



Reluctant Press presents:

The Queen Of Rock & Roll III

Philippa Peters



ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. PAGANI

AN 'ADULT TV' E-BOOK

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The Queen Of Rock And Roll – Part Three

by Philippa Peters

XVII. FIRST LOVE

I was trembling as I hung up the dress as Joanie directed me to and then I got a look at myself in the bedroom mirror. I shuddered at the body I saw, an incredibly, well-shaped female body, even more shapely than Joanie's, and it was me, Alan. My legs were so shapely and my waist so narrow now that I no longer wore a dress. My reddish hair massed on my shoulders making me look like some other girl, not Christine, some model or something. My breast nipples clearly showed through the silky fabric of the bikini. This is me, I thought wonderingly, looking into a face that had once been Alan's but was now framed in red ringlets, golden hoop earrings and femininely enhanced by subtle makeup of the professional beautician, my eyes so dark-fringed and vivaciously feminine.

“Now, what man couldn't go for that face and that figure no matter what was in your panties?” asked Joanie with a laugh, coming behind me and touching my quivering shoulders with gentle fingers.

“Oh, Joanie,” I gasped, tears threatening as I turned to her. I clutched at a surprised Joanie and kissed her quickly and fiercely, our soft bodies in contact. Joanie resisted at first but then hugged and kissed me back, so wonderfully, so pleurably.

“How will this look?” she said at last, laughing as she broke free. I tried to maneuver her to the bed but she would have none of that, nor my stroking her breast. “No, Debbie,” she smiled. “The men are waiting for us and they can do that!”

I couldn't allay my heated emotions with her for she was off, tossing me a wrap and a lipstick so that I could cover myself and our indiscretion on the way. A thigh-high, see-

through 'shirt' barely covered us for a walk to the elevator, out of the hotel and onto the adjoining beach. Many girls were strolling about in bikinis and so we were not out of place. But I had no dress to stroke me, no tight seams to keep my stride short, no nylon to softly caress my legs. So I felt terribly exposed and the way people looked at us didn't help my consternation.

We did get so many looks at our exposed legs and shapes that I was flushed with embarrassment when we reached the guys. It was the admiring looks we got from so many men that made me feel so weird. I felt that I had just walked naked through a crowded locker room that, in some ways, I had. I was so relieved to sink down on to a towel and the sand and get out of people's view.

"You must get the tanning oil on," Joanie warned me. Our tanning sessions in the city would only help so far under the fierce sun. "And sun block. We don't want you sore and out of action this evening."

I could have hit her cheerfully then as Stan grinned at me. He leaned back on the blanket, sunglasses in place, his body like Ben's very tanned, and proclaimed, "Ah, this is the life," to no-one in particular.

I felt my hands trembling as I fumed silently at Joanie's words. I put oil on my warming skin, trembling at the smoothness of my legs and hurting myself as I spread them apart.

"Can we take our tops off here?" asked Joanie as she lay back and tossed her sun block bottle to Stan.

"Not here," said Ben. "Family beach." I could hear kids in the distance, down by the waves. He stood up and moved his blanket beside mine. Joanie raised her head and winked at me and I wished I could just sink into the sand and never again have to be who I was, Alan, Christine, Debbie, whoever.

"Let me do your back," said Ben pleasantly from behind me and I almost jumped out of my skin when he touched my shoulder. He felt it, of course, and he was very gentle as he put sun block on me, under my bikini straps, around the gold ring that held it together on my back. I pressed down, hiding my agitated breasts and nipples as he gently caressed my back and neck, shifting my hair across my face to do so. His hands about my waist made me want to turn to him but I didn't. My stomach churned as he did the backs of my legs, his hands soft and caressing. Little did he know the hardness in my groin was almost unbearable when he did that.

"There," he said, stretching out beside me, his face creasing to a smile as he looked at my re-freshened lipstick and me.

"Th-thank you," I whispered, quivering and trying to stop as the sun was warm. Yet my stomach was in such a knot, I couldn't help the goose bumps springing out all over me.

"It was my pleasure entirely," he said, showing his attractive smile. He lowered his voice to a whisper. "You have a marvelous, womanly body. You should be proud of it."

Proud of it! I closed my eyes and tried to wish him away, to wish the whole situation away. I pretended to sleep and presently he turned over and seemed to be breathing in a regular pattern, too.

I looked at him through slitted eyes. What kind of man was it who could be attracted to a girl he knew was not a girl? He was like almost every other man I had dated, I thought. He was closely shaven, the thick eyebrows so unlike mine, his nose thin for a man but not bobbed and thinned femininely as mine had been. His chin was strong and firm not delicate as mine now was. I could have looked like that, I thought, frightened a little and starting to tremble again as I realized that he was looking at me in the same way.

"Relax, Debbie," he whispered and I saw something like sympathy or understanding in his eyes. "I don't bite, really. Please don't be scared of thoughts of anything I might do. I would never do anything to a woman unless she approved of it first."

He had me roll over then so that I would tan evenly and he took my hand in his as he lay beside me, gently stroking it. That didn't help me to relax at all.

"Do you swim?" he asked suddenly as we had lain in silence for over twenty minutes.

"I can swim," I said doubtfully, feeling my hair like a soft cushion as I moved it.

"Let's go then," he said, jumping up suddenly and pulling me to my feet.

"Oh," I squealed, most femininely, unable to contain myself.

He ran, pulling me after him, to the sea.

"Straight in!" he called as the cool water reached our bare toes.

"No!" I squealed again, but there was little I could do as he propelled me into a wave and we toppled forward into a foaming sea. I came up shivering and spitting salt water. He laughed at me and dove into the shallow waters again. I shivered and dove after him.

After the initial shock, the water was warm, very pleasant. My hair seemed to tighten up into small curls as I swam but when I complained, Ben just said that wet hair turned him on, and so I had to dive again to hide my flustered feelings.

Ben was a strong, powerful swimmer, and I wasn't. I would never have gone to the raft offshore myself, but he was there beside me all the way, praising me and urging me on. We sat together on the raft, like so many other couples, male and female, our feet dangling in the warm water, as he pointed out features of the island and its shoreline. I saw other people look at me and, by their admiring glances, I knew I wasn't being read as anything but a woman even though I was fully exposed in my bikini, my breasts taut in my tight top.

A boat with water-skiers went behind us. Ben put his arm about my trembling shoulders just as the other men did to their girls and related how his attempts at water-skiing had come to a comical end. He wanted to hire a boat and take me out and let me try the next day. I thought of the Purplehearts' tour waiting for us when we got back, though, and knew that I didn't dare to do anything I might get hurt at. So, we sat in the sun, male and female, like the people around us, he possessively holding me until the sun sank to a red ball.

It was a long pull back to the beach and I felt at one point that I couldn't make it. Ben was there instantly though to take my arm and pull me with strong strokes forward until suddenly my feet touched bottom.

I looked up at him wildly with a sudden rush of feeling, gratefulness. I knew I would have drowned without his help. He was holding my hand, then he then transferred his hand to my waist and I felt his sea-cooled body against me as he pulled me close to him.

"You could have floated in easily, with this tide," he said, smiling at me. "But Joanie's been signaling to us for a while to speed it up, and, this way too, I get to have my picture taken with the most beautiful girl on the beach."

He lightly kissed the top of my head while I felt a tremor pass through me. I wanted to thank him anyway but apart from holding his arm in front of me and squeezing it, I didn't know how. Suddenly I was aware of the cameras of some professional photographers, all eager to take my picture coming out of the sea with Ben's arm around me.

"Oh, to be young and in shape again," said one woman as Ben took my hand and led me, walking as femininely as I could, up through the last people on the beach.

"You never had a shape like that," said the redheaded woman she was with and they both laughed as I flushed, wondering what others were saying about me that I couldn't hear.

"Debbie! Your hair!" exclaimed Joanie in mock exasperation. "Now it will take us hours to be ready for dinner."

I tried to cover my embarrassment at being the focus of so many eyes as I stood in my black bikini with such a handsome guy by toweling my hair furiously. It didn't help much as I still felt tight curls about my face.

Ben and Stan packed up for us and then Ben helped me on with my see-through shirt as Stan did also for Joanie. She gave him a big smile for that and I felt very jealous. I did not want to see her being so friendly to another man, not when she wasn't coming home to me at the end of the date, I thought with a pang.

Ben held my hand all the way back to the hotel. The sea breeze blew my hair across my face and I had to push it back several times. I knew it was a very feminine gesture but I couldn't help it. People in the lobby were already fully dressed and most of them seemed to stop and look at me as I held Ben's hand tightly while we waited for the elevator.

All the looks made me frightened that something was wrong, something showing that shouldn't but Joanie told me later in the bathroom we retired to that it was just how stunning I looked in my almost transparent shirt and bikini.

"Do you realize what a fantastic female body you have, Debbie darling?" she teased. "I'd die for legs like yours and so would all the women here!"

I blushed fiercely as I ducked my head and let her wash and blow dry my hair again until it fell in soft waves and ringlets about my bare breasts and the tingling skin of my face and neck. Then Joanie pinned it up, drawing it up into a sort of twisted crown from which the longest ringlets cascaded out and fell in a soft ponytail down my neck and back.

"Ooo! Big earrings with this," she laughed as we started on our makeup, both of us just in our bikini bottoms. I shivered but was very careful with my makeup and perfume, glamorizing the beautiful girl in the mirror until she, I, was as femininely attractive as possible.

Feeling still very awkward, a dull ache going through me, I followed Joanie into my room and changed into fresh gaff, fresh panties, fresh strapless bra and narrow white silk dress that hugged my figure all the way to my ankles. My chest was bare, the straps tiny spaghetti strands, cut across the top of my breasts to accentuate the femininity of my shape. I had never thought I would ever wear such a dress when Joanie had had me buy it. Now here I was, poured into it, my curves clung to and almost unable to walk in my high-heeled open-toed white shoes because it was so tight.

"I nearly called you Christine on the beach," said Joanie as she put these huge, dangling earrings on my ears. She was also in a long, slinky, dark blue dress.

"Just so long as you don't call me Alan," I said, trying to be light, but the look on her face was telling.



"I'd never call you that," she said in a subdued tone.

I had to bend to pick up my evening bag and her eyes grew larger as she looked at my cleavage. She sighed as I shivered at her looking at me.

"I should go to Dr. Chester," she said resolutely. "If he can do that for you?" Then she blushed a little.

If he could do this for a man, I thought with bitterness, then what could he do for a real woman? It should be even better, shouldn't it?

She touched up my lipstick again, a softer glossy red than I normally wore and led me out into the front room of the suite we had taken. The men were waiting for us there in dark tuxedo jackets, looking up expectantly at our rustling, mincing entrance. Ben's admiration for me was clear as he took my hand but held me away from him so that he could look me over from head to trembling toe.

“Let's go,” said Joanie lightly, smiling at the men's reaction to my ultra-feminine appearance. “I'm starving and it looks like you are, too, Ben.”

That caused a nervous laugh from both men and I was hot again with embarrassment as Ben took my arm and guided me out of the hotel room, to the elevator, past those gawking eyes again in the lobby and into the dimly lit nightclub portion of our hotel.

Almost as soon as we reached our table, Ben stood up again and reached for my hand eagerly with a smile to lead me to the dance floor. It was wonderful to be held so closely by him, his chin so smooth on my forehead as he drank in my perfume and kissed my hair, making me feel womanly all the way through my narrow, figure-hugging dress to my stockinged toes.

He whispered that he loved my perfume as we circled the floor so slowly to an old-fashioned waltz. Then, the floor got crowded and we couldn't move and so he took my hands and put them about his neck while he put his arms tightly about my waist and pulled me to him, my body tingling all over as he did so. My head rested on his shoulder and so he kissed my ear and I felt a shiver of pleasure going through me, tightening my arms about his neck, which only encouraged him more to press me into him as if I was truly his girl friend.

We returned to the table eventually, my whole body aroused and aware of him. I was glad I hadn't heeded Joanie's suggestion not to wear a bra. I felt aglow from the dancing and I looked over at Joanie as I brushed my dress beneath me and wiggled into me seat. She smiled at me, as happy and anxious for me as she ever was when we double-dated, that I enjoy myself. She could see now that I was doing exactly that.

Stan looked a little strained when he looked at me but I didn't care. My man stroked my hand, and smiled at me with open admiration, which I found that I really liked. I knew I was flushed and excited myself and it must have shown. It was going to be a wonderful evening in the club and I wasn't even going to be jealous of Joanie I thought to myself as Ben's arm went around my waist and I snuggled into him, my leg in the silk dress against his.

I did dance with Stan after our supper was served. He was so nervous and held me as if I was a porcelain doll and might break. Mostly, though, it was Ben I danced with. He hugged me closely and lovingly, as the band played a lot of smooth, romantic music, which everyone in the club, especially me, appreciated.

We had late night drinks on a patio looking to the sea, the music and noise of the club behind us.

“Now isn't this better than the Stargate or the Studio Club?” Joanie asked me as brightly lit sailing ships scudded across the moonlit bay.

“Would you like to walk a little?” asked Ben, coming behind me and putting his arm about my waist. I stiffened with the shock of his touch once more.

Joanie and Stan were going in for another dance. “Remember that yours is the right bedroom,” were Joanie's parting words as Ben steered me off the patio and onto the beach, my body shivering as he steered me along a walk into the extensive gardens beside the hotel.

I was completely unnerved as the aroma of the plants reached me and I saw how dark the walk was and how it led so far from the hotel. But Ben stopped beneath a huge oak-like tree and pulled my quivering body against his. Agonized, I knew what he wanted. I had done it with many men before, thanks to Joanie. He put his arms about my waist and pulled me to him. Closing my eyes, I lifted my face, as he bent his head to reach my stiff, tense lips. I felt electricity pass through me as his kiss left me shivering with helplessness. I knew that kissing him would be so different. I had known it, or so it seemed, since I had met him, and it was just that different. I was unable to stop responding to the ardent demand of his kisses. He pressed into me very firmly and I accepted him clingily, wishing I had not redone my lips with so much lip-gloss.

I relaxed my stiff arms on his chest and put my arms about his neck and that was even better as he accepted my invitation to kiss me even harder, his tongue parting my lips as he took possession of me. I didn't resist his hands going lower down my back to press me into him even more and I wasn't perturbed at all, I don't know why, as I had been with other dates, that I could feel his male arousal through my so thin dress.

He picked me up and swirled me, kissing my face and ears as I felt an equal delight flowing through me. "Debbie, Debbie," he said softly, letting me sink to my high heels and kissing my so willing lips once more, probably unaware of the unabated tingling and excitement coursing through me.

I felt I ought to say his name too but I didn't dare. We moved on, stopping frequently for more kisses until we ran out of garden. He kissed me long and hard before we went back in the club where dancing was still going on but there was no sign of Joanie and Stan. He guided me through, his arm about me, and I felt so womanly, like a woman with her man, past the knowing eyes of the maitre d', who must have seen mussed up lipstick and a flushed face very often before, and a couple hurrying back to their suite.

Ben kissed me again as soon as the elevator door closed and I made a spectacle of myself in the way I clung to him particularly to the older couples waiting to go down as the doors opened on our floor. I buried my head in his shoulder, embarrassed as they giggled at some remark, about me for sure, as Ben, his arm about my waist, guided me to our suite and inside.

There was no sign of Stan and Joanie. Ben guided me to the right bedroom as a lump rose in my throat and my unease suddenly blossomed inside my gut. Joanie must have been there for my short, lace-frilled nightie and panties were on top of his pajamas at the end of the bed.

Ben was slipping out of his jacket but he didn't let me go. He kissed me and we sort of stumbled to the bed, as I trembled under the fierceness of his kiss. "Let me undress you," he whispered to me as we sank onto the bed, quivers of warring emotions going through me.

He turned me as I went so stiff and he undid my dress, kissing my bare shoulders as he lipped the straps over my shoulders and rubbed his chin over my so soft skin. "You smell so nice, so womanly," he murmured as he let my dress fall and then, with his soft fingers he undid my bra.

He gently rolled me and I felt my earrings cold and falling back into my hair as he touched my breasts. I almost shot straight up with the intense, bewildering, nerve-tingling sensation that I felt. He stopped and, shaking like a leaf, I had to take his hand and put it back, the caress arousing incredible feelings in me that I can only describe as intensely pleasurable. My little thing was jumping or so it seemed beneath my gaff and all over my body I was alive as he stroked my breast and then my nipple which again made me almost bite his lips in ardor so aroused, so much Christine and Debbie, did he make me feel.

He loosened my hair then, running it through his hands while I struggled to regain control over my shattered emotions. He stood up and slipped my dress down me, revealing my stay-up stockings and my white panties. A thought occurred to me and I sat up, my arm across my so tender breasts. "You-you do know all about me, don't you?" I whispered, frightened as he gently stroked my leg as he removed my stocking, more wonderful waves of pleasure firing through my distraught nerves.

"I know all I need to know," he murmured, kissing my legs while I almost convulsed and then he took off my other stocking. "I've never had a girl like you, Debbie, but from the way you kiss me and react to me, you're really not that different from another girl."

"I'm not," I whispered in panic and he pulled me up to him and his mouth fell on mine and soon I realized that it was all untrue. I wasn't a man, not the way I was feeling as I pressed my naked breasts into his chest and then helped him out of his shirt, even undoing the belt of his pants so that he could let his pants fall to the floor and I could feel his huge erection pressing into the only clothing I had on, my white silk-and-lace panties.

I was shaking uncontrollably, visibly, as he lifted me up and deposited me on the pillows, turning down the bed as I covered his face in kisses, unable to let him go or the rapture I felt from the touch of my thrusting nipples into his hairy chest. I was woman, clinging to her man. Somehow, he opened the covers, got rid of his underpants and socks, and slid into bed, letting me cling to him, he totally naked.

Our skin touched thigh to thigh, and I felt his engorged penis on my soft thigh. Then it was between my legs and he was pushing into me, his hands and then his wonderful mouth having free rein with my breasts. They were so erect and so sensitive to his tongue. I spasmed under his caresses and writhed beneath him in pleasure as he returned to kissing me and making love to me with his whole body.

I was wet between my legs, my groin hurting awfully but I couldn't let the pleasure he was giving me stop. He bit at my breast, a mock bite, and I felt such an ache in my panties that I fought against him wildly, pushing and wriggling to be free from his legs and hands.

My thighs thrashing aroused him, though, and suddenly, he mounted me, pushing my legs apart with his own, his hands making my legs go round his waist before squeezing and fondling my breasts, sending waves of delight through me.

He pulled my panties down a little and I felt a huge wetness between my legs. "Oh, Ben! Don't!" I squealed as I lay helpless beneath his strength, my desire for him as a woman never stronger though.

Ben slowed and suddenly lowered himself on top of me, his face just inches from mine. Then he came lower and kissed me as I felt his hardness now right against my panties and the thong gaff beneath.

I couldn't help it. I kissed him back and felt his tongue enter my mouth and within seconds, I was a quivering mass of excited flesh in his arms. He could have anything he wanted from me, the way he was making me feel.

"Don't," I murmured most unconvincingly, pulling my arms tighter about his neck, wiggling my panties on his wet, pulsing thing.

"I'm too rough," he gasped, stroking my breasts and then my hips and thighs so gently as I pushed even tighter into him. "I want you so badly, Debbie. I want all of you. I want to be in you and possess you, as a woman, my woman."

I felt crazed, drunk on emotion, as I kissed him fiercely, surprising him, the passion flowing out of me as greatly as it had flowed into me from him just before. He responded and kissed and fondled me as if I was a woman he was arousing and I was completely a-quiver with sensations of ecstasy I had never felt before, never. Not even, when I thought of it later in wonderment, with Donna and Joanie. I caressed his penis with my thighs and made no objection as he slid my panties down my legs.

I had to open my gaff and writhe with the pain as my tortured male parts appeared but that didn't faze Ben at all. He was so huge and I was so small but he pleased us both together while I shuddered again and again and buried myself into him, kissing every part of him that I could reach.

"Incredible," he whispered as he aroused us both together to unbelievable heights of delight and shame. A man shouldn't have to do what he was doing for me, his girl. And so I didn't object again when he raised my legs and tried to enter me. It would pleasure him, I knew, and so I quivered, trying not to cry as I felt him enter me.

I had thought it would be so awful, the end of the world for any man to be loved like that, to give pleasure to another like that. It wasn't. It was so odd at first, to know that he was inside me, jerking and pulsing, as he might be inside a woman. But then he caressed me with his hands on my breasts and I suddenly felt womanly feelings. He stroked me and I began to squeeze and cooperate with his thrusts and it was his turn to groan and moan. I loved every one. I loved every indication of his passion and love for me. And when he came, I felt glorious that my man had achieved his climax, especially when he fell across me and we kissed so ardently again, my legs still tight about his waist.

"Wow!" he gasped, coming down but not getting out of me. He caressed me instead and I wiggled in his grasp, getting more comfortable as he fondled me, pressing tighter into me. Then he began a long, rhythmical assault on me that destroyed the last reluctant feeling I had and reduced me to a quivering wreck as he came again, eventually, every nerve end in my body shot from the enervating touch of his mouth and hands.

He relaxed enough then for us to lie beside each other, quivering as he occasionally felt the need to taste my breasts again. He discovered that my little man got so stiff when he fondled my breasts. Then he kissed and loved them while I jerked about all over the bed as he squeezed me until I too came, the weird feeling of being a man being sexed by another man passing quickly as he began to kiss and hug me again, his erect, sticky manhood against my abdomen.

“Oh,” he whispered to me at last. “That was what I wanted to do to you, Debbie, since I met you. I just didn't think that making love to you would be as sweet as it is though. You are some woman, you ought to know.”

I shivered and knew he would make love to me again. He was slower, gentler this time, more tender, stroking me longer on my thighs until I could have squeezed him to death. Pillows behind me helped too as he leaned in and kissed me even as he was entering me, making me into his woman once more. I kissed him back as he pulled my hair down and sucked on my breasts. I could sense the ecstasy rising in me again as he began to make me rise and fall, making him enjoy making love to me more and more. I flickered my tongue over his lips and caressed him too with my long, sharp nails and he exploded into me, making me writhe and shiver at the force of his lovemaking and he entered ecstasy too. I could feel it exploding as I rocked back and forth.

“Oh, Debbie,” he gasped, wriggling uncontrollably against me. “If you do it to me again like that, I'll have to marry you forever.”

I myself was trembling as we untangled and then lay together in each other's arms, exchanging soft kisses, my body tight to his, my smooth bare legs between his. There were no secrets between us. He knew I was totally his, his woman. He turned me then and drew me back into him so that he could kiss my hair and neck and fondle my breasts and my little man and my legs. He roused me in no time, but this time he didn't let me turn. He took me from the back, fondling my nipples all the time, his head on my shoulder so that I had to turn to kiss him as he had me, penetrating me and coming very quickly, which I had to admire. I had never had such stamina as a man and knew of few who had.

I drifted off for a while after that, he still inside me. He slipped out some time, I don't know when, but he did awaken me again during the night for another bout, my backside wiggling to help him achieve his climax in a fashion I had never thought I could do.

“I love you, Debbie,” he whispered in my ear. “You'll always be my girl.”

I don't know if he thought I was asleep at that point or not but I had to kiss him then face to face. My breasts were bruised from his attentions but I encouraged him one more time and we did stroke each other so many times until mercifully I went to sleep first, or I think I did.

I awoke to Ben Holt's gentle caressing of my breasts with my hair, his manhood aroused and laying heavily on my thighs. I jerked up, frightened for a moment to be in bed with a man before memory came flooding back and I recalled with horror what I had done and felt the night before.

Ben smiled down at me as I realized we were both naked and he was partly atop me. “You look so beautiful this morning I couldn't resist touching you,” he said with a grin while I felt my temperature rising unsteadily. “And of course touching my woman can only lead to one thing.”

Shuddering, I came awake fast, his light touch on my breasts making me want to squeeze my legs together tightly in panic. But I had no panties on, and no gaff. It was time to panic. I looked at him, wild-eyed, I'm sure.

