. I wasn't quite the little puppy I had been, running at his beck and call. Then I realized that perhaps I was still that cocker spaniel. I felt his hands slid down my neck, across

my shoulders, then down my side, much as Tina's fingers had done this morning. The tactile impression, even without the velvet dress, might have made me swoon.

No man could ignore my reactions anymore than I could ignore the zillion tactile buttons he'd pressed. His hands went to my breasts and ass, swept around my hips, even slid across my hard erection that made an unsightly tent of the velvet. I didn't moan or weep or throw myself against him and I certainly didn't try to avoid his contact. I was plastic and completely pliable. The loss of hormones since my castration six months ago had significantly affected my female response systems which were less natural and less mature considering I'd been a male for most of my life. My male system, half-starved from the lack of testosterone, was only nominally functional. One can say that the brainstem and mid-brain had been feminized into a profoundly passive sexual role. Adaptive for a Gamma, maladaptive for an Alpha of either sex. Did I know this at this time? You've got to be kidding.

Jimmy did, or rather he couldn't help but notice. Years spent studying the nervous systems of Beta subjects and, more recently, Gammas, gave him a hint. He led me back to his clinic and had me sit as he made a phone call to Chicago and Mrs. Anderson's medical staff. It was nine o'clock at night, Chicago time. Castration had been used before, as was the case with Mrs. Anderson. What did they know and why this odd reaction? Minutes later, he gave me a jolt of testosterone and a witches brew of neuro-transmitters after taking a blood sample for later comparison. Then he sent me to bed.

~oOo~

It was before dawn. Pink light filtered into my room and I'd just returned Bee to her crib after her feeding. Jimmy entered my room. His intentions were self-evident. He was naked, his penis was only at half-staff, so it was not raging lust that had led him here, though as he removed the T-shirt I used for a night shirt, his erection did increase. Rough hands went to my breasts before he pulled me close and kissed me. It was the classic male kiss used to overwhelm and conquer rather than seduce. Soon, I was as naked as he was. He worked and massaged my body in a workmanlike fashion, without affection and almost without the necessary lust.

Finally, he pushed me down in front of him and held out his cock which was even less erect than when he'd entered my room. I took it in my hands, then to my mouth and began to perform what magic I could. The whole context was clinical for both of us. Why was he here? Even for an Alpha, this was not attractive. Lust without love was common enough but sex without lust was a complete bust. Just before he left, he said something more to himself than to me. "The precise counterpoint of the Beta."

"Huh?"

"The perfect lay you're not. Peaches, you could make a sex maniac celibate."

I guess he was pissed at his own poor performance but that didn't seem like Jimmy. I was confused.

"Gammas carry babies, Betas make babies. Different roles and entirely different outcomes it would appear. Christ, Mrs. Anderson should have told me what they knew

months ago." He scratched his head, "Your vagina is good for one thing and one thing only, delivering babies. That apparent bi-sexuality you showed earlier, poof! Gone! You know how a Beta can get into a man's head and make him sexually crazy? You've got the same power in reverse."

"And that's a problem?"

"Depends on your point of view. I figured if this thing with Tina fell through, I could always sell your ward." I felt suddenly sick. "Anyhow," he continued, "a Gamma sex slave might be worth a million." He shrugged. "So much for making money, huh?"

"I... I can't believe... you even considered..."

"Come on, Peaches. Bill's life ended over a year ago. Frankly, had it worked out otherwise, you would have had a good life."

"As a whore?"

"Being pregnant nine months out of every ten sound better? If I had to choose, I'd be the whore."

I glared at him. Maybe he already was, a whore that is.

~oOo~

Tina had never watched me feed Bee. My baby was sucking valiantly on my left breast but getting little. She grumbled as only an infant can when I pulled her free but then she quieted immediately as milk rewarded her efforts on my right breast. The sound of her sucking was clearly audible now. Tina was sitting beside me on my bed, holding me as I held Bee. I leaned back against her. I was aware of her breasts against my naked back, the light occasional flick of her hair that sometimes crossed my shoulder and neck when Tina moved. The sweet warm odor of a naked woman mingled with the familiar scent of Little Bee and my own milk. Tina stroked Little Bee and me, giving neither of us extra favor. Between Bee at my breast and Tina beside me, I wallowed in contentment. An odd response considering that Jimmy had listed my ward on eBay late this morning. Not only would I get sold to the highest bidder, I'd most certainly not reside here near Tina after the transaction.