He had already shaved. His mouth descended on mine, fresh and clean and tasting of toothpaste. His arm slipped around my body and I was drawn even closer to him, his huge manhood pressing against my thighs as I squirmed to get free but he pressed on me even harder, his lips so hungry on mine and I found myself responding a little as his hand caressed my hips, urging me into him.

He stroked my thigh and pulled it up over his, rolling right on top of me, his mouth so hard and demanding. I awoke fully to his intention to have sex with me again as his hands worked on me, touching my breasts, making me feel so female and so obviously desired by a male.

I quivered and tried to free my mouth but that only meant that he could kiss my neck, my shoulders, my chest and my breasts which made me gasp and wriggle under him. The kissing made him even harder. He pressed into me ardently even as I tried to avoid him touching me so fiercely with his manhood.

He lifted his head and smiled at me. "You are so beautiful," he whispered, kissing me lightly, easing my arms about him again. Trembling I kissed him back and felt stirrings within myself. I felt suddenly so feminine as he stroked my hair and kissed my face and insisted that I kiss him back as he whispered compliments about my female shape, about the way I kissed like a girl, how I wiggled my bottom so provocatively, so girlishly.

He then pressed my leg down and as I hung onto him, kissing his smooth face. He started to come between my legs, gasping as he held my thighs tightly together, rocking up and down while I felt so aroused myself, holding him to me, pressing on my hard nipples, his mouth finally resting on mine as he gasped and came between my legs, holding onto me so tightly, saying my name over and over as he rocked me with obvious delight in what he had done to my girlish body.

He came down slowly from his highly charged state to something akin to normalcy, kissing and hugging me all the time as I lay beneath him, accepting my role as his woman, glorying in it, as he did everything to me that a woman could want in being pleased by a man. I felt such thrills at his slow lovemaking that I hugged and kissed him back with desire and he loved that, too, leaving me weak with passion as he hardened again and took me as he had our first night but this time it was so much easier and I felt so female as he entered me, loving the way he went back and forth, my pleasure increasing as his did, as he treated me in every way as his woman.

We were lying there, so tight in each other's arms that I was sure we would come again soon, so excited and sensual did he make me feel when Joanie came in at last to break us up. She saw us in bed, he on top of me, clearly moving his body against me and me clearly enjoying it, the way I was holding him.

"Oops, sorry," she said, backing out, smiling. She was in a white bikini. "Don't stop on my account, please. Carry on. It's just getting late and Stan and I are going to the beach to get a half hour's sun at least."

Then she was gone and Ben grinned at me as I flushed and buried my head in shame on his shoulder. He loved me trembling and, when I started again, he eagerly kissed my lips and put his hand between my legs to pleasure me as he had done before. I was putty

in his hands. I couldn't help coming with his mouth so insistent on mine, his body sending such thrilling, ecstatic feelings through me.

Somehow I managed to get out of bed and shower with a man watching me with admiring eyes in every move I made. I got on my gaff and another black bikini as he bothered me. He watched me do my makeup, fix my hair and get ready for the beach.

I think I spent all of that day in his arms. We made out a little on the beach, between massages with sun block and tanning oil. We held hands, laughed and giggled at what we said and shared every moment in contact in some way with each other. I have never been kissed so often as I was all that day.

"Do you feel like a girl yet?" asked Joanie with a smile when she finally shepherded me away from Ben to get ready for another night's dancing with our men.

I had to admit that I did. I felt wonderfully happy. The admiration in Ben's eyes every time he looked at me, his fondling and stroking of me, even though he knew me most intimately, aroused desires in me, I had to admit, for more. For more of those feelings that I hadn't known I possessed, the desire to be as female and feminine as possible for my man, Ben.

I was flirtatious with him all day, so unlike me. I hadn't known how wonderful it would feel to just let go and be as girlish as I wanted to be, no inhibitions to hold me back. I was coy and demure when I wanted to be, to turn him on, and it worked as he rewarded me as a woman expects every time. I was so glad of my figure, my rounded hips, my smooth legs and beautiful breasts. Ben seemed to like my femaleness, too, his hands and mouth giving me compliments all day as I cuddled up to him when I could.

I only had a short time with Joanie as we changed for dancing and she laughed at me all the time. "How do you feel about girls now?" she asked, as excited for me as she had been all the time.

She gave me a couple more of the travel pills. "It's better if you take them over a few days, not just the day of travel," she said innocently. Too innocently. I looked up at her from the chair I was sitting on outlining my lips in a narrow pink line before I applied my lipstick.

She smiled brightly. Too brightly. "Hormones?" I asked, feeling suddenly sick at the amount I had consumed on the plane into St. Thomas.

She hesitated and then nodded. "They're really helping you," she said quickly. "I've never seen you so girlish with a man and he is pleasing you, isn't he? These will make it better, make you feel more feminine, or that's what, what Brenda's aunt says."

I couldn't believe it. I shakily finished putting on my lipstick and stood up in my bra and panties, looking at myself, at the garter belt and dark-topped stockings I had decided to wear, the thrill of each touch as I had put them on and attached the stockings, imagining Ben taking them off. Were all my feelings just chemically induced? I had thought of myself as his girl friend as he had called me all day. I saw myself introducing him to the other girls and how they would approve of us. I'd even wondered what it would be like to live permanently with him. I remembered his words that he loved me and felt as queasy as I

had ever felt in the two years I had been Christine. I looked at Joanie and she determinedly held out the pills to me.

Did I want to be as female as possible for Ben? Did I want the changes the pills would surely make in me? I took the pills uncertainly from Joanie and then the glass of water. I didn't know. What about me and Joanie, I thought belatedly? I had given her little thought all day and certainly not in bed, wrapped around Ben. Ben, my lover, my first male lover. I shuddered and swallowed the pills.

"Good girl," said Joanie encouragingly. She helped me get my black slip over my curled mass of hair. Then I put on my long, form-fitting, dark blue dress, the thin straps just wide enough to conceal my bra and slip straps. Joanie zipped me up at the back as I couldn't reach it at all.

"Ben will have to undo you," she said and I felt thrilling sensations go through me as I put on my long earrings, tossed my hair to one side to get my necklace about my neck. The sapphire lay on my chest just above my breasts with their very obvious cleavage. I put on my dark blue satin shoes, the high heels no bother at all. I was shivering all the time though, not knowing if it was the pills or not, so eager to rejoin my man and have him pour compliments on me for my femininity, having him admire my figure, letting him kiss my neck and fragrant hair, seeing how much he wanted me, which was certainly going to happen later after we had sufficiently aroused each other on the dance floor.

The second night in bed with Ben was more thrilling than the first because I had no inhibitions. I wasn't afraid to touch him any more and stroke his body while he was totally absorbed in rousing me physically, enjoying me every way he could. Even when exhausted, he could not keep his hands from me, stimulating my thighs, my nipples with little kisses or just kissing my eager lips and stroking my hair.

Ben loved undressing me and when he found out that I had stockings and a garter belt, he couldn't stop touching and kissing my legs and panties. I was too aroused to want him to stop. He mounted me and we made it the first time while I was still wearing my garter belt and stockings, he stroking them as he came and me clinging to him, ecstasy and desire coursing through me as my man came inside me and told me how much he loved me, how delightful and sexy a woman I was.

When Joanie came in the next morning, my inhibitions about being a woman were so far gone that I was on top of Ben, my legs beside him, rocking as he penetrated me as far as he could, while he caressed my outthrust breasts and my hair fell all about them and his face. As I wiggled my buttocks and rose just a little, my man was moaning in delight which thrilled me also. It was excruciating and wonderful to see his face twisting in pleasure as he hugged me tightly as he came, shuddering. He was wonderfully inside me as he pulled my mouth down on his, just as Joanie came in.

I lay on him, trembling, his hands caressing my back and buttocks as Joanie laughingly told us when the tour was leaving and, if we weren't there, she and Stan would understand why. Ben just ignored her and kissed my breasts openly in front of her while I squirmed on him, his huge erection still wetly between my legs as I squeezed my thighs together under the thin sheet that covered us a little from Joanie's view.

Then he pulled on my hair until my face and lips were within his reach whereupon he began to kiss me quite savagely, raising his knees and pushing his manhood partly into me, pumping away, grunting as he fondled me and making it quite clear what he was doing to me. Joanie fled from the room and she and Stan went off on the tour, I guess. Ben and I stayed in bed and made delicious love all morning, before and after our showers. We did finally make the beach in the late afternoon, to find a far spot where we sheltered entwined behind huge umbrellas and where I removed my bra and let my man enjoy his afternoon in the sun with his girl friend.

The weekend was over much too fast. I felt like crying and I'm sure there were tears in my eyes, as I hugged and clung to Ben as we kissed goodbye and then he and Stan took a different taxi from the airport back into New York. He had kissed me back, too, and held me as if he would never let me go until Stan had insisted that they had to go to work.

"We'll see each other again soon," he had whispered unsteadily as he finally just held me tightly pressed to him. He kissed my face and neck and gently kissed me again and again while the feeling of wanting him to make love to me again and again grew and grew in the pit of my stomach.

"Go on now," I was able to say unsteadily as I realized what an exhibition we were making of ourselves. Cabs were honking as they went past and Ben's cabbie was looking very annoyed at our frantic leave-taking.

I was shivering, fighting off tears, wondering what was so wrong with me to feel so empty as I followed a smiling Joanie to another cab. "I should have known," said Joanie, smiling as she put her so soft, nyloned leg next to mine, soft and stockinged like hers. "Your first guy. You were bound to fall in love."

That stunned me. I looked at her in shock and disbelief. What I felt was love? I shuddered. It couldn't be. I, Alan Markham, couldn't be in love with another man! But I, Christine Harris or Debbie Johnson, was. Joanie was absolutely right. I was in love with a man.

"You can't have him, you know," said Joanie stroking my hand. "I have to tell you that right now even though it is going to hurt you."

I looked at her, my eyelashes thick, not I hoped with unshed tears though I still felt very weepy. "He said we'd meet again," I said, shivers going through me.

"And I bet he told you that he loved you," Joanie said.

I flushed and nodded warily, the earrings he had given me moving on my neck with my soft hair.

"He has a wife and two, lovely, little daughters whom he dotes on," said Joanie brutally as I stared at her, appalled at her words. "What I paid to Stan and him for the weekend will be towards a down-payment on a house in the suburbs for Ben."

I had to tear my hands free from her and clench them together to keep back the tears and shock that threatened to overwhelm me. After a while, I was able to ask, "So that is why he made love to me?"

"If it means anything, I'm pretty sure he fell for you, too," said Joanie, a wry smile on her face. "I hoped that this ride home would be a giggle where we could talk about men, you know, real girl talk. The way you two carried on in public, though, never mind what I

saw you doing in bed, well, it was above and beyond, if you know what I mean. He really fell for you. As any man should, the way you looked and behaved in a bikini. The way you moved made me feel like I was an ugly duckling!”

I found little consolation in what she said. All I could think about was the miserable, stunning truth that I would never see Ben again, ever.

Joanie was very solicitous of me as we got home. We were warmly welcomed by Vince and then set about domestic chores that seemed so far removed from reality. Reality was a warm beach and a warm man in bed, making love to me. My feelings were so numb as we went about the process of contacting the others, arranging and confirming rehearsal times and picture taking for our new video and CD.

Joanie and I went to bed as usual in matching nighties and she was as stimulated as she always was after being away for a weekend. I let her make love to me all the way and finally was able to make it with her, though strangely, it wasn't as fulfilling for me as it had always been before. It just felt strange and somehow wrong making love to her, the girl I had always thought of as the love of my life. Were the pills still affecting me? I suppose so for now I did understand what Joanie had meant about feeling like a lesbian after making love to me.

Hard work took the edge off feeling sorry for myself and grieving over my lost love. Rehearsals for our tour began right away and then came the tour itself. Audiences loved the rocker, *I'm a Modern Girl*, and we faced sold out crowds in the arenas we played. I had changed the Police hit, *King of Pain*, to *Queen of Pain*, and I performed it, in a low, husky tone, thinking only of Ben Holt and how he had finally made me feel and what I had lost. It quickly became the high point of our show and began to get airplay, even though it wasn't supposed to be a single, just by the requests of those who came to the show.

We had a new road manager, Barry Walker, an older man, experienced with several other rock acts. He kept everyone at bay, even Anna's new, fairly obnoxious boy friend, until we came down after our shows and were able to meet properly with whom we had to meet. Barry was hired for us by Bellis and Day, who were effectively our new managers.

“You know,” said Arthur Bellis, the shrewd lawyer at the head of the firm, when we met him before leaving on our tour. “You will all be millionaires if this album of yours sells reasonably and the tour is successful.”

He had wanted to discuss the ways he would invest our money and set us all up for life. I hardly heard the details. All I understood was that I wouldn't have any money worries for the rest of my life. Bellis and Day would look after everything if we wanted. All we had to do was to perform well and stay popular.

We dressed in the hippest styles of the day and toured fifty cities in three months. We issued a second single, *You Love Me (One, Two, Three)*, which overtook *I'm a Modern Girl* in the charts, and our CD hit the top of the charts which led to several interviews on teen programs and music channels.

I always tried to answer honestly. No, I wasn't a teenager any more. Cabaret had tried to cut two years off our ages but that was just hype, just as the idea that *Jailbait* was autobiographical. No, we weren't on drugs, but Brenda had been busted and she would plead

guilty at her trial when it came up and hope for a light sentence. We'd all be there to support her.

I answered silly questions about fashion and music, about the ideal man for me, about whether I was a natural blonde or not, and we met a lot of incredible girls and boys who won contests to be backstage with us and almost worshipped us as we signed CDs and hats and t-shirts for them.

The CD went platinum and showed no sign of slacking off. In fact, our earlier CDs picked up in sales, too, and so everyone was happy and excited with our success. Joanie was on top of the world and didn't seem to understand how much I was faking it with her, the girl Alan Markham had wanted to love and honor all his life if only he could have the chance.

"There's a weekend coming up," said Joanie in the week's break we took which everyone supporting us needed. We were besieged with calls from Bellis and Day to set up appearances and commitments for shows in the months ahead.

"Anna and Brenda have taken off with their boy friends for some private time," said Joanie deadpan at me. "Would you like me to set up a weekend like we had at St. Thomas?"

A cloud seemed to lift from me. I thought of seeing Ben again. Of being in his arms. I thought of us making love and I didn't care about his wife and daughters and if he had lied to me.

"I'd like that," I said, blushing, as Joanie raised an eyebrow as I accepted her proposal.

"I won't be able to get Ben for you," she said slowly. "You do understand that, don't you? And you should dye your hair again. I'll arrange with Marc for us to get everything primped, right? And I will get a good man for you."

I immediately wanted to say, "No," and Joanie saw it in my face.

She smiled. "This is the way to get over Ben Holt," she said with a smile. "And the way you've been behaving in bed with me, Christine, you really do need a man right now."

Carl Hatch was not at all like Ben Holt. He was far bigger, muscular and exuded male confidence. I, my reddish hair bouncing on my shoulders, I was scared of him from the moment he possessively took my arm and showed me all his strong, white teeth in his predatory smile.

He spoke with something of a Southern twang and professed to know well the private hotel into which we were booked in the Florida Keys. He was loud and aggressive, even flirting with the stewardesses on the plane down to Miami. I was mortified with myself for agreeing to go away with Joanie on a 'Forget Ben' weekend. I cringed in my window seat as Carl addressed the stewardess as 'Darling' and smiled at her invitingly while she gave me a pitying look with which I agreed as he turned back with a grin and reached for my hand.

"I jest can't believe you ain't real!" were the first words out of his mouth when we put our cases down in the rooms we were to share. He grabbed me in a big hug and tried to wrestle me to the bed, but I managed to wriggle free, grab my makeup case and escape to the bathroom, where I stood for the longest time, quivering and looking at Debbie Johnson

and the short, yellow dress 'she' was wearing, her boobs hanging out, so low cut was the dress. I had dressed for Ben who would have loved me to be so feminine but would have been complimentary about it, too.

Joanie and her date, a guy named Joe, just as big but quiet and considerate, it seemed, were in the room next door. I wanted badly to talk with Joanie, to call it off with the loquacious, ever-smiling Carl Hatch, but Joanie was far too wrapped up in her man to notice my distress. I was on my own, it seemed as I freshened up my makeup and thought of the skimpy bikinis I had brought for the weekend.

Luckily, Joanie came in with Joe as I was debating how to change and she took the two men away to the beach while I changed into a black bikini and a wrap that left my long, shapely legs bare. I counted to a hundred before I made my slow way out of the hotel and to the pool separated by a fence from the real beach and sea beyond.

Carl ogled me most openly as I took off my wrap and lay down on the blanket with Joanie. He volunteered right away to put on my sun block for me and, with Joanie smiling at me and then looking at Joe so fondly, I let him put his huge, hard hands on me, so unlike to Ben's. Since it was so private, we were able to take our tops off in the sun and I thought Carl's eyes would pop out of his head as he looked at me, lying on my back in just my bikini bottom, soaking up the sun.

"Wow," he said aloud and Joanie burst out laughing.

"Why do guys always say that about you?" she said mockingly to me. "They never do that to me."

Which then led to a joking discussion between her and Joe about breasts and breast sizes and she promised again that, now she had money, she was going to get an augmentation soon. Then, Joe could enjoy himself as much as Carl was going to, she said with a wicked smile at me. I hated her and the leer on Carl's face equally. He'll never have me, I thought and meant to tell her so. But I couldn't do it openly and so that day drifted on, not too restfully for me, until it was time to change for dinner and dancing.

I wore a wide-flared, dark purple cocktail dress and it was a good job I did because Carl loved to dance. He liked all fast rock and roll songs and, as we went from club to club in Miami, each louder than the last, we heard lots of Purplehearts music, and a lot with fascinating Cuban or Latin rhythms. Carl wanted to dance everywhere.

He taught me several new dances but mostly he wanted to twirl me and have my dress whirl out and show off my legs, my pantyhose and my dark purple panties. I was grateful that I was twirled so much because I didn't have to touch him too much. I was exhausted, however, when we came back in the cab, his arm about me, my stockinged legs trembling in the tight, hurting high heels I had worn.

I was tired getting ready for bed, envying Joanie the eagerness with which she had departed with Joe into their room. I would have preferred sleeping to anything else but Carl's enthusiastic kiss on my mouth left me in no doubt as to the expectations he had of me.

I managed to slip out of his arms to change in the bathroom for bed and to cleanse my face of makeup. I had brought only froufrou teddies for sleeping in, thinking of Ben, and

now it was Carl who was going to see me in them. I wore the white one first. The openings at my thighs were cut very high while the neckline was very low, the frills at my thighs and along the deep V of my neck and around the shoulder straps were wide and soft, even though they were crinkly.

Carl was in bed, naked I think, his hairy, muscular chest evident above the bedclothes. The lust in his eyes as he saw me sashaying out of the bathroom was pretty obvious.

“Carl,” I began quietly as he opened the sheets for me to slide in beside him and I could see his nakedness and more. I could see his desire for me, huge, bigger than Ben most likely. “I really am very tired.”

He thought I was being coy. I sat sort of far away on the edge of the bed but he reached over, took my arm and pulled me in beside him with frightening ease. He pulled me down and I put my hands up defensively on his chest as his hairy leg touched mine. He kissed me hard and enthusiastically and I can't say that I really felt anything at all except that his muscled chest was very hard. His hands went about my waist and then touched the bare tops of my thighs and I squirmed at that.

“This is what you want, right?” he said hoarsely as his hand slid over my teddy and found my breast. It was more a mauling we engaged in as I tried to induce a little romanticism from Carl but my attempts at light kisses on his face and stroking him had little effect, except to increase his groping of my body. He loved my soft, smooth legs and yet he conspicuously avoided the part between my legs even when I opened to him, thinking he might arouse me with some gentleness there as he was stroking my thighs.

I could feel his manhood growing for some time against me as he kissed my nipples, licking and nipping on them until I felt myself stirring at last beneath him. I was astonished though when he suddenly turned me over and had me get onto all fours, pulling my teddy down. I tried to struggle a little but he pushed me into position effortlessly and held me there as he pushed his lubricated manhood between my buttocks, my teddy pushed to one side.

Absurdly, I felt my own little man react as he pushed my face into my pillow and began to enter me with his huge erection. All the time, his hands caressed my smooth hips and thighs, my flat stomach and my breasts, avoiding the only place where I was really reacting to him.

He came very quickly while he was still working his way in, hurting me a little but I doubt that he knew it. I collapsed then and was crushed by his weight on me. He lay on me then, kissing my neck, my hair, my shoulders, and my face where he could reach me, his wetness still on my thighs while his hands caressed my breasts.

“There, baby,” he whispered as he let me eventually roll over and lie against him. “Wasn't that just what a girl like you wants?”

I felt him harden against me again and it occurred to me that he really didn't know what to do with a girl at all. I wondered how many girls he had ever had, except in his dreams. That gave me an idea. I should teach him what I wanted, what a girl wanted, teach him how to please me. I don't know why I thought I should do that. I really didn't like him after all.

“Oh, darling,” I simpered. “It was nice, but it can be even nicer. Let me show you how.”

I don't know why but when I caressed his hair and kissed him slowly and gently and got him to do the same, making his mouth and tongue mobile in mine, he got instantly hard again and so I drew my leg up about his waist and he jerked in shock as I caressed his waist and then took his manhood in my hands and stroked it, too.

I caressed his chest gently and sucked on his nipples and got him to do the same to mine. I slipped around and mounted him, my legs beside his waist as I pressed him into the pillows and let his hardness press into my abdomen, putting his hand on my little man. He froze but when I sighed and leaned into him, kissing his mouth softly with my mobile mouth, letting my long hair flow over his face. Once he squeezed my little man hard and began to hold me tight to him, I knew I had him and I could do anything with him.

Surprisingly, I began to be very aroused myself. I got him to take my teddy off for me and then mounted him again, sitting into his lap until he slid into me easily. I rose and fell onto my thighs as he began to gasp and pump really hard until I slowed him down and made him last so much longer and give each of us so much pleasure. He finally did come and I achieved a real sense of conquest as he came as I wanted him to, his hands and mouth giving me every bit of pleasure I wanted.

My quivering in emotion was quite genuine as I lay in his arms, my breasts pressed into him. “Oh, darling Carl,” I simpered in my giddiest, most girlish voice, concealing how I really felt. “That was so beautiful. You're such a wonderful man to me. Any woman would love a man who knows how to be so gentle!”

Carl seemed to swell with pride as I put my arms about his neck and kissed him, parting my lips to let him possess my mouth. I had meant only to lead him on a little but he seemed so flattered by my compliments that he set all his inhibitions aside and hugged me tightly and rolled me to one side, touching and stroking me everywhere until I felt my temperature rising and I began to want him as much as he wanted me.

He relaxed and kissed me more gently, yet more confidently than before. My tongue loosened him up and he did it in the same way to me. Where I stroked him, he stroked me. It was then that it was confirmed to me how inexperienced he was and how he was learning from me.

I taught him well. I had started by disliking him and his arrogant, clumsy, male ways but, by the time I went to sleep in his comforting arms, my head on his chest, my legs wrapped about him, he was my willing and eager slave, who would do anything, in any manner I prescribed, for me. He kissed me from head to toe, even my little manhood, thinking it great when he made me come, writhing with delicious, wonderfully thrilling sensations, as I had done to him earlier. Ben had never done that to me and I loved Carl for doing that for me, thinking enough of me that I should climax too just as he had so many times.

Several times as I mounted his often stiff, muscle-bound body, caressing him with everything from my hair and breasts to my soft thighs, he clutched at me and whimpered beneath me, begging me to stop the delightful agony I was putting him through. I gave him

girlish moans and told him how much I loved what he was doing and wasn't he so strong and so masculine. He made me feel so womanly, I purred, and actually it became true as he came inside me, his thing so huge that his release was like a sting inside me, making me wonder if a woman felt it like I did when her man released. I writhed at such thoughts and got the shivers which were so pleasing and thrilling it made me again wonder if I was having an orgasm with Carl as a real woman might have.

I made him do it to me again later and felt his release just like before, clenching so much that I found myself ready to ejaculate too. I guided his hand between our straining bodies and he obliged me eagerly, stroking me gently until I came, threshing wildly about between his legs, which he really seemed to really like, the way he almost crushed my mouth with his kisses.

"Oh, babydoll," he said as we eased off exhausted, and I rested in his arms. "You sure do know how to make love to a man."

I must admit that I still felt very little for him despite the thrills of making love. I showed him how to lie beside me, kissing and fondling me, his manhood trapped between my thighs. He got hard and I released him easily until we cuddled up again and somewhere in there I went to sleep.

Carl was my puppy dog for the rest of the weekend much to Joanie's and Joe's amusement. I can't say that I enjoyed myself as I had with Ben Holt. I was acting far too girlishly, putting it on, but that only made Carl even tenderer with me, which really astonished Joe.

"Happens every time," Joanie told Joe cheerfully as Carl and I clung together, kissing and hugging, as the taxi drivers waited impatiently for us to unclench.

"You sure do have quite an effect on men who make love to you," said Joanie as we sat together, in little skirts and matching black tops, in the back of the cab. "I thought at first that you didn't like Carl."

"I didn't much," I giggled at her as I fixed my ravaged lipstick that Carl had kissed completely away. Then I felt like kicking myself. I didn't have to be a simpering little girl to keep Joanie's attention, did I? She, however, giggled as well and hugged me as sweetly as she had ever done.

XVIII. BYGONES

I knew something was up by the look on Brenda's and Anna's faces when they returned from a late lunch to the rehearsal studios

"Where's Joanie?" I asked, worried by the clouded glances they gave me.

Brenda pointed to the Ladies' Room and I went there, neither the other girls nor I embarrassed any more by my using the same room at the same time as them.

Joanie was arguing with a dark-haired girl with her back to me. Joanie stopped as I went in. The dark-haired girl turned to look at me, her face as angry and flushed as Joanie's, but that expression turning to shock and surprise as she looked at me.

"Hi, Alan," she said.

"Oh my," she added with a sly smile as she looked me over, an attractive, blonde-haired girl, my hair newly styled and cut, my excellent figure well shown off by my slim, short gray skirt and pink top.

"Donna," I said shakily as I stared at the girl who had once been my lover.

"I want to come back," said Donna, her jaw jutting forward in determination. Behind her, Joanie shook her long dark hair negatively in equal determination. Donna's blue eyes took in the subtle way my makeup was applied and for the first time in a long time reminded me that I was a man in a dress.

"All-All right," I stammered nervously while Joanie appeared outraged at my words. Donna looked at me with something akin to a sneer on her face. She lifted her chin in her familiar, petulant way and stalked out to speak with Colin and Barry, I think.

Brenda and Anna came bursting into the bathroom then as Joanie was berating me.

"Coast City's dumped her after her second dud," snapped Brenda. "So why should we have to take her back? She just wants on our bandwagon!"

"She just heard that Jack Harris thought her latest was so bad, he asked them not to release it," added Joanie, sitting up on the counter around the washbasin.

She didn't seem to get it either, why we had no choice about taking Donna back. I shifted in my short skirt, it feeling so right about my sheer pantyhose, but I knew nevertheless what I was now by the way Donna had looked at me.

"We-We do need a singer," I began nervously.

"Bull!" exclaimed Anna. "You have a much better voice than she does."

That made me feel very shaky and nervous. She shouldn't say things like that and mean them.

"She broke us up!" snarled Brenda.

"And she can't sing rock," said Joanie, looking at me, frowning at my nervousness. "She hates it."

"If she was so bad on her own," insisted Anna, "she could pull us down, too."

"She always gets what she wants," said Joanie savagely. "She took your songs, Christine, didn't she, to launch her own career. Now, she's flopped and needs you and us again. But when she gets what she wants from us, you know she'll just step on us again."

"O-Only if we let her," I said, knowing I didn't even have to try any more to keep my voice light and high-pitched, a girl's voice. I looked around at their hot, bitter, brooding faces. "I-I don't think, well, you know what she could do, you know, if she spoke about me. I don't think we can refuse to take her back if, if we still want to go on as the Purple-hearts."

They all got it together and the shock on their faces should have warmed me but I was too agitated myself to appreciate it. They seemed to have forgotten that I had been a man or rather they had forgotten that we couldn't be a top all-girl band if Donna ever spoke out about me.

“Frigging heck!” exclaimed Brenda, pounding the counter suddenly, into the stunned silence. “You gotta get a permanent sex change, Christine, and then we can spit all over that bitch!”

I flushed and felt a flutter all through my feminized body as they all stared at me angrily, angry with me, I could see, because I was not a girl like them. My bra suddenly felt too tight and my stockinged toes were uncomfortable in my new high heels. “W-Would it make any d-difference?” I gasped, my throat dry. I flicked my hair back with my newly manicured hands. “I-I still couldn't get a b-birth certificate to prove I was what I wasn't. She would know.”

They were outraged still at Donna and, when we went out to continue our rehearsal, a pale-faced, tight-lipped Colin Wheeler came over and took me by the arm and asked me to come back into the control center and look at the settings he was using for some of our older numbers.

“You can't let her back into the group,” he said, coming straight to the point when we were alone behind the glass partition, looking in on the group setup for performing.

“Why not?” I asked, surprised at his vehemence.

“Number one, Brian Fields won't allow it,” said Colin. He suddenly reached over to the mike and called off our rehearsal for the rest of the day, saying he and I had to work on new arrangements for the rest of the afternoon and evening. I watched as a fuming Donna stalked out one way and the other arguing girls the other, Barry Walker left in puzzlement in the middle of an empty set.

“Bellis and Day will be upset, number two,” went on Colin as he picked up my coat from where I had left it, helping me into it. “Barry says you're the better singer by far. He thinks you should go out on your own as I have been saying to you for over a year. And, number three,” he took a deep breath, “I don't want her. I don't like her. She doesn't give anything to the group that you don't already have. She's just trouble. Always has been.”

I let him take my arm and usher me naturally as he would have any woman out to a waiting cab. I debated with myself what I should tell Colin. We had lunches together and I know he enjoyed my company as much as I enjoyed his. He had such insights into music, all kinds, and I really was learning a lot from him. But earlier that afternoon, before our break and Donna's appearance, it had become a little more.

Colin had already let down enough to show me some of his writing, mostly show-type tunes. He told me wryly that he was trying to write a musical and knew there was something missing in his music. Would I be honest enough to tell him what? He did write interesting, accomplished music, I found, but it was so unvaried, harmonically similar, even rhythmically almost so much the same as to be dull. Then I thought of all the wonderful things he had suggested to me. I played over some of his work and thought of it as I would have thought of my own. Yes, it was easy to break out of his themes, to play variations.

I had done one new version of a song of his that I liked about someone scared about loving someone too much. I had even taken liberties with his lyric, my toes crossed as I used the piano in our rehearsal room to enrich, as I thought it, his themes. I started to ex-

plain my time variations to Colin but he was way ahead of me, saying he loved what I had done to his work.

Then, he had leaned over me and kissed my cheek at first. I felt those strange emotions he always aroused in me and offered him my mouth. He kindled a fire in me that grew from smoldering to raging as we hugged each other, sharing the piano seat. We heard the other girls coming in from their break and we broke apart ourselves, unable to look at each other as we started the rehearsal we had supposed to be arranging.

Nothing of that impinged upon our almost silent ride in the cab. "You'll sing *When I Love Too Much*," he finally said, almost belligerently. "I don't want Donna to get her hands on our song, even if it is a ballad."

"All right," I agreed nervously. "We do need her, though, for all the requests we get to do songs from our first two albums. They're really hers. And it is tough for me to sing and play all the time, Colin. I-I think I can improvise better not having to sing all the time, and that's what we've sort of made our name for, haven't we? And Joanie will be a better drummer if she's not all the time worried about her singing."

"You should just use backup singers on stage," said Colin acidly. "Anyway, you're going to catch it from all sides, you know."

He tucked his arm under mine most companionably as we got out in Manhattan. I hadn't eaten and neither had he as we had really been working on adding in our new music into the stage show we had already sort of perfected. Some things we had to drop but we had to balance it all so that it wasn't just me singing and taking one solo after another.

As I tried to point out to him as we took a long, leisurely dinner in Belli's, our need for variety in the program would be met with Donna. He didn't like it. He argued with me but I couldn't give in on this one, even though I couldn't, just couldn't tell him why. Finally he gave up grumpily and we walked companionably at last up the Avenue and into a theatre line-up.

Several people looked at me and whispered to their companions but I just ignored them and very few people approached me, I found, if I just acted as if I was no-one special.

"You'll help me with the other girls, won't you, Colin?" I asked him anxiously, as we were whisked under the marquee without presenting any tickets and right in front of all the other lined up people. The manager who seemed to know Colin well greeted us effusively.

He looked at my strained face and suddenly bent and gave me a friendly, impulsive kiss on my lipsticked mouth, his lips surprisingly warm and appealing just as they had been before that day. "Of course," he said, squeezing my arm, as I felt a tingle pass right through me again, and he was looking at me sort of strangely. "Now the show," he said, taking the ticket stubs a uniformed usher had suddenly brought us. "You do know what it's about, don't you?"

I looked at the ticket in his hand. It was for a musical, *La Cage aux Folles*. I shook my newly permed and set hair and made as innocent a face as I could. "No," I said demurely. "But I'm sure I'll enjoy it since I'm with you, no matter what it's about."

We toured, oh, how we toured for the next three months, and we also had several television performances to give and, of course, a million interviews to endure. All our personal lives disappeared and we only had each other to depend upon again.

Colin had given me a hasty, pleasant kiss after the show we had seen but wouldn't come in, claiming that he still had music business to finish even that late at night. I didn't expect him to call and he didn't, which was disappointing but don't ask me why.

Musically, we found the studio audiences could be revved up just as easily as our arena fans if we played live. We did *Jailbait* and *You Won't Ever Make me Change* to give Donna a chance to shine on Saturday Live and I did *I'm a Modern Girl*. I also did *Remorse* and *Queen of Pain* so many times on other shows that I found myself varying my solos without even thinking about it, so familiar was it to me what the others would play.

We rocked out one show with *Smoke* and kept it going for nearly ten minutes, so much feedback did we get from the young audience we were playing for. We didn't know but they taped that show and cut out some of the early interviews in the show to air what we had done, my face contorting and twisting as I hurled bursts of heavy chords and blistering rock and roll riffs at the audience.

That led to us meeting Julius Waldener, a movie producer, who had most of his segment cut from that show. I could hardly hear him as he tried to talk to me after, in the green room, saying he was a movie producer and he wanted us to appear in a couple of scenes in a movie he was making. I thought it was a line. The girls were teaching me all about men and how they tried to hit on us. I nodded and made small talk about it as there was pandemonium around us after the way we had played.

The next day, however, Arthur Bellis was on the phone to us all to tell us that our week off was going to be turned into a time for all of us to appear in a movie, a teen story, as a background band, something like *Flashdance*, Arthur said, which we all groaned at since we were getting very tired. I think I was only making it once a week with Joanie even though we still slept together every night. She was so very tired after drumming through two hour shows and often more with encores.

Actually, the movie wasn't at all like *Flashdance*. It was called *Washington Square* and turned out not to be that bad a movie about runaway teens. Since we weren't working anywhere near as hard as we did on stage, we didn't mind the chance to get our music on film, even though we hadn't heard of any of the unknowns 'starring' in the movie. We thought it would never be heard from again after we left the set.

It was a new experience to be made up by film artistes, to be dressed by others, to be deliberately made up so that we appeared several years younger than we actually were. It was all leather stuff, too, the skirts slim and tight. I did Colin's song, now called *Loved Too Much*, while Donna did *Last Chance*, the bitter, bluesy number I had written at the time Joanie had left me for Tony Thompson.

Julius loved our work. It took the week to shoot the scenes that our music was background to, from so many different angles, and I discovered how very important it was for me to lip sync to my songs. We all got to do a couple of scenes with the runaways as well which was a laugh since they had us do each one many times and then they always chose the first run-through we had done when we were most 'natural', Julius said.

I was fooling around with my guitar, the amps turned very low, free-forming around a theme, waiting for the bus to arrive to take us out of the shooting area when I looked up and Julius was watching me.

“That jam you did on David's show, Christine,” he said eagerly. “I know you wouldn't want to do that again but we do need a theme for this film. Do you think you could do something like that for me?”

I started jamming again. “I am already,” I told him. We went back to the studio for that a week later and recorded what I called *Squawk*. It was called *Washington Blues* on the soundtrack of the movie and was on our fifth album. So I got paid twice for it in a way.

Once he got us in the studio, Colin appeared as if nothing had ever happened between us. He treated us all in friendly fashion, even Donna, who had been surprisingly easy to get along with as we toured. If anyone enjoyed the large crowds and fed off the adulation we were receiving from boys and girls alike, it was Donna.

I overheard her saying to Anna that she was stupid and she should never have left the group. But J.C. had been on and on at her to move on. It was all his fault, I gathered. She raised an eyebrow at our sleeping arrangements, noting that Joanie and I were sharing a room always, but she said nothing more about it. She didn't call me 'Alan' once while we were on tour but sometimes she was looking at me when I sang and I saw the jealousy in her eyes. I had to wonder how long it would be before she really turned on me, privately or publicly.

Colin kept us in the studio until we had laid down several tracks for *No Mercy*, our fifth CD. I wonder if anyone but me knew that *Two Lovely Daughters* was so fierce, bitter and sarcastic because of what I had gone through with Ben Holt. Joanie never said a word about it, though she did pull a wry face the first time we played it through, not looking at me, as Donna sang the lyric. Donna had to do it about twenty times before Colin said it was up to the new standard we had set for ourselves, which didn't make her very happy at all, either. She looked daggers at me after that but kept in whatever she might have wanted to say.

Washington Square came out and was popular. Offers began to pour in for us to appear just about wherever and whenever we wanted. So we had to sit down in our next break with Arthur Bellis, Barry Walker, a grumpy Brian Fields and Colin, without whom I would have refused to meet, as our new CD took off in sales like a rocket.

“Your previous albums are still selling briskly,” said Arthur, smiling and arguing against us doing any more records for a year at least. “You are starting to run the risk of being over-exposed. It could be time to have a good, long holiday.” We all cheered at that. Only Brian didn't smile. “I would suggest though that you do a television special first.”

“But we're best when we're live,” I said, flushing and re-crossing my silk-sheathed legs as all the men looked at me. “I-I mean ...”

Colin quickly supported me. “It should be your kind of show,” he agreed. “Six, seven set songs without breaks as you do on the road.”

“That's been done many times before,” sneered Brian Fields. He didn't like it one bit that we now had our own lawyers and managers. We also knew that Cabaret hadn't given

us any real support in the market in regard to promotion. Not that we had needed it, according to Arthur Bellis. In fact, more hype would have been detrimental to our long-term success, he said.

Now he reminded Brian, who seemed to want to veto our appearing on television in our own show, that we had to produce only two more records and our contractual obligations to Cabaret were fulfilled. Donna actually smiled at me when Arthur said that he would be asking to renegotiate our deal upwards if Cabaret wanted to continue to distribute after our original package deal was up.

Colin took charge of the television special and then Arthur took us all through the monies we had earned and where it had been used. With the revenue from my songwriting, I



discovered that I was, in fact a millionaire a couple of times over, as Arthur had said I would be, while the others would be as well, even Donna, when we finished our tour with a visit to the West Coast and the California Rock Festival.

"If only I'd stayed with you girls," said Donna, stressing the last word a trifle bitterly as the planning session broke up.

"You had your chance," Brenda interrupted quickly. She was dressed more smartly now, looking more vibrant than she ever had before. "If it wasn't for Christine, you'd still be poor. She's the one who insisted we take you back."

I shivered when she said that. There was a funny smile playing around Donna's mouth. "Oh, I'd have got my money somehow," she said enigmatically, smiling more broadly at me, certainly seeing how I blanched under my careful makeup, my gold earrings shaking with nervousness.

"Remember the golden goose," said Brenda angrily

and then she strode away and took Barry Walker by the arm, who smiled easily at her, and they went off together. I did understand now though the reason why she seemed in such good spirits and was dressing so well. All she had to do was keep him away from Auntie Cathy, I thought.

"Speaking of goosing," said Joanie with a quiet, wry smile as she came up behind me with my coat. "We'll be having a lot of time for holidays in the sun, won't we?"

"I-I guess so," I said. Sudden visions of Ben Holt, snuggling up to me in bed, putting his arms about my naked body and pulling me into him, my breasts so sensitive and thrusting into his chest, setting me off into gyrations of wild thrills as I surrendered to his lips, threatened to engulf and overheat me. I felt my color grow at the thought and half-expected Donna to ask me why I was blushing so much.

But Donna didn't. She just looked at me and smiled knowingly. Later, in bed, Joanie laughed at my fears. "She just thinks she knows," she laughed. "She thinks I'm a lesbian. If she only knew!"

I kept expecting every day, I must admit for Joanie to announce that she was leaving me for one of the men that hit on us everywhere we went and with whom she reacted with great pleasure. She danced with and kissed her male partners all the time, treating me in public just like a girl friend.

But in bed that night, Joanie was as loving as ever. I bitterly wondered if it was the money that made her grateful. She made very sure that I climaxed completely in a way that Ben and Carl couldn't always do for me. It required no gymnastic ability for Joanie and me to make love tenderly, face-to-face as a man and woman should. Our breasts tenderly pressed together and my longer hair covered us both. Our shapely legs intertwined and our painted toenails made telling whose was whose very hard. That was what making love to Joanie so poignant. Once we were joined together, it was impossible to tell which of us was the man and which was the woman.

XIX. SUCCESS

It was a year of unrelieved success for the Purplehearts. Our television special was based on an interview-commentary format, interlocking with a live concert we did in New York theatre. It was the second-highest ranked show of its week and brought us accolades and spreads in popular magazines and newspapers.

That was very difficult for me, talking about the time when I was a little girl and having Donna give me very wicked looks. The other girls supported my stories and even filled in other fictional details of meeting and hearing each other play in fictional bands around the mid-West. Everyone took what we said as gospel as far as I could tell. No one ever called me on my fictional background as a little girl. All they wanted to know about was which was my favorite Barbie.

Our sixth CD, *For Valor*, was a million seller on its first day of issue and four of the songs I had written followed each other to the top of the charts. I liked best the one Colin and I had written together, Joanie out of the apartment for the day buying more clothes with Anna and Donna.

Colin had been pleased to stay with me alone and we had fooled around on the piano, shy with each other, I think. I hadn't thought that my slim, front slit skirt would disconcert him so much or my tight, bateau-style plum sweater. I had thought I was very casually dressed but he said I was putting him off, smelling so nice and dressing so sexily.

I had flirted a little with him then, pouting over his remarks and it had the same effect as it had on Carl. He put his arm about me very shakily and we kissed, my senses reeling as we did so. He challenged me then to write a 'real' rock and roll song, a Fifties song, he requested, in part I think to hide the confusion he must feel as he seemed to enjoy our gentle kissing as much as I did. I understood Joanie's side of it more as I thought of her going off and kissing so many men on the dance floor. I wondered if she got as much a thrill out of it as I did kissing Colin.

We deliberately wrote a song with all kinds of 'hooks' in the lyric, made the melody deliberately catchy, with room for a raunchy, Stratocruiser solo. *Rockin' Baby Blues* was the result and Donna loved it from the moment she came in with the others and asked us what we were up to. We both flushed at that, having kissed and hugged several times, laughing over what we were doing.

Donna, though, loved singing it and dancing to it as she performed, whipping the crowds we faced into a frenzy as I peppered them, too, with several 'improvised', but really well thought out, raspy, bitter guitar licks.

Our CD reached a million a month sales and stayed there with no push from Cabaret. "No need to," said Steve Casey when we met him on an excursion to The Cavern to listen to some new bands. "Your records just sell themselves these days. It would really over-expose your group if we started hyping you now. You get so much ink without the hype from us. It might also be the reason why everyone wants to write about you now. You aren't exactly seeking anybody out, are you?"

Donna still wanted to boss the group, annoyed I could see when reporters wanted to talk to me about something, often what I was wearing. I always tried to send the attention back to her, saying honestly that Donna and Joanie always picked out what I wore in public, the little skirts and tank tops, the mid-thigh stockings and high heels. I had no fashion sense, I declared. They should talk to Donna about the way I dressed. I tried but it wasn't always enough to please her.

She was content, though, to let Colin and I set the group's musical direction. I insisted that Colin's name be with mine on three other numbers we sang on *For Valor*. It was only fair. In one, I had stolen a theme from one of the variations I had written on a song in his musical portfolio.

"Where do you and Joanie go when we're off?" Donna wanted to know one day as she was visiting us before we went out together to the Stargate. "I can never get you on weekends when we're on holiday and Colin says he doesn't know where you go."

"Oh, we go out," I said, gulping, as I thought of what we were planning for the next weekend. "We-We date. Travel. S-See the s-sights."

Joanie had to spoil it by over-exaggerating. "The museums. The opera. Folk festivals," she said, her eyes glinting brightly at me, even though she was trying to be deadpan. She had wanted to start dating again and she wanted me with her every time she did. She

wanted me to start my pills again which I had left off and which had made our lovemaking, infrequent though it might be, very satisfying for both of us, I thought.

We were dating and I was getting used again to kissing men in the back seat of our limousine, Joanie and her man getting it on opposite me. I had all kinds of offers and all kinds of hands all over me. It seemed to rouse Joanie for the 'after' when our dates finally went home, their hopes of a lay dashed, but it didn't do as much for me. That's why Joanie wanted me back on my pills, so that it would be as good for me as for her. But I knew what she really wanted and it was indeed coming.

"Why don't you invite me along?" Donna wanted to know.

"Shall I?" Joanie asked me mischievously. My blushing was enough to confirm Donna's suspicions.

"You've got a boy friend!" she crowed at me. "Who would have thought it? Little Alan Markham some other guy's girl! Has he been inside your panties yet?"

The looks on Joanie's and my face were enough to make her burst out laughing while I quaked in humiliation and smarted at her reaction. I could deny I had a boy friend. I didn't. Colin was avoiding me again. He wouldn't be alone with me, even though I always sat next to him and often held his hand even when we had to walk anywhere.

Later, in bed, Joanie mischievously asked me whether I would like Donna to come with us to Florida again. "No way," I said firmly, suddenly thinking of some of the things I had done lately on our weekends by the sea.

Stan Murray, Ben Holt's friend, had been my date, surprisingly, on our last trip to the Keys.

"Well, he asked and asked me," said Joanie as we unpacked after a strange plane ride in which he was so nervous each time I moved my legs in my dress or touched him with my newly manicured fingers. "I really couldn't turn him down and I thought he'd bring you up-to-date about Ben."

He had. Ben had divorced and re-married, not happy about leaving his daughters, but he had known he couldn't have everything when his wife found out about his weekend 'business meetings'. The girl Ben had newly married was red-haired, strawberry more than anything else, Stan said, and really very much like Debbie, me, but no one else knew about me but Stan, he added.

I felt really sad as Stan went on with his brief account of Ben's new life. It affected me and I made love to a nervous, quivering Stan with a desperate ache in my heart and did everything Ben had ever wanted me to do to pleasure him. Stan was soon whispering that he loved me and would do anything for me, the most wonderful woman in his life. I did feel like a woman as I lay with Stan, directing his fervent kisses to my breasts and other parts of my tender body.

Stan was eager to spend the whole day in bed, in marathon lovemaking, exploring my body as if he had just discovered the secret of life itself. He desperately wanted to see me again, to date me back in the city and even though I flirted with him, trying on girlish ways I'd seen other girls used on guys, I knew I wouldn't. I would only want to talk about Ben Holt and that wouldn't have been fair to him.

On the West Coast, Joanie and I shared a house overlooking the sea for more than a month and she found many men to stay over with us. I knew she was paying the guys extra to sleep with me as I heard them on occasion say to each other that they felt it was very easy money to earn and laugh at the one who just got regular money. I didn't care. Oh, I did feel a little bit humiliated, well, a lot, at times, but so long as they were gentle to some degree and most were, I didn't care. It was sex and they were soon enjoying me, I'm sure, and eager to please as I acted like a girly girl, simpering and praising them while all the time I thought of Ben or Joanie. Even a rough one, like a Carl Hatch, was all right if he could be tamed and Joanie, I think, chose well. Those were the ones who always wanted to stay longer and cuddle me all day long on the beach, their mouths buried in mine.