I reached up and took her hand in mine, drew it toward my lips and kissed it. She leaned over, lightly kissed my neck, then nuzzled my ear. "He placed the minimum bid at ten thousand dollars. Can you believe?" I turned my head to catch a peek of Tina's face, "A University professor should be worth more. My education alone cost twenty-thirty times that," I laughed.

Time stood still. All of this was almost sinful. All things end eventually, though. I lifted a sleeping Bee away from my nipple and wiped off a lingering drop of my milk. Little Bee's lips continued to make a sucking motion for a few seconds, but she was down for the count. Tina took her from my arms without a word, carried her to her crib and put her down. I felt sweet delight in the way Tina carried my baby, with love. "Just the small white blanket," I said. "She gets too warm otherwise." Tina gave me a questioning look, then decided that perhaps I knew what was best and did what I ordered.

Tina eased down beside me and placed her left arm along my shoulder. With her right hand, she took my chin and drew my face close. I was a little afraid. What had Jimmy said about how I could make a sex maniac celibate? "Jimmy said that I had the reverse powers of a Beta."

That stopped Tina. She raised both eyebrows and gave me a questioning look.

"I don't think he was just saying that, OK? He was in communication with people from the Nevan Foundation last night and again very early this morning. Apparently the castration set something loose in my head and, zing."

"Zing?"

"Screws up sexual desire. Jimmy tried to fuck me this morning, couldn't get it up. Anyway, Tina, I have to believe he's right. For Pete's sake, I gave him a blow job, or tried to. He shrunk all up."

"That doesn't mean it's your fault, Peaches. Men." The last came out as a swear word.

"Anyhow, the good news is that those people looking for a Gamma-based sex trade business are probably out of luck."

"That's gross, I mean the sex trade, yuck," responded Tina. "You seriously believe anyone would actually try to do something like that to a Gamma?" She thought about it for a moment, then concluded in the affirmative. "Men," she growled again.

"Is it true that women are, you know, doing it with Gammas? It, like sex?" I asked. My voice was plaintive. The thought both intrigued and frightened me.

She didn't respond to my question. Maybe what she was doing was her answer. She was still holding my face near hers. I could smell the coffee she'd had when she first got here. I wanted so desperately to recapture that kiss from yesterday and terrified that it couldn't happen again. "Awful nice that Jimmy let you come over and visit this afternoon," I added, using the conversation to cover my fear.

"You talk too much," Tina said as her lips moved to mine. Whatever fears I'd had vanished in that split second. How could so light a touch lift me above the earth so high? I let my eyes close and simply drank in the pleasure. Her left hand lifted off my shoulder and lightly stroked the fine hairs on my neck. There was a calm certainty in her touch and my response. A minute, two minutes, passed. A man would have had his 'thing' inside me by this time or at least he would have been making a fumbling attempt to do so. I felt the tip of her tongue push, ever so gently, between my lips and enter. Not an attack, more like a friend coming over in the morning for coffee and conversation. And I answered. Eventually she began to actually probe with her tongue, slowly, deeper and deeper. My resistance crumbled. It was as if I had now opened wide in total surrender, as if I were begging her to take my soul.

Her right hand dropped down and the tips of her fingers lightly slid across the soft flesh of my breast, then wandered lightly across my aureola and crested the knotty, erect nipple that had so recently joined with Bee. She moaned, a deep guttural call from somewhere inside her, at a place no man could go. Her breath quickened and heated. Then all pretense of two separate bodies sitting side-by-side disappeared as she and I merged into one flesh.

She was in the superior position as I gripped her between my thighs, locking my ankles. I drew my feet tightly against the back of her upper thighs and felt the soft swell of her backside. Surely not the way a male would have held her; there was no possibility that my penis could have entered her thus positioned. She scooped up both of my breasts, her hands overflowing and buried her face between them. I reached under her arms and gathered together the weight of her breasts in my own hands. Our odors intensified as our vaginas expressed our mutual arousal.

My ability to pleasure her increased a thousand fold, for I was sharing her pleasure as if it were literally my own. Moments later I'd twisted back into the superior position, my face planted in her crotch, my lips and tongue seeking and finding her clit. Her clit was my vicarious clit. My lips and tongue, led by her response, could find the precise angle, the correct pressure and timing. Never had a lover been more perfectly capable or more involved in the object of her attentions for I was as much the recipient as she was.