We stayed out there for so long and toured because of the number of places for gigs and because of the California Rock Festival. It approached as just another event. Our tour was going well with big crowds everywhere, with us even having to put in extra concert days in the biggest cities, restricting Joanie's 'holidays', and mine, to basically one-night stands.

In the few days we had off before the Festival, we suddenly realized how big the event was going to be. Television showed us crowds in excess of three hundred thousands on the site for the first day bands. We were set to be last-but-one on the fourth day of the six-day festival. We were to be flown in by helicopter since the roads were so jammed as more and more people were pressing into the area while once there, few were leaving even those without tickets to the actual day's music.

"You really have to plan out your program and rehearse it well," Barry Walker insisted. "You can't improvise the way you have been doing because you'll never hear your own sound except as distortion from the speakers. It will be really different from anything you've done up to now."

I was scared by that. I relied on feedback from the others to cue my improvisations, to change and alter the sound, filling in for Brenda and Anna, if the truth be told. What Barry said made sense and we rehearsed, trying to be tighter as a group, particularly on the 'oldies', our first CD songs, which drew Donna more onto center stage that she loved.

There were press conferences before many bands performed, often multiple groups. The punk rockers played up a lot for the press and it was one of those groups that 'shared' the interview with the Purplehearts. Their leader, with a ducktail of hair falling in front of his eyes, was expounding on every topic under the sun, even his traditional opinions about women and music. "Women can't rock," he said, knowing we were across the room from him. Then he went on about The Bomb, holding forth as if he was an expert or something.

"This is the End of the World!" he was shouting. "So we're gonna get everything we want. It all ends this year! We're gonna get those who did it to us!" He ranted on for a while and I wasn't surprised to see foam at his mouth. He looked very pleased with himself when the reporters finally turned to us for the few remaining minutes.

"And how about you?" asked the television veejay. "What will you girls be doing if this is the End of the World?"

The others were looking at each other. He thrust the mike in my face, startling me, making my earrings flash and touch me. I felt my skirt hug me tightly and felt the tightness in my breasts as I blurted out, "We'd make love for the last time."

Joanie squeezed my hand where no one could see behind me. As I was answering, it suddenly came to me that it was a song. If bombs were exploding, the end of the world at hand, I would want to go out at peace with my friends, loving them all and having them love me.

I could answer no more questions as the words and music came together in my mind. I was bursting to get away and write. It took a little while to sense the right counter melody but as soon as we got back to our trailer, it all fell into place, words, music and arrangement.

The others all protested but, once I sang it through for them, they were sold. Donna refused the lead. "It's you, Christine," she said, staring at me. I had thought she was admiring my new hairstyle. She had said she was going to get her hair done the same way with a mass of curls at her neck. "Joanie and I will back you but this one is all yours."

I didn't want that. I was shaking all over at the thought of leading on the song and Barry Walker was annoyed and very anxious when Joanie told him what we were planning to do. When he heard it was called *The End of the World*, he got even more upset.

"You can't do it!" he shouted to be heard over the helicopter when we got aboard to be flown in to the Festival site. I was so glad of my leather skirt. I could feel the wind trying to whip it up and expose my panties and thighs to everyone and I still nervously held onto the edge to keep it down. I had high-heeled boots that came to my knee and a leather jacket over my filmy, white silk blouse. Joanie had pinned my hair tight to my head, away from my ears to expose my heavy steel earrings. The back of my hair flowed freely over my shoulders but was blown by the wind around my face as I clambered in to the middle seat. Joanie took a ribbon and tied my hair back, threading the ribbon through, as Barry ranted on at us.

We flew over the Festival site. There were people, it seemed as far as the eye could see under the dim lights. It was a sea of humanity. We landed a little way from the brightly lit oasis of the stage and had to walk it seemed like forever in our high heels to the stage.

The crowd noise was loud and continuous. Nearing the stage, the band's amplified noise was incredible, but in the stage area, behind the speakers, surprisingly, it eased off. Joanie hugged and kissed us all as she did before most performances, her arm lightly touching my breast as she kissed the corner of my mouth. "Remember you're my girl," she whispered as she grinned and bounced away, her breasts jiggling, leading us on stage. I didn't look like that, did I, I thought, as I picked up my Strat for the first set, getting a smile and hug from Bonnie and John who had set up our instruments the moment the Whole Earth Band had quit the stage and were now scurrying off.

The emcees were talking about drugs to the audience, not advocating, but warning about what was bad and being sold in the crowd. Their introduction consisted entirely of, "Who's next? Oh, yeah, the Purplehearts."

Then, the two guys walked off the stage and I plugged in, trusting that somewhere Barry was working as our sound engineer and everything would come out right. We be-

gan just as we had rehearsed and so my feelings of femininity almost betrayed me again as they always did when so many men stared at me, so many eyes not just on my face but looking at me up and down as if measuring every part of me and finding me wanting as a woman.

Comin' In, *Rockin' Billy Baby*, and *Rockin' Baby Blues* got us off with a great roar from the crowd and with the play of the searchlights we could see how far back it went, to apparent infinity, in the dark. I had never before seen so many eyes looking at me, seen such a sea of upturned faces. I wished I had never come here and embarrassed myself so stupidly. How could I fool so many people? At any moment, they were going to be chanting 'Alan' at me. I knew it.

Donna tried a joke to lead in the set we used to promote the *For Valor* CD but we couldn't tell by the screaming back at us if she was heard or not. She looked helplessly at me.

"Just keep it going!" I yelled and windmilled the opening chords to *You Won't Ever Make Me Change*. I released the guitar part early shifting to *Eye in the Sky*, the Alan Parsons rip-off as the others were finishing the last notes. I did it again on *I'm A Modern Girl* and the others had caught on well. Brenda anticipated the next change beautifully swinging us into *Loved Too Much* underneath my heavy, block chord patterns of *Modern Girl*. We did four more from the *For Valor* CD. The crowd noise had been swelling so gradually that only when we paused did the roar come bursting in and we felt the stage shake. People were stomping and waving their hands, applauding, I guess. We hadn't realized that so many had been sitting down but now they were standing and a great surge had moved towards the stage.

I did *Smoke* as Joanie broke the spell of fear with the staccato opening and I had to edge forward to get a little feedback. I saw the movement at first as I growled through familiar passages, taking liberties with arpeggio runs around familiar chords and that's when the dancing started. We were into an oldies set then, English style, The Pacemakers, the Zombies, the Police, and then some really old Link Wray and Tommy James.

We should have finished with just one more but the crowd was frantic and so after *Squawk*, we did all our early stuff, *Jailbait* and *Rock and Roll Queens* whipping up the crowd. It was so easy to improvise about the familiar pieces and hint to the girls where I was going to go next after taking my solos.

When Donna screamed hoarsely, "One more," at the crowd, there were angry shouts back at us so someone must have heard us. "A new one, written this afternoon!" she shouted into the mikes and so I had to do *The End of the World* and it ended to a roar unlike anything I have ever heard.

We ran off, shaking from the release of adrenaline as well as outright fear at how the crowd was surging to the stage. I thought they were going to break it down and I looked around for Bonnie who had appointed herself my protector so often before.

But it was Barry who grabbed me in the crush of people off stage. He pulled me back to the other girls where the two emcees were staring at me, goggle-eyed. "We've got problems!" Barry was yelling at us all. "You did twenty-four numbers instead of the forty-five

minute set! Nearly two hours! Now The Alert won't go on. Not after that. Not after the way Christine played. Not after she turned on the crowd like that! You have to go back!"

"We-we can't!" I gasped, trembling as Brenda put her arm about me. "What did I do?"

Barry Walker grinned. "When you stepped up to get the feedback, you were vamping the crowd. You should have seen it on the big screens, the look on your face. I think every guy out there thinks you want just him and every one wants just you." He reached over then and fastened my blouse that I hadn't realized that I had pushed undone working the guitar, showing off my red silk, lace-edged bra.

"When you stand like that, with your thighs holding your skirt so tight, well," Barry went on slowly. "Did you know you were flirting when you flicked your hair back the way you did in your playing?"

"I couldn't hear what I was playing," I exclaimed. "I was just filling in the gaps." I looked at Joanie and tears welled up in my eyes and she came and hugged me, knowing that I wasn't that way. I wasn't, was I? I wasn't the slut Barry seemed to be implying I was. Then I thought of the beach house and what Joanie and I had been up to with men. I was so ashamed of myself. I had an Alan attack and Joanie caught it somehow and put her arms about me.

Barry seemed to be shocked as Joanie kissed me and murmured. "You were fabulous, girl," to me.

"You were fantastic, Christine," he said emphatically, his eyes bulging at us both. "I didn't mean anything bad in what I said. You were so fast, for so long, but so moving. I've never heard such packed solos before. I feel crazy! That's how they feel out there. You have to cool them down before they wreck the place."

The show promoters were on the stage then. One ran up to us at the edge of the path to helicopter pad, huddling against a trailer. "The Alert won't go on!" he was screaming as if it was our fault.

"The girls will go back," Barry reassured him, nodding anxiously at us.

"They'll get what we would have paid The Alert as the headliners!" shouted a small, longhaired, balding, bushy mustached guy.

Barry led us back up and we went back out not really sure what we were going to do. We got a reception like we have never had before. The sea of waving hands had become an ocean. I could barely move as I thought about being in Blind Mice and being Alan, so tarted up now to look like a girl. I felt the guitar on my breast, my breast! I was flame red in embarrassment and turned to leave but Joanie was pointing at me with her drumstick, expecting me to lead off.

The other girls couldn't hear me or lip read me as I switched to the Telecaster. I played the first part of *Satisfaction* all by myself and they joined in late. The people close to the stage were screaming so loudly that I could hardly hear Donna singing. Our exchanges were rougher as we played stuff we hardly ever played now until I realized that we hadn't slowed the crowd at all.

Joanie was yelling at us to slow it down. I switched to one of Donna's ballads and that did have a little effect and so we did *Guinevere*, a Crosby, Stills and Nash piece and *I'm Not*

In Love, from Ten C.C., which helped, and so we were able to finish with some medium rockers, a couple of my collaborations with Colin.

We left the stage this time at a run, with me wiggling and definitely running like a girl in my high heels, hanging on to Brenda and Joanie. It was so strange how womanly I felt as I slumped into the helicopter, a blanket warming my bare legs as I was the only one in a skirt.

“Phew!” gasped Donna in my ear as we all snuggled together as the helicopter swung crazily and we saw the lit up stage and the still seething mass of humanity with lights here and there revealing the immense scope of the crowd.

“You girls were fabulous!” said one of the pilots as he turned and looked at me, giving me a wink. I was trembling too much to accept even a simple compliment and the other girls looked as shocked as me.

“You sure gave it your all,” said the co-pilot, nodding to me.

We saw it all on television news over the next few days. I saw how sexy I looked in my leather skirt and boots as I swayed forward, my legs spread for balance. I knew I was trying to lean forward to hear the music but it did look like I was romancing the crowd and, what was worse, they responded to every move. Only snippets of the music, quite distorted, were carried on the telecasts but the speed of the guitar solos struck me immediately. I hadn’t realized how fast, how fierce, and how concentrated my playing had been.

The papers were full of the way we had played, the way we had looked, choosing the most revealing photos to illustrate the story. The words to the story were all about my playing, the way I had played, the length of my playing and my driving guitar as if the other girls hadn’t been on stage with me, a part of it all. The *Alert* were angry at being upstaged and said so, even though they did play eventually, in the early hours of the morning. ‘Half a million’ worn out and exhausted fans had slept on the ground if they could find a place to lie, according to some reports.

“I think we’ve broken through,” said Donna, after the third day of news about us and showing clips from our concert in San Jose. “We’re more than a rock group now. You’ll see.”

XX. MAN TROUBLE

It was a year of very hard work for the Purplehearts. Colin loved *The End of the World*, as did the public. The CD, *Distinguished Service*, containing that number, sold over ten millions in three months, with millions of singles on top of that. Cabaret came up with a new deal giving us control over our recordings and the maximum in royalties.

We played in festivals of a hundred thousand several times and regularly performed in open-air stadiums to crowds who came to emulate California and lose control to our playing. Sometimes it was scary to perform to huge numbers of jumping, crazed and crazy people who came to see us.

I went weeks without even thinking of Alan or having any ‘man attacks’ any more as Joanie called them. Dr. Chester’s pills helped. I settled into a female routine and didn’t think about what I was doing. I was Christine Harris and I joined in as readily as any oth-

ers into sessions in the beauty parlor and preparations and discussions for our appearances in the latest hip fashions. The girls in interviews had let everyone know that I had an aversion to pants and so I was always the one outfitted in a sexy dress or skirt while the others wore mannish suits. It got to me sometimes as my blonde hair was restyled femininely and my makeup reapplied a dozen times to please various stylists. The other girls had the same treatment though so I couldn't refuse. Nor did I want to.

It was a relief to take time to make a new television special of our eighth Cabaret CD, *Keeping the Peace*, featuring videos of the leading numbers, *Faintheart*, my own, *Blackberry Way*, a little known anthem of The Move, and several collaborations with Colin.

Each video was a small film in itself, often requiring many costume or dress changes for us girls. In one, I was in a bikini pose in one sequence and it was stretched out and used throughout *So Good To Be With You*, flashing on my legs, my bust, my hips until I squirmed in distaste. I wanted it taken out of the show but Barry told me I couldn't have that done. The director chose the shots.

My walk also flummoxed me when I saw myself on film. It was so naturally feminine, the sway that I had without even thinking about it. No wonder men were always coming up to me and hitting on me whenever one of the girls wasn't there to divert them. I was pretty often the butt of their jokes about men and my female sexiness. 'Dumb Blonde' jokes. It was awful that I was getting used to that as well as liking to dress the part of a very sexy girl. When I thought of being Alan Markham, I shuddered. I didn't want that. I liked to be a Purpleheart, to be a girl musician, to be pretty and admired or envied by men and women.

With splices from the California and other concerts, the television show was again a spectacular success and highly rated. But I was glad in a way when Joanie suggested relieving the pressure for a while with a 'holiday'. I knew she deserved it. She had been very good for almost a year living and rooming with me, teaching me how to flirt with men, how to counter Brenda and Donna's snide remarks and how to be a pretty girl in public. She wanted a real man, I knew, even though I could have gone on with her in what Barry, I think, was certain was a lesbian relationship.

Joanie suggested Hawaii, away from our usual haunts. She would find guys who already knew about us, she assured me. And so I went to Antoine's to get my hair re-colored as a redhead, re-cut and re-styled, curving at my neck in gentle smooth wave.

We had agreed to meet at JFK again but I was early. I sauntered about the concourse avoiding the men whose eyes lit up when they saw me or stared at me avidly, as if I was a piece of meat. I didn't dare to go to the bar unattended, as I knew what would happen to a single girl alone. With Joanie, I could let her handle the brush-offs which she did very well. So I aimlessly checked the bookshop. My heart jumped into my throat when a hand suddenly took my arm and a tall man was standing beside me.

"Debbie! How have you been?" asked a very familiar voice.

The smiling face registered only as 'very familiar' for a moment as I stared up into brown eyes and smooth face, the features thin and patrician, his hair now parted so differently from the tousled mass I remembered.

"Ben!" I gasped, turning to him and clasping his hand as he smiled down at me. "You, you've done your hair differently," was all I could think of to say, my wits scattered.

He laughed, the familiar, remembered laugh that made me shudder all over. He put his arm about my shoulder and hugged me, while I thought I would fall off my high heels. "You haven't changed at all," he said lightly, taking a deep breath. "Unless it's to grow more beautiful and feminine than ever. You smell so deliciously female."

I felt my nerves tingling throughout my entire body, my breasts taut, my panties aching as my soft dress swirled about my stockinged legs. I felt so womanly and desirable as Ben smiled at me. We walked aimlessly, his arm protectively about me, talking about little things we both remembered from before.

I stopped suddenly as I realized he was guiding me towards Departures and the way out of the airport. "Oh," I said regretfully. "You-You're not going to Hawaii, are, are you?"

He laughed and shook his head. "No. I just got in from Washington. I was looking around for my, for my ride." He was glancing around nervously. "But I don't see anyone, anyone from the office. He stared at me suddenly, intently. "But you? You were leaving for Hawaii?"

I thought of Joanie and what she had lined up for me. "Yes," I said a little nervously. "Joanie and me."

"It's okay," he said, squeezing my waist, my dress flaring about me. "I understand."

There was an awkward moment and we both began to speak at the same time.

"I, I don't have to go," I said nervously as he said, "Do you have to go?"

We laughed together. He bent and lightly kissed my cheek as I held onto his hand hard, not wanting to let go. Man and woman, I thought happily, my body tingling as I saw the admiration in his eyes. I'm his woman forever if he wants me came a thought unbidden by my brain. I wanted him to kiss me very much, to feel again the way he had made me feel, the first man in my life.

I left a message for Joanie with the airline and left Kennedy on Ben's arm, feeling as womanly as I had ever felt in my life, as I caught so many admiring glances, girls jealous of me. In the taxi, he drew me into his arms and kissed me with all the tenderness I remembered of him. I returned his kiss with quivering lips, thankful for the expert makeup job that made me look my best, taste my best to him. He pressed me to him and I felt my breasts thrusting forward, aroused and sensitive to him. When his tongue pressed between my lips, I felt his hand inside my jacket caressing my waist and then my breast. I was in ecstasy, trembling as I twisted my body to him.

We went directly to a private hotel he knew. He phoned on his cell for a reservation as he nibbled on my jeweled ear. I kissed him passionately as he was put on hold, my stockinged legs brushing against his suit as I quivered, my arm about his neck, trying to extract every moment of pleasure from him that I could.

I was on fire, trembling, as he escorted me into the hotel, registered us as 'Mr. and Mrs. Holt', directing the desk to send up our luggage as soon as it arrived from the airport. He took the keys and gave one to Mrs. Holt, I thrilled at the name, to put in her purse.

He helped me out of my jacket even as we entered Room 607, tossing it onto the bed and swirling me in a mock-dance to admire my girlish figure in the red, low-cut dress. Then, he did what I wanted and took me in his arms and kissed me hard and with passion. I shook with thrills that ran through me as we pressed together on the bed, bodies, legs and lips.

I felt the zip of my dress go and didn't mind at all as I started to undress him as he undressed me, our respective strip teases intermingled with rapturous fondling and kissing until he turned down the bed and we slid in, him naked and me still in my panties and gaff. That only lasted for moments as he freed me and then rose over me and I moved my body to accommodate his possession of his woman. The pleasure was as great as before. His body was as accommodating as my own as he loved me in so many ways, the covers soon gone and I was able to thrill to the sight of this man so aroused in his passion for me as he took me and made me his woman once more.

I didn't think of his wives, either of them, or of his daughters, or even of Alan, who would have been aghast at what a man was doing to me if it had been done to him as Alan, and Ben would have been equally appalled. But I, Christine, reveled in loving Ben, showed him some of the things I had learned since with other men and he in turn loved me, again and again.

"I'm so hungry," he said as we lay together, our legs locked, his hands stroking my thigh, my breasts soft against his chest. I raised my bruised lips and snuggled in tighter to him.

"Not just for that," he laughed, squeezing my rounded hips into him. "Let's order something first." He hadn't eaten since morning. He moved to the telephone but I was no help to him, shuddering as his body moved against mine, at every touch of his maleness. He was amused at my eagerness to start again, my nervous responses to his caresses, my guiding his hands to my breasts, my soft legs between his, encouraging his awakening responses.

Somehow, he got the call in between kisses, ordering champagne and steak suppers for us both and then we returned to a glorious session of lovemaking in which he finally had to turn me over and take me fully as his own arousal was so rampant. I almost wept as he covered my face with kisses as he came so insistently, pleasuring me as he knew how to until I was squeaking with delight, not wanting him to ever stop.

Inevitably, room service arrived as we were bonded together and I had to reluctantly let him go from me. He picked up a sheet and put it over me as he pulled a towel about himself and went to the insistent ringing at the door.

I hid under the covers as the waiter came in. "Honey, do you have change for the tip?" asked Ben as he signed for the room service.

I had several thousand dollars in my purse. I rolled a little and showed him where it was on the bedside table. I looked up and saw the waiter's eyes nearly popping out of his head. He went out backwards and I sat up and saw myself in the mirror. My red hair was a mess, my makeup mussed, but some men like it like that. I hadn't realized, though, that the back of the sheet was open and the waiter had seen my naked leg and back, even my

breast. He must have known what we were doing and why he had been kept so long at the door.

I flushed with embarrassment as Ben set up the meal. I was sticky all over and had to get the rest of my makeup off. I went for a shower and cold cream as he ate. I felt wonderfully fulfilled as I cleaned myself, put a white, terrycloth robe about myself, put on my panties and daintily went back to share a meal with my 'husband'.

I wasn't hungry so I sipped a little champagne and sat on the edge of the bed, tingling, admiring the movement of his muscular, male physique, wondering how I could tantalize him enough into exploring my naked body again.

He ate the second supper as if he was starving and I was pleased to see him regaining his energy. I wanted him to be strong when he came back to me. I tried to calm the ache in my panties by crossing my legs as I adored him.

He smiled at me. "This is delicious," he said, cutting into the uneaten filet mignon. "You should try some. Taste what you are paying for."

The words barely registered with me at first and probably wouldn't have but for the sudden guilty look he gave me.

"That I'm paying for?" I asked, bewildered by the look on his face. I thought he was going to ask me for money for the room which I would willingly have given him.

"Yes, well," he sounded a little embarrassed. "Well, hell!" he said, carving more of the steak. "Joanie asked me to set us up again. She said you really liked me and would come with me. Heck, I've ruined the surprise part of that. I'm sorry."

"No, it's all right," I said, my brain functioning on autopilot, my throat tightening, as I worked it out, as it all became clear. I had thought it all a fortuitous accident. He had wanted me for who I was, Christine. But none of it was true. I felt hot suddenly, awkward. I needed to cover up what I was displaying to him.

"So. So," I said, my voice a croak. "There was no trip to Hawaii."

He got up and came to me, taking my hand as he sat on the bed beside me. "Oh, Joanie went," he said brightly. "But I told her I couldn't be away that long. This, this is just for the two days, you know. I have, I have to be somewhere Sunday night."

"With your new wife? Or with your daughters?" I said bitchily, surprising even myself at how I felt and how I sounded so much like a jealous woman.

He looked at me, his face hard and shocked. "How did you know? Oh, Stan!" he said suddenly, angrily. "He said he'd been with you, raved about it."

I shook, thinking what he thought about me, the reputation I must have with him and guys like him. "Well," I said unsteadily, rising up unsteadily, looking for my bra and stockings. "You'll be glad to know that you fooled me this time. I-I thought you really did c-care, that you really did pick me up, that you really c-could love a g-girl like me." I had to wipe the tears from my eyes while he looked really contrite. "The bit about looking for your ride was masterly."

He stood and came to me, taking me in his arms. "It's not just about the money," he said huskily, kissing me and I felt my body starting to betray me, my nipples hardening, my mouth hungrily hanging on to his.

"B-But you d-did do me for the money," I said as he broke off at last, keeping my hands beside me though I longed to throw them about his neck and start loving him all over again.

"It's for my daughters," he said apologetically. He caressed me, touching my breasts. "And you are so much like a real girl."

That would once have made me feel so good. Now, it made me shudder, as I saw myself as he must see me, a freak, a drag queen that he could tell his buddies about who gave him experiences almost like a real girl. I felt dirty and so ashamed, a boy who'd been had sexually by another because he'd deluded himself into thinking he was a girl. A boy who'd come on to Ben so eagerly and passionately, loving him and letting him have his way with 'her' in anything he wanted. My head throbbed as I slid my feet into my high heels. Damn my stockings! I just had to get out of Room 607!

He still held onto me as I struggled to get free. "You don't have to run away," he said forcefully, almost angrily, putting his hands about my neck to kiss me. "Joanie has already paid me."