Eventually she gave me what I, as a Gamma, could not give myself. She passed the summit of arousal and pitched over in a grand, massive climax. She'd carried me in her arms, so to speak. For the first time in well over a year, I felt the release I'd so often sought. I shared in the wild ride of the secondary climax, then the third. Each was smaller, weaker, but still... delicious.

I don't remember how long we were so intertwined. Having drunk from both cups at the same time, I now knew that a Gamma's experience was richer emotionally. Tina's physical gratification was light years beyond my own feeble efforts. Love was more potent than lust, for me at least.

I laid my head between her breasts and allowed her arms to encircle my shoulders. We were both slick with sweat and smelled of sexual congress. I hadn't understood why she'd married me two years earlier. She said it was because I was 'safe.' "How long have you known, Tina?"

"Know what?" she said. Her voice sounded sleepy, her body was entirely relaxed.

"That you were gay."

I felt the sudden tension in her body. "You... know?"

"How long?"

"Only after I lost you." She sighed and drew me closer. The tension was still there but it seemed to be fading. "You know, you were almost two months pregnant when you went to see James regarding your morning sickness." I grunted as if to say so what? "I think I was sensing your transition from male to..."

I sat up, "Gamma? I don't think either of us even knew about Gammas. Certainly I'd never given them any thought back then."

"Nor I, to be truthful, Bill. I'd been considering a divorce," she laughed, "even before we married. God knows I'd been sexually active with enough men before I married you. After I married you, I said to myself, same-old-same-old. In the last weeks we were together, Bill, I was really beginning to feel something I'd never felt before. It must have been something to do with the changes that were even then taking place inside you." She let out a long sigh, "Of course I don't really know..."

I repeated my original question. "When did you know that you were gay?"

"After your Bee was born, about three months ago. My lover is a lovely, strong woman. You should meet her."

"And Jimmy doesn't know?"

"It's none of his business." She looked at me in puzzlement. "So, how did you guess?"

"It wasn't a guess. I knew when you looked at me in the women's dressing room at the department store yesterday morning." I lied, of course. I'd felt her lust as she enjoyed my form while we made love, there was nothing abstract or clinical in her sight of me. I recognized it instantly as a former male. She fucking loved my ass and tits. Go figure!

Chapter 4

I'd never been sold before. I can tell you it's an odd experience. By the end of the first day, the highest bid was just below thirty-five thousand dollars. That was about average for a Gamma back then. That night, Jimmy shot a video of me in my black bra and panties mounted on those extraordinary high heels and wearing transparent nylons. I had enough mascara on to blacken half of L.A. and long artificial lashes like Bea had worn; my mouth had been turned into a vivid red slash. The video should have been X-rated but eBay carried my image nonetheless. By the next morning, the bids had jumped to over a hundred thousand dollars.

By that afternoon, Jimmy was in fine spirits indeed as the latest bid broke the five-hundred thousand mark. It took almost a week to reach six hundred thousand and there were now few players. I was eventually sold to a man from Mississippi for six hundred and sixty-seven thousand, three hundred dollars and forty-two cents. Go figure. I had to wonder what the forty-two cents represented. I guess it was my precise worth. Jimmy loaded me on to a plane bound for New Orleans where my new owner would take claim.

If there was any doubt about my Beta roots, that would have been eliminated by



the time we got to LAX. I was wearing the sweetest little micro skirt that never covered a female bottom. My blouse was translucent, which was to say, one had to look, but not very carefully, to actually see my breasts which were sans bra. Men did look, you can be sure of that. My nipples had been painted like a classic Roman whore. I'd thought those heels that Tina had bought me were outrageous; the ones I wore to New Orleans were little more than six-inch spikes. The good doctor had filled me up with tranks to the point that I would have made the typical Gamma look coherent. You see, my buyer didn't want Little Bee. I may have been a giggly bundle of pseudo-Beta, but my heart had been torn in two.

I was worth enough money to Jimmy that he traveled with me to New Orleans. My new owner was short and squat and reminded me a little of Max Swillwater without the pleasant smile. He didn't actually open my mouth and check my teeth, but he did paw just about every other aspect of my person. Fortunately he didn't try to talk to me or all he would have heard was gibberish. Money exchanged hands and 'my friend' and former owner returned on the next flight to California.