I could feel the tears coming to my eyes again. I mustn't cry, I thought wildly. I couldn't be that silly, that female, in front of him. All I could remember was that he had said it, he had said he loved me, as we lay together as man and woman making love in our bed.

He kissed me softly, gently, coaxing me to see him again as my lover and I responded, my nerves tingling as he opened my robe and caressed me. I felt his lips harden as he hungered for me. I'd felt that signal so many times before and I had always submitted to him. My panties tightened and I almost gave in.

"No," I said, breaking free from him and picking up my red dress from the floor. I looked at him and regretted it immediately. We could have been in bed already, him on me, making love. I could see that he wanted to as he moved to tighten his towel.

I flung the dress over my head. "Stay," he pleaded as I struggled to adjust it about my heated body. I picked up my jacket and left my bra, my stockings, my gaff and slip somewhere in the bed. I picked up my purse, knowing I looked a wreck, and he made no move to stop me.

Tears blinded my eyes. This was the man I had dreamed of, I cried to myself, the man who had brought out the womanliness in me, showing me it was all right to give myself to a man, that it was all right to be as feminine as I could be for him, and to give in to desires to be treated like a real woman, even in bed with him.

I paused at the door, my lips quivering as I turned to look at him, wanting so much to stay with him. He smiled slightly at me as if confident of his power to stop me walking away. "You-you said you loved me," I whispered, feeling the tear falling down my cheek, so freshly clean of makeup.

He smiled even more. And I desperately wanted to return to him, throw my arms about his neck and press my body to his.

"I say that to all the girls I make love to," he said quietly, apologetically.

Only when I was outside, hurrying away, searching in my purse for the tiny, feminine handkerchief there, did I realize that Ben Holt had at least at the end classified me as a girl.

XXI. REVELATIONS

Donna was out of town with her new man. Anna and Brenda were with their friends. Colin was the only person I could think of to phone. He was round to my apartment in twenty minutes.

"You didn't have to come over," I said as I opened the door to him.

He took off his jacket, studying me, my new hair, as if he hadn't seen me before. "I've been waiting for over a year for you to call me," he said, his eyes on my face, concern on his. I had barely any makeup on, just liner by my eyes. "You sounded desperate to me. You've been working so hard. So, I had to come. You look, you do look ill. But you're even more gorgeous without makeup."

I knew I looked ill. Gorgeous? Hardly. I retreated to the hall mirror and looked at myself. My hair was still red and so were my eyes. I hadn't stopped the floods of tears I had shed over Ben Holt once I got back to the apartment and it showed in my face. I still felt so sorry for myself and I couldn't shake it.

Colin came after me and put his arm about my shoulder as I stared at myself, beginning to feel the tears coming again. He guided me to the sofa, holding me, letting me rest my head on his shoulder as I cried myself out again, cried for the end of all dreams of complete acceptance as a woman, cried in anguish at the loss of innocence, at the stupidity I had showed in believing the lies of the men Joanie must have paid so much to corrupt such a willing dupe.

Colin understood none of that. He was just there, my only male friend, to hold me and comfort me. "It's not the end of the world," he whispered lightly, making a joke as he stroked my hair, my head on his chest.

"You don't know," I said huskily, my weeping easing off at last. "Oh, Colin, I'm such a fool."

He patted my hand and assured me that I wasn't. When I was calmer, he persuaded me to enter the kitchen and make coffee for us both. Only when we sat together, companionably, talking music, did I suddenly realize that he was wearing a white shirt and bow tie, his tux jacket thrown over a chair in our living area.

"Oh, Colin," I said, realizing what I had done. I looked at him anxiously, taking his arm. "What did I do? I called you away from something important, didn't I? I called you away from someone else."

He pulled a wry face. "It wasn't going to work out anyway," he said lightly. "He only wanted me to take him to a show to find someone younger and handsomer."

I stared at him and realized how little I knew him. I had pined for his company for over a year, thinking he should have called on me. But he saw me as a female. How could I expect him ever to be just a friend to someone like me? I knew that he was gay but I didn't know how committed he was to a gay life style. I didn't have any idea how gay he was.

"I do it all the time," he went on, misunderstanding the look I gave him. He took my femininely manicured hand in his and squeezed it. "I can sense when the young ones want to move on and, to tell you the truth, I'm glad. I'm getting so bored with trying to placate self-centered prima donnas." He smiled suddenly. "They make our Donna look like an angel at times. And to be honest, you stopped me from making a public spectacle of myself tonight. This wouldn't have been the first time I was out with someone so openly but I really didn't have to dump him." He paused and took my other hand. "Not after what you did. I heard from Steve Casey how you spoke for me with Brian. I have wished over the last year that I could be your lover, Christine, but it's just impossible."

"We make great music together," I began, intending to divert him again.

"Oh, I don't dislike girls," he went on with an impish grin at me. Then his forehead creased as he thought hard and tried to explain. "I can kiss a girl and enjoy it a lot, especially when she's as beautiful as you. It's just that I can't follow through. I have tried. I want to sometimes. But I just don't get as aroused as I do with, well, with someone else like me." He flushed then, biting his lower lip.

"I understand," I said, my voice a croak, relieved in a way, but annoyed in another and not sure why.

"Tell me about the guy," he said, his eyes darting a quick look at me and then away. I wanted to tell him that it was all right between us. I had too few friends to think ill of no matter what they did. I needed friends and so I related my whole sordid tale to him but I told it to him as if I really was a girl.

Colin was flummoxed. "But you don't have to pay to sleep with men!" he exclaimed. "Ninety-nine per cent of the straight guys in New York would hop into bed with you for free. I mean really nice guys, too, not creeps! What kind of line has Joanie been feeding you?"

"It isn't Joanie's fault," I found time to say in a strangled voice. I had fed him a line of not wanting to be in all the papers for our escapades but I could clearly see that he wasn't buying it. I stood, my cheeks burning. I hadn't told him the worst parts, the number of men I had been with and what I had done with them. I couldn't tell him how I had encouraged them. I couldn't tell him of my relationship with Joanie. Then he would know we really were lesbians.

I had to shake my head at that as I minced into the living room, my high heels so strange on my feet, my dress so filmy about me as I sat on the sofa and tucked it up about my stockings.

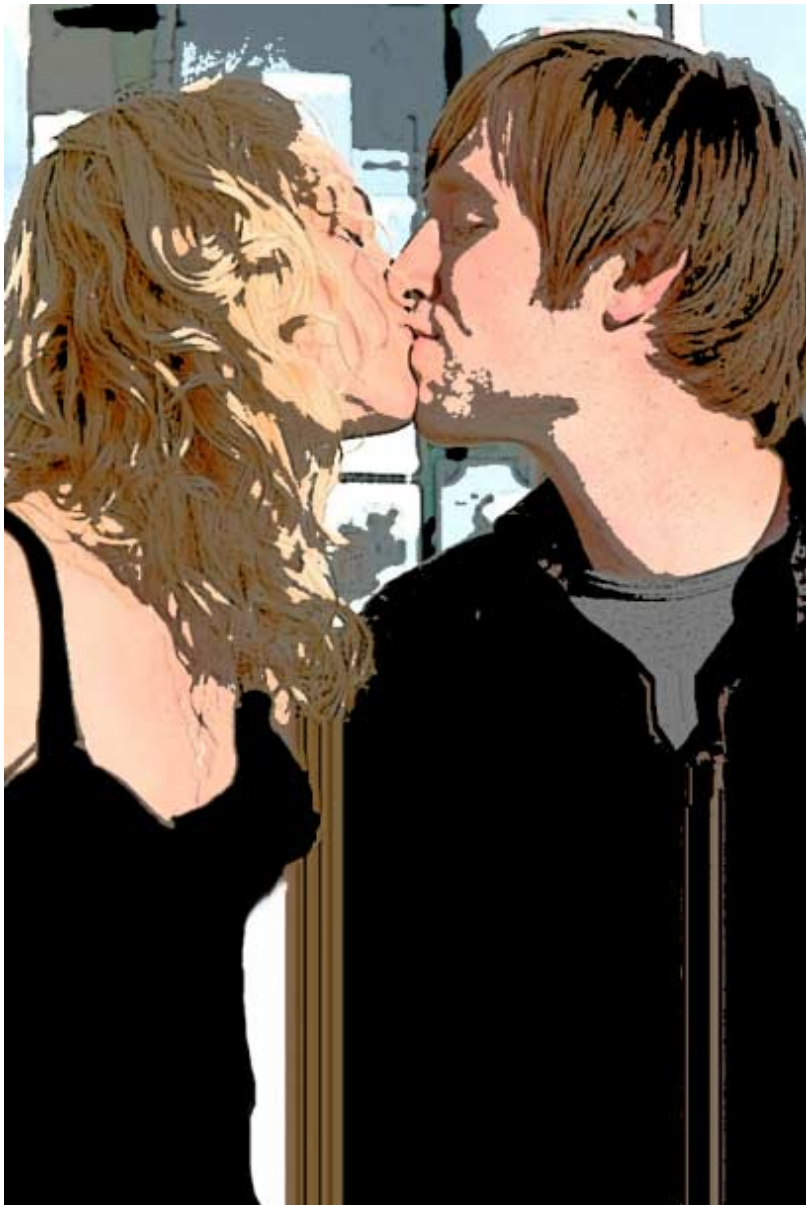
When I sat, he came and sat beside me which he so rarely did. He was looking at me intently and I was sure he was seeing right through me, seeing the real me, and my heart seemed to be doing flip-flops. "Oh, Christine," he said, taking my hand. "It's not me, is it? You haven't gone and fallen for me, have you? I felt that our kisses after California were getting too intense. I liked them but I thought I was encouraging you far too much."

I was shocked. The earnestness and the remorse in his voice prevented me from making the flippant reply that was on the tip of my tongue. I could only stare at him and shake my head. He put one hand about my shoulder and took my hands with the other as he moved up close to me.

"I-I haven't fallen for you," I whispered. "I only wish that I had." I meant that he was so nice that I knew he'd have treated me better than Ben Holt.

He'd often kissed me in the last year, lightly on the cheek, and I did understand now why he did that. When we walked together or just went out for fresh air between studio sessions at Cabaret, we would hold hands and he would hug me, often stroking my arm or hair as we talked and talked and not just about music.

This kiss was different. Colin kissed my moist cheek first and then my lipsticked, sticky mouth. He could kiss well, his mouth gently pressing and mobile as I remembered from a few times before. I felt my stomach begin to quake as he did not stop.



I eased my legs down and he moved into me, my breasts pushing into his chest as I felt my bra tightening. My panties concealed another ache as I squirmed and shifted in my soft skirt as he hugged me and continued kissing me firmly. He was on top of me then and I felt deliciously female as he pressed down on my dress, my silky, hairless legs being caressed by his rough trousers.

I loved it. I loved him kissing me but I felt as different as Colin was clearly the lead in our caressing. He treated me as if I was the innocent girl he had once called me. I found myself playing that part, being the innocent, letting him do what he wanted in kissing my face and mouth and neck, following his lead as gently as I could.

"Oh, Christine," he said, stroking my hair as I cuddled my head into his shoulder, kissing his face softly, feeling him tremble as much as me, to such gentle kisses. It was so intrigu-

ing, definitely something worth doing if it produced such pleasurable waves of emotion as I was feeling.

“This is silly,” he said shakily after he had kissed me thoroughly some more. “You’re on the rebound.”

I closed his mouth with mine, leaning over to him, my breasts pushing into his shirt. I intertwined my leg with his and he touched my thigh, his hand shaking as much as I was. I was by then feeling a rush of femininity coming on. It must be Joanie’s pills, the ones she’d got extra from Dr. Chester. I opened my mouth and let his tongue into me, demanding it as I stretched and slid on top of him.

He didn’t know what to do with a woman like me as I put my arms about his neck and kissed him, easing my body over his, placing his hand on my breast, giggling and kissing as he reluctantly squeezed with his hand, not knowing how much he was pleasuring me. One hand about my waist pulled me into him and he slowly pushed me back and re-asserted his control of me. I didn’t care, though. I was reckless, thinking of his words. Did he really think that I could not arouse him? He just didn’t know what kind of a girl he was dealing with, I thought hazily, as I drowned in his kisses.

He kept a little space between us, though, and I could sense that our kissing wasn’t going to be enough to give either of us relief. I was stupidly reckless then. “Imagine I’m a guy, too,” I breathed in his ear. “And I really want you.”

He stiffened at that, but his kisses grew in fervor as I clung to him, tantalizing his face with my hair, soft skin, my perfumed neck, and most of all my whispered ‘fantasies’. Why did I want him so much to take me then? I didn’t know. I blamed it on Joanie’s feminizing pills afterwards but it wasn’t that. I wanted to show him that he was wrong. I wanted to show him that a girl like me could arouse him as I had aroused so many other men.

“My name is Alan,” I murmured, the ache beneath my panties growing and growing as the fresh gaff I had put on immediately on getting home grew tighter as I squeezed his leg with mine. “I haven’t had a sex change yet. I never will. Can’t you love a boy like me, Colin? Can’t you love me a little?”

My breasts were really sore as I gyrated into his chest and moved my hips beneath him. My passion and sexual feeling had grown such that I hardly knew what I was saying. He kissed me so wonderfully, responding to my moving and I could feel his maleness through my clothes. And I exulted. He wanted me. I knew it. I had known it all along. He wanted me and he was going to have me. He was pleasuring me as he wrestled with me on the couch, my legs about him, my arms about him, his mouth on mine.

Then, I realized that we weren’t pleasuring each other even though my dress was up about my waist, my panties and soft upper thighs exposed. He was struggling to get free of me as passion fired me as I ground myself against his leg. He had to push and shake me really hard to finally get me to let him pull away. I was so confused for a while, my body so agitated, wanting him, not knowing why he was pulling away, trembling from head to toe. I didn’t care how he took me, only wanting him to do it, any way he liked, treating me as a woman, or a gay lover, anything. I just wanted to be relieved of the terrible sexual tension I was under.

“Christine,” he said, getting free, but still shaking me, making my hair cascade about my face. His face was ashen, his lips trembling. “I can’t, really. I can’t.”

“I’m not Christine,” I said, trying to lower my voice but failing miserably. “I’m Alan Markham. I like to dress up like a girl, that’s all. I can do everything for you, Colin, I can, that you ever wanted a boy like me to do. I can be better than Kenny or whathisname.”

I reached for the zipper on his pants and had it halfway down before his hand closed over my long, red-lacquered, feminized nails.

“Stop it,” he snapped. He sounded angry and I could scarcely believe it as I looked into his face, his nostrils flaring at me. I thought he liked me! “Stop it, Christine. You can’t be so sex-starved that any man, even one like me, turns you on.”

“Sex-starved? Yes, that’s what I am,” I agreed, kissing his strong hand, wanting it back about me where it belonged. I moved in on him again. “I’m so starved. I haven’t been with a man in a year or longer? Who cares though? You’re here now.”

I put my hands about him and almost fell on to him. He responded to my kissing and we wrestled a little on the sofa, me holding his head to me, while he touched my aching breasts but kept his groin away from me.

“Oh, Christine,” he said, hugging me, but sounding as if he was on the point of crying. “Whatever has happened to you? Where’s the beautiful, innocent girl who came to New York to write and play music? How did we corrupt you?”

“I was never a beautiful girl,” I muttered as he rose above me, caressing my arms as he looked at me, smiling bravely. I held his hand to the soft mounds on my chest. “I’m just a boy named Alan. Dr. Chester’s operation gave me my voice, my figure and my girly looks. I’m a real rock and roll queen, Colin darling, I really am.”

Why was I doing this, a little voice asked inside me? Why do I want him to know all about me? If I had thought it would arouse him earlier to think of me as a boy, it certainly wasn’t working any longer.

He took my face then and lowered himself onto me kissing me and caressing my hips as he pressed his whole body into me. I teased him with my hands and mouth, exulting in the way I felt, frenzied, not knowing why I was acting so, so, aggressively, as he finally stroked my breasts and I could feel him against me, stroking my thighs and my panties, then my rounded hips.

He had given up trying to stop me as I was convulsed with passion when his tongue entered my mouth again. I arched my body and tried to cling to him but it was too late. My body was shaking too wildly as a violent orgasm shook me, my body gyrating under him as the pain and pleasure drained every last ounce of feeling and femaleness from me. I think I screamed. I should have, so intense was the pain that I was crying as he rocked me in his arms, my senses blurring.

As I relaxed, however, coming down from the incredible surge of pleasure, so did he also relax. I was unbelievably uncomfortable, wanting, needing to get to the bathroom. But at the same time, I had to smile mischievously to myself. Men, I thought arrogantly. This is how I could do it in future if I could stand it. They would never know that I wasn’t a girl with the proper equipment between my legs.

Colin didn't quite know what was going on with me as I held him to me, kissing his face slowly, trying to regain my balance. I tried to touch him. He let me but I didn't like the look on his face.

"I'm sorry," I said, not wanting to move from him, my body so sore from being aroused by my own 'lovemaking'. "I was so hot. I just couldn't stop."

He turned slightly to face me. "You really were desperate, weren't you?" he asked bitterly.

I tried to sit up and take his hand. "Colin," I began, but he resisted the pull of my hand.

"You didn't need that story you were telling me," he said bitterly. "It wasn't even me that brought you on, was it? You had to fantasize, didn't you? I could have been anyone, anything, a block of stone." I realized then that this was what was galling him the most. "I don't need fiction to make love to you." He put his hand on my panties and began to ease them down.

"No! No!" I gasped.

"It's all right," he said, his hand caressing my hips as my panties slid onto my thighs, my gaff against his hand as he caressed my inner thighs. "It's just that I had this picture of you, so young and innocent. I should have known, shouldn't I? You don't write young and innocent lyrics. It's the tough parts you put to my ideas that change my sugary, insipid romances into something worth listening to."

I began to tremble. What was I doing? Rational thought started to return. I thought about the look of disgust on his face when I had reached for his zipper. "Oh, please," I began again, trembling, writhing under the pleasurable sensations he was arousing in me. I suddenly began to conceive of the inevitable change that there would be in our relationship if I let him go on.

"I know," he said wryly. "I came over to comfort you. Now, you are the one trying to comfort me. Ironic, isn't it?"

He was smiling at me as he lazily stroked me, my dress trapped above my waist, my legs writhing under his touch, as I struggled to hold him at bay. "Since Arthur Bellis can't even prove who you are," he murmured, "you can say what you like about yourself, even that you are a boy named Alan."

I took a deep breath. I could tell by his expression how much I had strained the warm, friendly relationship we'd built up over three years. I wanted to be open with him, to console him, and to restore what we once had.

"Everything I said to you, Colin," I whispered haltingly, "was true."

He didn't understand. I had to spell it out for him.

I pushed him up. "I-I can prove it," I gasped. "I-I am Alan Markham."

I wriggled out of my panties as he stared at me, open-mouthed. I watched his face anxiously as he began to understand my words. I thought he would be pleased. Stupid thought! After all, he was gay, and I was a boy. I was shocked by the look on his face, the way his mouth twisted. I almost didn't do it.

"You don't believe me?" I asked shakily. "I have to wear this g-string," I said, my long nails getting in the way as I fumbled with the knots holding me in.

"Christine," he began reproachfully, reaching out to pull my dress down and cover up my smooth, shapely, womanly legs. "Don't fool around with me." Then, his mouth dropped open and he stared at me, his eyes flickering as if he was mesmerized, back to the clear evidence of my true sex that I displayed before him.

I'd like to say that I loved him so much that I just had to let him know the truth. It wasn't that. I think I really thought that he would accept me, love me more because I was a boy and he was gay, after all. I didn't want to think that he might have loved me if I hadn't been Christine, just Alan.

I shook all over as I lay there with Colin looking down on me. I wanted him to kiss me as my other male lovers had done. I wanted him to make love to me. I wanted to make love to him but my feelings of desire were swept away by another feeling, despair, which overwhelmed me as he just stared at me.

I sat up, found my panties and pulled them on while he made no move to comfort me or continue loving me. I felt like crying again right then. No-one, not even Colin, now that he knew everything about me, could love me or accept just as I was. A hot flush traveled through me, making me quake even more as I thought of how I must have appeared to him, with all that I had done. My hair fell about my face as I felt shame coursing through me at the idiotic performance I had put on for someone I had wanted to call my friend.

"Christine," was all Colin could say hoarsely but he did sit up beside me on the sofa, pushing my g-string, as Brenda called it, to me.

I could barely see him through the tears that had filled my eyes. "I-I didn't want to tell you like this," I said slowly. "I don't know what came over me, why I forced myself on you like this when you just came over to be nice to me. This was so, so sordid. I-I shocked you so much."

"I'll say you did!" There was no humor, only grimness in his voice and face.

His hand took mine and squeezed it gently and for a moment I had a flicker of hope as I felt tears run down my mascara streaked face. "Now, I know too the real reason why you've been turning down all the foreign trips we've been setting up for you." He got up from me and reached for a box of tissues for me, letting me whimper through my protestations of shame, guilt and despair at what I had put him through with me.

Colin wanted to know the whole story, how I had managed to become a girl. I told him, leaving nothing out. He wanted to know about my voice and I explained about Dr. Chester and the surgery.

"You're still on hormones then?" he asked, still sitting beside me, my arm against his, his hand eventually taking mine, an old, familiar gesture.

"Yes," I agreed huskily, not daring to do more, certain he would run if I did. Or worse. I had never thought that he was so much stronger than me.

"That probably accounts for your changing sexuality," he said suddenly, almost moodily. "It can happen like that. Drugs and being treated totally as a female. You begin to want men."

"I really made a fool of myself," I started.

"Do something for me," he said quietly, squeezing my hands. "Lay off the hormones for a time and see what happens. You may find that you want to be Alan again."

I shook my hair about my head shivering, I crossed my legs and leaned back against him, barely aware of how female I was acting, not realizing that I was digging my long nails into him as I spoke. "No," I said, believing it for a moment after the trouble I had caused. "I don't ever want to be male again."

XXII. LEGALITIES

Colin insisted that I was on the rebound after my traumatic meeting with Ben Holt and that all my behavior with him was excused. He kissed me a lot, very tenderly, but didn't stay long with me. Which was just a well, as Joanie phoned from Hawaii, not expecting me to be in the apartment, intending to leave me a message about when she would be getting back. She was shocked and had to have all the details about Ben Holt.

"The dirty rat!" she exploded on the phone, going on with more expletives as Colin finally slipped out of the door, giving me a light kiss before he was gone.

Joanie talked for over half an hour, suggesting I call one of the other girls for company. Then she thought of Colin and suggested him. Joanie said that she was going to get the earliest flight back. Her weekend date was a dud, anyway. All he wanted to do was get drunk, Joanie complained. She'd had quite enough of that with Tony Thompson and so she was leaving anyway before the hitting started.

The apartment was lonely without her. We didn't make love as often as we had in the past. We didn't have marathon, multiple orgasm sessions as we did at the beginning when we explored everything about each other but we always slept together in the huge king size bed Joanie had insisted I buy when the money had started to roll in. Even on the road, we always put our beds together if they were small, going to sleep in one, invariably, cuddled together.

I was used to naked, warm flesh beside me, to soft hair and feminine scent beside me in bed. I hadn't been alone for so long. I thought of Ben and what I might have been doing with him, and of Colin, who hadn't been attracted to me at all as I thought he would have.

Joanie was very angry when she returned and learned that I had revealed my 'secret' to Colin, I hadn't thought about it too much and hadn't realized how much I had put the band in jeopardy. It wasn't just my secret to tell. It was the band's secret as well, Joanie fumed.

"You must stay away from him for a while," Joanie finally said as we lay in bed caressing each other later that night, my breasts and nipples growing larger than hers as she aroused me.

"Why?" I gasped as Joanie's soft, warm thighs slid over my equally smooth warm thighs and silk panties.

"Let me find out what he intends to do," said Joanie, stroking my waist and hips as she buried her face in my perfumed hair, murmuring her approval of my fragrances. New

feminine scents titillated my nose as she hugged and caressed me, rousing in me that sense of femaleness, of being one with her, no thought of really being a boy.

I surrendered my panties eagerly as Joanie became insistent that we make love.