It was a four-hour drive to my new owner's mansion; by the time we got there, I was long gone, thanks to the tranquilizers Jimmy had fed me. The next morning, nearly noon, I awoke to discover my unconscious state hadn't dissuaded my owner from taking a test drive. How gross. My breasts, flanks and thighs were marked with 'love bites' though no love had been involved. He soon discovered that his property carried some liabilities. Principally, I was in mourning for my Bee. My hormones were all fucked up and my breasts, filled with unused and unwanted milk, were killing me. And yeah, when I was conscious, he couldn't get it up.

Eventually I was sold three more times. Each time, my value dropped as word got out. I could kill an erection at twenty paces. It was Boston, then New York, and finally a tiny town in northern Florida, Alligator Point, I believe. I remained almost a year in Florida. My owner was too old to exercise his 'options' but he seemed satisfied with just looking and touching. And he'd gotten me at a steal, just over fifty-five thousand dollars. After he died, I became a part of his estate which meant that I remained in place, like the furniture, until the will was read some months later. By this time, almost two years had passed since I'd left L.A.

My new owner picked me up for just under forty grand. This time, I wasn't escorted to my new destination, nor, thank God, was I wearing my bimbo costume. You might say my worth as a sex item had finally ended. I wore a plain grey dress of a modest cut, flats; my hair, which had become very long, was tied up into a bun. Nanny was written all over me and, to be honest, I was relieved. There was a baby to care for, honest work including light housekeeping, nothing I couldn't do. As I'd once imagined when I lived at Gamma House, the ad had run as follows: "Gamma seeking a home. Good with children. Responds to Peaches."

Whatever sweet, lovable 'goodness' I'd once possessed had turned, like sweet wine, into vinegar. It wasn't the brutality of the men who had used me over the last two years that had so corrupted my Gamma soul. Ironically, having been a man, I had some insight into their basic nature. Evolution and not society had shaped their sexuality. They were driven by instinct to seek females that looked like me. The Beta form, and I was a Beta in form at least, resonated with the neural images laid down hundreds of thousands of years

earlier. None of my owners had been 'bad' human beings, they were merely Alphas doing what Alphas do. I should say 'attempting' to do what their programming demanded. Not one had ever penetrated me except orally. I'd left my share of scars on the fragile alpha male egos. In that regard, I wasn't not a victim, merely a player in a tragedy.

In Mississippi, I'd received my first breast implants, as if were I made 'sexier,' my master could, so to speak, rise to the occasion. It hadn't worked. By the time I'd arrived in Florida, numerous plastic surgeons had found employment. I was literally unrecognizable if one were to look at my old California I.D. photo. Silicon shaped my lips into a preposterous pout, my nose was attenuated to but a tiny button. My breasts would have done a younger Dolly Jane Mansfield proud. My slender frame carried far too much sail. Attempts to fix my male voice by shaving parts of my larynx had raised the pitch of my natural voice but the effect had gone too far. Rather than being sexy, it was shrill. Lord, I hated it when I got excited, my voice became a squeaky little girl's voice.

The final dishonor had been the first performed. In Mississippi, I'd lost my distinctive penis. In California that would have been illegal but in Mississippi there were no such constraints. The surgery saved only the receptor-rich skin that made up the head of my penis. It still swells up when I am excited but it could easily pass for a oddly-shaped clit. Of course, I urinated setting down now, no big deal. Fortunately, my last owner had been satisfied with just touching my overdrawn female ripeness.

A sex toy was not a 'love object' and therein lies the tale. The Gamma feeds on intimacy, affection and, most of all, love. That penis they removed wasn't a penis in reality. It was a device that could enter a woman's womb and draw out a fertilized egg. Gross, right? Wrong. It was the very core of a Gamma's reason for being. We got pregnant because it was our nature. And women in the first months of their pregnancy would find me irresistible. I certainly was capable of making love to a woman. My last contact with Tina proved that. And had she been pregnant...

A non-pregnant Gamma was a Gamma in exile. In spite of what Jimmy had said that he'd rather be a whore than spend nine out of every ten months pregnant, my programming said otherwise. By removing my ovum pod manipulator (penis), my natural function had been destroyed as effectively as if Jimmy had had his prick cut off. I could detect a newly-pregnant woman fifty feet away. At first it had driven me half-insane. Eventually, it had soured my Gamma heart. I would remain childless unless a fetus was implanted, a medical procedure that seemed unlikely to be provided to one such as me.

I was home. California, and there, amid the crowd, were my new owners. Forty-thousand for a nanny is a lot of money to upper-middle-class people. The man holding the placard on which was written PEACHES all in caps was precisely the kind of man I'd expected to see. Middle-aged, slightly overweight and expectant. His eyes told me all that I needed to know. His wife was the very essence of overworked womanhood. She had probably been quite a beauty, once. At forty, she looked older than her husband, careworn and, well, frightened. I caught her eye and she looked away. I could imagine what she was thinking: better this than being replaced by a younger wife. She need not worry, her husband would fail with me as all the others had. She must hate me as much as her husband lusted for me. It was pretty obvious that this situation wouldn't last very long. And then I saw them. A sweet blond-haired toddler hanging on to her mother's skirt, blue eyes wide

and expectant. Two towheaded boys, twins, perhaps four years old and a daughter who might be six. My heart did a delightful flip. Abruptly, I wanted this to work.

It was the older girl, hair almost as black as Tina's, who broke from the family formation and scrambled across the concourse, arms spread wide, eyes bright. She stopped abruptly as if suddenly realizing I was a stranger. "I'm Amy," she said with wide-eyed wonder.

Breathless, I knelt down to her level. "Hello Amy, I'm Peaches, your new nanny." I extended my arms and she entered my embrace hesitantly. Oh, the sweet joy.

~oOo~

I will not go into the details of that first few hours except to say that all my first impressions had been pretty much on target. Mr. Bell would have been all over me in a nanosecond had he been able to figure out how to manage that. And Mrs. Bell, Tilley, had to divide her mutually exclusive impulses along a fine and impossible line. On the one hand, she wasn't about to leave Mr. Bell and me out of her sight even for a nanosecond. On the other hand, she'd rather not have me in her sight at all. I'm sure all the efforts of my prior masters to make me 'user friendly' must have repulsed her to her very core. I was a friggin' cow with my triple D's. My perpetually puckered lips said 'fuck-me' and my shrill, little voice said Bimbo Dingbat. If I wasn't a threat to her marriage, I was an obvious threat to the sanctity of her marriage bed. So she hovered as far as she could from me without letting me or her husband out of her eyesight. Poor woman.

Neither adult had any real impact on me those first hours. It was the kids and me. I don't know if it was something special about me as a Gamma or perhaps all of these wonderful pixies were simply love-starved. Anyone else might have felt battered and exhausted by the time the oldest went to bed. Me? I hadn't felt so alive for years. I was like a flower blooming in the desert after a heavy rain. There was beauty in my heart where none had existed only hours before. I think it showed. Not to Mr. Bell, that wasn't the object of his focus. Mrs. Bell recognized me for what I was, a loving person. Not that that was the only game in town.

In spite of Mr. Bell's best efforts, she chased him off. We were going to have a talk and she would lay down the Ten Commandants. The first had to be Love not your mistress' husband. She really didn't have to worry about that but how could she have known? Mr. Bell cocked his hips and sauntered away after giving me one of those Alpha male looks that said: my turn will come. He went to a neighbor's house to have a few beers and, probably, to boast.

Having given me a grand tour of the house, Tilley eventually led me to what would be my room in the children's wing of the ranch-style house, all the way to the rear. I followed her at a distance, checking each room to see the wee ones in their beds. I think she approved. That harsh sneer she had worn earlier finally faded. She waited at the end of the hall for me to catch up. "This is your room," she said. Her nose quivered as did mine. She was pregnant. Possibly she didn't even know that she was in a gravid state. This sensation was new to her; it wasn't to me. My ovum pod manipulator would have come to rigid at-

tention if it could. What did happen was my 'button' bloomed into a quarter-sized knot of raw erotic potential. I was weak-kneed and this ordinary woman became, for me, the most precious, sensual creature God had ever created. The impulse to touch, to fondle, to lie upon her person was surely similar to that her husband felt since the moment he first stripped me naked with his gaze.

That she was feeling the same way was obvious to me, as a blush rose from her neck and threatened to leap across her cheeks. Her eyes brightened, her pulse quickened, her fingers twitched as she fought the urge to touch and be touched. I was a stranger and obviously feminine, if not precisely female. I was as inappropriate as a sex object to her as...