“Mmmm,” Joanie murmured as she kissed me and we rolled together, our legs twisting about each other as someone penetrated the other. “I think you’ve begun to grow again, you know.”

I was too engaged in delight to understand what she was saying. She seemed to be enjoying our lovemaking as much as me, though. When Joanie kissed my breasts and caressed my hips and thighs, I came in ecstasy and felt her matching my rhythms, climaxing with me. All the horrors of the previous day disappeared as I clung to her and she to me.

Joanie persisted in tormenting and giggling at me as we lay in each other’s arms, me still inside her, our legs locked as she tweaked my breasts, and then played with my long hair as she loved to do.

“Do you still take the hormone pills every day?” Joanie murmured as I kissed her face gently, she moving and directing me where to touch her.

I nodded and Joanie kissed my smooth, feminine neck. I knew there was no trace there of a male adam’s apple to make her think she was kissing a man.

Joanie chuckled. “They’re not hormones,” she said, not at all surprised as I stiffened in her arms. “I’m sorry,” she added with a laugh into my studded ear. “You’ve been taking a vitamin tablet. I couldn’t get a refill on the others and I didn’t think that you wanted to go back to that Dr. Chester.”

I shivered. “Then,” I began, the terrible thought that it wasn’t the pills that had made me behave so outrageously like a woman. It had been me, the real me, that had acted that way with Ben and Colin.

“You’re not changing,” whispered Joanie, touching my quivering, hard and erect breasts with her own. “Except that your little man’s getting bigger, I’m sure, which is most enjoyable for me. I’m going to get my breasts done, too, like yours.” She stroked mine. “I don’t see why you should have all the fun on our holidays.”

I let her go on making love to me. But I vowed that those days were over. I was not going to have an experience like Ben Holt again. I recalled how awful I had felt when Colin had looked at me. I didn’t know how I would ever be able to face him again. I buried my head in Joanie’s shoulder and she became the delighted recipient of my ardor. I felt bad about that, too, hoping I wasn’t damaging the very last ‘normal’ relationship I had.

Colin was his usual self when we met at the Bellis and Day office to sign stacks of legal papers. The girls were stunned to find that they were millionaires several times over as a result of all the concerts we had given and the CDs we had sold. Even without working, with residuals, we would still all earn millions in one year. Colin, as our producer, was also doing well from us as well as all the other bands lining up to use his talents.

We weren’t in on the financial details of his musical, either, but it was going into production on Broadway with several big stars lined up for runs in the lead roles, singing the songs we had worked on together. My songwriting company was getting a kickback from

that, Arthur Bellis explained in his pedantic way, and with my other writing revenues, I had had a stupendous year.

Bellis smiled at me. "We don't have a problem with the IRS any more," he said cryptically, "now that Colin has cleared up the mystery of your birth. Everything is in order and should just proceed as it should. I have our tax people finding shelters for all of your money." He then proceeded to tell us all how much we could prudently spend each month and how, if we wanted something big, like houses and cars, how he would finance such things for us so that we never lost our original moneys.

We were a chastened bunch as we retreated for lunch in Julio's, Bonnie and John, full time employees of the group, on security watch.

"What did he mean about Colin clearing up the mystery of your birth?" asked Donna as soon as we were alone or at least out of earshot of the other diners.

Joanie and I looked at each other and they read the guilt in our faces. It didn't take long for the story to come out. Brenda swore at us and Anna looked on the verge of crying. "So, on the day we finally learn that we've made it," said Donna angrily. "On that very day, I find that my life is in hock again to some faggy record producer."

"Colin's not like that," I protested.

"No?" asked Donna. "You know that for sure? Are you really sleeping with him? Is that how you know? You're in love with him?"

I thought I would cry under her brutal attack. I stood to go away anywhere but Joanie pulled at my hand and I sat again shuddering in my pencil-thin, black skirt. I could see Brenda looking at my cleavage and wondering as they all must how much of a woman I really was.

"I thought you were her squeeze," said Donna to Joanie. "Everyone in the company out there," her nod took in Bonnie and John, looking towards us with anxious eyes, knowing we were arguing, "think that you're a pair of lesbians. Don't tell me you're not."

"We're lesbians and we're proud of it," said Joanie, squeezing my hand and patting my arm while Brenda snorted. "I don't know what game Colin is playing but I do know what he said when I talked to him. He promised me that he would never do anything that would hurt Christine. He's not going to blab. He's not going to kill the golden goose, as one of you so elegantly put it, years ago." She looked pointedly at Brenda. "And I'm not going to walk up to Arthur Bellis and confront him about Christine and where she was born, either."

"You all know it's a problem with them not understanding why we don't all get our passports and go off making huge money on a glorious world tour." The others perked up at that and looked at me thoughtfully. "We know why we can't do it. One of us wouldn't pass the physical, right? Colin knows it now and I think he's done something to help us. That's what Bellis implied. Let me contact Colin again."

That was the best we could do. Save that, for the next few months, as we toured the South for a change, Colin Wheeler proved to be very elusive. Of course, his musical was rehearsing and taking up much of his time. I really missed him. It wasn't the same with Barry in the wings during our shows. We had a new sound man, too, from California, a

funny guy, with a way of talking that stated the obvious. Talking about cars, he was a walking lyric of the group, Phish, and that's what we called him. The worst part was that I noticed how he always managed to be next to Joanie whenever we did anything together and she seemed to like that.

We were only back in New York for hours when I got a special delivery parcel from Bellis and Day. "Probably from Colin," said Joanie, on the phone with Antoine to set up hair and spa treatments for that day. "He probably wants you to fix up more of his music."

But it wasn't music. It was a bunch of documents, all about Christine Elizabeth Harris. There were affidavits, copies of records, and letters that I didn't understand.

"Ye gods. Look at this," breathed Joanie, finding the most important thing in the package right away. She cracked open the little booklet, or so I thought it was, as I was opening up a paper document, headed 'Certificate of Birth'.

"It's your passport," said Joanie in excitement. "Look! Christine Elizabeth Harris! Hey, you're two years younger than us now!"

"I-I don't understand," I said, looking at the Certificate of some girl born two years after me in Missouri somewhere, the name the same as the one I was using but where had the 'Elizabeth' come from?

"It is from Colin," said Joanie, handing me a note I had failed to see before.

'Now you can go on that European tour, Love, Colin,' was written on the note.

"You're now a woman," said Joanie, taking my hands and dancing me round our kitchen excitedly. "Colin's made you a legal woman. Now we can go anywhere. We can holiday in the Caribbean. We can go to Mexico, Mazatlan. I love Latin men. Or Europe. France. French men are supposed to be the world's greatest lovers. Or they say they are. Wouldn't you just love to make it with a Frenchman?"

Her accent changed as she did a ridiculous Charles Boyer-Maurice Chevalier imitation, whirling about the apartment, reading out all the details about me in the passport.

"How did he do this?" I asked fearfully. "Why? We're going to get into so much trouble. This must all be fake."

"No," said Joanie, leaving off her call to Antoine. "It's the same as mine." Then she was on the phone to Donna, to Brenda and to Anna, and they were all excited, too. I had hardly got out of my nightie and into my lingerie and a dress before they came over, Donna arriving last of all with bottles of champagne. Where she got them, chilled, so early in the morning I didn't know.

So we celebrated my entry into legal womanhood as they pored over the documents, laughing that my father was James Orville Harris and my mother Christine Jane Billings. "Where did you get such names?" asked Anna. "Are they really your parents?"

I shook my head. "I don't know what Colin has done," I said. "I have to see him and ask him. I don't know what he was doing. All these letters from people who say they knew me and my family. The school records. They look real to me."

"Don't look a gift horse in the mouth," said a tipsy Donna, drinking directly from one of the opened bottles. "What's in the contracts there?" I hadn't noticed the contract enve-

lope that Arthur had sent us. I groaned. I had wanted a few weeks off. There were some tunes whizzing round in my head that I needed time to work on.

Joanie slit open the envelope with her acrylic fingernail and laughed as she put her hand next to mine. My nails were acrylic too as I couldn't keep them too long with all the guitar playing I had been doing of late. She unfolded the papers and began to read. "Hey, girls," she said her eyes almost popping out of her head. "You'll never guess where they want us to go in the fall. England. Germany. France. Italy. Two-three months of touring and rest days to equal concert days!"

"Oh, Paris in the fall," said Anna dreamily and we all looked at her. "The best fashion shows are always in the fall," she explained. "And there's Paris itself. The perfumes and the lingerie. Every girl has to have something silky from Paris. It would be so romantic."

Joanie looked at me and we both began to laugh. "Annie, this will be a working tour," Joanie said. "The way Barry works us, we'll just be wanting extra hours in bed by the time we get there."

"Leave Barry to me," said Brenda, teetering a little from the effect of alcohol for breakfast and then she blushed to the astonishment of us all. "I'll make sure we get lots of time off in Paris."

"Well," said Donna. "If you're shacking up with Barry now, I'm bringing someone with me, too. I'm not being in Paris alone, not with the lesbians there shacking up and having all the fun."

"Yes," added Brenda wickedly as I flushed deeply, feeling chills run up my spine at her words, while Joanie looked daggers at Donna. "Now, you're legally a woman, we can call you that properly and you can't object."

They got on the phone then to Arthur Bellis and Barry Walker and haphazardly as we often did it, with input from all over the place, plans for the fall were worked out. The only bad thing was that Colin had already told Arthur he wouldn't be around then. He was going to be opening his musical, after touring it, and checking it out with dry runs out of town, and then the big opening on Broadway. We would miss it, too, but he would see us later, he had promised Arthur Bellis, when we got back. He intended, said Arthur, to produce our next CD.

I didn't get to thank Colin for making me a woman legally. It felt so strange to know that I wasn't Alan any more. I half wanted to tell the girls in all their celebrating that I didn't want this. In the pit of my stomach, too, I was scared. I wanted to ask Colin what he had done to make me into this 'Christine Elizabeth Harris'. Even as I sat there demurely in my silk stockings, high heels and figure-hugging dress, I was sure it couldn't be legal. I knew what I was.

Some time during the day, Joanie got on the phone to a doctor and made an appointment which had me a little concerned. "No, I'm not pregnant," she said, looking at my concerned face. "I'm just going to see a plastic surgeon about augmenting my boobs. Well, with the jobs you and Donna have had done, I really look scrawny next to you guys. I want my share of French men, too."

That night in bed, however, after finally getting rid of the others, Joanie was as loving as ever with me but then she started giggling. It took her a while to explain why. "Well," she said at last, caressing my boobs in the frilly baby dolls she had asked me to wear that night, stroking my smooth, hairless thighs with her own. "Given your new status as a woman, what's going on between us has to be illegal."

XXIII. FRENCH KISSES

It was wonderful to be a girl in Paris. Joanie was right about French men. They were unabashed by our looks, our fame, our wealth, even the security that Barry Walker had marshalled up for us. I was propositioned at least three times a day by scrawny, thin-faced guys, Woody Allen clones, with thick glasses and amorous attitudes. They all seemed to think that they were God's gift to women and often made a beeline to me. It wasn't as though I was the only blonde in the group any more. I had noticed before we left that the others' streaks had become more and more pronounced so that Donna and I were more like sisters than anything else, her hair styled and lightened almost as much as mine. The, she had started to wear skirts just like mine and cuddle up to me in our group pictures.

Joanie found it amusing that Donna was competing with me for male attraction. I thought and said that she was welcome to all of it and Joanie laughed. "Not Colin, though," she said. I flushed at that and she added. "Ah, I thought so. You really got a thing still going for that guy, haven't you?"

I hastily denied it but she only nodded as if she knew more than I did. "But since he's off playing Mr. Sondheim for a while," she said, "we're going to have a good time in Paris. It's going to be a real vacation for both of us."

I begged off on that. I didn't want a man. I was content, mostly, with Joanie, but I knew my time with her was probably going to run out soon. She was flirting more and more with Phish at the dates and shows we did in our last run around the East Coast before we headed to England. There, we were held in such awe that apart from the terrible crushes of reporters we hardly had a real conversation with any English men. It was a marked contrast to what we met in France.

To please Anna, we all went together to the great Paris fashion shows, at least the ones that were on when we were there. A stylishly dressed woman asked me what I thought of a particularly garish selection of clothes, the kind that make the papers because they are so outlandish. I answered honestly that I preferred Givenchy and Saint Laurent, the classical designers, and several Americans who were practically the only ones I knew. And so the next day, in the papers, I read that I had slammed French dress designers.

So, I wasn't surprised the next day to have photographers in my face, so to speak, as Anna gushed over Ongaro's new collection and we all dutifully signed up to buy various pieces. That's where we met Jacques Bardier. He was talking to Barry Walker, whom we'd dragged along on the pretext of needing more security, and Barry seemed overawed to be talking to the guy. I didn't recognize him at all but Barry was all smiles and flattery as he brought us to him and introduced us, kissing each of us on the back of the hand, me last of all, so that he was left standing beside me as the photographers flashed and flashed, shouting at us.

“At least,” Jacques said, a smile on his lean, tanned face, “you might have worn Givenchy today if you like him so much.”

I turned to him to protest what was in the papers and saw that he was laughing at me. “My sisters dragged me there, too,” he said, leaning into me conspiratorially and I caught a whiff of male cologne, very cool, very appealing. “A load of junk, I called it, but they wouldn’t print that. Not from the great Jacques Bardier.”

I squinted up at him. He was, I suppose good-looking for a man but I have the hardest time in that department and it always makes me feel so silly whenever we girls had discussions about men and who was hot. Jacques was dark-haired, his hair thick and in need of a haircut, I thought. He had brilliant blue eyes and a few small, interesting scars on his cheek, his thin nose and prominent chin. He also looked very fit. It almost exuded from him that he kept in shape and yet he was still very thin.

“You have no idea who I am, do you?” he asked with a laugh and I had to agree that I didn’t. “You’ll have no peace from the paparazzi now,” he added, still holding my hand. “So, let’s give them something more to write about, shall we?”

I didn’t expect him to swing me into his arms and my mouth was open as he kissed me. I would have fallen off my high heels if his hand at my back hadn’t stopped me. I automatically closed my eyes and saw flashes going off everywhere. I was panting, struggling for breath as he put me back on my feet, his arm about me, smiling into my face, while I tried not to react too stupidly for all the photographers.

“Really nice,” he whispered, hugging me to him, and I felt the cloth of his jacket through the light silk separating my breasts from him. “We’ll have to meet again really soon.” Then, he let me go and was gone, more than half the crowd following him as he moved out. I was quivering with the shock of it all as well as the not unwelcome taste of his male lips on mine.

“Put your brand on another conquest,” said Joanie reaching into her purse to get me a tissue to staunch my mussed-up lipstick.

“Do you know who that was?” asked Barry Walker, as excited as I had ever seen him. “That was Jacques Bardier. He owns, or his family does, half the theatres and telecommunications industry in France among other things. He drives race cars, the real thing, Formula One. He’s been world champion twice. He’s a national hero in France.”

Every paper next day had pictures of him kissing me on its front page and sometimes pictures from the show we did that evening in a soccer stadium in a Parisian suburb. We did three more big, long shows in a row, and again, as Joanie had predicted, we did little more than sleep, the sights of Paris blurring into the background.

We had off days coming and Barry confirmed that he had a surprise, sort of. We were going to spend one night at least in an authentic chateau outside Paris. A little country vacation to sort of get our balance back, to rest for a while. There was a private plane waiting for us at Orly and it took us no time at all until we were landed at some other place where we were transferred to helicopters and went up high into the Central Massif, to a massive block of limestone on top of which was perched the chateau.

“Wow,” said Joanie to Phish, seated beside her as he always was of late, her hand resting lightly in his. We swerved and circled a couple of times getting spectacular views of how the castle, which it really was, was carved out of the surrounding rock. We landed before the second helicopter and waited with Barry until Brenda, Donna with Steve Casey in tow and Anna and her latest beau joined us. We walked up the grassy surround to the entranceway where our host had come down to meet us with a number of the people who worked there.

I should have expected it. Barry Walker looked very proud of himself as he took Jacques Bardier’s arm and the two led the rest of our party into a courtyard and then into the huge main hall of the chateau, lined with old suits of armor, weapons, shields painted in house colors I supposed, the light glittering from stained glass windows.

The servants hurried our bags away and I found that we girls all had single rooms all in one wing, all with bathrooms of their own. “We’ll dress for dinner,” said Jacques Bardier, looking very distinguished in his tux. “We have tuxes for the men in their rooms and a selection of evening gowns from Saint Laurent and Givenchy that should amuse the ladies. Madame Guertin’s girls will be delighted to help you dress. They have been looking forward to it all day. It’s not often we have so many beautiful women guesting here.”

He looked at me then for the first time since we had arrived and I felt a chill go through me. I could count. Five men and five women, well, sort of. I had a sinking feeling as I followed Marie, the maid assigned to me up to my room to be bathed in scented waters, to be pampered, and to be femininely prepared for a dinner with the host and, without a doubt, my intended partner for the night. No wonder Barry had insisted on Phish, the sound man, coming with us.

I managed to get Marie out of the bathroom at strategic times so that I was able to get into my gaff and panties without having her see what she shouldn’t. Marie was a chatterbox and loved doing my hair and my nails for me, loving how my acrylics added to my fingernails as I explained about playing the guitar and the wear and tear on my hands, the guitar calluses and shorter fingernails. Marie was proud of the fact that all my clothing was now French, from my bra and stockings and short slip to the long, evening gown, slit at the front to let my high heels show through. She insisted on fastening my stockings to my frilly garter belt and I felt so weird having another woman do that for me. She fixed my dress about me just so, adjusting my bust into the front of the dress so that it fitted perfectly. Monsieur Bardier had also provided a stunning diamond necklace and matching earrings for me and so I had to have my hair pinned up so that they showed off to my best advantage.

It took me hours, it seemed, to have the whole feminine process worked on me. My makeup was applied several times to get it just right, my lips limpid and kissable in Marie’s saucy words. She seemed to expect that I would be having male company that night as she prepared my bed with two sets of pillows. In what I thought of as a cloud of Chanel Gardenia, I finally left my boudoir, it was so easy to slip into the French words, and trembling, made my way down the hallway, to the balcony above the dining hall and then down the staircase, mincing and taking very small steps, trying to be sure not to fall.

Jacques came from the lit fireplace to greet me and to escort me to the other distinguished men and fabulously dressed women.

I was the last to arrive and I got all kinds of compliments as I sat daintily on a chair as the other girls were. I sat femininely in my designer gown, my breasts rounded and fully exposed like those of the other girls. I looked about, trying to appeal to Joanie to join me. She was, however, sparkling, it seemed, only for Phish.

Jacques was the perfect host. He didn't try to monopolize me. He escorted me to the dinner table and sat me between Anna's boyfriend and Barry Walker who wanted to know all about his racing trophies.

"They're around," said Jacques with a shrug.

"You're going to win this year with your new engines," enthused Barry. "You'll win in Belgium next month."

I was surprised Jacques was a racing driver. He looked too tall to me. He had bent over to kiss me and I had been in high heels. I was always in high heels. He caught me looking at him and I blushed, hoping that my makeup would hide my high color.

"Since I have the money to buy the very best engines there are, and have the modifications made to the car to accommodate me in every way," he smiled at me, gesturing down his lean body, "the biggest news stories are when I don't win."

Barry pursued that topic for a while and the other men joined in about their favorite cars until Jacques objected that the women were being left out. He then talked about his house and the famous people who had lived and died there. "Let me show you my house after supper," he said as we began a most sumptuous dinner at which I noted that he didn't eat very much, as I didn't either.

"We both have to take care of our figures," he said when Anna's beau joshed us about not eating the second rich dessert. He rose first from the table and led us up the stairs to the picture gallery, in a wing away from the bedrooms. I rustled up the stairs, holding up my dress like the other girls and it was only in the picture gallery that Jacques took my arm. He was very amusing about his ancestors the 'de Bardiers', most of whom it seemed had lost their heads to Monsieur Guillotin in the French Revolution. My tension rose, however, as he guided us out of the gallery onto the stone battlements of the chateau, warning us to be careful in our high heels.

The floodlights were on as we walked along the top of the Inner Ward, as he called it and explained that what we were seeing of the chateau was in fact a reconstruction, now finished at last after thirty years of work by his parents. "It was all demolished in the Revolution," he said, putting his arm about my waist as I tried to stroll about the heights, not sure whether it was that or his nearness that was scaring me so.

Anna and her boy friend and Barry and Brenda retreated, as we went out to one of the towers, a cooler wind blowing over the parapets. I was shivering as I looked over the heights to the lights of a village way below us, the cliff height adding to the sense of being so very high above the chateau's outer walls. Jacques took off his jacket and put it about me as he explained more but I was hardly listening.

It was getting darker and I teetered back, glad of his strong arm to guide me back to the picture gallery where Joanie and Phish were ensconced on one sofa and Donna and Steve, who'd been the ones to want to walk the battlements scurrying for another. Jacques

escorted me to a loveseat, one of those kinds like the letter S where you sit facing different directions.

“Have you ever seen a chair like this before?” he asked.

“In books,” I whispered, giving him back his jacket. I don’t think that he could see that Joanie was giving a message in signals to Donna. Basically it was not to leave me alone with Jacques and I think I saw Donna nodding in agreement.

Then, Joanie and Phish got up and announced that they were retiring. Joanie came over and glanced at Jacques as she gave me a light peck on the cheek and said, “Good night.” I couldn’t blame her for going off with Phish. She’d suggested enough times little vacations for us both. I knew she wanted a real man and needed the time away from me. I felt so sorry for myself though at seeing her go. I had to get up myself and go to the bathroom before I burst into tears.

I hardly recognized myself in the bathroom mirror. The way Marie had subtly changed my makeup gave me a Gallic air and I was definitely nearly bursting out of the front of my dress, my waist pinned in and the folds of the dress flaring out and following the shape of my wider, female hips. I dabbed my eyes and sighed. I imagined Joanie undressing me. No, this was going to be a lonely night for me, I thought, as I left the bathroom at the end of the gallery and went back into the long room.

Jacques Bardier was there all alone. I looked around for the others. “All gone to bed,” he said with a smile. “Performance takes it out of you all.”

He came to me and took my hand, heading me towards the sofa, smiling at me. He put his hand about my slim waist and I could tell he wanted to kiss me.

“Please, no,” I gasped, putting a hand on his chest, my red painted nails glittering from all the dimmed points of light in the room.

“There’s someone else?” he asked, his smile vanishing. “In America?”

“No,” I answered foolishly. Then, I thought of Colin. “Yes, I mean yes, there is someone in America.

Jacques’ face crinkled as he smiled and took my hands gently away from his chest. “No and yes,” he said, hugging me to him. “I think that that is *carte blanche* to try my very best.”

He bent his head towards me and I knew what he was going to do. I tried to resist, swivel away from him, but his lips were on mine before I could move my head. I went stiff in my long, silk dress as he pulled me into him, the silk hardly stopping the hard sensation of his tux against my softened, feminized body. His tongue entered my mouth and I felt a surge, like electricity, go through me. It wasn’t a quick kiss. He didn’t stop for what seemed a dizzying age, his hands on my back pushing my aroused nipples into him.

“Voila,” he said at last as I pulled my quivering lips away. “You feel what I do, do you not? We are attracted to each other. It is normal and healthy for a woman like you and a man like me.”

“No,” I interrupted him, my senses reeling as I felt his hand on the back of my bra. I clung to him so that he wouldn’t see my enlarged nipples, wanting to flee right away or call for Joanie to aid me.

I tried to break free and walk away but he was kissing my fragrant neck and I felt my bra loosen and come free about my bust. I turned away but he held onto me, his hands around my shapely waist and then inside my dress and over my breast as he kissed my neck and ear and hair, murmuring something soft and sweet to me in his own language.

I wanted to walk away but he was laughing at me and spun me around again to meet his eager mouth. He smelled wonderfully of lemons and leather as he drew me against him and one of his hands worked over my quivering skin as I tried to hold the front of the dress to myself.

“Darling,” he whispered as I tried to fight him off, push him away but he took my hands and put them about him, drawing me to him, kissing me firmly as I shuddered through my whole body. That energized him even more and he stroked my breast and kissed my face and neck, while I was gasping, “No, no, no.”

“The mouth says no,” he whispered, smiling at me, “but the body says, yes, yes, yes.”

He caressed my breast even more and found my mouth again, amused at my feeble attempts to stop him. He was arousing me as Ben and Colin had, kissing me the way I liked to be kissed. It made me submissive and hunger for more and he seemed to know it. He seemed to know that I would melt into his arms if he went on. So he did and I did.

I kissed him back, not thinking. I did. I was trembling with nervousness as I did, forgetting for a moment that this wasn’t one of the dates that Joanie set me up with. I forgot in the bliss I felt that this was a powerful man, used to having his own way, a man used to having any woman that took his fancy. I forgot that I was his fancied woman. I forgot that I was not a woman.

When it finally hit me what I was doing as he steered me to a sofa in the picture gallery, his kissing and fondling increasing as I reacted to him with such pleasure, I really fought him to get away and even began to cry. He was puzzled but stopped guiding me.

“I have to go,” I said, stepping towards the hallway that would lead to my room.

“Very well,” he said lightly, his arm still about my waist. “But I will walk you to your room.”

He kissed me again as he led me along a passageway and down some steps. I was in a panic for a moment before I recognized that we were in the right hallway that led to my room. He smiled and put his finger to his lips as we tiptoed, my heels muffled a little by the carpeting past the other girls doors from where I was certain I heard soft music and laughter in more than one room.

We reached my door and he opened it for me. I panicked as he drew me close and wanted to kiss me again. I tried to make it a quick one but he held onto me and waltzed me through the door, closing it behind me. He whirled me round and I would have fallen if the bed hadn’t been there. He let me go as I fell on to it and started to take off his jacket.

“This, this is my room,” I said in a panic, sitting up on the satin counterpane.

“No,” he said smiling again. “This is my room. All the rooms in this chateau are my rooms, if you think about it. You have come to my room with me.”

“But you can’t,” I began, watching as he took off his shoes. I should have cried out then. I should have thrown something but I was too scared to do anything but protest. “You have to go,” I spluttered.

I don’t know how it got there but suddenly he was opening and pouring champagne from a foaming bottle. He was smiling as he came and sat beside me on the bed, pushing a cold glass into my trembling hands. “All your friends are praising Madame Guertin’s thoughtfulness about now. So, why don’t we join them in a toast?” he asked. “Vive l’amour.”

I didn’t want to drink to love but he insisted. He set our glasses side by side then on the night table and dimmed the lights to almost nothing before coming back to the bed. “I deserve a least a good night kiss for that, don’t I?” he asked, as he put his arms about me and I resisted.

He kissed my arms then and pulled me down on the bed. He buried his head in my chest and the electric charge returned as my dress parted and he kissed my betraying breasts. I pleaded with him in whispers to stop, every fiber of my body aroused. But that just led him to my mouth and his wonderful kisses started again. I couldn’t help kissing him back even as I felt his hands opening my dress wide and slipping it from my shoulders, caressing my breasts as we kissed and then he rolled on top of me.

“I won’t hurt you,” he whispered as I thrashed and wriggled beneath him, trying to get him off as he persisted in kissing my chest and face. I was crying, I know, and he was puzzled, I know, as I gave him such inconsistent signals, saying no but quivering under his touches, loving his kisses, and my body betraying everything I said.

He moved and I thought he was going to go but he had taken his pants off and before he climbed on me again, he pulled my dress off. I almost screamed my, “No!” as he pinned me across the bed and his legs separated mine. I felt him between my legs and his hand raised my skirt. He kissed me, shutting off my protests as he leant in so tight to me that there was nowhere else for my hands to go but about him. He caressed my stockings and the bare skin at the top of my legs and I squeezed him involuntarily, as he kissed me again and again.

He took my earrings off, murmuring to me in French soothing words while I just whispered that I didn’t want to do this and begged him to get off me. Then he took off his underpants and his shirt as he pinned me and I felt him against my panties, between my legs. If it had been Ben, I would have loved it. I would have encouraged him but it wasn’t Ben. This was a man whom I didn’t know but it was clear that my shaking and quivering was turning him on just like it had Ben. And this man knew it was turning me on as I clutched him while my breasts hardened and my nipples engorged to his touch and caress. His mouth was deeply into me as he sensed I liked that, that I really wanted that.

I don’t know why but I thought if I could pleasure him, make him release, it would all come to an end and he might never know. I tried to get at him but he trapped my hand behind me and effortlessly took down my panties.

“Sacre bleu!” he said in my ear as his hand went between my legs to my g-string and I could feel him on my secret. “You are not female!”

“N-No,” I said in a whisper as I had said so many times. Tears of shame and mortification really came then as I tried to push him off but he kept his hand on me, exploring me, opening my gaff strings even as he held me down, his head raised, his kisses stopped.

“No wonder you fought me,” he said softly and he pulled me free of my g-string, and I went into several spasms as sensation returned to parts of me that had been numb since we had started kissing.

“Let me go,” I begged, crying, wanting to be anywhere but where I was, in the humiliating position I was in. I was found out through my own stupidity. I should never have let such an attractive man kiss me.

He relaxed on top of me and partly got up on his knees, his weight off my abdomen. I shuddered, thinking of the shame and degradation he could now put me through, how I had ruined the lives of my friends. I cried again.

“You must really want to be a woman,” he said, leaning over me. “You cry like one. You certainly kiss like one.” Then he lowered his head to mine and gently kissed me. It was such a surprise after what he had just done and how I had felt that I reacted as I shouldn’t. I stopped fighting and accepted his kiss, opening my mouth to let him in, kissing him back, grateful he wasn’t hitting me. I shouldn’t have because I felt him lower himself on me again.

I tried to get free. He was gentler with me but he wouldn’t let me. I was a woman and in his bed, he whispered, and I should be rewarded for that. I wanted to pass on the honor but that only make him laugh and he removed my last articles of clothing gently, almost



kindly, as he held me down, stroking my legs out of the stockings and garter belt and sliding my silky slip away from my overheated, writhing body. He purposefully made love to me and I was so enervated by our earlier struggles that I didn't fight him. In the end, I was cooperating fully with him in reaching a state of pleasure that he seemed to share the way he kissed me, stroked me and whispered to me as I pleased him as any woman would, letting him into me. I was his woman, his very loving and cooperative woman as he came again and he said how much better it was when I was so sweet and loving.

Under the bedclothes, naked with him, he found new ways to receive pleasure from me and I denied him nothing. I couldn't. He called me his woman many times and by morning I believed him. He insisted we bathe together, laughing at my embarrassment at him looking at me naked. He made love to me in the bath, a new experience for me which would have been great except that I was afraid several times that he might drown me.

"I suppose all your friends know," he said as I sat on the edge of the bed and dressed in front of him, his hands caressing each part of me as I put on my stockings and garters and my bra.

"The girls do," I agreed, nervously as he began to brush my hair for me, the way he had done it for his sisters, he said.

"Why would they leave you with me, then?" he asked doubtfully.

"Joanie wouldn't have," I said. "She's going to be so mad with me when she finds out."

She was. She was leaving her room with Phish as I was leaving hand-in-hand with Jacques. He turned and smiled impishly at me and then kissed me passionately, removing nearly all of my lipstick before he let me go. He had some estate business to attend to that morning, he said to me but there was breakfast waiting in the dining hall and he would be back for dinner. I should wear something sexy and exotic, he said, kissing me again as I blushed, knowing that Joanie was hearing everything as he intended.

"You didn't!" she said when he had finally had me walk him to the main doors and thoroughly kissed me again before he let me go. I joined Joanie waiting outside the dining hall to draw me into a side office and talk to me privately.

"You idiot!" screamed Joanie. "Where were Donna and Steve? They were supposed to see you safely back to your room!"

"They were with each other," I said. "Jacques says he told them that he wasn't going to keep me long."

"So you stay with him all night?" snapped Joanie. "You let him into your room? Tell me he just came back this morning and didn't stay the night. Tell me you didn't take him into your bed. Tell me you haven't had sex with a real man."

I was shivering under her assault. I felt like crying. So I wasn't a real man. No, of course not. I was wearing a dress every bit as silky as Joanie's and stockings and high heels and feminine French underwear. I had more makeup on than her except where my lover had kissed it away. No, I thought miserably, I wasn't a real man.

I told her everything that had happened. Boy, was she mad at me. 'Idiot' was the nicest of the words she used about me.

Jacques Bardier didn't come back until dinnertime and by then the other girls had heard the whole story from Joanie. Needless to say, dinner was a very tense affair. Brenda persuaded a grumpy Barry Walker that we needed to rehearse and that we could thank the staff for all they'd done for us by an impromptu performance. She had him outside setting up guitars, the keyboard and speakers we'd brought with us and, of course, Phish had to go to and the other two men were roped in to assist.

Jacques knew right away what was going on. "Les belles dames sans merci," he said flippantly as Brenda came back and sat down, scowling. "Or is it, When Did You Last See Your Father?"

"So," said Joanie, looking as tense and angry as Brenda. "You slept with Christine last night."

"And what business is that of yours?" he asked, smiling at me in the little black dress I was wearing, just spaghetti straps over my bare shoulders, the neckline square across my bust.

I couldn't help it. I flushed and looked down at my newly painted fingernails in my lap.

"Christine is our business," said Joanie aggressively.

"Christine is an adult woman," said Jacques, stressing the last word which only made all of them frown as I shook, my senses reeling. He smiled and stood up, coming up behind me and I felt his warm hand on my shoulder, caressing it lightly as if he had taken possession of me.

"She is as lovely tonight as she was last night and the first time we met," he said to the alarmed, tense faces across the table from us. "Yes, I desired her last night and through a series of circumstances I managed to get her alone last night. She is innocent enough to be no match for and experienced old roué like me. She didn't have a chance in resisting me. It's still her choice, though, and I want her in my bed with me again tonight if I can persuade her to let me make love to her again."

I was scarlet, I was certain, with embarrassment as the girls looked at me, a person they knew to be male, being referred to as 'her' and being desired as a sexual partner by a man, a real man in Joanie's classification. I squirmed in my short dress and heard the rasp of my dark stockings as I shifted my crossed legs and tried to keep my short dress down on my thighs.

"You know her secret," said Brenda firmly as his other hand began to caress my other shoulder catching my hair and setting my long, dangling earrings dancing at my neck.

Jacques Bardier laughed. "You think I am about to blackmail you?" he asked, and though I couldn't see his face, I heard the wonder in his voice. "Look around you. Do you think I need money? I could buy your record company with my pocket change if I desired it. Do you think I would let everyone in the world, or any part of it, know what I do in the privacy of my own bedroom? Who would the knowledge of your secret hurt the most then? Me? Christine? You girls?"

"It would hurt us," said Donna. "It would be the end of us. That's why Christine is our business."

"Then take my word," said Jacques. "No-one will ever find out your business secret from me. I've thought about it all day. I should say, I've thought of nothing else but my darling Christine all day. I was so distracted that I made all kinds of concessions to the village and farmers using the estate that my manager is very angry with me." He bent down and kissed my shoulder and neck while the girls looked at me with various expressions of horror and fascination.

I was spared more public humiliation by the arrival of the housekeeper, Madame Guertin, sent in by Barry to say that everything was set up for us. I trembled the whole way outside as Jacques held my hand. I couldn't look at him as we set up with a barebones set with just two mikes and half Joanie's normal drum set. We'd only intended a token run through in a small space somewhere as we knew some of the stages we had to play on outdoors in Europe were going to be very cramped.

We did our usual opening set and once the music started, I forgot that there was someone special watching me. We stopped then and ran through our placements, Barry insisting we stay within the limits he had drawn. Once, he grabbed me when I strayed over the line he had drawn and I nearly went tumbling into his arms. "Stay back," he yelled or someone will have your legs!"

"Lucky man," said Jacques into the confusion that followed as the music broke up. I flushed and looked away from the amused onlookers and saw Joanie grimacing ferociously at our host.

It got cold quickly as the sun went down and Barry ended our 'rehearsal' by saying that we didn't need to catch cold before we went into Germany and then back to England.

Jacques was waiting indoors with hot wine for us all. He put his arm about my waist and insisted that we all visit his games room where he had a bar and billiards table along with several other diversions. He held me all the time as if he owned me and I trembled, trying to decide if I liked that or not.

"I asked Madame Guertin to move your belongings into the master's bedroom. She says that I am a very lucky man," he whispered in my ear. "I hope you will let that stand at least until your friends retire if you would rather go back to your old room. You know that I only want a willing woman in my bed, don't you?"

I was speechless, an emotional wreck, for the rest of the evening. Jacques monopolized me as his partner in everything, coaxing me to play pool with him. Joanie looked like she wanted to say something sarcastic several times. Brenda too gave me a sardonic look as Jacques said good night to them all at about eleven, ushering me ahead of him. The men in our party, I noted in panic, just raised their eyebrows to each other as we left.

He let me cream off my makeup and get properly into my beautiful white nightie before he got into bed with me. He said that he wanted a willing woman and I was. I can't say that I was in love with Jacques. He said he was with me, after he had made love to me, and I was quivering under him, my aroused body wrapped about him. It was entirely different to be going to bed with a man who knew what I was and wanted me to be happy as he was making love to me. I felt thoroughly feminine as I cuddled up to him in bed and initiated his kissing me. He made love to me as if I was a woman, his hands so gentle and yet so enervating.

"You must come on the Grand Prix circuit with me." he said drowsily as we lay in our warm bed in the morning. I tried to get up but each time he would pull me back and start kissing and smothering me with his body again. Only when he had come thoroughly and completely, insisting that I have to reach an orgasm too, did he relent and let me up to begin our common bathing.

He walked about naked and expected me to do the same but I was too embarrassed. I had to put my panties on at least. It was lucky I did because Madame Guertin had the run of the place, including his bedroom. She brought us breakfast in bed and smiled very nicely at me as I tried to cover my blushes and naked breasts from her gaze.

I don't know how it was I agreed to go to Belgium with him to the race practice at Spa but I found myself in a low-cut, white blouse, and tight black skirt, my blonde hair held back in a long braid, holding onto a clipboard and stopwatch in the pit area of his racing team. I was supposed to be recording times, a useless job, but one given to me to make it appear that I was doing something besides look pretty and female in the unrelentingly male area.

"We need a blonde bombshell in the pits," Jacques explained as we flew back to his chateau that night. "Every team has its beautiful model in the pits. It perks all the mechanics up to see you there. I've been one of the few this year not to have my girl friend out at the track."

"I'm your girl friend?" I asked lightly.

"Sounds better than mistress in the press," he said with a grin and then kissed me and fondled me while our pilots looked determinedly ahead and the flight attendant disappeared into her cubicle.

Our love affair was in all the French papers, less so elsewhere. We had to go on with our touring and playing, but he sent his plane for me on an almost daily basis. When I arrived at times just minutes before performances, the girls got onto me, often crudely about how to speed up making love to Jacques. Because that was why he wanted me with him. It wasn't for any morale building in his pit crew. He wanted me to make love to him and for him to make love to me on almost a daily basis. He wasn't satisfied with anything quick, either. He wanted a full expression of his passion for me and, he presumed, my passion and desire for him.

He said he loved me often, while making love, and when kissing me goodbye from different locales where he was testing or preparing for races. Sometimes, he closed the door of the plane and took me on the fold-back seats of the plane, not caring that someone might come in and discover more about us than they should know. All his employees seemed to know that we were having sex in the plane, in his trailer, and in the hotels we sometimes met at. They unilaterally seemed to approve. They complimented me all the time on my dresses, my hair, my perfume and treated me, I have to say, as if I was a princess. At least, I think a princess would love to be treated as I was.

I was there, with Jacques kissing me and carrying me about the car, my short skirt hitched up and showing off my panties, after he won in Belgium, his first major win of the year. I was his lucky charm, the papers said, as they published photos of his celebration at winning, mostly kissing me.

I didn't know how to talk to the other girls about him. They didn't seem to want to talk to me, either. Joanie was sleeping with Phish permanently and her comments were curt whenever she saw Barry hurrying me off to meet with Jacques in Germany and Italy. He was most disappointed in San Remo that I hadn't brought a bikini with me and that he couldn't persuade me to go to a beach where girls never wore the tops of their bikinis anyway. It confirmed for me that I really didn't love Jacques. We had nothing in common except sex. He could arouse me with a kiss. I was always shaking so much I submitted to his every whim and what Jacques loved and wanted in a woman was submissiveness. He had found it in me and that was what he had fallen in love with, I was sure.

I wanted to talk it over with Joanie. I didn't know how I could break it off with Jacques. If I did as well, would he go back on his word about me and my secret? I didn't know what to do when it all came to a head between us.

We had promised two performances to a miners' charity in Wales. The roads were awful and there was no way I could get out to be with Jacques as he made his final practice for the big race in Italy. I promised to be with him for the party after the race but that wasn't good enough for him.

"Break the engagement," he ordered me as he pressed me down on his trailer's bed, my dress up above my hips, his hand caressing my stockings and garter belt.

"I can't," I whispered when I could, his mouth making my whole body quake again as he slowly undressed me of my silk lingerie, stroking and kissing every part of my body as its nakedness was revealed.

"I want you with me," he said, covering my willing lips and face with kisses as I writhed under his lovemaking.

I cuddled up to him and he laughingly began to arouse my breasts by nibbling on them. "I want to announce our engagement at the race," he said as I began to respond to him. "And I have bought a ring for you."

I was dumbfounded. I began to shake and he took that as a sign that I was in agreement and submitting to him.

"I-I can't," I said, trembling as he started to caress my garters and stockings, knowing how that affected me in pleasing and accommodating him. "I can't let the girls down."

"You don't love me any more," he teased.

I should have said that I loved him but I couldn't make it. "I can't be here," I said nervously and he frowned at me. He took full advantage of me and made sure that I too was satisfied before lying beside me as I struggled into my lacy panties.

"Do you love me?" he asked directly, staring at me as I slipped into my bra. "I just realized that you don't say it to me all the time, do you? Is it all just when we have sex to you? Then you whisper that you love me but only if I coax it out of you. I think about us all the time when you're not here. I want you here all the time with me. I want us to get engaged and then I want to take you to Casablanca. There's a famous clinic there. I'll be with you every step of the way into your becoming a complete woman. We won't be able to make love for a while but eventually you will and there will never be any questions any more about you. When you're ready, before or after we go, as you like, we can be married."

"I-I can't," I began, my mind reeling. He pulled me down on the bed and began to kiss me.

"Say you love me," he said roughly, his hand stroking my bra.

"I-I don't know," I said, as he rolled on me, holding me down.

His eyes registered his shock. "You don't know?" he asked.

"I don't know that I want an operation," I said as his hands ran lightly up and down my legs.

"You actually like sex like this?" he asked in surprise, putting his hand between my legs and caressing my panties and what was inside as I wiggled under his hands.

"Wouldn't it be so much better to make love through here?"

"Better for whom?" I asked, pushing his hands away.

He was angry and let me get up. Shuddering, I put on my stockings, my garter belt and short slip. I needed his help with the zipper of my dress and, as he helped, he pulled me to him, pressing his manhood into my backside, his hands on my breasts. He kissed my neck where I had just sprayed on fresh Chanel, and let his hands run down my sides over my hips and back to my alert, hardening breasts.

He pushed me face down, pulled down my panties, and took me more roughly than he had ever taken me before. I could sense that my eyes were bright when he finally rolled me over. "You like it that way," he said thickly.

I shook my head. I was scared of him and the angry mood he seemed to be in. I knew I had to say something more. "I do love you," I said, my voice hoarse even to me. "I just don't want someone cutting off parts of me."

"You said you love me," he said, smiling suddenly, and it was like the sun coming out after rain. I felt warmed and secure. Besides, he was kissing me and pressing me to him so hard that I thought he was trying to make me one with him.

"I'm holding you to that," he said when he finally took me, exhausted as usual, back to his plane. "You said you love me. People who love each other get married. We are going to get married and you are going to be a true woman when we do. Come back here on Saturday and we'll discuss all the details."

"I-I can't do it," I said as he held me in his arms on the tarmac and the pilots in the cockpit looked studiously away.

"We have to be in Wales."

"If you love me," he said slowly, "you'll be here and you'll become my wife as I want you to be." He kissed me then and I began to shake as he kissed and kissed and kissed me.

"Tell me what I want," he said as I clung to him, my hair about our faces, my lipstick gone again from swollen lips.

"You want me here on Saturday to love you," I said dreamily and he squeezed me.

"Close enough," he said with a smile.

He stood on the runway and waved to me as the airplane taxied out onto the main runway as I waved back to him from the window. The flight attendant came and smiled at me

as soon as we were in level flight. She redid my hair braid and freshened my lipstick for me. "I wish I could have a man like Monsieur Bardier," she said enviously. "He really loves you so much."

The Welsh concerts were chaotic. The constant rain didn't help. Roads became quagmires and nothing was moving in or out of the concert sites. We were delayed and delayed and finally got to the stage late in the evening. I thought of Jacques all the time and his impossible demands. I called his plane before we went out and asked them to relay a message to him that I just couldn't get away. The pilot called back to say that Monsieur Bardier had received the message that I was not coming.

It took us all the next day to get out and back to London. As we sped towards Heathrow, Brenda got very angry when we made the turn-off. "Not again," she snarled. "Do you two think you just invented sex? The rest of us can live a day or two without it. You should try it."

"Stop," said Joanie from the front of our limo suddenly. She was looking at me and had gone chalky white.

"What is it?" asked Barry as Phish turned too and looked at me in deepest concern.

"Jacques Bardier," said Joanie, pointing to the radio. "There's been a horrible accident. He's dead."

XXIV. BACKTRACKS

It was a very sad and sorry group that returned to the States two weeks later. I didn't know how to react to the news. In some ways, it was a relief not to be under the pressure that Jacques put on me. The girls didn't quite know how to react either. They treated me as if I was brittle pottery. They were forever hugging me, even Anna who was usually distant from me. The paparazzi were the worst. From the moment we got to the tarmac and the plane on which the girls insisted on accompanying me we were not left alone for a second, light bulbs flashing in my face even when Donna and Brenda punched out a couple of the most persistent. They were lucky not to be charged but the general consensus, even in the press, was that they, the photographers, had gone too far.

The worst of all was to meet Jacques' distraught family for the first time, his teenaged brother, so much like a younger version of him, who followed me around at the funeral and whom I finally let hold my hand at the gravesite. It was there I had my crying jag and it was all captured on the long lenses of the photographers. At least, I didn't throw myself on the casket as his sister, Amelie, did. She had already told the press that Jacques had phoned her and told her he had found the love of his life and that we were getting married in three months and going to live near to her home on the Riviera. That was as big a shock to me as it was to the other girls.

In private, I protested that it wasn't true, but they soon wormed out the details that he had asked me to marry him and I hadn't given him a definite 'No'. That left them very thoughtful and also very affectionate with me as if I was a girl who had just lost her fiancé in a terrible accident. His parents and his other sister, Laure, wept with me at the gravesite. It was their grief-stricken faces that set me off and the way they treated me as if I had

married Jacques and become one of the family. They couldn't stop thanking me for the pleasure I had given to him in his last weeks and that's when I lost it.

I wept for Jacques as I realized how he had been true to his words to the Purplehearts. He had kept our secret and now he was dead. He had been driving very aggressively in his last race after getting the message that I wasn't coming. Only I could have guessed how he had interpreted that. Had he gone out angrily on the track thinking that I was telling him that I wouldn't see him again? I didn't know and had no one really whom I could ask. I really didn't want to know, either, if I had been the main cause of his death.

So, there were pictures everywhere of me in my little black dress, my hair in black ribbons and black veil, in huge dark glasses, crying in his sisters' and brother's arms, as they tried to console me, they who had lost so much more than me. We were hounded then for days afterward and the quiet time in the Italian countryside turned into a running battle with the photographers.

We had been going to shoot some videos in and around London before we went home but, thankfully, Barry let us cancel them. They would have been in very poor taste after what the media was playing up as my tragic love affair.

I was glad to leave England in the end then but it was just as bad in New York. We had usually avoided photographers in our personal lives since we didn't have big entourages or lots of security. We posed for pictures on tour and the girls did at various clubs they visited for entertainment. To be besieged on the tarmac was just awful.