"Yes, well..." Her voice became strangled. "The bathroom's down the hall and there are some suitable clothes in the... in the..."

I didn't mean to do it, that is to say I hadn't given any conscious thought to the act. She was so close and so dear. I wanted to kiss her. It was precisely the kiss I'd received from Tina that wonderful afternoon so long ago, as if I'd held it in storage waiting for the right opportunity. It would be light as a feather and take her off guard. I lunged, she evaded. She spun away from me and stumbled from the tiny cell that was my bedroom, like a deer in flight. Just before she got to the end of the hall, she looked back at me. Our eyes met. Hers were as big as saucers and filled with confusion that bordered on terror. And then she was gone.

She and I were going into 'kimmer.' That's a term that means, heck, what do you think? It means a kind of 'heat,' not unlike what cats go through. In a while, hubby would come home to discover his wife was hotter than a cookie sheet right out of the oven. And really hot wives tend to get attention. Me? Been-there-done-that. I'd have a hell of a time getting to sleep now. I opened the closet and checked out what 'appropriate' meant in clothing. I owned no more than what I worn on my back. Finally, I walked down the hall one more time and checked out each sleeping child. That helped some.

~oOo~

"Mr. Bell!" I squeaked in that little girl voice that I hated so. It was indeed Mr. Bell. And he hadn't attempted to seduce me. Hell, he hadn't even bothered to wake me up! He was mulling my breasts like they were cabbages and his prick was already out and ready for service. Most females would have screamed. As a Gamma, I felt no such need. That little thingy he was pointing at me would turn to mush soon.

But it didn't. I was shocked when he slammed his thing inside me. I was even more shocked by the ripe wetness of my vagina and the manner it was treating me. It made no sense to me then but it did later. I was in 'kimmer,' full-blown sexual capacity, or at least as full-blown as a Gamma could be. I eased back and decided to experience this odd arrangement only to discover that it was a bit more stimulating than I'd expected. It wasn't unlike that first time Bea and I had done it. I was becoming quite frantic as my pelvis thrust against Mr. Bell. My squished button-penis-thingy screamed in delight. As climaxes go, I'd had so few in the last three years, one to be exact, that anything counts, OK? I left

bloody claw marks down Mr. Bell's back but the pain only inspired him to drive that thingy harder and harder. Then we both came, me for the second time.

Immediately, he tried to pull back, afraid of the noise we'd made perhaps or just afraid of getting caught. I caught his ears and forced his face to my breasts. I wanted him to chew, bite and suck on me. I whimpered when he escaped. I'm sure he was very proud of his performance. Even I was proud. I laid there, gasping in delight. It was like I was a real person for a few moments. Mr. Bell was about the most ordinary, uninspiring, slightly overweight middle-aged man one could imagine. Mr. Bell was decidedly not the secret. It was the lingering odor of his pregnant wife that had opened channels in my brain that hadn't been opened for years.

I began to play with myself as I had never done as a full Gamma. I kneaded and squeezed my huge breasts like some inflamed sex kitten. I wanted more. I was no better than the Alphas, lust could and did ride me like a demon that night. My lush pseudo-female body had finally found purpose.

~oOo~

The look on Tilley's face the next morning said it all. That hot cookie sheet had been left to cool on its own last night. The dark shadows under her eyes suggested that sleep had not come easily and the hollow look in her eyes said that she was all too aware of her husband's unfaithfulness. My presence in the kitchen with her was about as welcome as having a large dangerous snake share that space. Her eyes warned me not to enter her territory and I didn't. I had breakfast with the kids in the family room while watching cartoons. Mr. Bell stood between the family room and the kitchen, between me and Tilley, and his looks said it all. I was a set of new, expensive golf clubs that needed to be used and he was trying to figure out how that could be quietly arranged.

Tilley was angry, though she never actually specified her exact reason. She couldn't say what she wanted to say, that she knew her husband was fucking a piece of slime, a Gamma. She moved to safer ground. "We should sell her. Lord knows there are better things we could do with the money, Henry." Her efforts were wasted, of course. I was exactly what he'd hoped I'd be. He knew that she knew. And he hoped, given time, that she would accept me being his Gamma mistress, not a real threat. At the moment, he wanted her and the kids gone. "Nice day for the park, hey?" he said, loud enough for the kids to hear.

It all went precisely the reverse of Mr. Bell's plan. An hour later, it was Mr. Bell and the kids that went to the park. Tilley was determined to put me in my place, to establish the pecking order. Buckets and mops were assembled, a laboratory full of chemicals were brought out to be employed. I remember that frustrated look on her husband's face as he was ushered out of the house. Those new golf clubs were going to have to wait.

It was in the confines of the master bathroom a few minutes later when it started. The closeness of the air allowed the rich chemicals from our bodies to be exchanged. Kimmer was unknown to her, she was already sexually threatened and sexually frustrated. She

loathed my very existence. I was bent over the toilet bowl, brush in hand, scrubbing when she roughly grabbed my shoulder, "Not like that..." She snarled, "you dumb bunny."

Even through the thin cotton of my overshirt, I felt her touch like liquid passion, I stood up, turned and kissed her. She mewed at the contact and might have jerked away but something held her, a hidden need. That momentary hesitation was all it took. Her lips met mine, not with the precious stillness I'd know with Tina, but with the more familiar Alpha aggression, as if she wanted to eat me up. Her tongue exploded into my mouth as her hands found and worried my triple-D breasts. In moments, the cotton overshirt had been ripped off my torso as she hungrily clung to my breasts, then my belly. Finally, after she yanked down my pants, she found my magic button.

It was only later, with the two of us naked and in her bed, I brought us both to climax, over and over again until we lay quietly, slick with sweat, in each other's arms. There was no way I could retrieve her fertilized egg. And there was no way I could stop from trying. Were I intact, this would have defined the end of kimmer and the return to my natural condition, pregnant. She didn't know that. What she knew was that no one had ever owned her physically as I did that day. Nor was I free of my need for her, or rather, her fetus.

Kimmer ended about five weeks later. By that time, the fetus was too advanced to be transferred, not that I could have transferred it, me lacking the necessary device. But by this time I was firmly ensconced in the Bell family. By the third night, we'd become a threesome in bed. The kids loved me as I loved them. A Gamma's life is rough and decidedly not for wimps but hey, it was a life. Mr. Bell, Henry, soon learned that the essential connection was between me and Tilley. Home alone with me, he couldn't get it up. Whereas, even after kimmer had passed, when I was with Tilley, I was receptive to his advances. As the odd man out, so to speak, he began to shower both Tilley and I with affection and gifts. By the time Tilley was in her third month, I had a respectable wardrobe and Tilley looked ten years younger. But my life was, as yet, far from complete.

~oOo~

I convinced Tilley to take me to the Channel Six annual Christmas party in Hollywood. Though I knew almost every one there from the News Group, not a soul recognized me as Tina's ex. The slinky, glittery gown and the long blond hair that trailed behind me like a cape would have made recognition impossible even without my rack and nicely rounded bottom. Tilley followed me around, star-struck, though these Channel Six people were hardly more than local talent. I think she was having fun or at least I hoped she was. She was nearly full-term now and moved with the grace of a tanker. She had attracted the attention of a senior program producer and as she and he talked, I made my move. I spied Tina across the room from us and looking bored. She was in that same small black cocktail dress I'd seen here wearing three years earlier in Brentwood. I whispered in Tilley's ear, "There's someone I need to talk to. I'll be back." I glided away. My heart was in my throat.

"Hey?" I said. It came out as that squeaky little girl and I naturally blushed.

Tina looked back without the slightest hint of recognition. Like a male, she checked out my cleavage, but unlike a male, she did so unobtrusively. "Can I help you?" It was one of those false smiles she used on the public.

"Ms. Smith, could we talk er- in private?" I felt the room tilt slightly, my blush was in full bloom. Worse, Tina didn't look that interested. As to moving to somewhere 'private,' she'd declined to respond.

I was the very essence of a Beta now, superficially of course, since I lacked the drives and needs of a Beta. The raw sexuality I projected was due in part to the extraordinarily rich 'sex life' I'd led as a full member of the Bell family, and the earlier surgeries, of course. Mostly though I'd become perfectly 'tuned' to the lesbian life style. In effect, I'd developed a 'taste' and capacity seldom enjoyed by the ordinary Gamma, I was as much a sexual creature as any Alpha now. Dr. Ash would have thought me deviant though I wonder whether or not I really was. Perhaps had I been a companion of a Beta... I couldn't help remember Cindy. She wasn't stupid. Had I achieved, in spite of the system, my real potential? I looked into Tina's eyes. There was no recognition of me there but there was carnal interest. The latter was carefully masked but decidedly not latent.