Joanie came back with me to the apartment and I know that caused an argument with Phish. I caught the tail end of it as Joanie said, "She needs me right now."

She was right. The apartment block was staked out by newsmen much to the annoyance of our doormen and the other tenants if half of what they said about the intrusions in the building were true.

"We're going to have to move," said Joanie moodily as we got ready for bed, she undoing my hair and the fanciful liberties she had taken in braiding the black ribbons into my long blonde hair. She then pulled it into two bunches on either side of my head and secured them with elastic fasteners.

"Pippi Longstocking," she said as she usually did when my hair was red and tied back that way. I tried to smile as I took off my black top and bra. She watched me walking over to the drawer where I kept my nighties, shedding my skirt and stockings on the way. I didn't feel at all self-conscious moving about in front of her in just my panties.

"Phish likes my boobs," said Joanie, shedding her clothes and showing me her implants. "He says they're almost as nice as yours."

"He can have them," I said without thinking as I got us both similar, long nighties, pink and sort of Grecian goddess in the shoulder ties and how they draped about our braless figures.

"No," said Joanie. "In no way are you sleeping with my boy friend and there's no way I'm going to let this group turn another man into a woman."

I colored and tried to apologize for my thoughtless remark but it did get us to talking again and about Jacques. I confessed to Joanie that I really hadn't known what to do about

Jacques. I confessed that I hadn't really loved him and how horrible it was to have everyone thinking that I did when I didn't.

"Don't say anything to the press or his family," counseled Joanie. "It would just be awful for the family to have you put that on top of losing him."

We snuggled up in bed and she kissed me as she asked me about Jacques and I explained what he wanted me to do before or after marrying him.

"He'd have had you have the operation," said Joanie seriously. "We could all see it. He was one of those guys who always get what he wants. Then, when he does, the chase is over and he goes onto something else. That's what we were worried about. That you'd fall for him so hard, and when he broke up with you, you'd be so devastated. You have so little experience with men."

"I'm going to change that," I said lightly. "I thought I'd start with Phish. I've heard that he's a breast man."

She had been idly stroking mine as we lay together. Now, she tweaked me hard and kissed me, her leg feeling a little rough as she slid about my smooth ones.

"You leave my boy friend alone," she said, laughing as she slid over me and began kissing my face.

I put my arms about her, familiar fragrances arousing me as she kissed my neck. "I thought you said that you'd had enough sex with Jacques to last you a lifetime," she said, repeating what I had said to them all in Italy.

"It's been two weeks," I said pitifully and she began to laugh.

She held me down. "Oh, what the heck," she said. "I promised myself that I was going to be true to Phish and not sleep with any other man." Then, she considered, rocking on me, knowing how that would arouse me, as our breasts brushed each other's. "But making love to you is making love to a woman, isn't it? So, this doesn't count and I'm still true to Phish."

I didn't care. I loved her and she loved me in a way. All our lives, I could see me losing her to various men and it always coming back to this.

In the morning, she bustled about and got breakfast ready but I could see she was anxious about something. "I do want to get out today and see the new group that Phish has agreed to manage," she said. "Why don't you come with me over to Brooklyn? Phish has got them auditioning there this weekend. He's got a recording date with Cabaret on the strength of his attachment to us."

"How can I?" I asked moodily. "This is where it's so awful. I'm supposed to be grieving over Jacques and I'm not."

"See your point," said Joanie. "Shall I ask one of the other girls to come over?"

I was always included in naturally now as one of the other girls. I quivered a little in my pink robe and nightie as I sat, wasting time in the kitchen as Joanie fidgeted and wanted to go.

"I should call Annie and invite her over. She's got something big to ask you," Joanie said, smiling. "You know she is in complete awe of you."

"What could Annie want from me?" I asked, mystified. "She's never wanted anything from me before."

"She wants you to be her bridesmaid," said Joanie with a giggle. "She's asked us all already and we all said we would if you would. She hasn't dared to ask you the last two weeks."

"Not that who-is-it she took to Europe, is it?" I asked in disbelief.

"Now, now," said Joanie with a smile. "Keith is very nice, perfect for her, just not on the A-list of romantic lovers like all yours. And don't you start making jokes about taking Keith away from Annie. She's seen him looking at you as well and knows if it came to a choice between the two of you, she'd lose every time. Anyway, we need you to be bridesmaid. You have to see the awful dresses she's chosen."

"Pink?" I asked to her grinning face.

"Yup," she said. "And huge, bouffant sleeves."

"Straw hats with ribbons?" I asked and Joanie looked at me with wide eyes. "Crinolines?"

"How did you know?" asked Joanie, laughing but trying not to.

"She is Italian," I said. "How many times has she seen *The Godfather*?"

"Oh, no," gasped Joanie thinking of the wedding scene in that movie. "You have to talk to her."

"I'll try," I promised.

"No puffed sleeves," she made me promise to tell Anna.

"If she can have the crinolines and petticoats," I agreed and Joanie began to smile again as I shivered a little thinking of myself in skirts like that. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad.

"And no ugly groomsmen," said Joanie. "That's most important."

I agreed with her, imagining myself in a wide, crinoline dress in Colin's arms. He danced better than any man I knew.

Joanie was anxious to get away and I soon realized why when Phish called from below that there were still a few photographers lurking around. They were mostly hidden in parked cars. She went with a wave as Anna phoned and just by the nervous way she talked I knew Joanie had prepped her on what to say.

I promised to be her bridesmaid but only on condition we other girls, she didn't notice the 'we', picked out our dresses. Anna said she was so relieved. She had been sure that I wouldn't want to be a bridesmaid but she couldn't think of getting married without the four other girls, her best friends in the world there for her.

Joanie finally phoned back later that night to tell me not to wait up as she was going over to Brooklyn with Phish to listen to the group he was managing. I knew what that meant and spent a fairly lonely night as I thought of Joanie being faithful to her Phish. I didn't expect her and when I woke up next morning her half of the bed hadn't been slept in.

I was looking forward to another miserable day when, after breakfast, Joanie called me. She wanted me to come over to Cabaret and bring my 'garbage file' as I called it. "You've got to come," she said. "These guys are pretty good. They've got a picker you'll get along with and a drummer who's so good, well, I sound like I'm still in marching band. But the stuff they write, ugh, your garbage is a decided step up."

I got my file ready, pleased in a way, that someone would play some of my work other than the Purplehearts. We called it the garbage file because it was stuff I had written that was similar to some of the work we had already done. I often worked and reworked lyrics and counter-melodies as we recorded. If some of my ideas here had had the same time and the same treatment as some of our hits, they might have succeeded, too. Colin had always said that, I thought with a start. He had always told me to hold on tight to the garbage file for, if I didn't want to use it, he would in his next musical.

Only one persistent photographer stepped out of the bushes and caught me as I was clicking up the marble steps to the entrance to Cabaret. Bonnie was at the door and let loose with a series of curses as others ran up to the doors she was locking with a security key.

"In studio three," Bonnie said as I took off my dark glasses and dark beret and let my hair go free. I had worn my dark gray 'business' suit with the short, tight skirt and dark stockings, but my 'office secretary' look hadn't seemed to fool anyone. She came over and hugged me then. There were tears in her eyes to my astonishment. "We were all so sad for you," she said, holding me as I felt myself tearing up. "You deserved a man like that."

I was glad to get away after the condolences, feeling as much a fraud as ever. On the stairs down to Three, I suddenly heard a drummer playing through a scintillating series of variations on a riff I'd heard before. I stopped at the bottom of the stairs before the open door not wanting suddenly to go in.

Arms went about me from behind, jarring every sense in me as a familiar voice said, "Well the groupies around here are nicer than the scrubbers we've been getting on the road," and Ted Shelley kissed me on my neck and I felt his hands groping my breasts even through my buttoned jacket and white knitted top.

"Ted!" I heard Joanie's voice from the control room over to the right and then she came up and removed the groping arm from my petrified body. "This is Christine Harris you're pawing."

I was released and spun around on my high heels to face the guy who had taken me from singing on a sidewalk to performing in a rock band, the first guy who'd actually said I was good at music.

Ted grinned at me, his face unchanged from the last time I had seen him on stage before he had quit Blind Mice and broken up the group. I was shaking as he bent his head and suddenly kissed me full on the lips, harshly, demanding.

"Ted!" Joanie laughed, parting us and I trembled right through my dress and pretty white panties as Ted smirked at me, my lipstick on his mouth. "She's not going to want you playing her music if you keep taking advantage of her."

"Oh, I think she'll want us more," leered Ted and I shuddered, wanting to hit him as much as run from him.

"Here's that drummer I told you about," said Joanie, looking over her shoulder and shaking her long, dark hair at an unabashed Ted Shelley. I knew before we entered the sound room that Lee Alvis would be sitting behind the drums and he was. I should have recognized the riff he was playing and varying. I had shown it to him once and did some varying in guitar rhythms to suggest how his drums could answer me.

Lee got up and came to shake hands with me while I felt as if my stocking-clad legs were shaking all over. "I-I thought you were drummer for the Jokers," I said as there was an awkward, little silence while he stared at me, open-mouthed.

"How did you know that?" he asked, surprised. "I only played with them for two or three gigs and they decided I didn't fit. They didn't want anyone with them who could play better than they could. Gosh, you are even more beautiful in the flesh than you are in pictures."

"And he's got pictures of you all over his part of the bus," said Jimmy Tarleton, coming over from his keyboards to give me a hug as well. "On the ceiling. He's the President of your fan club."

Lee Alvis colored a bright red and aimed a punch at Jimmy, and I thought it was going to start all over again as Jack Stacey came over at a rush and knuckled the side of Jimmy's head. I was flushing as well. I knew what Lee did while looking up at the picture of a beautiful girl above him. Then all three began to laugh as I never remembered the Blind Mice doing before.

"You have a new lead guitarist," I squeaked as a lean, dark-haired guy, his hair long and thick, came over to us. I tried desperately to ignore the shakes I had all over as my former band mates talked to me as if I was entirely someone else.

"How did you know we had a new guitarist?" asked Lee, frowning as Eddie Reece came over to be introduced.

"How long have you been in Blind Mice?" I asked, ignoring Lee and trying to make conversation desperately with anyone else but people who had known me as well as I knew myself.

"Blind Mice?" asked Eddie, looking to the others.

"That's what we were once," said Lee, looking hard at me and I felt all their eyes on me now, examining me very closely. I expected at any moment that one of them would say my name and expose me. I knew it. I could hear it coming.

"Now we're The Pride," said Jimmy Tarleton.

"Blind Mice," said Joanie at almost the same time. "You were the Blind Mice." Now they were looking at her. "I think we played in some fairs and festivals and such, four years back, around Illinois and Michigan, with your band."

"And you remember us from then?" asked Lee Alvis in surprise.

"Never forget a good drummer," said Joanie, diverting attention from me. "You were pretty wild as I recall, taking solos all over the place."

The guys burst out laughing and started punching Lee in the arm while he pretended mock indignance.

"Got you taped," laughed Jimmy Tarleton as Eddy and Jack wandered away, back to their instruments.

"You had a pretty good guitarist then, too," said Joanie and I wanted to squirm in embarrassment.

"Pretty good guitarist?" asked Lee Alvis doubtfully.

"You don't mean Alan Markham?" asked Jimmy in surprise. "He was pretty but he wasn't any good."

I was paralyzed by the callous words. "Oh, that Alan," said Lee Alvis, grinning at me. For a moment, I thought he saw right through my makeup to the real me below my fake eyelashes, powdered face and Revlon Red lips. "We used to have this kid on guitar, Ted's friend, his lover boy. Ted said he could play but we never heard it. We broke up once when he and Jack fought over little Alice. That's what we called him behind his back. Whatever happened to him?"

Lee directed the last question to Jimmy who just shrugged. "We were well rid of that loser," said Jimmy, reaching out to put his arm about Joanie.

I removed Lee's arm and found Joanie looking at me in alarm as she did the same to Jimmy. "You guys," she said lightly, stepping over and taking my arm.

"Who's going to be producing these guys?" I asked, a tremble in my voice as we retreated from the grinning pair.

"I am," said a familiar voice from the doorway.

"Colin," I said as he stepped forward, no smile at all, just concern on his face.

I wanted to fling my arms about his neck, as my emotions were battered again by another strange meeting. Beside me, I heard Joanie sigh and turning to her, I caught the smile on her face and guessed right away that she had planned this meeting.

"Now you guys," she said, not hearing it at all the way I did, and not catching my furious blushing. "You go out and get to know one another again. We've got a recording session of our own very soon and you two need to talk. Phish can handle the rest of today."

Colin took my hand and nodded to Joanie and led me out of the studio. "Where are we going?" I asked breathlessly as he went down more steps and suddenly we were on a parking level with lots of cars. He took out his keys and a silvery-gray, late model car began to flash its lights and its ignition started.

Colin gave me a little smile. "Modern car designers," he said. "Note the all tinted windows for your privacy, too. We won't be bothered by your friends at the front door."

We came out in a back street and Colin immediately got into a traffic flow headed to New Jersey and out of town. It took us over an hour to get out of the traffic before he finally pulled over in a little town at an Italian restaurant and took me in.

"Found this place on the way," he said, after ordering for us both. "Note Signora Motella's surprise. You're the first woman whom I've ever brought here."

"On the way where?" I asked and he smiled at me.

"Joanie says I shouldn't believe what I read in the newspapers," he said abruptly.

"About Jacques and me?" I asked, flushing, and he nodded as a waitress appeared with bruschetta for him. "No, please don't. It-It wasn't like that at all."

"He wasn't the love of your life?" he asked, a muscle in his chin working as he seemed to be trying to control his voice.

"No," I said, shaking my head and feeling my long braid slithering over the dark gray jacket of my tailored suit. "I didn't love him at all," I said vehemently, "which makes it all so awful. His sisters, his family, said all those things to the press."

"Which he had said to them," he said ironically as I cringed. "Would you have married him?"

I shook my head, appalled, but shivering as I thought of how I would still have gone to him after his last race as he had told me to do.

"You're such a submissive," he said with a sigh, taking my hand across the table. "I had to rescue you from Brent who's a pussycat in comparison to this Jacques, by his reputation at least. This Frenchman would get always get what he wanted. Everyone I know who's dealt with him says that. He was totally dominant and you were his little submissive, right? He did dominate you, didn't he? You made love to him, many times, according to the papers."

I shivered as his hand tightened about mine. "So you'd have stayed over there with him?" he asked quietly into my shivering.

I shook my head, my eyes bleary. "No," I said.

"Why not?" he asked, almost sneering at me.

"He wanted me to have the operation," I whispered to him. "He wanted me to change my sex."

He was very quiet for a moment. I risked a look at him and he was just staring at me. "So?" he asked.

I almost cried. "I-I can't do that," I whispered again so that no one could hear me in the little room where almost everybody else was talking loudly, the unique sound of recorded concertinas a quiet masking noise in the background. "I couldn't, I just couldn't. Don't ask me to. Please."

I suppose the lunch was delicious. Colin said it was several times and he should know. I think he ate most of mine as well as his own.

I had no idea where we were going after he turned west and not back into the city. He relaxed as we drove along and told me all about Waldener, the filmmaker, and his plans for a 'gritty' film of a girls' rock group struggling to get recognition in a country town. Waldener wanted all the Purplehearts to have parts in the film and for Colin and me to produce a completely new batch of songs and do a film score. It was a move I should make, said Colin seriously. As an artist, I needed to expand my horizons beyond playing and touring, "wearing myself out" in his words. Besides, one role was ideal for me, he

said, the shy guitarist, which sounded great until he talked about the girl getting pregnant and having a baby. That would be too much of a stretch for a non-actor like me.

"I think you can act any part you want," said Colin with his first bright smile at me after I said that I couldn't do that. "So long as it's a woman's part, though."

We were out in the country, seemingly nowhere, when he suddenly slowed down and the car turned in on a gravel track, through some woods and then out along the top of a gentle hill to where a house was being built.

Construction had stopped for the day. The roof and windows were complete as were the walls, the stairs and the palatial entranceway. The electricity worked but there was still much to be done to make it a home, including decoration.

"It's my house," said Colin with a little smile of pleasure as he led me through it. "I asked Dave and the boys to take the day off so that I could show you around without them all fawning all over you. I'm the only one allowed to do that here."

I felt my senses reel at that and he put his arm about me to guide me down a few steps that were tricky, my high heels sounding like wood blocks in a drum set as I walked with him.

"I've put everything I've earned into this," he said with a smile as he brought me to a bay window that overlooked the grass meadow which he had said was all his. We watched as a fox slipped along the tree-line and he told me all about the permanent animal residents of his estate. "This is where I am going to settle down," he finished.

I was looking out at that moment and felt his arm about my waist, drawing me closer. I turned to him, half afraid of how he might be looking at me.

"Yes," he said quietly. "I brought you here to propose to you. I'm ready to settle down if you will have me."

"Colin," I began, stunned at his words.

"Even if you want a complete sex change," he said, his mouth turning down wryly, "but I wouldn't insist as someone else did. I've thought it through and I think I could make you happy even then. But if I couldn't, if I can't now, I promise you that I'll help you find the right man for you. You deserve the very best, your heart's desire."

"Colin!" I had to cry out loud at last, my cheeks warm with embarrassment and shame. I remembered, if he didn't, how I had treated him so abysmally in my apartment when he was only there to comfort a woman he thought he knew. I couldn't bear to hear such frankness from a male friend and collaborator in music.

He held me against him and suddenly I felt painfully shy as he hugged me and my aroused breasts pushed into him. His kiss was very gentle and considerate but I could sense that he was holding back his inner excitement. I knew how he felt as I felt exactly the same way.

"Christine," he murmured. "I haven't thought of anything else since, since you went off to Europe, but of getting you back and making love to you."

"Making love?" I gasped, remembering only our wretched attempt that I had so badly botched in my apartment.

He put my arms about his neck. "In every way possible," he said. "And in every way that you would like." He pressed our bodies tighter together and kissed me even harder, I shuddered as he opened my jacket and caressed my hips and my breasts, my top so tight as I strained against in my eagerness to be against him.

We kissed fervently and I was suddenly bursting out with long suppressed feelings. It was joyous that I didn't have to hold back. He was so kind and that was enough for me, I thought, quivering all over as his hands didn't stop caressing me. I desperately wanted to be loved, I knew that now, and here was Colin who desperately wanted to love me.

There was an old sofa down in what would be a breakfast nook where the workmen sat to have their coffee. I could sense that Colin was anxious. He murmured things about last time being all his fault and he wanted to make it up to me. I let him push me down on the sofa and climb on top of me. I guided his hands beneath my skirt and was soon in waves of delight at his gentle caresses as he lifted my skirt and pleased me in ways I never expected. I undressed him as he undressed me and soon we were feverishly, frantically one on the sofa, my panties and g-string gone somewhere with my stockings onto the dusty floor.

My breasts fascinated him. He tantalized me and seemed to know instinctively how his touches made me feel as he was ready each time to capitalize on my weak and womanly feelings and pleasure us both until I was a complete physical wreck in his arms.

He found my clothes and dressed me, being rewarded as best as my trembling hands and quivering lips could do. It took him ten passionate kisses to attach my bra and he nearly started undressing me again as I clung to him and gave him access to every part of my body as he dressed me.

He finally led me back to the car and drove out of the estate and on to a little town nearby. He helped me out of the car, smiling as my tight skirt rode up my legs and I stepped into him for a kiss before we went in. My hair was just a mass of blonde curls, my braid long since undone and I couldn't get it redone without help.

"This is where I stay when I come up here," he said thickly, taking me by the hand, smiling at my mass of hair as I pushed it out of my face and leant on his shoulder. I didn't care how I looked. I was with my man and that was all that counted.

The lobby was fairly crowded and we got lots of curious looks as well as double takes as Colin went up to the desk and quickly got his 'usual' room. We walked hand-in-hand through the foyer and I heard whispering behind us and I saw shock on some faces in the elevator as we went up to the third floor. But no one said anything.

"That's what I love," said Colin nervously as we scampered into his room and I threw my jacket on the chair and turned to him. He didn't disappoint me. He put his arms about me and kissed me thoroughly, my nerves tingling at every touch of his suit against my stockings, every movement of his lips on mine.

"I can walk through a hotel with you," he went on, "hand-in-hand with the one I love and no-one stares at me or says something in disgust. I can hold you in public, kiss you, and everyone approves or is envious of me."

I was shaking as he bent to kiss my eager mouth. "The one I love" rang in my ears as his soft caressing mouth awakened desires in me I hadn't felt in a long time, since the debacle with Ben, in fact. I made a determined effort to blank out that episode and the glorious feelings I had had when I thought Ben had picked me up because he loved me. This was better. Colin really loved me.

I thought of him alone as we made love, frenziedly at first and then more slowly as he proved to me that whatever qualms he had had of ever being able to love a woman didn't exist with me. Of course, he knew exactly what kind of 'woman' I was. I was so glad that I was woman enough not to embarrass him in public.

I had to let him know, though. "I won't ever have a sex change," I whispered softly, thinking of Joanie and how that was a closed book now. But I could still imagine a time when she might need me as I had needed her when we got back from the funeral to New York.

Colin began to love me then, touching me with such subtlety, setting off electric charges all through me, suffusing me with female longings to satisfy his male demands. He might have thought of me differently but I didn't care about that. If he had asked me at the height of passion, he could have extracted any promise he wanted from me. Luckily, he was too kind to do that.

"But you are a woman, no matter what, aren't you?" he asked, snuggling up to me beneath the bed sheets, drawing my naked body against his, so clearly not completely a woman's.

"Oh yes," I gasped as his hands danced along my thighs. His lips caressed my breasts. I clutched at him as the pleasure of being his woman rose within me and I wanted to cry out in ecstasy as he had his way with me, his pleasure evident in the way he took me and filled me with his love.

"I'm glad you're a woman," he said, as he forced me to relax for a while and I could tease him gently while he was too spent to do other than hold me against him and kiss my hair. "With your passport, we could get married," he said and I stiffened against him.

"But, but is it legal?" I said, burying my head into his shoulder, feeling his hairy leg between my smooth, hairless ones.

Colin smiled and rose over me, kissing my face gently as his body rested on mine. "You don't have to worry about that," he said. "An old blues singer told me about a courthouse that burned down in the Thirties in Arkansas. All birth records gone. Had half the crime syndicates in New York claiming to have been born there and getting American passports till the Feds caught on. We did the same for you. I already knew the place where the records were gone. All I had to do was find a Christine Harris in the neighborhood who might have been born there. Arthur did the rest, the affidavits and school records and such."

"But the real girl," I said.

"She has a birth certificate, I suppose," he said. "Or she can go get it from Illinois, Indiana, or wherever she was born. She can get her passport when she needs it. She just passed through the area at about the time you would have been there. The IRS was glad to have

your records updated so that they can tax you as they should and Arthur really thinks that Christine Elizabeth Harris is the real you.”

“Thank you,” I whispered but suddenly I felt him stiffen on me.

“You never did say, did you?” he said slowly. “You haven’t answered my proposal at all, have you? I wouldn’t care if you did decide to have the operation. I said that, didn’t I? I wouldn’t care if you stayed like this. Even if you don’t want to get married, I can take that, too. You really don’t have to marry me if you think it’s wrong. I just want to live with you, hold you, love you.”

“Yes,” I said. Men are so dense. He didn’t know what I meant for a moment. He didn’t know what question I was answering as I thought on about the consequences of my answer. No more Joanie. Definitely no more Ben and no more ‘holidays’. Just being loved by my husband. I thrilled to that. I thought of the wedding we would have, Joanie in a pink, crinoline dress with bouffant shoulders and the Blind Mice as groomsmen. Well, perhaps we could dump the Blind Mice.

Then Colin got it and I could not stop the torrent of kisses and the passion he forced on my tender, feminized body and my sore to bursting female breasts.

“Oh Christine,” he sighed. “I’m going to hold you to that promise. I want you be the most beautiful woman in the world. All I want is to be married to you and to spend my days and nights making love to you.”

And so far, my husband has been as good as his word.

The end

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