My time with the Bell's had come to an end but it would have to be a unilateral decision on my part. Neither Tilley not Henry would terminate my ward, of that I was certain. It was time to go to ground, to disappear. I'd already made my mental apology to Tilley, to abandon her in the unfamiliar world of Hollywood. I felt no apology was necessary to Henry, of course, but I would miss the kids. Having tasted my sexual potential, I could not just give it up. Most important, I wanted back into the mainstream. I wanted to be a 'real' person. "Ms. Smith," I said. Anxiety ran its electrically charged fingers down my spine. Getting Tilley to bring me here hadn't been easy. If Tilley had even the slightest notion of my desires, I'd be grounded forever. Tilley would never let go. She would use the considerable resources available to her from the State to keep me a slave. A 'free' Gamma was an oxymoron. Were Tina to discover who I was, I would simply exchange one mistress for another. It was ironic that the only potential I had was my deviant 'sexuality' and Tina wasn't responding. Indeed she looked, at best distracted, possibly irritated. At me?

"I'm sorry," she said stepping away. I watched her head directly toward a handsome woman, definitely older, perhaps fifty. The woman who had Tina's full attention carried herself with marked dignity; obviously she was 'somebody' and was very much involved in a conversation with a bit of fluff less than half her age. Words were exchanged and in a moment, both Tina and that other woman slipped out of the room. My heart sank. I glanced at Tilley. She was still involved in conversation but time was running out for me.

"Hello? I'm Megan." It was the bit of fluff. We could have been on the same cheerleading squad for she was nearly as sexy as I was and as overdressed for the occasion. She, like me, was in full hunting gear and war paint. And, like me, she'd shot and missed her target. There was a little anger in her eyes and a hint of color on her neck.

"Franks," I said, borrowing Jimmy's last name. "My friends call me... Billy. Billy Jo. Miss Franks."

"Pleased, I'm sure," she said, eyeing me up. "You know Tina?"

"Not really," I said. Then I laughed. The clock was ticking, how much longer did I have? This 'girl' was surely interested in that other woman or was I jumping to conclusions? "I thought I knew her," I added and waited for a response, anything to reinforce my guess. I could see Megan weighing the same thing. I shot from the hip, "I thought she loved me." It was easy to look uncomfortable. My words had obviously hit home as Megan eased in closer. I could feel her breath travel across my shoulder.

"Ever been to Silver Lake?" she said. It wasn't really a question but an offer.

"That bitch over there," I said nodding toward Tilley, "doesn't let me out of her sight. God knows I'd even go to Silver Lake to escape her."

"I hear you," she said softly and with feeling. I felt her hand on my arm and I followed her lead. Tilley hadn't seen me depart. I felt light-headed if not yet free.

~oOo~

Megan hardly had a pot to pee in herself, though in worldly possessions she far out-classed me. The apartment was small but very well-cared for. She was certainly not in a position to 'keep' me, nor would she have been so inclined. She and I were cut from the same cloth, which is to say, in the lesbian world we had pretty much the same position we would have had in the heterosexual world. She'd set her sight on Ms. Gloria Bangle for the same reason a gal like April might have aimed at Dr. James Franks. Unlike me, however, she was a 'real person,' with driver's license, the works. She even had a job at the station.

"I'm illegal," I said. "Lebanese. Getting a job's a real bitch," I added.

"Your English is good for a rag head." She stared at me. "You look a little like her."

"Tina? Yeah. Must be a racial thing. Her mother was Lebanese, you know."

That seemed to satisfy Megan. "It doesn't pay much but I think I know where you can get a job, no questions asked."

My heart stuttered in my chest. "Where?"

"Across the street at the Blue Light. It's a club."

"Gay?"

"You need to ask?" She laughed and stood up, "Come on, I'll introduce you to the Duchess." "She's going to love you to pieces." She looked at my dress. "Let's see if I have anything you might borrow." She poked her finger toward me, "Borrow."

This was, I believe, the end of the beginning. "Megan, my friends call me Peaches." I could see her eyeing my gown, "Consider this collateral," I said as I started to undress.

"Oh, I want more than that," she said as she captured my face in her hands. She brought her lips slowly toward mine. I could already feel her excitement and that erotic bloom echoed inside me. Oh yes, I could do this.

The End